

# THE WORD OF TRUTH

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## *THE TRUTH - THE WHOLE TRUTH*

The child which learns that two and two make four is able to go on and understand and appreciate that two goes into four two times. If the first is not learned and appreciated, the second will not be understood. That two goes into four two times can be learned by any child who memorizes the mere forms of speech, but understanding and appreciation of this is dependent upon a full knowledge of simple truths that must come before it.

That two goes into four two times is admitted by all men. The unity that exists concerning this is based upon the fact that ever, always and at all times they agree that two and two equals four. Let them disagree on the simple primary addition and it will have to be left to every man's opinion as to how many times two goes into four. And in this matter we would find varied and confusing conclusions.

Even so it is with understanding and appreciating the Word of God. Arithmetic is an exact science, but so is the task of interpreting the Word of God. If primary truths are learned and understood and their truth and force brought to bear upon all major subjects our findings are more apt to be in harmony with the mind of God. The Bible does not begin with Matthew but with Genesis, but today it is generally believed that we can get along without the first thirty-seven books.

We must not interpret the Old Testament in the light of the New, but the New in the light of the Old, for the Old came first. The student who approaches the New Testament with a mind saturated with the Old is bound to come to different conclusions than the student who knows little and cares less for the primary truths revealed in the Old. These primary truths must be learned and in later studies their truth and force must never be forgotten.

In John 3 we have the record of Nicodemus. This is a favorite with "preachers of sermons" and many and varied are the conclusions, which come from it. We hold that in attempting to understand the record of Nicodemus it is essential that all that God has said concerning the seed of Abraham shall be brought to bear upon it, for Nicodemus was certainly one of Abraham's seed. If this is done we can rest assured that we have not only the truth, but the whole truth. This is our desire and nothing short of it will ever satisfy. Others may not care for it, we may fail to get them to see it, there may be no demand for it, they may refuse to hear it; but at least we must possess it for ourselves regardless of the attitude of others.

In Acts 8 we have the story of the Ethiopian eunuch, This story does not stand alone. Upon it we must bring to bear the promises of God to eunuchs. If we do so we will come to certain conclusions, if we do not we will come to anyone of a thousand conclusions.

In Acts 6:5 we find mentioned one "Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch," How are we to understand his case if we fail to bring to bear upon it all that God had promised to and revealed concerning the "stranger that has joined himself to the Lord?"

In Acts 10 we have the important record of Cornelius. The truth of this passage can never be comprehended until we consider it in the light of what God has revealed concerning the stranger who came out of far country and prayed toward the house of God. Failure to do this has caused some to propound a grace dishonoring teaching that men are converted first and saved afterward.

The writer well knows the utter impossibility of trying to teach the exact truth concerning Nicodemus, the Ethiopian and Cornelius to those who are devoid of any exact knowledge of the Old Testament. Furthermore, it is a fact that many refuse to go out of the passage under consideration, and so finish up wondering why there can be so many contradictory interpretations of a single simple passage.

It should be evident to all who duly consider it that if one student searches the record of the Ethiopian eunuch in the light of what God had promised the eunuchs that take hold of His covenant, and another studies it without even any knowledge of what God has said concerning such a one that these two students will arrive at widely differing conclusions. It is needless to say that the conclusion that is nearer to the mind of God will be the one that came from considering every word that God had spoken. The student who does this will have more than the truth-he will have the whole truth.

In view of all the foregoing statements let us give consideration to the four men already mentioned, examining the record of each one in the light of all that God has revealed concerning such as they. This should help us to a deeper appreciation concerning what God has revealed concerning such as us.

### **Nicodemus-Seed of Abraham**

It is our firm conviction that all the promises of God are of equal value and importance. God has promised, therefore, He will do that which He has promised. It seems to be the attitude of many that the only promises which are of any value are the ones that they can by some means crowd in on. So in beginning consideration of these things it may be well at once to again re-emphasize the character of God's promises.

Let us take for example the familiar passage John 3:16, This promise is to "everyone who believes" and the things promised are deliverance from perishing and eternal life. In this promise all one needs to do to qualify for a place in it is to believe in the Son of God.

Now let us go on to look at other promises.

