

# NT

A pattern for life in God's House

Fiscal fiascos and the satanic solution  
Assisted reproductive technologies  
Self-esteem

Upside down values: pure in heart

Issue 2 2012

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## NT Needed Truth

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Communications to the editors:

@ [editors@neededtruth.info](mailto:editors@neededtruth.info)

✉ c/o Robert Fisher, 258 West Main Street, Whitburn, West Lothian, EH47 0QW Scotland

☎ +44 (0)1501 743811

✉ or Martin Jones, 46 Herne Hill, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M9A 2X1

Editorial production team: Robert Fisher, Peter Hickling, Geoff Hydon, Brian Johnston, Martin Jones

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## From the Editors' desk

### Self control

In 1888 the first issue of this magazine was published, under its full title of *Needed Truth*, saying that 'one of the most important and most needed lines of truth that have been given by revelation of God ... remains almost without exponent in the press ...' That was 'teaching as to "that house of God which is (an) assembly of the living God, pillar and ground of the truth"'<sup>1</sup> It sought to set that truth out, and we have not deviated from that purpose 124 years later. Yet they recognised, as we do, that 'There is a tendency in most of us to exalt the truth that has been delivered to us at the expense of other truth. On the other hand, when we see others unduly exalting one truth, we are in danger of making little of it by way of restoring the balance. In this way things which are both of God are made to destroy one another, instead of helping each other ...'<sup>2</sup> We seek, as they did, to maintain a balance, so you will find in these pages articles which deal with many aspects of a Christian's life and service. It is still necessary to defend *the faith once for all delivered to the saints*<sup>3</sup> in its entirety, although we have to recognise that the apostles themselves did not place equal stress on every item in their preaching. Much that was said and written, especially in the pastoral letters, related to standards of Christian behaviour.

Yet we again quote the 1888 Editors' introduction: 'The supreme test of all we hold, or speak, or do, is its relationship to Christ. Does it correspond to what He is, and with the place to which the Father has exalted Him?'<sup>4</sup> That is why our two major series this year are about the person, nature and offices of Christ; everything else that we have and are and ought to be flows from Him. This is not incompatible with what some may think of as the dry ecclesiology of teaching about the House of God; on the contrary, desire to understand and do God's will flows from an acknowledgement of Christ's Lordship. If He is Lord, can we not do the things that He says? Some in the past have sought to regard only the recorded words of Jesus in the Gospels as the expression of His will, thinking of the Pauline letters as a later elaboration of Christian teaching. But this is not so; the first writings in the New Testament corpus were Paul's epistles, and they included what he had *received from the Lord*.<sup>5</sup> The Lord Himself appeared to the apostles after His resurrection, and taught them during forty days; what they learned then became *the apostles' teaching*,<sup>6</sup> which they spread to all the disciples. It is our responsibility to follow that teaching, out of love to the Lord Himself.



References: (1) *Needed Truth* Vol. 1 p.2 (2) *Ibid.* p.6 (3) Jude 3 (4) *Ibid.* p.7 (5) 1 Cor. 11:23; 15:3 (6) Acts 2:42



# The first kiss

Gilbert Grierson, Knocknacloy, N.Ireland

## The kiss of the lover

To be in love defies scientific explanation. But romantic love (Greek: *eros*) is something very real. Sometimes it is love at first sight; at other times it develops slowly. However it arises, love is a living thing and is meant to grow, mature and develop. Young lovers may start by holding hands, before the poignant moment when the first kiss is exchanged. What tenderness, over-flowing of affection and oneness of desire is being expressed and exchanged! You can only really know what being in love feels like if you have been in love yourself – like the writer of the ‘Song of Songs’:

*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!*

*For your love is better than wine ...<sup>1</sup>*

It is God who has created the desire for two lovers to kiss each other. Our society is even degrading the romantic kiss, making it part of our throw-away culture where casual relationships with routine kissing are no more than a desire for personal gratification. But for the one who waits for true love, then the kiss has special significance – a bond that two hearts are united in love; a precursor of so many more physical expressions of love, ordained of God, that will naturally follow in time, as that love is consummated within the divinely created framework of marriage. Surely this is something worth waiting for.

## The reconciling kiss

Psalm 2:12 says:

*Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*

This unusual verse reminds us that sinners need to be reconciled to God through His Son, otherwise they will experience His wrath against sin and suffer the judgement that their sins deserve. This reconciliation is only made possible because *Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.*<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the coming to Jesus in faith is seen, symbolically, as kissing Him, because it indicates a right relationship has been established with God on a personal level. It is a kiss bringing peace. *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*<sup>3</sup>

## The holy kiss

Why did the first Christians greet each other with a holy kiss, probably on the cheek?<sup>4</sup> Was it a sign that the peace and love that had been established between God in heaven and men on earth through the work of the Son was now also being evidenced between followers of Christ on earth? A kiss, something personal, something pure,



something that spoke of reconciliation, love and unity, found its expression within the constitution and practices of a new people of God founded upon new covenant truths, expressing the inexpressible and abiding love of God.

## The kiss of betrayal

I wonder when was the first time Judas kissed Jesus? In the Garden of Gethsemane it was a kiss indicating treachery in Judas’ heart, for he was betraying his Lord and Master.<sup>5</sup> How more corrupt could the meaning of a kiss have become than when it was used as a sign that Jesus was the one whom the armed guards were to arrest and lead away to suffer and die! God was graciously allowing something that was ordained for good (a kiss) to be used by evil to bring about His purposes of love towards those who, by nature, were His enemies.

## Conclusion

While some may experience true romantic love on earth, earthly and transient, emotional experiences will be far exceeded by the spiritual realities of heaven when we will be with the One who created human emotions and who is Himself love in all its fullness and completeness. Let us treasure in our hearts that first kiss with the One who loved us and gave Himself for us that we may be for ever with Him, close to His heart.

‘Loved with everlasting love,  
Led by grace that love to know;  
Spirit, breathing from above,  
Thou hast taught me it is so.  
Oh, this full and perfect peace!  
Oh, this transport all divine!  
In a love which cannot cease,  
I am His, and He is mine.’<sup>6</sup>

References: (1) Song of Songs 1:2 (2) 1 Pet. 3:18 (3) Rom. 5:1 (4) 1 Cor. 16:20 (5) Luke 22:48 (6) G.W. Robinson

Bible quotations from ESV





# The sanctity of Christ's priesthood

John Terrell, Manchester, England

The subject of the sanctity of the Priesthood of the Lord Jesus is among the most precious and important of all aspects of His character and work. This is not least because it is eternal in its nature. His redemptive work on the cross is past and gloriously completed; His high priestly service is for ever. It is almost as though everything in His experience, reaching into past eternity and culminating in His resurrection, has been preparation for an unending heavenly role in which His redeemed people will share. Amazing as the truth is that then ... *His servants shall serve Him*,<sup>1</sup> it is still more amazing that He will eternally continue a priestly service for us, though its precise nature and outworking is not revealed.

