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## **Christians in a Pagan Society**

*Joel Portman*

One has said that the greatest need of any person is to be a Christian, and the greatest need of a Christian is to BE a Christian. The world is full of those who depend on a profession that they have made at some time in their lives, be it real or otherwise, but who fail to live a life that the apostles and early disciples would have recognized as being characteristic of a true believer. The tendency to conform outwardly to this corrosive society that accepts anyone as a Christian as long as they aren't fanatical about living as a Christian is natural. It is the result of the world's abrasive pressure (Rom. 12:1-2), the inward tendency of each one to want to conform and not be seen as different, and behind it all is the unceasing program of the devil. His purpose is to keep souls from trusting Christ, and then, if they are saved, to keep Christians from living Christ. He hates those who can truthfully say, like Paul, "For me to live (living) is Christ; and to die is gain." (Phil. 1:21). It is as if Paul is saying, "If Christ were removed from my life, I have no reason to live or for my existence"; and we remember that this was the man who, from the moment when he first met and trusted Christ, lived with two objectives: "Who art Thou, Lord," and "What wilt Thou have me to do?" His life was totally devoted to Christ, and all who knew him knew that his life was Christ and Christ alone. That could hardly be said of 21st Century Christians, could it, at least for the majority.

Weak Christians are what constitute and result in a weak Christianity. New methods are sought to advance the cause of Christ and the

gospel, but as E. M Bounds said, "The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men," ("Power through Prayer"). Renovated Christians, instead of compromised believers, are what the Church and Christ need today, but very few are willing to live so devotedly to His Person or to sacrifice their personal interests in order to truly honor His Name.

## **Christianity in the Present**

In 1976, Time magazine proclaimed on its cover that it was the "Year of the Evangelical". That may have been true to some extent, as those who professed to be Evangelical Christians seemed to be on the point of dominating U.S. politics and influencing other fields. However, this nation (the United States) has never been a Christian nation, any more than any other nation has been so. True, in the past, Biblical principles were acknowledged and valued, even though few actually lived them in reality. There were some in those days who held the false belief that eventually the entire world would become Christianized. In reality, true Christianity has always been a minority in any day or in any society. This was never more true, than when the Babylonish religion of Rome dominated the entire European world. True believers were hounded, tortured, martyred and driven into hiding. In our day, such opposition in this country is unheard of (but not in other lands), but opposition still exists, not against those who are compromised, but against any and all who determine to live godly in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. 3:12).

In the author's school experience, a Bible teacher (?), paid by the public school system, came into our classroom every Friday to teach an hour long Bible class. School assemblies were opened with a hymn and prayer by the principal. That is not to say that sinful practices didn't exist, or that the students were marked by godly lives! Obviously that was not the case, but there was a reverence for and recognition of the need for the students to understand Bible truths. This is certainly not the case today!

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is a monthly publication that is freely available on the Internet and is intended to be a help to believers who appreciate the timeless truths of God's Word and who recognize the unchanging principles of God's will for His people. It is primarily intended to strengthen those who enjoy fellowship in local assemblies of believers who are gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

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According to a recent Gallup poll, in 1948, 81% of the US population professed some aspect of Christianity. In 1970, only 70% professed belief in Christianity.

In 1948, only 5% claimed "None" or gave no answer

In 2014, 20% were "None" or no answer

In 2015, 23% claimed "No religion" with a higher percentage of those among millennials. Keep in mind that 23% of the population equals about 46 million people!

The decline is remarkable and indicative of the increasing paganization of our society. The rise in the number of those who practice some form of witchcraft, be it Wiki or any other form, along with those who are openly antagonistic to Christianity or any of its principles, is a further indication that we are now living in what might be called the "Post-Christian Age." Among priests in the Roman Catholic church, there is a demand for those who can perform exorcisms, and that demand seems to be increasing. A certified psychiatrist reported that he has seen an increase in definite cases of possession in the US.