**"And the Lord appeared unto Abraham, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land." Gen. 12:7.**

**"For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed forever." Gen. 13:15.**

In these passages the promise is to the seed of Abraham, and the thing promised is the land, which Abraham saw. All one needed to do to qualify for a place in these promises was to be one of Abraham's seed. Abraham's seed means Abraham's descendants. Those who were Abraham's seed were born his seed by natural birth, and from the moment that the first breath of air rushed into their lungs they were partakers of a promise that God had made to all who were born Abraham's descendants.

It must be admitted that even if this was all that they had they were born better than one who was not a descendant of Abraham. But a promise of the land was not all that they had, for in **Genesis 17:7-8** we discover still greater blessings guaranteed to the seed of Abraham.

**"And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession and I will be their God."**

In considering these promises we must exercise care lest we make them empty and meaningless. If at the time these words were spoken, God was the God of all men, then these words can mean nothing. It would be the same as if a King would go to one of his subjects and promise him that he would be his King and rule over him. In the end the subject would be receiving nothing that he did not already possess, and he would have nothing more than every other subject of the King.

We have set forth before in these pages (Vol. III, No.1, opening section) how that before this time God had given up all men because all men had given up God. But out of the human race God had taken one man, Abraham, and had unconditionally promised to be a God unto him and to his seed after him. Therefore, the moment a child was born in the Abrahamic line of descent, God, who had promised to be the God of such, was bound by His own promise to be the God of that child, and that child became one of His covenant children.

We will be reminded that all men were born in sin and shaped in iniquity. This we believe, for it is God's word. Yet we know that while this is truth it is not the whole truth, for among all men born in sin some were also born the seed of Abraham, and those thus born were born in a covenant, born one of God's people, born with God as their God. Let us believe both records and not use one passage to cancel another. We cannot sympathize with those students who place two verses in: the ring, match one against the other, and then referee in favor of the verse that will support their contention.

## Present Truth

How different it is today, since the revelation of Paul's gospel. We know that God became our God the moment that by faith we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. From that moment we could say in truth "He is my God," and God acknowledged by the witness of His Spirit to our spirits that we were the children of God.

However, while God became our God when we believed, He became the God of Abraham's seed the moment they were born. Therefore, for men to say that salvation has always been the same is to confuse and contradict the truth that God has given.

Some will insist that the Old Testament saints had to be born again, but it is not true. This places a requirement upon them, which God did not place upon them in His unconditional covenants to them. No man needed to be born again until after Christ appeared. And they were born again the moment they believed that Jesus was the Messiah. (1 John 5:1)

Over and over again we would insist that the seed of Abraham were well born by natural birth. They were born in a covenant, born in covenant relationship to God, born with Jehovah as their God and born as one of the people of God. If this is not true then the promises of God to the seed of Abraham are not true. And if these be not true we may well ask if any of God's promises are true.

From all that the Old Testament saint was by birth he could by exercising faith go on to perfection. God always had a higher and better goal for them than that which they had obtained by birth. To reach this higher goal was to attain perfection. There were always two hopes in that calling. One was connected with the earthly sphere and another was connected with the heavenly sphere. But we must not forget that those who attained perfection began with something and advanced from it. From what they were by birth, they went on to obtain greater blessings by faith.

And now to consider Nicodemus. This man was one of Abraham's seed or descendants by natural birth. He had been born with God as his God. He had been born in a covenant, born with hope, born one of God's children. He had faith in God and faith in the Word of God. Yet unto him the Lord Jesus said: **"Ye must be born again." John 3:3.**

The Word of God, which Nicodemus possessed, gave him the basis of his hope. It told him what he was and what he had because he was one of Abraham's seed. This Word also gave him the hope and promise of the Messiah. And during his lifetime the Messiah appeared and this places a new obligation upon Nicodemus. He must believe that Jesus is the Messiah. If he does he will be born of God (1 John 5:1). If he is not born again he will lose all that he had by natural birth, that is, by being born one of Abraham's seed.