As we shall see, His function as High Priest on our behalf today is wonderful and often inadequately appreciated by us. Then, when knowing *just as I also am known*,<sup>2</sup> we can only imagine in eager anticipation, His priestly function in the heavenly realm in eternity.

The rite of sanctification to priestly service begins in Scripture with the sanctification – setting apart for holy office – of Aaron and his sons. *You shall ... consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest*.<sup>3</sup> This was a service to God and to His people Israel, and certain associated principles are referred to in Hebrews 5:1-4. There we read that the high priests must be of human birth, representing men to God and God to men. They are called and appointed by God, we are told, to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. Verse 5 of this chapter reminds us that the Lord Jesus did not glorify Himself to be made a high priest; His office, too, was established by divine appointment. *You are my Son; You are a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek*. The comparisons between the Aaronic priesthood and that of Christ are themselves instructive both as to appointment and function, but the contrasts are even greater, as we shall see.

The process of setting apart, or sanctifying, for priestly service of the family of Aaron started inevitably with sinful, failing men. Hence their need to offer sacrifices for their own sins before they could stand between men and God and offer on behalf of others. Their sanctification was essentially ritual and ceremonial in nature, though personal holiness was also required. When we come to think of the preparation for, and sanctification of, the Lord Jesus as our High Priest in New Covenant context, we are impressed with the vastness of the superiority of the Lord's high office. The anticipation of His priestly office on behalf of a redeemed people today goes back into eternity.

Then we read in John 10:36 of the Lord Jesus as *Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world*. This

sanctification was for the whole work of salvation, not only in the Lord's earthly ministry in *the days of His flesh*; not only in the accomplishment of His suffering and His ultimate atoning death on the cross; but also in all that flowed to God's glory and our eternal joy in His triumphant resurrection. Hebrews 5:5-10 fills this truth out for us, showing that the proclamation of His eternal Melchizedek-like priesthood has a special association with resurrection, expressing perfect divine satisfaction in the work of eternal salvation. And we read of the Lord *learning obedience by the things which He suffered*. The unique priestly ministry of Melchizedek as mentioned in Genesis 14 is something which could be further considered with profit in relation to the Lord Jesus (see Hebrews 7), but space does not permit this now. Its eternal dimension is, however, an outstanding feature as we have seen.

Now temptation was a most important element of the Lord's suffering as recounted in Luke chapter 4. There we read that He was *filled with the Holy Spirit and led by the Spirit*, having already been anointed by the Spirit in His baptism at the Jordan. Having emerged triumphant from the wilderness temptation, He *returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee*.<sup>4</sup> From all of this we can see the work of the Holy Spirit in the Lord's sanctification and preparation for High Priestly work. In Hebrews 4:14-16 we are reminded very preciousely that the One who stands for us before the throne of grace enables us to come there *with boldness* in search of divine mercy and grace. And sometimes we need the very special help of the Holy Spirit in our prayers.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, since our study has its main focus on the sanctity and sanctification of our great High Priest, we must note also that He sanctified Himself.<sup>6</sup> The wonderful prayer of John 17 has often been referred to as the Lord's high priestly prayer. Its content, which expresses concern for *those whom You have given Me*, and again, for *those who will believe in Me through their word*,<sup>7</sup> justifies the description of this prayer as high priestly though the Lord only entered on that lofty role in resurrection glory.<sup>8</sup>

Thus we see the total commitment of the Godhead to this glorious office of high priest extending forward for our endless blessing into the great eternal 'forever'.

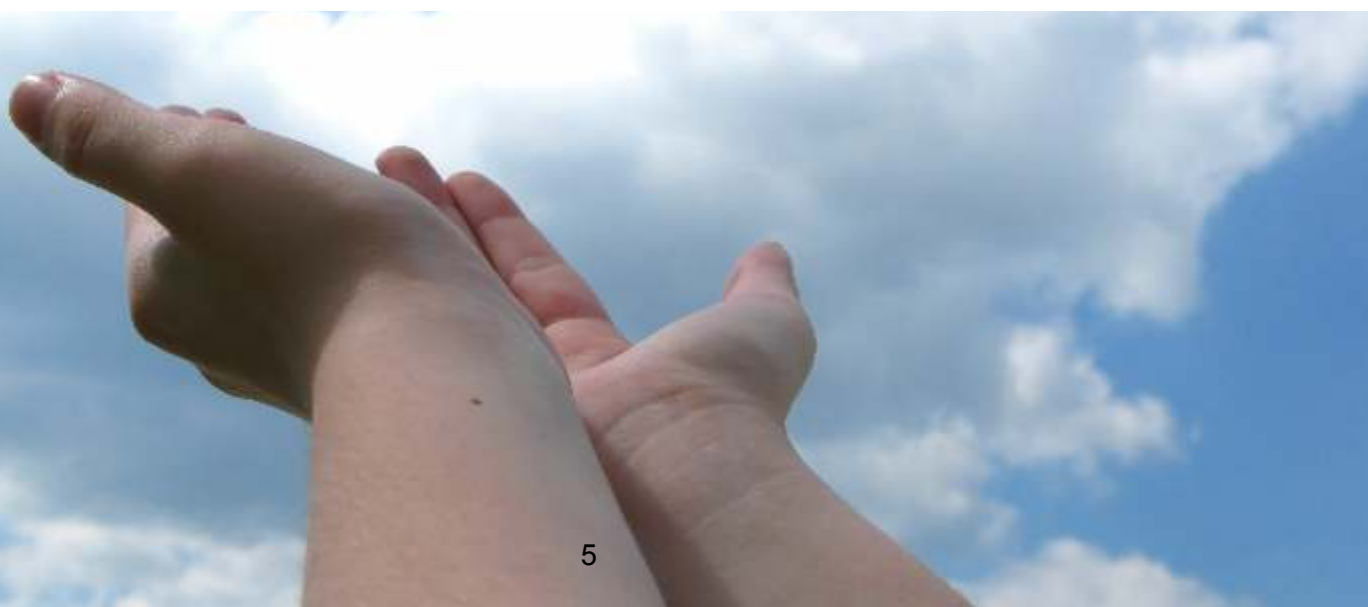
Turning to the content of the Lord's high priestly service for His people today, we remind ourselves of the role as a dual one; representing men to God and God to men. With regard to the former we have already made reference to Hebrews 4:14-16 and reflected briefly on the wonder of a divine High Priest who can *sympathize with our weaknesses* and was *tempted as we are, yet without sin*. *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace*. To Him and through Him we come with all that expresses our need for mercy and grace. But we do not only bring our petitions and prayers through Him and receive that blessed outflow of mercy, grace and forgiveness; we also place into the hands of our High Priest our adoration, thanksgiving and worship such that He offers these as gifts. Nor does He, like the priests of Israel, have to offer sacrifices for sins. Israel's priests were erring men, while our High Priest is the glorious sin-bearer of Calvary whose hands are wholly taken up with offering gifts. The only sacrifice He offers is our sacrifice of praise, because in respect to sins He has already offered one sacrifice for ever.<sup>9</sup>

In representing God to us our great Priest is supremely qualified through His perfect humanity, in all its purity, to graciously mediate the mercy and grace of God; the joy and assurance of His own divine presence as we feed on Him in the Word and in communion. Paul assures the Ephesian disciples that we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.<sup>10</sup> Is not the heavenly throne of grace one of those heavenly places?