Some may look at these conditions and despair. Yet we remember that at the beginning of God's work in this dispensation, such conditions were present and dominated all strata of society. This was especially evident in Corinth and Ephesus, where God worked mightily to save souls and to establish powerful and effective assemblies. So we need not think that God's work is finished, for souls will be saved and God's purposes will be advanced to bring sinners to the feet of the Savior. However, the conditions must be faced and believers must know how to maintain a living, active testimony for the Lord's honor until He comes.

### **Christianity Attacked**

The year 2015 could be called the "Year of Aggressive Atheism". We see and hear those like Richard Dawkins and others actively opposing any form of religion, even to the extremity of removing children from Christian families so that they won't be "harmfully" influenced by parental ethics. We observe the determined erasure of all Christian principles, even traces of them, such as the presence of the Ten Commandments on courthouse

grounds or public squares. There is a determination to replace all that is Christian with humanistic, man-based, hedonistic materialism that emphasizes that which is physical in place of the spiritual. Science, fueled and driven by the theory of evolution, along with technology, becomes man's God. The purpose is to eliminate any need for God in one's life, and accomplish the desired ends by man's personal abilities. We read in this an aspect of Psalm 14:1, "there is no God".

There have been aggressive attacks against the structure of a stable society, whether it is expressed in marriages, homes, schools, or any organization. Yet, thankfully, even non-Christian commentators recognize the severe results of such a pathway and have spoken against it. Their viewpoint falls short of what should be expressed, but even their recognition of the societal value of Christian principles is an indication that wiser men understand the ultimate result of this program.

We should understand that there has always been a spiritual warfare that has existed in this world. This world is a spiritual battleground, and the warfare is for the souls and lives of men. The Lord Jesus Himself warned the disciples in the upper room in John 14-16 that they should expect to face opposition, and they did. In 2 Timothy 3, Paul warned Timothy about the conditions that he would face in his days, and those conditions are no less today. Peter describes, in 2 Peter 3, the conditions of the last days. Those passages are written for our help and blessing, to warn and inform believers what they should be prepared to face in their testimony for Christ.

Ephesians 6:10-18 describes the need for the whole armor of God in order to stand in an evil day against the spiritual powers in heavenlies. There is a need to be equipped and determined to resist by spiritual means the attacks of the devil as he uses every device in his arsenal. Paul spoke of his service for Christ in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, concerning his use of spiritual weapons to overcome the resistance in the hearts of men to the truth so as to bring them into obedience to Christ. We need to be prepared to use the same arsenal in our service today.

Because of what we face in this spiritual conflict, spiritual lethargy, fuzzy principles and practices, lack of awareness, and failure to apply spiritual means will result in defeat for the child of God. Individuals must, and will, decide if they will compromise principles, or if they will, like Daniel's companions or Daniel himself, stand unswervingly for the truth, and practice it. Individual Christians will determine priorities for their lives, for their families and children, and even for the character of assemblies. Believers who derive their pleasures from the world's activities and entertainments of any kind, will inevitably fail to maintain and express principles that will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ.

This is not to be fatalistic, but to express our need to be realistic. By this we mean, that believers in Christ need to count the cost, as is often said, and determine what direction their lives will express. Living for Christ in view of eternity will always cost presently, but it will be rewarded in a far greater way. Paul could say, looking back at the close of his life, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that Day; and not to me only, but also to all those who love His appearing." (2 Tim. 4:7-8). His life was a triumphant course of unswerving fidelity to His Lord, and he could anticipate the promised reward without any doubt in his words.

### **Christianity Thrives**

It is remarkable, and a testimony to the power of God, that instead of declining under persecution, true Christianity has always thrived. We have heard, and it is true, that "the blood of the martyrs is the life of the church." A survey of church history substantiates this fact. Outward profession may increase under world favor, but true Christianity suffers and declines. We note in Acts 5:13-14, 6:1, 8:4-10, that following God's judgment on Ananias and Sapphira, and the opposition that followed the death of Stephen, there was multiplication of the number of disciples and growth in Christian testimony. Many efforts by governments and dominating church systems have tried to eradicate God's truth, but it still stands today; in many parts of

the world, where there is persecution and opposition, believers continue to flourish and maintain testimony for God. Under such conditions, God is still working, believers are still going on for Christ, souls are being saved, and local assemblies are being established. And this is a work that will continue until the coming of the Lord and the end of church testimony on earth.