No man could be required to believe that Jesus was the Messiah before He appeared on earth. Thus Nicodemus could go through life with a sure hope as one of Abraham's seed. But there came a crisis in his life when the Messiah appeared. He must believe that Jesus was the Messiah or be destroyed from among the people. **"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people," Acts 3:22-23** See also Deu, 18:15-19.

The new birth was an effect and believing that Jesus was the Messiah was its cause. If the cause was there, the effect had to follow. It was only to Nicodemus that our Lord preached the effect. To all others He presented Himself as the Messiah (John 4:25-26) and the new birth resulted immediately when they believed.

It is not fair to Nicodemus to say that he had already been cut off and therefore had the same status as a lost soul today--without God and without hope. Even if this were true, yet he was a lost sheep of the house of Israel, not a Gentile dog. We have every reason for believing that Nicodemus could say with Paul, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." He represented the nation of Israel, and the nation had not yet been cut off. At Acts 28:28 the whole nation was cut off for failing to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. They had refused to hear the prophet who was like unto Moses.

The message "ye must be born again" fit Nicodemus, but it will not fit a lost soul, without hope and without God. We must not take that which is particular and make it exceedingly general. We are not "doing away" with the new birth but we are insisting that its place in Scripture shall be respected according to the dispensational purposes of God.

The term "new birth" is not radical enough to describe the great work, which God is now doing for lost men. Only the words "new creation" will describe the marvelous transformation that transcendent grace is now working.

Let all who insist that the new birth is God's message for today consider the following. It was not good news but bad news to Nicodemus when he was told he must be born again. Consider further that the words "the Christ" mean "the Messiah" according to God's Word (John 1:41). In **I John 5:1** we read: "**Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,**" Therefore, according to God's word all a man has to do is believe that Jesus is the Messiah to be born of God. Is this sufficient to preach to lost men today? Would it not be better to preach this only to those who had the Messianic hope? We leave it to the reader to answer. The writer would say that his message does not deal with man, or man's needs, or man's efforts, or man's sins. Our message deals with God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who they are and what they have done. We preach Christ.

### **The Ethiopian Eunuch**

We turn now to the record of this interesting character as given in Acts 8. It is a positive fact that this record is always interpreted apart from any consideration of the light given in the Old Testament. The stereotyped messages given on this passage always present Philip as a soul winner and the Ethiopian as a poor lost soul who had gone to Jerusalem to seek God but was returning disappointed. Philip may have been a soul winner, but this eunuch was by no means a lost soul. He was a Gentile but he was a eunuch and because of this he is put in a special class by the Word of God.

In **Isaiah 56:3-6** we read: "**Neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give a place and a name better than of sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.**"

This is the Word of God to the eunuch as given in Isaiah 56. We know that the Ethiopian eunuch had a copy of Isaiah's prophecy for he was reading it when Philip approached him. And he was reading not far from the place where these words are found. In fact, it would be safe to say that Isaiah was his favorite book, and the fifty-sixth chapter his favorite portion.

This eunuch was not like the descendants of Abraham. He was nothing by birth, but he was something by faith and works. He had found a promise in the Word of God to all such as he, and he had acted upon it. Inasmuch as he had performed the dangerous and difficult act of going to Jerusalem to worship, we are confident that he had kept the sabbaths, laid hold of the covenants and chose the things that pleased God. He was not a lost soul for he was saved with all the salvation any man could be saved with before the death of Christ.

However, the same book that gave this eunuch his hope also told him of a suffering Messiah. This was difficult for him to understand, but inasmuch as he had already accepted and embraced all the light that God had given him, God sees to it that he received more light. The Messiah, of which Isaiah spoke, had come and had suffered and it was now the eunuch's duty to believe on Him. If he does not he will lose all that has been promised to him in Isaiah 56. And if he does believe, thereby laying hold of the Messenger of the covenant as well as the covenant.

#### **Nicolas, A Proselyte**

This man was a Gentile. He became a Jew. Therefore he became one of God's people. Then he believed on the Lord Jesus, which made him a part of the believing remnant of God's people.