We are not staying now to write of the very special access of the people of God in collective worship into the holies<sup>11</sup> where also the Great Priest over the house of God mediates and serves our privileged presence in collective worship in heaven. Of this more will be written in a subsequent article in this series.

References: (1) Rev. 22:3 (2) 1 Cor. 13:12 (3) Ex. 40:13 (4) Luke 4:14 (5) Rom. 8:26 (6) John 17:19 (7) John 17:9,20 (8) Heb. 8:4 (9) Heb. 10:12 (10) Eph. 1:3 (11) Heb. 10:19-25

Bible quotations from NKJV





# Christ, the Messiah

## The exact imprint of God's nature

Karl Smith, Kirkintilloch, Scotland

Last time we looked at the description of the Lord Jesus in Hebrews 1:3 as *the radiance of the glory of God*. This phrase focuses on how the Lord Jesus shines out one particular aspect of God: His 'glory'. Now we move on to how the Lord Jesus expresses all of God's innermost being: His 'nature'.

*He is ... the exact imprint of his nature*, the writer to the Hebrews continues in the English Standard Version. The Revised version chooses the word 'substance' instead of 'nature'. The Greek word both are trying to translate is *hypostasis*. This was a word that had been used four hundred years or so beforehand by Plato and other Greek philosophers to mean the real nature of something, underlying its appearance.

Readers familiar with C.S. Lewis's Narnia series will remember the description of heaven that appears at the end of the final book in the series, *The Last Battle*. In his fictitious universe, Lewis imagines heaven to be a larger and perfected version of the places they have loved throughout their lives. Perhaps fancifully, the book explains that the England the characters had lived in before their death and the Narnia known by those who had lived there were merely shadow lands, which give physical expression to the real England and the real Narnia that exist as part of the real world above. 'The reason why we loved the old Narnia is that it sometimes looks a little like this', a unicorn rapturously explains to the children. Their friend the Professor replies, "It's all in Plato, all in Plato: bless me, what *do* they teach them at these schools!"

Plato, in his *Republic*, compared the world to a cave whose inhabitants see only distorted shadows, thrown on the roof by a crackling fire, of what is really there in the larger world outside. The external material things we can see are bound to be illusionary in some way in Plato's thought, just like the shadows in the cave. Underlying each one, however, is an inner nature, its substance, its



reality. One of the words Plato uses for this is its *hypostasis*, the same word translated 'nature' or 'substance' in Hebrews 1:3.

The nature or substance of something, then, is no woolly theory about it, but something solid you could rely on if only you could grasp it. The word literally means 'underneath standing' and this signals how foundational it is. In fact, by the time of the New Testament, the Greek word had come to mean an absolute confidence in the thing under discussion and it is used in this way later on in Hebrews e.g. *Now faith is the assurance* [this time the Authorised Version *does* translate this word as 'substance'] *of things hoped for*.<sup>1</sup> But how can we with our tiny finite minds ever hope to grasp the nature of God firmly enough to have this kind of confidence in Him?

He wanted to make His invisible nature visible to us. He sent us more than a flickering shadow. In fact, He sent His Son who is *the exact imprint of his nature*. The New International Version (NIV) translates this word as *the exact representation of His being*. Other scriptures such as 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15 talk about the Lord Jesus as *the image of God* and *the image of the*





*invisible God*. In these verses the Holy Spirit chooses the word *eikon*, which we still use in English as ‘icon’. This emphasises the visual element of what is seen, something you can look at. Hebrews 1:3 uses a deeper word, which is found only once in our Bibles, *charakter*. This word, by contrast, emphasises the process by which the image is made. It was a symbol created by an engraving tool on something like a coin. Or perhaps a seal on a ring was pressed in hot wax. When it cooled down, the image left in it would show exactly what was on the seal. We still use this word in a similar way. In printing, a character such as a letter or number on the page reflects exactly what is on the head of the typewriter or on the printing press. To take yet another example, by looking at the imprint in the snow, you can see exactly the pattern of the boot that has walked in it.

The Lord Jesus is not a rough approximation, a vague idea of what God is like. He is not a shadow of God’s nature, as in Plato’s cave. Shadows lengthen out at twilight and shrink in towards mid-day. They dance and move in bizarre ways as the fire crackles. He is not someone from whom we can piece together a good guess as to God’s nature.

The unfathomable nature of God is represented **exactly** in His Son, *the exact imprint of his nature*. This happens to an extent in human families. We carry genetic information in our DNA that often causes us to resemble our parents, whether in looks or character. How often have you heard someone say, “So and so is the image of his father”? No-one looks precisely identical to his father, however. We all have features of our own to add to the mix. The Lord Jesus is the express image of His Father’s substance with nothing added into the mix from elsewhere. Of all the ‘many ways’ God had spoken through the prophets mentioned in Hebrews 1, none had been so precise an expression of His being as this expression *in these last days when he has spoken to us by his Son*.<sup>2</sup> This, however, is not to downplay the Old Testament Scriptures. They form part of the divine Word of God as the main means by which we learn about who God is today. As our inner thoughts need words to communicate them to others, so the Bible communicates the truth of God to us perfectly and directly. Because of the limitations of our human languages and our finite minds, however, God sent His Son to communicate, not only His truth, but His whole nature. Many of those who

saw Him would not be able to read the Scriptures, although they could hear them read aloud. Nevertheless, the Lord Jesus was a walking, talking Bible to them in His actions and personality as much as in His teaching. It is no accident that the Lord Jesus is also called ‘The Word’.<sup>3</sup>

Looking at the Lord Jesus is precisely equivalent to looking at God. That’s why He could tell Philip, “*Whoever has seen me has seen the Father*”.<sup>4</sup> I suspect that the angels in heaven cannot directly see or even understand the nature of God, but perhaps even there He delights in revealing it through His Son. Certainly, however, God was seen through His Son on earth. Those who saw Him act saw the way God acts: “*the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.*”<sup>5</sup> He gave the example of raising the dead, something only God could do.<sup>6</sup> Soon Jairus’s daughter and Lazarus would be able to testify that the Son was the image of the Father in this respect, making God’s power to raise the dead spectacularly visible. We look forward to the day when He will raise our loved ones who have died in Christ – and then ourselves – to enjoy eternal life in new bodies. Equally they could be confident that the teaching they heard from Him was not different by a single syllable from what God Himself wanted to teach them: “*I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.*”<sup>7</sup>