*(to be continued)*

He is no FOOL who parts with that which he cannot keep, when he is sure to be recompensed with that which He cannot lose."

Philip Henry (1631-1696)

## Is There A Biblical Pattern For The Church?

*Jack Hayes*

People who are newly saved are often faced with a great difficulty,. Which group of believers in the area should they join? There are many sects and denominations around, so the task of deciding is not easy. To attend the nearest 'place of worship' is no answer. It could have a modernist preacher who would wreck your faith. To look around for nice people with an exciting form of worship could lead to something remote from the teaching of scripture. To search for a good preacher is no safe course of action. His term of ministry may be relatively brief, and then what? Are there any guidelines for the perplexed believer who is seeking a spiritual home? There are, and they are contained in the unerring Word of God. As in every other area of our Christian lives, the Bible is our only safe source of guidance.

This series is written with new believers or young believers in mind, and the purpose is to list at least some of the features of churches as they were in New Testament times. This is

done with the conviction that every effort should be made to imitate the biblical pattern, for God's principles never change with the passing of the years. Read the articles prayerfully. Check the contents with the inspired scriptures. If what is said tallies, seek out a company of believers who endeavour to follow the New Testament pattern and associate with them in their witness for God.

### What is a Church?

Many people refer to a religious building as a church, but in the New Testament, buildings were never called churches. In fact, there are verses which show that buildings accommodated churches, so obviously, the building itself was not the church. For example, churches met in the homes of Philemon, and Aquila, Philemon v.2; Romans 16:5. The church was the congregation of people who met in these homes, so the church was made up of people. It has ears, so it must be people! Acts 11:22. "Tell it unto the church", said the Lord Jesus, Matthew 18:17. You don't speak to buildings! The church has emotions, Acts 5:11. The church prays, Acts 12:5. These and other references demonstrate that New Testament churches comprised of people, and not of wood, brick or stone.

Others speak of a countrywide religious organization as a church. There are denominations called the Church of England and the Church of Scotland etc. In Bible times there were no such 'national churches'. When the New Testament refers to the church in a country or region, the word 'church' is always plural. Thus we read of the churches of Galatia, and not the Church of Galatia, Galatians 1:2, the churches of Asia, and not the Church of Asia, 1 Corinthians 16:19, the churches of God in Judaea, and not the Church of Judaea, 1 Thessalonians 2:14. There were independent churches scattered throughout these regions, and no equivalent of the modern day national ecclesiastical organisation.

So then, in the first century, a church in a locality was the group of believers in that district who gathered for worship, prayer, teaching and service. Probably, the word 'assembly' would better express the sense of the Greek word *ekklesia* which is normally translated

'church' in the King James Version, the old English translation of the Bible. Consider some of the features of these New Testament churches or assemblies.

### **New Testament Churches had no Sectarian Title**

In our day, each of the sects and denominations of Christendom bears a title to distinguish it from other groups. Some take their name from a founder, and so there are Wesleyans and Lutherans etc. Others are identified by their form of church government, and so there are Presbyterians and Episcopalians. Some are known by a particular doctrine or practice that they hold, and so there are Baptists and Pentecostals. To willingly take any name that does not include all believers is to be guilty of the sin of sectarianism that is condemned in 1 Corinthians 1:10-16. New Testament assemblies did not gather under the patronage of any sect or denomination, but they did gather in association with the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The relevant scripture is Matthew 18:20. Said the Saviour, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them".