To understand the proselyte we must remember the people of Israel were not only the nation of God--they were the people of God, they were the Church of God. The Hebrew word **QAHAL** is identical with the Greek word **ECCLESIA**. These words are used interchangeably by the Holy Spirit, and this fact establishes their absolute identity as far as their use in the Word of God is concerned (See Psa. 22:22 and Heb. 2:12). No meaning can be attached to one of these words that cannot be attached to the other. If one means Church, the other means Church. The word church is a poor translation, but it is used here because it is the popular term.

In Neh. 13:2 it is stated that no Moabite could come into the congregation of God forever. The word there for congregation is **QAHAL** and as used by the Spirit of God it means exactly the same as **ECCLESIA** in the New Testament. Therefore Israel was the Church of God from Genesis 12 to the day of Pentecost. On that day the believing remnant was constituted the Church of God. The nation of Israel is called a church by Stephen in Acts 7:38.

After Genesis 12, if a Gentile desired to belong to the Church of God he had to become identified with Israel. To be counted among God's people he had to leave his nation and be counted among the nation of Israel. The promise he acted upon is found in Isaiah.

**"Neither let the son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, the Lord hath utterly separated me from His people. . . Also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the**

**Lord, to be His servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted on mine alter.” Isa. 56:3, 6-7.**

Thus the stranger from the commonwealth of Israel could receive every blessing promised to Israel God's people. Therefore, if this man Nicolas was a true proselyte he was already saved with that salvation promised to the stranger in Isa. 56. But after Christ died he had to believe. If he does not he will be cut off from Israel and so cut off from God. If he rejects the Messiah promised in Isa. 53 he will lose all the blessings he hoped for from obeying Isa. 56. But he received Christ, and so the promise to him was made sure.

Just here it may be well to state that there was no security for the Old Testament saint as an individual. What they had they could lose. If this is not true, then the words "cut off" have no meaning and become an idle threat. Nicodemus could have been cut off from all he possessed as Abraham's seed. The Ethiopian and Nicolas could have lost all they received from laying hold of God's promises. But they made these promises sure by believing in Jesus as the Messiah. His sheep heard His voice and so they could never perish.

### **Cornelius**

Two classes of proselytes are established by the Word of God. God had certain blessings for those who went part of the way. These words will sound strange to many and they can be twisted to make us teach some weird doctrine, but their truth can be demonstrated if Scripture is believed.

In Isa. 56 we have the full blessings promised to a man of the nations who went all the way and became one of God's circumcised people. In 1 Kings 8:41-43 we find the blessings of those who did not go this far. In this passage Solomon, as God's messenger, says:

**"Moreover concerning a stranger that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy names sake; (For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm) when he shall come and pray toward this house; hear thou in thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel" 1 Kings 8:41-43.**

Here we have the case of a man who has heard of God's name, His works and His power. He is not of God's people Israel, but he comes to Jerusalem because of God's name. When he prays he turns his face towards God's house. He cannot enter the temple, neither can he offer a sacrifice for it will not be accepted. But he has assurance that his prayers will be heard.

Such a man has not gone as far as the stranger described in Isaiah 56, but he has gone far enough to receive certain blessings.

In Cornelius we find a man such as this. He feared God, he was a devout man, and when he prayed he prayed to God. Furthermore, he gave much alms to the people of Israel, and this alone guaranteed him certain blessings. See Gen. 12:3.

Cornelius was not the same kind of proselyte as was Nicolas of Antioch. Nicolas had gone all the way, but Cornelius only a part of the way. The Jews called those who went all the way "proselytes of righteousness" and those who did not go so far "proselytes of the gate:'

The message to Cornelius and his subsequent conversion is out of harmony with the truth for today. We do not preach salvation to those who are cleansed or those who have access to God in prayer. All who have access in prayer today are already saved.

In the four men presented we see four distinct classes:

(1) Nicodemus, seed of Abraham, born well the first time but needing to be born again. This was not because something was wrong with his first birth but because the Messiah had appeared and must be received.

(2) In the Ethiopian eunuch we see one who had embraced the promises of God to all such as he.

(3) In Nicolas of Antioch we see a proselyte of righteousness who possessed all that God had promised to the stranger who joined himself to the Lord. When Christ came he went on to possess Christ.

