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The Pentecostal Response

(Acts 2:37-47)
H. A. Ironside

This brief portion of the book of Acts is one that requires very careful and thoughtful examination. A great deal of controversy has raged around it, and very many serious misconceptions have been drawn from it.

The apostle Peter had just preached his wonderful sermon setting forth the life, the death, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had particularly emphasized the fact that the Lord Jesus came to the nation of Israel in accordance with Old Testament prophecy as their Messiah. He was the One they had been looking for down through the centuries, but they failed to recognize Him when He came. They rejected Him and delivered Him over to the Gentiles to be crucified; but Peter concluded with this triumphant word, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

The effect of Peter's message was tremendous. We are told in Acts 2:5, "there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men." He was addressing himself not to the ribald crowd that had been in front of Pilate's judgment hall who cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." Rather he was addressing primarily devout Jews who were awaiting the coming of the Messiah, also a number of proselytes from the nations who had the same sincere expectations. When these honest men heard Peter's proclamation, we read, "They were pricked in their heart." This was the work of the Holy Ghost. He so carried the message home to their hearts that they were deeply stirred.

They did not attempt to deny what Peter said. On the contrary, they accepted the message. Having accepted the message we can be very sure of this—they were already born of God. The apostle Peter wrote in the first chapter of his first Epistle, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever...And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you." These people had heard the gospel

and believed the message, and that implies necessarily they had received divine light and were regenerated. They turned to Peter and the rest of the apostles and cried out in deep distress, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Now, I want you to notice this. Their cry was not the same as the question of the Philippian jailer of which we read in Acts 16. These brethren did not say to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?" That was not in their mind at all; but they said, "Men and brethren" (and you will see from the very term of address used that they recognized their brotherhood with the men who had been preaching) "what shall we do?"

What is involved in that question? I think it is very easy to understand. These, as I said, were devout men. They had been waiting earnestly, believingly, for the Messiah. Peter had just shown them that the Messiah had come. The nation had rejected God's anointed King. They had refused Him whom God sent to deliver them. When Pilate asked, "Shall I crucify your King?" they answered, "We have no king but Caesar." These men were troubled. They had expected Christ to set up His kingdom here on earth. But He had gone away to Heaven where God had seated Him on His own throne; but what about this nation He was to reign over? What were they to do? They really meant to ask, "Men and brethren, in view of the fact that our King has already come and our people did not realize it and He has been rejected and crucified, what then are we going to do?" They were not simply questioning their individual salvation. They were questioning the fate of the nation to which they belonged. What was to happen? What shall we do now? Is there any way this dreadful thing can be undone? Is there any way the Christ who had been rejected can appear again and the people be given another opportunity? Is there any way by which the sentence can be revoked? What shall we do?

Peter said, "One thing you can do is repent." Repent! What does that mean? Repent means literally a change of mind—a change of mind that involves not only looking at things differently from an intellectual standpoint, but involves complete moral reformation, complete change of attitude. And so Peter said, "Repent, change your attitude." They showed what their attitude was when Christ was presented to them and they spurned Him. Now he says in effect, "Change your attitude. Instead of spurning Him, instead of rejecting Him—receive Him! It is true He has gone away from earth, that He is not here to establish His kingdom, but He still lives and is exalted at God's right hand. Repent. Rightabout-face! Instead of going on as a part of the

nation that rejected Him, change your mind, and separate from the apostate group by taking your stand for Christ."

That is the message we would give today to every one of our dear Jewish brethren everywhere. People do not understand sometimes why we should have Christian missions to the Jews. Do not the Jews have a good religion of their own? Then why should we bother with them? Well, you see, we believe the testimony of Moses and the prophets and we grieve to think that the Jewish people, just as the Gentiles, have rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. So in obedience to the word of Jesus Christ we go to them, as to the Gentiles. Peter said to all men everywhere and particularly to Israel who rejected and spurned Him, "Change your attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead of trampling on His grace, open your heart to Him." Thank God, there have been tens of thousands of Jews who have changed their attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ

and have crowned Him Lord of their lives whom the nation has rejected.

Next he called on them to do something that would separate them visibly from this nation that is under condemnation: "Be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." As part of the nation they were responsible for the rejection of Christ. Now Peter said, "In accord with your changed attitude toward Jesus Christ give this outward witness—be baptized in the name of the One you have rejected, and God will look at you standing there and you will no longer be under condemnation as are those who rejected Christ. Rather you will be under His grace because your sins are forgiven." It was not baptism, but change of attitude toward Christ, that gave them forgiveness. The baptism was the outward manifestation of their hearts' new attitude.