At least two things are suggested by the phrase 'gathered in (or unto) my name'. First, Identification with the Lord Jesus. That is, the believer abandons all man-made ecclesiastical systems, and is identified with the rejected Christ. The epistle to the Hebrews urges this upon us all. "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach", ch. 13:13. 'The camp' in that day was Judaism, and its modern equivalent is Christendom into which many of the features of Judaism have been absorbed. The believer is called upon to break his links with that, and be associated alone with the Man who is 'outside the camp', as one gathered to His name. Second, Subjection to Christ. When the Saviour is seen in relation to the local church, the name most frequently used by the Spirit of God is that of the LORD Jesus Christ. Most of 1 Corinthians relates to assembly matters, and in that letter there are constant references to Him by that title. So, gathering to His Name implies the acknowledgement of His authority as THE LORD

Jesus. It is true that His lordship ought to affect every department of our lives, but don't neglect it in your church life, by gathering to His Name, owning no authority but His, and no other rule-book but His Word.

So then, early Christians took no denominational title, but were happy to be known as those who were linked to Him, thus experiencing the deep joy that His presence brought.

### **New Testament Churches had no Headquarters on Earth**

Modern ecclesiastical bodies consist of a central authority with numerous congregations responsible to that central office. The format differs from group to group, but there are general assemblies, synods of bishops, central overights and so on. This concept of a headquarters on earth is alien to the Word of God. New Testament churches were churches of God, 1 Corinthians 1. 2, and each one was responsible to God alone. This is demonstrated in the seven letters that the Lord dictated to the churches in Asia, Revelation 2 and 3. There is no hint that these churches were responsible to each other, or to any central authority, but to the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who walked among the golden lampstands, Revelation 1:12-13.

The autonomous character of local assemblies is a safeguard against false teaching. Error affecting one assembly need not corrupt another. If a central authority exists, and the devil infiltrates it, false teaching will then be pushed out to every congregation in the group to become the compulsory creed for all. So then, every local church should stand independent of each other, and responsible to the Lord alone. This does not mean that there should be no fellowship between assemblies. Scripture allows for this as can be seen, for example, in Acts chapter 11. Barnabas came from Jerusalem to Antioch to teach and encourage the new assembly there. At the end of the chapter, the believers at Antioch sent a monetary gift to the needy Christians in Judaea. Thus there was both spiritual and material fellowship between these two communities of God's people.

## **New Testament Churches were Restricted to Christian Membership**

One sad feature of the present day is that many of the Lord's dear people are connected to religious systems in which believers and unbelievers are linked. That situation was never the norm in New Testament times. In 1 Corinthians 1. 2, Paul described the composition of the church of God at Corinth like this, "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints". Thus each member was a genuine believer for it is our faith in Christ that sanctifies us, Acts 26:18. He also spoke of assemblies in general as "churches of the saints", 1 Corinthians 14:33, another indication that there should be an exclusively believing membership.

Believers who are members of a mixed religious society often argue like this, "If I withdraw my light from this situation, the darkness will be all the greater". They see their unsaved fellow members as a mission field. In actual fact, the Bible shows that light and darkness are incompatible, and so light should be withdrawn. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers...Come out from among them, and be ye separate", 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

It should be noted that not all believers qualify for the privilege of fellowship in a New Testament assembly. Sin disqualifies, 1 Cor. 5: 11, and to hold erroneous doctrine that would create a faction is another factor that debars, Titus 3:10. Both *moral and doctrinal evil corrupts the whole assembly, for "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"*, 1 Corinthians 5:6, Galatians 5:9. There is the need to maintain the purity of the assembly both morally and doctrinally.

*(to be continued)*

## **Spontaneous Witnessing**

*Robert Surgenor*

Solomon said, "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth" (Eccl. 12:10). The reason being, that if the preacher is going to proclaim the gospel, he must do it in such a way that the hearer will understand the truths being presented. Thus there are times of preparation. The face of God is sought in prayer, and the Scriptures are searched for acceptable words. One old preacher once remarked, "Before you preach, prepare as if everything depends on you. Then when you get up to preach, preach as if everything depends on God." That was sensible advice. There should be prior meditation on what one is going to present. It is not a matter of one just opening one's mouth and God miraculously filling it with words. Ah no, there must be material gleaned, the mind must be clear, and the heart warmed through the nearness of God. That is why preachers bend the knee in prayer and ponder over their Bible as they groan in God's presence preparing for the battle of heralding out the gospel.