Some aspects of God’s nature as expressed in Christ shocked enemy and disciple alike, such as the profound holiness that extended beyond external things into the hidden motives – and also the consuming desire to extend forgiveness to even the most unpalatable of people. “*Who can forgive sins but God alone?*” asked the scribes, not realising that God’s exact imprint was among them.<sup>8</sup> Their concept of God’s nature was too small. Human philosophy cannot comprehend its fullness in words and concepts, so God sent His Son for us to see it expressed in a person, *For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily*.<sup>9</sup>

References: (1) Heb. 11:1 (2) Heb.1:1-2 (3) John 1:1-14 (4) John 14:9 (5) John 5:19 (6) John 5:21 (7) John 8:28 (8) Mark 2:7 (9) Col. 2:9

Bible quotations from ESV





# Self-esteem

Paul Merchant, Musselburgh, Scotland

A large part of life is a kind of endless one-to-one conversation with ourselves. When we are thinking, it's like talking to ourselves, but inside our heads. And in the ups and downs of everyday life, good days and bad days, our thinking gets into repetitive ways of reacting to what happens to us. We use so much intuition and instant interpretation as we react and respond. And when things go wrong that have an impact on us, we often react with thoughts such as, "I never get it right," "I'm not good enough," "Nobody listens to me," "I'm just too tired today," "Oops, failed again," or "Now what will they think of me?"

These instant, guilty thoughts often reveal our low self-esteem and, in Christian service, lay on us a burden of failure and of having to earn God's love, to deserve it by working at being successful in His work. How we fail to rest and enjoy the unqualified acceptance, undeserved favour and enduring, abundant love of our God and Saviour!

How do people value themselves by the standards of secular Western society? There are at least three altars at which this society worships, dedicated to the idols of our age – Wealth, Intelligence and Physical Beauty. Many worship these idols by how they use their time, energy, finances and in how they conduct their relationships. Their self-esteem rests precariously on their own assessment of how they satisfy these gods.

But these transient, superficial values are not for the Christian. The Christian sees through and beyond and above these hollow gods. The life of Christ displays the true value of people to Himself and to His God.

Jesus' life was full of encounters with people whose minds and hearts He moved from rejection to acceptance, from feeling excluded to being included.

The woman at the well was presumably burdened by a life of sin and failure, yet Christ chose to share with her profound truths about worship. This excluded woman with low self-esteem was transformed into the included woman who brought a crowd to see Jesus, "*Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?*" *They came out of the town and made their way toward him.*<sup>1</sup>

Mary brought her expensive ointment to Jesus and she was scorned by the men in Simon's house, but Jesus lifted Mary's damaged self-esteem and publicly applauded her faith, "*When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial.*"<sup>2</sup>

In the Lord's teaching, the prodigal son returned home and his first words to his Father were, "*Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer*



*worthy to be called your son.*" But the father's reaction was jubilant talk of the best robe, ring, new sandals, a feast and the fattened calf!<sup>3</sup>

At another banquet prepared for many guests who then gave feeble excuses, the people who were given a warm welcome were, in the end, those who were the lowest in that society – "*Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.*"<sup>4</sup> How they enjoyed themselves that day, responding to the largesse of their generous host!

This is the foundation of the Christian's self-esteem – how God values us. God loved us, chose us, values us and has plans for us!

Not our love, but His – *not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*<sup>5</sup>

Not our spirit, but His Spirit, *he has given us of his Spirit.*<sup>6</sup>

Not our life, but His, *Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.*<sup>7</sup>

Our lives do not rely on the daily temperature of our fragile, wavering self-esteem, but on God and our value to Him, *And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.*<sup>8</sup>

References: (1) John 4:29-30 (2) Mat. 26:12 (3) Luke 15:21-23 (4) Luke 14:21 (5) 1 John 4:10 (6) 1 John 4:13 (7) Eph. 5:2 (8) 1 John 4:16

Bible quotations from NIV



## Upside down values

# Those who are pure in heart

Andrew Dorricott, Hamilton, Canada

How can we see God when the Bible is clear that no one has seen God at any time?<sup>1</sup> The Bible is also clear about our sinful nature,<sup>2</sup> so how is it possible for us to be pure?

While purity speaks of being clean, it is also a word meaning ‘free from extraneous matter; simple or homogenous’.

God knows our heart. In the days of Noah, God saw that people’s hearts were continually evil.<sup>3</sup> David cried out to the Lord, in the grieving of his sin, for God to purify his heart.<sup>4</sup> And in John’s Gospel it says that Jesus knew the hearts of everyone.<sup>5</sup> It is at the centre of His plan to change our hearts and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness. Our heart speaks of the innermost driving force of what we do and say,<sup>6</sup> and God is ultimately concerned with the condition of it – not only to the point of salvation, however.


Many Christians, and many non-Christians too, for that matter, want to see God at work; perhaps in the midst of a trial, or when facing a big decision, or when praying on someone’s behalf. It can be the case where we feel or see very little from God, and that can be a stumbling block in our faith journey. The issues of life are not always an “all’s well that ends well” experience, and the perceived lack of action by God can be difficult to understand and accept. When we seek God’s help, or His direction, are we single-minded in our heart towards God, or do we feel as though praying to God is just one of many steps to get the answer? Are we so distracted by other situations, people or ‘idols’ around us that we are unable to see God at work?

Using a specific trial or decision might not be enough to explain this verse, so let’s take the principle of a pure heart in the face of an issue and expand it to our daily lives. In a self-assessment of the things you hold dear in

your life, can you say that your heart is ‘free from extraneous matter’ in your devotion and commitment to God? This really is the heart of the verse: to live a life free from idols (meaning *anything* that distracts our devotion away from God). It is a very hard thing to achieve, but perhaps more troubling is that it’s very easy to justify not doing so. For fear of reaction or offence, we can compartmentalise our lives into family, work/school, friends, and ourselves as individuals. We can be slightly different people in these different environments, adapting to the social norms or conventions so that we fit in, or succeed, by the world’s definition. We justify it by calling it ‘balance’. This seems contrary to Romans 12.<sup>7</sup>

If we are able to live our life with a heart that is single-minded, free from extraneous matter, pure in devotion to God, we will see Him more and more at work in our lives and the lives of those around us. We will be more in tune with His Word and His will. Not only will we better see His direction when we ask, but we will see His direction even before we ask. Seeing God in our lives is as much about seeing and recognising the effect of God in all situations, big and small, as it is seeing Him face to face in that future day. Being pure in heart is not strictly a matter of being clean, but being undivided in our devotion in the depth of our heart toward God. A truly undivided heart will establish, maintain and grow our relationship with God to unknown heights. Set aside all the reasoning and justification for those things that distract you from God and conform you to the world, and God will be visible in mighty ways!