Some people have supposed that because Peter said, "Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ," he was suggesting a different baptismal formula from that the Lord Jesus gave in the Gospel of Matthew. They fail to recognize that in Matthew 28 the Lord was telling them in what name they were to baptize believers. He said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." He used the preposition meaning "baptizing them unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." That is the revelation of God in Christianity. The Jew knew God in the sense of the triune God, for the word Elohim implies God-triune. But the Lord Jesus Christ gave the full revelation and in essence He said, "You go and baptize converts in the name that implies the fullness of deity." They proceeded to do as He told them, and as they undertook to baptize they did it in the name of Jesus. They preached in the name of Jesus; they healed in the name of Jesus; they wrought signs and wonders in the name of Jesus; they baptized in the name of Jesus. Being baptized in the name of Jesus implies baptizing as instructed by Him—in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

So there is no confusion here. This is not a different kind of baptism. It is not a different name from that given in Matthew's Gospel. This comes out very clearly in Acts 19. There Paul, in coming to Ephesus and talking to certain disciples, said: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them" (Acts 19:2-6).

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If they had been baptized as Christians before, they would have known of the Holy Spirit, for He is spoken of in the baptismal formula.

So that passage definitely proves the formula of baptism given in Matthew 28 is the one by the authority of, and in the name of, the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words the apostles said, "Be baptized by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and the past will no longer be held against you. You will no longer be looked on as part of the nation that rejected the Christ, and in token of this God will give you the gift of the Holy Spirit as He has given it to us." The coming of the Holy Spirit had ushered in the new dispensation, and they were to be brought into all the blessings of the new covenant. Notice the breadth of this: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).

When he used the term "afar off" he did not mean those in distant lands; but his meaning is essentially moral, spiritual, covenantal. In Ephesians 2 we see that Paul used that term to refer to Gentiles, those not in covenant relation with God: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;...being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.... [He] came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh" (Ephesians 2:11-13,17).

You see, the Jew is nigh in the point of covenant privilege, the Gentile is a stranger to the covenant-he is afar off. Peter on the day of Pentecost proclaimed salvation not only to the Jews, as some have ignorantly said, but to the Jews and their children and then "to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

Let us never lose sight of the universal character of the gospel message. Christians have a message for the whole world, and now as God looks at men there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither barbarian nor cultured, but all are sinners and all need a Savior. There is no difference, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"; and again, "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."

Peter proclaimed this universal message, applying it first particularly to those at Jerusalem. Also we are told, "with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Someone may ask, "what did Peter mean by that? I thought one of the first principles is that men cannot save themselves; men are absolutely helpless, dead in trespasses and sins, and yet Peter said, 'Save yourselves.'"

He did not say, "Save yourselves from Hell and save yourselves from the wrath of God," but, "Save yourselves from this [perverse] generation." In other words, separate yourselves by baptism from this untoward generation that is rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, the wrath of God was hanging over that generation. The Lord Jesus had predicted that shortly after His ascension the temple would be destroyed; not one stone would be left upon another (Luke 21:5-6). That nation, as a nation, was subject to judgment. Now, Peter says, if you want to escape that judgment, save yourselves by being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. What was the response to Peter's admonition?

"Then they having received his word were baptized." You will notice the King James version reads: "They that gladly received his word were baptized." Some Greek texts include the word gladly, but since the King James version was translated many older texts have been discovered and they omit that word. I am always rather suspicious of persons who receive the Word with gladness and joy. One wonders if the Spirit of God has really done His probing work in the conscience. We would rather see men facing their sins before God-demonstrating a changed attitude toward self, a changed attitude toward sin. That makes people serious, thoughtful, sober; it makes people sad. Thank God when sinners have been made serious and faced their sins honestly before God. When they look up to the Lord Jesus Christ and honestly receive Him, then they are made glad.

So on the day of Pentecost thousands of people received the Word and immediately acted in accordance with their faith. They were baptized and their baptism cut them off from the Christ-rejecting nation of Israel and at the same time brought them into a new fellowship altogether. It brought them into the Christian company.

"The same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Added to whom? To the 120 company of believers mentioned in Acts 1:15. Now the body had grown.

We see four things affirmed in the lives of these new believers. "They continued steadfastly." They were not the kind that come forward, bow down and confess their sins, professing to accept the Lord Jesus Christ. Then taking a little copy of the Gospel of John, they leave their names with the one dealing with them, walk out of the church and never appear again. The early believers, having become united with the Christian company, entered into fellowship with them. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." They had no written New Testament yet. They depended wholly on the Old Testament and on oral ministry. Since the apostles were divinely-taught teachers, the believers continued where they could get the instruction they needed.

If you profess to accept Christ as Savior, see that you are often found where the Word of God is opened up. We have the whole New Testament today and now

God would have His people gather together, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is” (Hebrews 10:25). Some people say, “Oh, I do not need to go to hear the Word. I do not need to go to the gatherings of the people of God. I can go out and worship God in nature.” But as you speed through the country enjoying the passing vista, I am afraid you are not giving many thoughts to God and His testimony. I am afraid it is getting to be the manner of some to lie idly in bed until about 11:30 Sunday morning, and then lazily roll over and turn on the radio or television.