However, there are some occasions where there is no time to enter into all that I have just stated. At times there are circumstances that call for spontaneous witnessing, if one is going to convey to others the gospel. Prior to this type of witnessing, there is no preparation, no prayer, and no time to think. Let me illustrate such witnessing from the Scriptures.

We all are familiar with the story in John's Gospel chapter four. There sat the Lord waiting for a woman that you would not relish for a neighbor if you were a moral individual. She approached the well with her waterpot when no other women would be there. It was at noonday. The women went for water early in the morning ere the sun reached its zenith, so she, being a social outcast, and not wanting to be the object of gossip, went at the heat of the day. She was a sinner and ignorant of God's ways altogether. However, after the Lord dealt with her, and saved her, what a transformation took place! Notice; "The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a Man, which told

**GOD'S Word is true, essentially and eternally true. True in the Saviour it reveals, the Salvation it declares, the Doctrine it expounds, the Precepts it enforces, the Promises it speaks of, the Hopes it includes, the Threatenings it denounces. Thy Word is truth. Lord increase our faith. All that He has promised shall be fulfilled.**

me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:28, 29). There was no prayer meeting, no searching the Scriptures, no lining up any points of illustrations. Why no! Off she went with a message that was spontaneous! The message was exceedingly short. It was absolutely sincere, and it was very effective! Perhaps one could break this message into four segments. First: "Come!" In other words, drop everything you are doing. Change your course. This is urgent, and your only opportunity – act now or you will miss Him! Second: "See a Man!" She emphasizes a Person, and invites them to have a good look at Him, for the enlightenment of their mind. The whole thrust of her message is Him – a Man! Third: "Which told me all things that ever I did!" Now she exposes His omnipotence. He sees all. He knows all, and He exposes all. Nothing is hidden from His divine gaze. Fourth: "Is not this the Christ?" She recognizes Him as the Messiah, the Promised One of God. God manifest in the flesh! What a tremendous message from a totally ignorant and wicked woman just saved moments before! Immediately upon conversion, she experienced spontaneous witnessing! She couldn't help it. The message was burning within her and she simply could not contain it. It had to come out, and it did so with Holy Spirit power. Her words, like Samuel's, certainly did not fall to the ground, but rather fell into the hearts of the hearers, so much so, that they followed her to the Man and were won to Him through her urgent, and unprepared message. It was as if something overpowered her at the moment she was saved, and she could do nothing but exclaim the good news to the men in the city. This is a grand exposure of spontaneous witnessing!

Go back into the Old Testament and you will find the same thing. You remember in Second Kings 7, as a result of Israel's disobedience, God sent a famine into the land. So severe was the punishment, that women were eating their own sons. During this famine, there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate of Samaria. Realizing their plight they said to one another, "Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now

therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die. And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there. For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life. And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it. Then they said one to another, 'We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.' So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, 'We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were.'"

What was this? Why, it was spontaneous witnessing! At first these men were totally selfish over their amazing discovery. They were helping themselves and even burying their newly found silver, gold, and raiment. How selfish can one get? However, their conscience began to plague them, and the fear of God fell upon them. They were convicted that what they were doing was wrong. All of a sudden they were constrained to blaze abroad the good news. Notice, they were even afraid to wait until the morning. They felt compelled to run with the news immediately!

Now let me take you to the Book of the Acts on the day of Pentecost. Take a good look at Peter. What kind of a man is he? From what I gather from the Scriptures, he was a muscular, impetuous, unlearned and ignorant

fisherman. As we would speak of it today, "he wasn't even a high school graduate." Not only this, he had left all that was temporal to follow Christ. He was financially poor, for he said, "Silver and gold have I none" (Acts 3:6). Now in the world's estimation they would think, what could one ever expect out of a man like that? Look at those the Lord chose to represent Him. They were nothings! They were fools in the eyes of the sophisticated society of the world. Paul's educational abilities were far greater than the other apostles, yet consider his confession, "We are fools for Christ's sake" (1 Cor 4:10). What a confession! Yet, that was the world's appraisal of that mighty man.