References: (1) Ex. 33:20; John 1:18; 6:46; 1 John 4:12 (2) Rom. 3:23; 1 John 1:8 (3) Gen. 6:5 (4) Ps. 51:10 (5) John 2:24, *also* Mat. 9:4 (6) Mat. 12:34 (7) Rom. 12:2



*“Blessed are the  
pure in heart, for  
they shall see  
God.”* Mat. 5:8

## Ethical dilemmas

# Assisted reproductive technologies

Dr. John Robinson, Vancouver, Canada

Ethics discussions often lead to intense and unexpected emotional reactions, especially when the topic is reproduction.

‘Barren’ is a biblical word. Times change and so does the language. Today we speak of ‘infertility’. It is a softer way to describe a sad and stressful problem for many married couples. Although God commanded both Adam and Eve, and later Noah, to be *fruitful and multiply*<sup>1</sup> this was appropriate in the context of God’s new creation. A child is not something owed to one, but a marvellous gift from God.<sup>2</sup>

Psalm 139 talks about God’s infinite care over our creation, while Romans 8:22 refers to the ‘groaning’ of creation. We spend our lives trying to reconcile the beauty of it all with the pain resulting from the mystery, flaws and incompleteness of the creation we know now. Most find ways to cope; for others it can be too much to bear.

Medical treatment for infertility became available almost 100 years ago with the introduction of artificial insemination. *In Vivo* Fertilisation is where male sperm is inserted into the female. Specific drugs are usually needed for this method. Attempts were later made outside the body, in a ‘test tube’. It was not until 1960 that IVF (*In Vitro* Fertilisation) became widely available. The successful birth of Louise Brown in England (a ‘test tube’ baby) in 1978 heralded a new era in the treatment of infertility.

Infertility has been the source of great sadness and even anguish for some married couples, even in Old Testament times. There were Rebekah, Sarah, Hannah, Manoah’s wife and Elizabeth.<sup>3</sup> God did

intervene with these particular women and prayer was a big factor.

God has granted the knowledge and ability to doctors and biologists to develop technologies to treat and help many medical conditions. Science has made the improbable, the implausible, and often the ‘impossible’, come true: for example, pacemakers for hearts; transplants of different organs; corrective surgery for deformities – and IVF.

The attitude to assisted reproductive technologies (ART) varies amongst Christian and cultural groups (e.g. ART is not accepted by the Vatican.) The churches of God – along with Jewish and Islamic people – accept ART, but (a) only between married couples, (b) a third party donor is unacceptable, (c) surrogate motherhood is not accepted, and (d) there must be no embryo wastage. Within these constraints there is conformity to the design for the generation of families which the Scriptures consistently expect. From a Christian point of view, we accept the conclusions above, for the following reasons:

(a) Each individual begins with fertilization, and is a unique creation with a special worth to God, whom God intends to be conceived within the marriage relationship, sharing not only the love which its parents can give, but also their individual genetic contribution. The concept of the family, where the parents are committed to each other in the sight of God, pervades the Scriptures.

(b) For these reasons, a woman having a child which is biologically someone else’s, even if desired and loved, introduces a sort of artificial adultery, where someone else’s



personality is involved. (Of course, adoption of a child from someone else is accepted).

Children, being a gift from God, are a responsibility from God to the family. Christian couples must pray together and ask God for wisdom.<sup>4</sup> They should also seek godly counsel. Some married couples feel uncomfortable that ART dissociates the sexual act from the procreative act, entrusting the life of the embryo to the scientists. ART is not for every married couple, even if they can afford it.

Paul went beyond recommending life without children when advocating a celibate life without marriage<sup>5</sup> so that one could devote more time to accomplishing Christ’s command to spread the Gospel message.<sup>6</sup>

The miracle of human life is that we have each been made to be in relationship with God. Relationships take us beyond mere biology. Relationships are used in the New Testament to describe God’s own inner life.<sup>7</sup> Relationships are the energy of Christian community: each disciple with Christ, and every disciple one with another.

References: (1) Gen. 1:28; 9:1,7 (2) Ps. 127:3-5; 128:3 (3) Gen. 25:21; 11:30; 1 Sam. 2:5; Judg. 13:9; Luke 1:7 (4) Jas. 1:5 (5) 1 Cor. 7:7-8 (6) Mat. 28:19 & see Canadian Medical Dental Society, Vol. 31 Issue 1, 2011 (7) John 17:21



## Conflict at Corinth

# Social Tensions

Alex Reid, Leigh, England

Corinth was an important centre of trade and commerce in New Testament times and we find the social divisions that we would expect; from the day labourer to the wealthy business person; from those high on the social status ladder to the very lowest. Perhaps this is reflected in Paul's description of the Corinthian church: *For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, ... not many noble.*<sup>1</sup> In saying *not many*, the apostle did not say 'not any', for it is evident in reading Corinthians that there were some people of substance within the church. Another social division that existed in Corinth was that between slave and free,<sup>2</sup> such were the normal social divisions of those days. But there existed in the church at Corinth divisions that were unexpected in a community based on mutual love and respect. These were party factions, lawsuits among saints and a flaunting of wealth by some.

Party factions within the church were caused by allegiance to one prominent person over another: *... there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ".*<sup>3</sup> Such entrenched positions were little better than the partisan politics of the secular world: *... are you not walking like mere men?*<sup>4</sup> In accusing them of acting like 'mere men', Paul may have been comparing their behaviour to that of the disciples of the sophist teachers of the time. These professional teachers, debaters and public speakers sought to gather groups of followers, and their secular disciples were often openly competitive.<sup>5</sup>

It is hard to imagine one brother in the Lord taking another to court, but this was happening in Corinth.<sup>6</sup> It was common then for disputes among elite members of Corinthian society to spill over into the civil courts, and some among the Corinthian saints may have been following this cultural practice of settling their differences.<sup>7</sup> Whatever the reason, Paul's condemnation of this practice is scathing: *I say this to your shame. Is it*

*so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?*<sup>8</sup>

There were serious problems at the gatherings of the church, particularly in connection with the Breaking of Bread, or Lord's Supper. Some were making this gathering an occasion for excess and indulging themselves in food and drink.<sup>9</sup> The effect of this excess was the severe embarrassment of the saints who had little or nothing: *Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.*<sup>10</sup>

Having noted some of the conflicts at Corinth, we need to ask what the root cause was. The apostle identifies a major cause as arrogance: *Now some have become arrogant ... and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power.*<sup>11</sup> Arrogance breeds boasting and feelings of superiority: *For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?*<sup>12</sup>

What did these feelings of arrogance and superiority spring from? Corinth was a highly gifted church.<sup>13</sup> Their over-emphasis on spiritual gifts and knowledge, to the exclusion of more important things was their undoing: *Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.*<sup>14</sup> It was to this gifted, but dysfunctional, church that the great apostle wrote that wonderful passage about love: *Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered ...*<sup>15</sup> Surely here was the answer to the problems at Corinth, and to many of the problems in Christian communities today; spiritual knowledge and gifts, decoupled from love, takes us in a wholly undesirable direction.