(4) In Cornelius we see the proselyte of the gate. He feared God and had access to God in prayer. This did not save him (Acts 11:14) for he still needed to be saved. Since God's promises are true it does not seem right to class him as one who was without hope and without God. Yet he was not a saved man.

As we have considered these four characters in the light of God's Word, we trust that it has again been impressed upon every reader the absolute necessity of obeying God's commands rightly to divide the Word of Truth, and to make a distinction in the things that differ. No man on earth can be discovered today whose case, condition and character will parallel that of any of these four men.

The command "remember" means "do not forget," or "keep in your memory." Such a command is given only when one is inclined to forget or has forgotten. Thus in **Ephesians 2:11** we read: **"Wherefore remember, that ye being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh, made by hands; that at the time ye were without Christ, being aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."**

We know from the Word of God that we were born without God, without hope, without promises, without covenants, unrelated to God, lost, sinners, ungodly, Gentile dogs. We must find in God's Word an exact plan of salvation that will fit our need, in view of what the Word declares we are. We refuse to try to wear a garment of salvation that was made for a lost sheep, a proselyte or one of Abraham's seed. These will not fit us for they were not made for us. And just where shall we find the revelation of such a plan of salvation? Once again we insist that it is only in the book of Romans that a plan of salvation is found that will fit the need of such a sinner. Even the gospel of John does not reveal such a plan. Some will insist that they can find all they need and all they want in John 3:16. Well, maybe they do not need much or do not want much.

If the X-ray of Romans had not been turned upon us, revealing a need that love alone could not fulfill we would have been perfectly satisfied with God's love and eternal life. But in view of our condition and deep need as revealed in the Roman epistle we must have more than love and eternal life. We need grace acting to bring us justification, reconciliation, and righteousness. We must be placed beyond imputation of sin and we must be beyond condemnation. It is only in Romans that these things are revealed. This may seem radical to many but it is not new or strange.

Many students of the Word have seen this but have hesitated to follow it out to all its conclusions. We quote from one who has written concerning this.

"Paul is the declarer and revealer of the Gospel to us. Take Romans to Philemon out of the Bible and you are bereft of Christian doctrine. For instance, if you were to take Paul's epistles out of the Bible, you cannot find anything about the Church, the Body of Christ, for no other apostle mentions the Body of Christ . . . You cannot find the exact meaning of any of the great doctrines such as Propitiation, Reconciliation, Justification, Identification, Redemption, Sanctification. You cannot find what is perhaps the most tremendous fact of every Christian's life, that of his personal union with the Lord in glory. Paul is the great divinely chosen opener to us of truth for this age." (William R. Newell. Paul vs. Peter. Pages 6 and 7.)

### **A Propitiation**

In stating that no man today stands as Nicodemus, the Ethiopian, Nicolas or Cornelius it will probably be well to give the reasons for this. How could they have a standing that no man can have today? The answer is found in **Romans 3:25**.

**Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood."**

The Greek word used here for propitiation is used of the mercy seat in Heb. 9:5. Concerning the mercy seat God said:

**"And there I will meet with thee." Ex. 25:22.**

The mercy seat was the propitiatory or meeting place. But now Christ Jesus has been set forth to be the propitiatory or meeting place through faith in His blood. Therefore, these words in Romans set aside much that was true before. They set aside every basis, place and plan on or by which God would meet sinful man. Not since the divine pronouncement of 2 Cor. 5:16 has it meant a thing to be the seed of Abraham as far as salvation is concerned, and it has meant nothing since Acts 28:28 as far as position is concerned. No man is born with God as his God today, and no man is born in possession of hope. No man is born in a covenant" and no eunuch can get one thing by keeping the sabbaths. No Gentile can be blessed by becoming an Israelite, and no man can get access in prayer by fearing God and turning his face toward God's house.

Today, the beginning of all relationship to God, the beginning of all blessings, the beginning of hope, the beginning of all answered prayer is when a man by God given faith received the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord. Today, God will meet men only in Christ. He has set Him forth as the meeting place through faith in His blood. God will not meet the sinner at the altar, at the place of prayer, at the front of the church, or in

the inquiry room. God will meet men in Christ. God will not set Him aside and will permit no one else to do so. Your blessings, your hope, your salvation is in Christ. This is the message of Romans. This is our gospel for sinners today.