Why did our Lord choose such men? Why not men of renown, men with famous records, or men of high intellectual community standing? Simply because such qualifications were not needed. He didn't choose men with these backgrounds and then continue to build "super-men" from these world-valued foundations. Why no! So, why choose a man of Peter's low caliber? I believe you can find the answer in 1 Corinthians 1:25-29. "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence." There you have it!

Choosing men of lowly standing only magnified the grace and power of God. These lowly men absolutely confounded the upstart worldly-wise men of the day. What orator, what intellect of the day, could offer to ruined humanity what these humble slaves of Jesus Christ could offer? They couldn't offer one profitable thing. They did not have one solution to man's problem caused by sin. Not one! But, the apostles did! They had the solution! They had the absolute cure! Not only this, they were given, by the Spirit, the ability to effectually proclaim that cure.

Take the scene in Acts 2 that we are now considering. Jerusalem is full of strangers, because of the Passover. Over fourteen nations were represented on that memorable occasion. All of a sudden there was the sound, as of a rushing, mighty wind. Notice, no wind, but a great sound. Then suddenly, there were cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. What was this? Why the Spirit of God has descended and entered into their mortal bodies. Why? In order that they might have the ability, the power, and the courage to speak the wonderful works of God. Not only this, all of a sudden they had the miraculous ability to speak in a foreign language, having never gone to school to learn it. Tremendous! But, that's not all. Look at Peter, what happens to him? Folks were gathering together in their presence and asking, "What meaneth this?" So, what happened? Did Peter run off to a quiet study room to prepare a message for them? Or, did he say, "Let us now pray?" Not a bit of it! Then, what did he do? Well, the divine record says, he "lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words" (Acts 2:14). In other words, he spontaneously witnessed! He "lifted up his voice." He made sure that all would hear. He certainly wasn't ashamed in what he was going to proclaim. Not only this, the message was for all within earshot. Peter had bold confidence! The next thing to notice is he addresses his countrymen. His message was not in general terms. None of that! He was going to make this declaration a very personal thing. He singles them out. They couldn't pass the message over their shoulder and say to themselves, "that's for the fellow behind me." Oh no! Nothing of that nature! Peter aimed his spiritual bow right at their hearts and let the arrow fly. Then he charges them, "Be this known unto you." He wants to make sure that they are listening and that they will understand. He stresses the importance that they listen intently and that they understand fully. Then his last exhortation, before delivering his message, "and hearken to my words." He demands attention! What authority! What power! What holy boldness!

Now it is not the intent of this writing to

expose to you the contents of Peter's message, but I will say this, that it was incomparable to any message his audience had ever heard before from any scribe, Pharisee, or lawyer. It wasn't written out, it wasn't even thought out prior to its delivery. It was spontaneous! How could an unlearned and ignorant fisherman deliver such a masterpiece declaration? The answer is simple. The Holy Spirit took him up on that special occasion, and filled him.

Now then, let me ask you, in consideration of these amazing incidents, have you ever spontaneously witnessed? You say, "I'm not a preacher." I didn't ask you that. I simply asked you, have you ever been a spontaneous witness? If you reply saying, "I'm bashful," or, "I wouldn't know what to say." Again, I pose the pertinent question, have you ever spontaneously witnessed?

If you are truly born again, I will guarantee you this, that there have been times in your life when the Lord has given you the opportunity to do so. If you kept your mouth closed on such an occasion, shame on you. More shame if you didn't confess your sin afterward. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" (Rom.1:16). "I am ready," he exclaims. Are you ready to witness? Have you ever experience the filling of the Spirit on various occasions, thus enabling you to spontaneously witness?