References: (1) 1 Cor. 1:26 (2) Ibid 7:22 (3) Ibid 1:11-12 (4) Ibid 3:3-4 (5) Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change*, Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2001, p.31-43 (6) 1 Cor. 6:7-8 (7) Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul left Corinth* p.58-75 (8) 1 Cor. 6:5-6 (9) Ibid 11:20-22 (10) Ibid 11:22 (11) Ibid 4:18-19 (12) Ibid 4:7 (13) Ibid 1:5-7 (14) Ibid 8:1 (15) Ibid 13:4-5

Bible quotes from NASB



# Prayer Mail

An interview with Derek Adams, Stoke-on-Trent, England, concerning Prayer Mail (an informal means of communicating prayer requests).

## ***How did the idea for Prayer Mail first come about?***

Several times, during the international Youth Fellowship Rally (YFR) held in 1992 at Kimmel Hall, I stood on the stairs watching lots of people talking while they were in queues at meal times. I wondered over and over again how they would all be able to keep in touch with each other after YFR was over. So, it could be said that the seeds of Prayer Mail started to germinate on the stairs at Kimmel Hall!

Working on the idea for some time led to the development of a feasible plan which was then shared with other young (at the time!) men in the Stoke-on-Trent Church of God and we worked on it together at the church hall.

We designed a matrix of groups where, in each group, a single prayer point would begin to be circulated by post around the group with other prayer points being added to it by group members as it circulated. Eventually, it was forwarded to the leader of another group who would then begin its circulation around that group, and so on.

## ***So how exactly did you set it up in practice?***

There was a print out of all who had attended YFR, and we were able to get a copy. The church at Stoke and its overseers were very supportive. They funded the initial postage and stationery which we used to invite everyone from YFR to participate – at least those for whom we had an address. It was also necessary to include instructions about how this new prayer scheme would work. Individuals also sent gifts to help with the set-up and running costs.

In some parts, it worked well, in others it inevitably fell apart. Transatlantic mailings were in no small way responsible for this. There

certainly were frustrating delays in those early days of Prayer Mail's operation, but technology has changed a lot since then! The development of computers and email soon started to make a difference.

As more and more people began to get e-mail addresses, the scheme then became known as Prayer Email. The biggest change being that, rather than needing to circulate mailings, there could now be one central point from which all the prayer requests could be sent out digitally by computer.

## ***Why do people often refer to Prayer Mail as 'Deckspear'?***

It's a combination of a shortened form of Derek – 'Deck' – and 'Spear' from the full business name, 'Spear Travels'. 'Deckspear' was the email address from which the prayer points were sent out and it just 'stuck', no doubt being reinforced because, at that time, 1993/94, I was the first person known to many of my friends as having an email address! Just exactly when it became known as Prayer Email is difficult to determine.

## ***Can you tell us something about the scale of the operation?***

There are currently 440 addresses around the globe receiving the emails direct. I know of some instances where the emails are then forwarded to or printed out for others. It's common enough for them to be used in church prayer meetings. However, I don't really have any definite idea of the number of people they actually reach. I would estimate that a fair percentage of people belonging to the Churches of God in the western world have made some use of Prayer Mail since it began way back in 1992.

## ***Has there been any particular time when you realized just how effective Prayer Email was?***

I remember the time when I realized how instantaneous it could be. It was



when Mary and John Kerr were struck by a car. Since I am able to keep an eye on emails while working, I was able to immediately pick up an email which came through from the family saying that Mary was going into surgery and so prayer was being urgently requested. It struck me that in less than a minute I had received and forwarded on that request, and that forwarded request in turn could then have been opened and read as far away as Australia, enabling people to pray for Mary while she was still in surgery.

## ***Can you give us some idea of the volume of work involved in running the scheme?***

How much Prayer Email is used is determined by everyone who is involved, not by me. The percentage of contributors is minimal compared to the number who actually receive the emails. The scope of its use is also down to others. From my point of view, there are some very quiet weeks when next to nothing is received; but, equally, other weeks can be very busy with several prayer requests being received daily.

If anyone would like to be added to the list of recipients or to contribute information about local initiatives, evidence of the Lord's hand, blessings received and problems faced, please email [deckspear@aol.com](mailto:deckspear@aol.com)



# Fiscal fiascos and the satanic solution

Martin Jones, Toronto, Canada

Shocked European bankers are taking huge losses on their investments in the Greek economy; whilst European governments reluctantly put their hands deep into their pockets just to keep the Euro dream afloat.

But, if either had paid more attention in history class, this whole fiasco might have been avoided, or at least the early warnings recognized. In the context of taking an investment gamble, the Greek horse had form.

Since independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1832, Greece has suffered recurring budget crises, frequent state defaults and long periods during which it has effectively been cut off from the international capital markets.

Despite that, its current membership of the Euro isn't the first time that an ill-advised attempt has been made to unify it with its neighbours.

Latin Monetary Union (LMU) was attempted in 1866 between France, Belgium, Italy and Switzerland; not by a new coinage, but by pegging each currency at the same fixed rate. Greece joined two years later. Britain, true to form, would have nothing to do with it and was proved absolutely correct. The Greek government propped up their ailing economy by gradually decreasing the amount of gold in their coins – that rendered the fixed rate meaningless. Things got so bad that Greece was formally expelled from the LMU in 1908 and the whole scheme was soon to be wrecked by the upheaval of World War One.

The irony of the historical and current situation isn't lost on students of ancient history, who point out that the Greeks were pioneers of economic and monetary union.

In 400 B.C., seven Greek states minted coins to the same weight with a common design (of the baby Heracles strangling a snake) and the first three letters of the Greek word for 'alliance'. Like today, each state placed its own particular image on the reverse. Why it collapsed after 200 years is unknown, but the Achaean League had another go in about 280 B.C. using the head of Zeus as the common design.

The historian Polybius noted that there was more than monetary union. They "had not only formed an allied and friendly community, but they have the same laws, weights, measures and coinage, as well as the same officials, council and courts of justice"; enough, perhaps, to make today's Eurocrats green with envy – but it lasted barely a century due to the crushing defeat by the Romans at the Battle of Corinth in 146 B.C.

History is littered with aborted attempts at economic and monetary union; a track record that led Walter Bagehot, the essayist and editor of *The Economist*, to write in the late 1860s – "the attempt to found a universal money is



not possible now." He concluded that the practical difficulties were "simply insurmountable."

Based simply on current events, that assessment seems to be well supported – what chance of a global system when even a regional one is fragile? It is not hard to find one of the main causes of these repeated failures. Paul put his finger on it with his warning to the Church of God in Philippi:

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*<sup>1</sup>

In 'normal circumstances', union can only be achieved when we act responsibly, unselfishly and for the greater good – and, by the way, that's just as true in our churches as it is at inter-governmental level.