### THE END

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## ***NEW CREATION AND NEW BIRTH***

There is much teaching today that must be branded as error which is simply the overemphasis of some portion of truth to the complete exclusion of some higher portion. Or it is the emphasis of an earlier revelation with no consideration given to a later revelation, which may have set the first aside.

How well we remember the overemphasis that was placed on the so-called Lord's prayer in former days. If a Christian knew the Lord's prayer and repeated it on certain occasions he was considered to have just about reached perfection as far as knowledge in practice and prayer was concerned. It was said before going to bed at night and after arising in the morning. It was said before meals, at the sick bed, in the death chamber. It seemed to be the most important thing in the Word of God.

When the day came that we knew the Lord as our Savior, and soon began to find higher truth concerning prayer in the Word of God, we hardly knew what to do about the Lord's prayer. We felt a bit conscience stricken at neglecting to say it, yet its endless repetition did not appeal to our new nature. How happy we were when a faithful teacher showed us the dispensational place of the Lord's prayer, and explained to us that its majestic pleas were not in harmony with the truth for God's present administration. We did not feel that we were being robbed, for we already possessed higher truth concerning prayer to take its place.

Even so it is with the new birth. Accurate students of the Word, who discover the exceedingly rich truth concerning the new creation, realize that new birth and new creation are not one and the same. The overemphasis of teaching concerning the new birth has made it almost impossible to even get a hearing concerning the new creation. Those who overemphasize the new birth dismiss the claims of the new creation for recognition by saying that "new creation" is just another name for the "new birth." Thus "new creation" becomes nothing more than a name for something else.

We lose nothing by recognizing the dispensational place of the new birth. To give it its appointed place in Scripture leaves us free to allow the glorious words "new creation" to mean all that they can mean.

When God desired to express the change that took place in the seed of Abraham and the proselytes he used the figure of the new birth. A more radical figure is needed to describe the change that takes place when the ungodly become sons of God. "There is a new creation;" New creation is the figure God uses to describe the change in us. For us to use it will be testimony to all men that God's superabounding grace has done more for us than He did for the sons of Israel. Those who refuse to use it will fail to express in sound words all that God has done for them.

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## ***TRUTH AND EXPERIENCE***

It may be helpful to many readers if certain experiences are recounted that usually come to those who find and embrace the truth. The message of this article comes not only from my own experience. for much of it is based upon careful observation of the experience of others.

There has been much talk about counting the cost in Christian life and experience, but at no point is counting the cost as important as doing it in relationship to embracing and propagating the truth. When God called Paul He showed him great things he must suffer for the sake of His name. I doubt if we will ever suffer like Paul, but at least it will be well to know what happens to those who embrace the truth.

**In the life and experiences of many believers there has been that time when they rested in the perfect assurance that, in general, they possessed and believed the truth on every major Biblical subject (such as):** That Israel fell at the cross, that the Church began on the day of Pentecost, that the book of Acts is the early history of the Church, that the present dispensation began at the Cross, that water baptism is an ordinance for the present time, that a service in which bread and wine were served as memorials to the Lord, are some of the views which were firmly held, believed and propagated.

From time to time our belief in these things were assailed by men of different schools of thought, and again, our beliefs in these things created many problems and questions and left many New Testament passages unaccounted for. Yet if a moment of doubt in the truth of these things ever came, our faith in their correctness could be immediately bolstered by such excellent and encouraging helps as "all Bible teachers are agreed," or "the Church has always believed this," or "it is the uniform opinion of devout Christian scholarship that these things are true. "

Our assurance was strengthened further by the fact that we were generally considered orthodox. Our beliefs were supported by many proof texts, all of which had generally been interpreted for centuries as teaching these things. True it was that sometimes these proof texts taught the very opposite, but inasmuch as they had always been so interpreted so as to teach our views they gave us marvelous support. Over and above all this our faith was strengthened and our assurance increased by one thousand and one human helps such as the fact that our views were taught by all the leading Bible Institutes, or that they were proclaimed by all leading fundamentalists. Furthermore, at any time we could select and attend a Conference where in a happy atmosphere, our views were presented and defended and nothing contradictory to them was ever permitted to be spoken. And so I, like so many believers, went on my happy way with calm assurance that nothing could disturb. There was no exercise of mind and heart concerning the truth for there was complete assurance that truth was possessed.