The Christians of the first century continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teachings and in fellowship. That is important. We need one another; and because we do, the Spirit of God has come down to knit us together into one body. Think of one of the most frequently quoted verses in the Bible: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14). Have you ever stopped to think what is meant by the communion of the Holy Ghost? It is God working in our hearts, helping us to enjoy the things of God together in the power of the Holy Spirit.

They also continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread. Breaking of bread is the sweet and sacred ordinance of the Lord’s supper. Jesus had said, “This do in remembrance of me.” The early Christians did not neglect this. They continued steadfastly in observance of this sacred ordinance.

The fourth thing is they continued steadfastly in prayer. Don’t think that means they continued in prayer and fellowship in their own houses. Prayer is an expression of dependence, and when the people of God really feel their need you will find them flocking together to pray. A neglected prayer meeting indicates very little recognition of one’s true need. I wonder how many of us continue steadfastly in prayer? Do you ever attend a prayer meeting? You say, “Prayer meetings are too dry for me.” How do you know? Wouldn’t it be well to try it and see? Wouldn’t it be well to come and see what draws people together to pray? You will find you are missing a great deal. The early believers continued steadfastly in prayer. And the outsiders noticed it.

“Fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles” (Acts 2:43). Notice that there is no indication that all the believers performed miracles and wonders. Only the twelve apostles were said to have spoken in other tongues, and only they performed miracles. These were the signs God gave in order to convince the gainsayers.

All believers were together in those early days. There was no sectarianism, no strife, no denominationalism. “And all that believed were together, and had all things common.” For a little while they had what some people call a world ideal—a kind of Christian communism. It was founded on love for one another—very different from modern worldly communism. The

believers were as brethren in Christ. Tolstoi said, “You cannot have a brotherhood without brothers.”

There were special circumstances that led them to sell all their possessions. The Lord Jesus had predicted judgment on Jerusalem, so what was the use of keeping property? The term “all men” (verse 45) does not mean the unsaved, but the Christian company sharing with one another.

Then look at their habit of life. “They, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread [at home], did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people.” Note that the Christians still met in the temple for worship.

Others saw that something wonderful had taken place. They could not help but see it. “And the Lord added to the church [or, to them] daily such as should be saved.” Oh, if God’s dear people could be found walking in joy and peace before Him, with one accord, continuing steadfast in such sacred fellowship, what an effect it would have on the world outside!

“Back from Babylon”, chap. 1

William Rogers

Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Romans 15:4), so there can be no part of the history of Israel, as recorded in the Old Testament, from which God’s people today may not learn something. But perhaps no stage of that history contains teaching more suitable for present-day needs, and exhibits more striking correspondences between their circumstances and our own, than that which is given us in the narratives of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, and in the writings of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the prophets of this period. The story of the captives who returned from Babylon to set up the temple, and to restore and build Jerusalem, has its counterpart in that of God’s people who, during the last hundred years or so, have come out from what was virtually a Babylonish captivity, that they might occupy the place to which the Word of God called them, and might be free to walk in obedience to its commands. Each of the two movements had its rise in the hearts of a number of men who had been exercised by the Word of God as to their position, “men whose spirits God had raised” (Ezra 1:5). Each was characterized by a similar godly zeal among the earlier leaders, and by a realization on their part of their utter weakness and counting upon God for His help. In each there was more than the mere coming out from what was evil—there was a definite turning to God’s center for His people, the place where He had chosen to put His Name; a material center in the one case, a spiritual

center in the other. Alike they were also in this respect, that there was at both times diligent searching of the Scriptures, and earnest endeavor to carry out at all costs what was "found written" therein. Even the truths thus learned in each case had a similarity, and produced like effects on the lives of those concerned. On the one hand they engendered carefulness as to keeping God's feasts in a scriptural manner, and on the other hand they led to a clearly defined separation from the ungodly peoples around.

In both these respects the two companies went far beyond the greatest and best leaders of earlier periods; than Samuel, David, Solomon, Hezekiah; than Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley. For example, when the returned captives kept the feast of tabernacles in booths, as it had been commanded in Leviticus 23:40-42, we read that "since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so" (Nehemiah 8:17). And again when Nehemiah was deprecating marriages with the heathen on the ground of Deuteronomy 13:3, 4, he could say, "Did not Solomon, King of Israel, sin by these things, yet among many nations was there no king like him,, (Nehemiah 13:26). As might be expected, persecution and scorn from those around them were the common lot of those who, at the one time or at the other, sought to walk in the path of obedience to God's Word in these matters; and when each movement developed somewhat, trouble also began to be experienced from the crookedness and worldliness of some within their own ranks.