That little caveat is necessary, for students of the Bible will be well aware that Bagehot's view will one day be proved to be incorrect – but it will be unity achieved for the greater evil, not the good.

Revelation 13:16 speaks of a universal regulated trading system, not denoted by the head of Zeus or Heracles, but by the name or number of 'the beast'. No currency will be usable without it. The carrots of economic and social stability and the sticks of persecution and execution will make it tough to keep out of this diabolical pact – but taking the mark of the Antichrist will have eternal consequences by permanently aligning the taker against the true Christ and in union with Satan.

The Bible teaches that Christians will be spared from these events, later enjoying instead the wonderful millennial unity pictured by the wolf living with the lamb.<sup>2</sup> But we should be alert to the reality that men and women around us are hurtling towards something far worse than mere economic meltdown. We must trigger the most reliable and timely 'early-warning' system – the plan of salvation in God's Word.

References: (1) Phil. 2:3-4 NIV (2) Is. 11:6

# S is for ... Separation: what, why, how?

Geoff Hydon, Mount Forest, Canada

It all began with separation. Your Christian life started with action by God to set you apart. The Bible uses the word sanctification, and calls those who are sanctified: 'saints'. Essentially saints are those who have been set apart by God in holiness at the time they became children of God,<sup>1</sup> spiritually separated out from everyone else. Although God achieves that initial separation for us, He also expects those whom He makes saints to then live saintly lives and enjoy nearness to Him. That requires a constant readiness to set oneself apart for God to use, as enabled by the Holy Spirit. In the purpose of God, individual saints should practise their faith with fellow saints who are equally committed to serving the Lord from a pure heart.<sup>2</sup> Churches of God are a practical necessity for this to happen, and to continue to reflect this corporate reality such churches must themselves retain their distinctiveness by keeping themselves separate from error (motivated strongly by the awareness that God is dwelling among them).<sup>3</sup> Could you affirm and explain these matters from Scripture? This article is intended to help with that by briefly covering the What, Why and How of separation and provide lots of scriptural references to enable you to check out the context and do more general reading on this subject.<sup>4</sup>

## What?

It's a two-sided coin and its essence could hardly be better expressed than Paul's instruction to Timothy: now (1) *flee from youthful lusts* and (2) *pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart*.<sup>5</sup> Note, separation from others' sins<sup>6</sup> and errors is not merely theoretical, it will require action in relation to the people committing them (and thus the cautions of Galatians 6:1 and 2 Timothy 2:24-25 are necessary.)

For landmark guidance on this subject we first go to 2 Corinthians, which deals primarily with separation from unbelievers, and clarifies the stark spiritual differences between saved and unsaved, no matter how great their sins or how good their good deeds.<sup>7</sup> This is not to minimize the responsibility we have towards all people,

no matter what their transgressions; just to remember the focus the Lord expects.<sup>8</sup> And is it true of you and me that we have first ensured that we ourselves are pure,<sup>9</sup> through cessation of sins, repentance and cleansing through confession?<sup>10</sup>

But the Lord's spotless life confirms that separation is not just about where you are or who you are with.<sup>11</sup> In 1 Corinthians 5:11 the instruction to not 'associate' with certain sinning people means more than just being with them, it literally means to not be mixed up<sup>12</sup> with them; if we are indistinguishable from them our witness for Christ is compromised.<sup>13</sup>

So separation means avoiding being harmfully mixed with others, for a greater goal. This evidently should govern the 'why' and 'how' as well as the 'what' and 'where' of our actions.

Now when writing to the Thessalonian church, Paul instructed the believers to choose not to mix with certain people in the church, for the purpose of error-correction.<sup>14</sup> That is very challenging as each of us considers our own weaknesses, and the practical issues around putting this beneficial and non-optional instruction into effect. And the principle obviously must apply to relationships with believers not in a church of God too; wrong does not become right based on that distinction. Beloved fellow believers, and churches they may attend, can be caught up in various kinds of error, which don't mix with true obedience to the Word of God.

What should we particularly watch out for? The errors will usually fall into one of three main categories: wrong teaching; wrong activity; or the right activity but done by the wrong people. Most commonly seen errors in these categories would include:

1. Doctrinal error: compromise of the whole counsel of God;<sup>15</sup> assuming that either water baptism is required for salvation, or that it is not necessary for disciples at all; thinking salvation can be lost (falling away),<sup>16</sup> teaching salvation by works;<sup>17</sup> making no distinction between 'the church, which is His (Christ's) Body'<sup>18</sup> and a Church of God.<sup>19</sup>

2. Sinful practices: worldliness,<sup>20</sup> idleness/misuse of time/effort,<sup>21</sup> idolatry,<sup>22</sup> immorality,<sup>23</sup>

3. People problems: Autocratic or independent church leadership;<sup>24</sup> women in authority or teaching positions in the church.<sup>25</sup>

Obviously, more could be added, but these are encountered frequently and signal the need for separation, for such things should not be present in a church of God. This is not to say that churches of God are free from error, for they are composed of believers who are as prone as any others to sin and getting things wrong. However, the





New Testament pattern for the operation of a church of God is intended to ensure that it is kept free from such things.<sup>26</sup>

### Why?

To be in fellowship with God requires us to walk in the light.<sup>27</sup> Practically, the disciple who is seeking closeness to God will also be drawn to fellowship with those of like mind. Are these your personal goals?

To respond to a natural question about why churches of God need to be separate from other churches, even strongly evangelical ones, we can find an answer in actual experience. In the late 1800s many saints separated from Brethren companies in order to form new churches of God. Why? This was not based on dislike of the people, or failure to recognize that there was much to be admired in them. The disciples that withdrew did so because they saw that there were fundamental practices to be followed in order to conform to the scriptural description of a church of God, and there was behaviour that was appropriate in the house of God.<sup>28</sup> These things simply could not be achieved in the Brethren churches as they were. Scripture requirements about church functions, even those as basic as Acts 2:42, need to be adopted unitedly by saints; an individual cannot implement them alone. Nor could the Brethren churches be corrected, because the scripturally-based form of leadership and the decision-making process required to resolve the problems were absent, indeed resisted.<sup>29</sup> The only solution then was for faithful disciples to purge themselves from their former association in the spirit of 2 Timothy 2:19-22, even though that course was very painful for them. We must of course take care now not to become transgressors by reversing such a stance.<sup>30</sup> That could occur if, by participating with churches that are in error, we effectively align ourselves with their wrong teaching or condone their erroneous practices, and so build up the wrong thing. The correct answer is to continually attempt to testify to the truth, with a prayerful desire that our contacts will want to uphold that truth with us. In turn that requires the churches of God to be fully submissive to the Holy Spirit's guidance into all the truth from the Scriptures.<sup>31</sup>

### How?

There is no option but to continually base our action on what we find in the Word of God.<sup>32</sup> Separation may seem unwelcome if we fail to implement it with a view to getting closer to God, or if we give priority to our popularity! (Remember, the effect of Christ's sinless life on others was to condemn sin in the flesh, and He is our example.<sup>33</sup>) Correspondingly, it is the Holy Spirit's application of the truth that brings about our daily sanctification.<sup>34</sup> The Scriptures will alert us not only to error but to what is excellent and worthy of the full occupation of our thoughts, in all we do.<sup>35</sup> This mindset is needed so that we act in mercy and grace, in truth and love,<sup>36</sup> neither compromising our walk<sup>37</sup> nor blindly cutting ourselves off from the needs of our fellow men. Most comforting is the fact that the place of separation is



not a lonely one; God calls us to it, so by definition He is already there.<sup>38</sup> The attitude of Moses in this matter must be ours;<sup>39</sup> the presence of the Lord is the goal of separation.