I know very well how firmly I believed and held these views before I entered the Bible Institute. And a certain Bible Institute was chosen because it would teach me exactly the things, which I already believed and held to be final truth. Thus my beliefs, which were already well established, were strengthened yet further as they were reaffirmed to me by my carefully selected teachers.

It is a fact that some believers become students and others never become students. My most earnest and oft repeated prayer was that God would make me a student of His Word. This prayer God saw fit to answer, even as He has answered it for a multitude of others who have made the same request. And certainly it cannot be accounted strange if after years of study some of us do not believe just as we did before the study began.

Constant handling, constant study and constant meditation of the Word of God is sure to bring familiarity with its message even if the meaning is not fully understood. Growing familiarity with the Word of God has caused many believers to find that they can no longer hold certain beliefs, which they once regarded as positive truth, which was not even to be questioned. For example, the time came in my experience when it was no longer possible for me to believe that Israel fell and was set aside at the Cross, unless it were possible for me to erase from my memory all that I had learned from studying and teaching the book of Acts. And it seems that I could as easily forget the face of my mother as I could forget the words and messages of that book. If I had never studied, I would have never doubted. But I had studied, and I could no longer believe that Israel fell at the Cross.

In like manner, many believers, as a result of their personal studies, have been filled with honest and unremovable doubts concerning many things which they formerly believed such as--Israel falling at the Cross, or that the Church began at Pentecost, or that water baptism is for this age.

There is a large group of influential Christian men who feel that, because of its divisive character, that it would be better if all baptism were eliminated. They believe that it would make for Christian unity and fellowship and would give great impetus and strength to the sadly divided fundamentalist movement. For all practical purposes they have eliminated it and so never speak or teach upon the subject. In fact, thousands of them are willing to go along on a "no water" movement and many of them gave definite support to one brother who was not afraid to give a strong witness against water baptism in this dispensation. But, when they discovered that its removal would cause more strife and divisions than baptism itself, they did an about face, became strong contenders for the necessity of baptism, and set themselves solid once more with all who regard ordinances by condemning and disfellowshipping all who raised their voices against it.

But our doubts about baptism came not from a desire to remove a controversial and divisive ordinance, for they came from positive convictions that water baptism was not for this dispensation, according to the Word of God.

Those who are cast upon a sea of doubt concerning their former beliefs are sure to begin to look for some way out. It was impossible to find consolation and assurance any longer by telling ourselves that these things were generally believed and taught. The Word of God had shaken us, and a sense of stability could no longer be secured by leaning on some carnal support. Many of us attended our favorite Bible Conferences, heard our old beliefs restated and defended, but this only increased our doubts as we knew that problems were being ignored, difficulties ridiculed and honest questions were branded as being attacks against the faith once and for all delivered to the saints.

So, we were shut up entirely to the Word of God. As study continued and help was sought we discovered a position which seemed to be tenable, solid, satisfactory and as far

as we could judge was Scriptural. But the hardest task was and always will be that of reaching the new position. For between the old position where positive assurance prevailed, and the new position where positive assurance comes again, the believer cannot find a solid place to rest his foot. He feels that he has abandoned a position that was shaky only to find his feet upon quicksand. Things begin to tumble and crash about him, which he never intended should be disturbed. At first only his beliefs were disturbed, but as soon as he started for his new position, his associations, his fellowships, and his service are all disturbed and shaken. Truth is his desire, but he never realized what it would cost him.

When this happens the first thought of many is to get back to the old position and rebuild the things that have been torn down. They long again for its former security and positive assurance, they hope again to believe what a multitude believes, to again be able to support their faith and erase their doubts by saying- "Well, dear Dr. "Soandso" believes it, and if he believes it, it is good enough for me."