Let me try to explain how this phenomenon works. A Christian is a person that daily reads their Bible, and one who prays every day. Thus fellowship with God and communion with the Holy Spirit are enjoyed. A Christian is a witness of Christ, in word and in deed. Their deeds give weight to their words. Spontaneous witnessing comes very unexpectedly. Peter exhorts us; "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Pet. 3:15). There it is! What better verse could we employ for our subject than that? "Be ready always." "Be ready always." "Be ready always." Have you got that message? "Be ready always." So, you go into a restaurant and are seated with your companion at a table. The waitress comes along all smiles and inquires, "Would any of you like a drink first?" We have this and that

kind of delicious wine, and so on." So you simply say, "No thanks." Is that all that you can say? Don't you feel one little obligation to that smiling waitress to make her think about eternal things? Does not the Spirit of God even compel you to witness? Remember, at that point she is your servant. She is obligated to be nice to you for you are giving her employer your money, thus enabling him to give her a wage. She is dependent on you for her living. What better advantage could you what than that? Listen to a spontaneous witness. "Thank you for the offer, but no thanks. I have found a better drink years ago called living water." Then the waitress is asked if she ever heard of living water, and the answer will invariably be, "No." Then the spontaneous witness tells her of the living water, as the waitress stands there speechless. After the meal, compliment her on her service, give her a big tip and grace it with a suitable gospel tract. Sometimes a gentle touch on a person's shoulder has a beneficial effect.

Where is the source and power for such witnessing? I am reminded of our Lord's words to his disciples. "And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (Lk. 12:11-12). There's the answer – the Holy Spirit. Has He ever compelled you on certain occasions to spontaneously witness? If not, have you asked yourself, why? Are you concerned about this? Are you going through life a silent disciple, after all He has done for you, in order that you might bear faithful witness of Him? Do you not feel an obligation to fulfill His desires for you?

I remember on one occasion in a supermarket a very nervous and timid Christian lady was picking out some vegetables for her shopping cart, when all of a sudden a big crude man began to take the Lord's name in vain. Presto! A spontaneous witnessing occurred. From who? Why, from the timid, nervous Christian lady! Right in his face she objected to his vile language and told him why. She explained to him that the Name he had taken in vain was that of her Lord and Saviour who shed His precious blood for her sins. Her

bashfulness, her timidity, her nervousness, had suddenly evaporated, and there stood a bold witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. What had happened? All of a sudden the Holy Spirit had filled her and compelled her to witness – and she faithfully did! Needless to say, the big rough man stood there like a guilty little child. Oh to have had a video of such an encounter! What a tremendous thing! Again the question comes, have you ever become a vessel of spontaneous witnessing? If you are in touch with God. If you are in love with your Lord, when the occasion suddenly presents itself, by all means – SPEAK UP!

*If we grow in grace, we shall renounce self, rise above the world, resist Satan and make Christ alone the one object of our faith, hope and love.*

## Walking with God

*William Cowper*

Oh! for a closer walk with God,  
A calm and heavenly frame;  
A light to shine upon the road  
That leads me to the Lamb!

Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord?  
Where is the soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and his word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!  
But they have left an aching void,  
The world can never fill.

Return, O holy Dove, return!  
Sweet the messenger of rest!  
I hate the sins that made thee mourn  
And drove thee from my breast.

The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from thy throne,  
And worship only thee.

So shall my walk be close with God,  
Calm and serene my frame;  
So purer light shall mark the road  
That leads me to the Lamb.

## Righting the Wrong

**Donald Ross**

**N**OTHING is settled permanently until it is settled right. Shifts, concealments, subterfuges and evasions amount to nothing. A wrong may be apologized for, defended, endured, covered up, lied about, daubed over, winked at, or silently endured; but so long as it exists, there is trouble in store.

However the matter may be stifled, smoothed over or misrepresented, every wrong not righted will come up, and keep coming up.

A wrong is not made right unless it is confessed, repented of, repaired, done with, and done with forever; but a matter decided wrongly, by craft or trickery or guile, follows on and on until God Himself shall settle it in a severe manner. Let us search and try our ways, and be more anxious to do right by others, than to wrangle with them for the rights we claim. It doesn't matter what we suffer, if all is right on our part; but no matter how we prosper, all is vain if wrongdoing is left unsettled. Have we righted every wrong? Have we cleared ourselves of everything which shall secure the anger of God?

Let us do right, "and who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1 Pet. 3:13).

As you read these lines, begin at once. Rectify the past wrongs, or God will do so, to your shame, some day. The clean path is the easiest, after all.

"But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23).