Is being separate too limiting? When you are part of a thriving church with lots going on, it is easier to find your social needs satisfied in friendships and activities with fellow Christians there. What if you are seeking a life partner, but with no obvious prospects in your local church? Or what if you have a zeal for evangelism but you are in a church of God that is small, ageing and with little outreach activity? Still this truth of separation must apply. It constrains you no more in making worthwhile contacts and serving the Lord than it did the Apostles! It will help you to unselfishly hone your vision of a key life-goal: bringing others as close to the Lord as you yourself desire to be. Separation is neither an excuse for inactivity, nor a justification for griping about things; it is a central truth that provides a proper basis for fellowship the Lord desires to bless!

References: (1) 2 Thes. 2:13 (2) 2 Tim. 2:22 (3) 2 Cor. 13:5; 1 Cor. 3:16-17 (4) For more reading on this subject, please obtain copies of *The Search for the Truth of God and Churches of God, New Testament Pattern*, available from [www.HayesPress.org](http://www.HayesPress.org) (5) 2 Tim. 2:22, numbers added (6) 1 Tim. 5:22; Eph. 5:11 (7) 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1. See also 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 1 John 2:15; Jas. 4:4 (8) John 17:11-19 (9) Mat. 7:3-5 (10) 1 John 1:9 (11) Mat. 9:10-13 (12) Gk. *Sunanamignumi*: 'to mix up with' (An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, W.E. Vine) (13) Mat. 5:13 (14) 2 Thes. 3:6-15 (15) Acts 20:20-21,27 (16) John 10:28 (17) Eph. 2:8-9 (18) Eph. 1:23 (19) 1 Cor. 1:2 See NT Issue 4, 2011, p.6 and NT Issue 1, 2012, p.15 (20) Titus 2:12; Jude 1:19 (21) 2 Thes. 3:11 (22) 1 Cor. 5:11 (23) 1 Cor. 6:18 (24) 3 John 9-11; Titus 1:5ff (25) 1 Tim. 2:12 (26) 1 Cor. 5:6-7; 2 Cor. 7:1 (see also Footnote 4) (27) 1 John 1:6-8 (28) 1 Tim. 3:15 and see footnote 2 above (29) See *Elders and The Elderhood*, especially chapter 8, available from [www.HayesPress.org](http://www.HayesPress.org) (30) Gal. 2:18 (31) John 16:13; 17:17 (32) Acts 17:11 (33) Rom. 8:3-8 (34) John 17:17 (35) Phil. 4:8 (36) Col. 4:5-6 (37) Phil. 3:16; 4:9; 2 Tim. 3:14 (38) 2 Cor. 6:17 implied in the translation 'Come' (39) Ex. 33:12-16

Bible quotes from NASB

# Warmed-up Heart of Africa

Bennet Ntambalika, Blantyre, Malawi

Whoever would have thought that a simple enquiry by Patson Katimba in 1983 about a Churches of God publication would eventually lead to the planting of such Churches in Malawi? *“As for God His way is perfect.”*<sup>1</sup> Correspondence between Patson and Alan Toms continued for a long time and then was passed on to the Fellowship Outreach Committee. Patson shared copies of the magazine with friends and they were used as study guides at their fellowship meetings. Unsurprisingly, because the group enjoyed the teaching so much, they requested people be sent to Malawi to teach the truth the magazine was propagating.

Mark Imoukhuede and Godwin Okwena from Nigeria met Patson sometime in 1995 at the Airport holding a copy of the Needed Truth (NT) magazine. Today there are many names on the mailing list from all over the country. During an International Trade Fair when the Churches of God had a stand, the Needed Truth magazine was an attraction, not just because of its new look, but because of its heart-warming content. Testimonies abound of the impact NT magazine has had on many lives. We pray that from Malawi, the Warm Heart of Africa, the hearts of men and women will be warmed up as they read this magazine.

From that time Nigerian brethren and also evangelist ‘Uncle’ Bernard French made frequent follow-up visits to the work of God which had started in Malawi. The truths concerning the teachings of the Churches of God were taught to those people

who were showing interest until 1999 when the first Church of God was planted in Chilomoni, Blantyre City. Through crusade meetings conducted around Blantyre City, many people gladly received the Word of God and were baptised. This led to the planting of another Church of God in Ndirande, Blantyre. God continued to be gracious to the people of Malawi and the work began to spread to the remote areas such as Ntcheu, Mulanje and Milepa in Chiradzulu District where Churches of God were also planted.



Mulomba group

The work of God is still growing and spreading to other areas where people are showing interest such as Lilongwe, the Capital city of Malawi; Lumbazi, a township in Lilongwe; Bangwe, in the city of Blantyre; Nyezerela and Chinama in Phalombe District; and Mulomba in Mulanje District.

God has continued to provide spiritually for His people in Malawi, but has also made provision for the people physically. In 2008 the so-called ‘UK 3’, Norma Aitken, Karl Smith and his wife, Joy, came to Malawi in order to find ways and means how those in the churches could become self-reliant and disease-free. These three people



Lumbazi group in Lilongwe

did a tremendous job. They worked tirelessly, travelling to the remotest areas even though the weather was not suited to westerners. They met with different government officials to find out ways in which the people of Malawi could be assisted with physical needs such as good water, enough food, healthy lives and education in order to make their lives better.

We thank God for the following developments which the UK 3 achieved during their stay in Malawi and for the ways in which those in the churches have benefited:

1. The saints, including the surrounding community, were provided with seeds and fertilizers and trained in modern farming techniques. The following year the saints had enough food to eat and the surplus was sold.
2. Adult literacy schools were opened in all the five churches to help those who could not write and to help them read their Bibles.
3. Mobile clinics were opened to help those who live in remote assemblies without access to government clinics, dispensaries and medical facilities.
4. An orphanage school was opened at Ndirande, providing breakfast, lunch and medical care.

Reference: (1) 2 Sam. 22:31 NIV