Many times I was tempted during that transition period to turn back. I watched many others as they turned back. My mind even now dwells upon my fellow ministers who turned back and tried to take up where they left off. But I am convinced that even though many believers seemingly got back to their friends, their fellowships and their favorite teachers, yet I know that they never have and never will get back to a place of positive assurance in the position, which the Word of God caused them to doubt. They are back in their old associations and are practicing accordingly, but their desire for research and discovery in the Word of God is gone. They may serve their bread and wine or partake of it, but I know they will never erase the eternal question mark, which was cast upon that practice by their studies in the Word of God. Many are drowning their convictions in a whirl of ceaseless activity and are justifying their lack of desire for Bible research and discovery by claiming that now their only interest is in the salvation of souls.

Plain words will always seem to be harsh words, and I have spoken my thoughts plainly. Yet I speak in love, for I desire to say these words to all *who* saw the truth and tried to embrace it, but from honest fear went back. I know you are not satisfied. You cannot be happy, and you are not going to be as long as you stop short of that truth that you have seen. Will you not try again? Will you not once more give due consideration to those things that so many are convinced are the truth, and which you once felt to be the truth? You tasted the truth, you found it was good, and you tried to walk in it. Will you not resume your studies and try again? It may be that the pace some of us set was too fast. Maybe you were overdriven by the zeal of some. Many of you who labored as ministers earnestly desired to carry all your people with you. For this you are to be commended.

Permit me to say in closing that I stand ready at any time to enter into the heartiest fellowship with any man who labors for the recovery of truth. This fellowship need not be based upon exact doctrinal agreement.

At the present time many believers are enjoying the most positive assurance with nothing to support it but the Word of God. We can appeal to nothing but the Word in support of our position. We cannot point to the great men who believe it. We cannot name great institutions that embrace it. But we have assurance that is born of the Word of God. Nothing can ever shake it. THE END

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## THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

The devotion, appreciation and sympathy of the readers of THE WORD OF TRUTH have been constant sources of encouragement to the Editor. The sacrifices which they have made for this witness creates in us a continual desire to make it a better and fuller witness to the truth. For more than a year, we have realized that it was impossible to properly write and care for the magazine and also continue all other work, which we have been doing. For many months we have been burdened because of the realization that the magazine is not properly cared for and the knowledge that we are neglecting the most important and far-reaching part of our ministry.

In view of the importance of this form of testimony and the sacrifices made by our friends for it we have determined to let go of part of our public ministry and devote the time to the printed page ministry. On the first of November we will give up our classes in Chicago and Rockford, Illinois. Most of our readers know that the work in these two classes has required us to travel over 550 miles every week and to be absent from home the greater part of three days. Furthermore, it seemed after these three intensive days that study and writing was impossible until we had rested for a day. By surrendering these classes we can add at least three working days to our week at home and be more efficient on remaining days. *It* will also make it possible for us to help other Centers, as we have been forced to decline their invitations again and again. It will also give us opportunity to produce, in the near future a series of pamphlets, which are under consideration. It has been exceedingly difficult for us to decide to give up our labors among the beloved friends in Chicago and Rockford whom we have had the joy of teaching once each week for almost five years. We would pay tribute to their love and devotion to the truth and to the one who labored to teach them the truth. From time to time in the future we expect to be among them for special Conferences.

In view of these changes we believe that we can promise all our friends a better and more helpful ministry than ever before. We will give the time to it if our readers will provide the material needs for a witness of this nature. We are giving up a work, which has provided us with a portion of our income in order to devote the time to that which has been a labor of love. We trust our readers will realize this and rally to our witness with sufficient material support to make this ministry doubly effective for His glory.

\*\*\*\* We were in Buffalo for one service while on our vacation and this visit brought about the plans for a Conference. Mr. Henry Renner of 575 Minnesota Avenue is making the arrangements and any further information can be secured by calling him.

This will be our third Conference in Philadelphia, and we expect to have the pleasure of greeting our old friends and making new ones. Friends desiring further information may call Mr. William Hogan at Reading Railway Y. M. C. A.

Once again we are privileged to be with our faithful friend, Ed. Schauschneider at the First Ward Mission in West Allis, Wisconsin. The three messages given there will be "What is the Soul?," "Sheol and Hades" and "What is Death?"

**End, Vol. III, No. 2**