Among the returned exiles, the final development was that almost universal departure from God, which we find pictured in the book of Malachi. How far the present-day movement may be about to turn in that same sad direction, let those who are spiritual judge.

In this connection, it is worth while to note the order we find in the two books of Ezra and Nehemiah. The one contains the story of the building of the House, the other, that of the building of the city wall, and, as is fitting, the building of the House comes first. It suggests right attitude of soul toward God, while the other suggests right attitude toward the heathen outside. In the one case God gets His place, in the other Moabites, Ammonites, etc., are kept in their place. Both were manifestations of the same soul exercise, what one might call an inward and an outward manifestation of it. The inward one, as we have said, comes first, for if not, whether then or now, the outward becomes mere sectarianism. Yet on the other hand, if one claims to give the Lord His place, without giving any outward manifestation of separation from evil, it is but hypocrisy. For, then and now, the friendship of the world is enmity with God.

It is also an interesting fact that the need for the wall does not seem to have been so apparent at first as it came to be later, when many of the original company of returned exiles had passed from the scene. This does not imply that it was any the less a work of God. The men

who built the wall were just as really carrying out His will for them at the time they did it, as the men who years before had built the temple. They could just as easily have given Scriptures for what they were engaged in (see Daniel 9:25; also Jeremiah 20,21:38, compared with Nehemiah 3:1). And the very adversaries who opposed them had to acknowledge that "this work was wrought of our God" (Nehemiah 6:16). Yet it is not difficult to imagine a critic saying to Nehemiah, "It is merely bigotry and sectarianism, this wall-building idea of yours, Nehemiah, the others who came before you did not do it. You are bringing the people of God into bondage." Such critics did in fact exist, chiefly among the well-to-do folks and the nobles, whose families had already made alliances with the heathen. They both hindered the building, and sought to nullify its effect when it had been finished. Is there not a parallel to this also to-day? The earliest brethren who, in any particular place, came out from religious systems of which Babylon is the Scriptural prototype, were occupied with getting back to God's center of gathering, and had little need to concern themselves with wall building, because the reproach and persecution which in those days every one of them had to face was in itself a wall that kept outsiders away. In the circumstances it might be said, as had been said of the Church in its earliest days, "Of the rest durst no man join himself to them." Moreover, since most of them had to "buy" the truth (Proverbs 23:23) at much cost to themselves, it was not to be expected that they would "sell" it by going back to build again things which they had destroyed.

But times change. The assemblies of God's people grew in number and in size. Buildings and yet larger buildings were put up to accommodate them, until at length it has become in most places no more unpopular to be connected with the "Gospel Hall" than to be on the roll of any of the world's "churches." Children of those already in the meetings professed conversion, in very many cases through the mercy of God were really saved. These, as they were from time to time baptized and brought into the assembly, had not usually the same deep soul exercise about such matters as their parents had, who came out from some of the surrounding religious sects; nor did it cost them so much to walk in the path of obedience. An old proverb says, "Lightly come, lightly go," and it has shewn itself sadly true in this matter, as those who seek to shepherd the assemblies of God's people know only too well. As a result of these developments and others one might name, it became very necessary to "build the wall," not so much by setting up rules such as, "You may not do this," and, "You must not go there"; and still less (though that, as we know, has often been attempted) by a wholesale cutting off from fellowship of those who do not see eye to eye with us on every point; but by emphasizing in ministry to the hearts of the saints those truths of the Word of God which bear on the separate path in which God has called His people

to walk, and on the danger arising from unequal yokes of whatever kind, religious, political, or social. It is often said, and it sounds very well, that if Christ is ministered to the saints, this other "scraping ministry, as it has been called, will be unnecessary. Yet when we turn to the epistles of the New Testament, we find not only much of both, but also that in those epistles which were written latest, the exhortations to godliness, and to separation from evil become much more prominent, which suggests that in the apostles' days, things developed much on the same lines as has been the case in our own. Let us then look into the details which are given us in these post-captivity books, with a large measure of expectation that we shall get real help from them to meet the present need among the assemblies of the people of God.

Our Ministry

Alex. Matthews

For the Scriptural meaning of the word "minister" see Joshua 1:1. "he Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister." Joshua served Moses, ministering to his necessities. "hosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant," Matthew 20:26-27. All God's people are ministers to minister to each other according to their several abilities.

There is but one God and Father to please and glorify; one Lord under whose authority all are; one Spirit to empower all who are in the house of God. All the gifts which God has set in the body are for the profit of all, and none can say that he has no responsibility, for each has an influence, and no man liveth to himself, but each is either a power for good or for evil.

Young sisters are to be meek and teachable, learning to bring self into subjection. They are to shew piety at home: and a cup of cold water given with the desire to please Him will be rewarded by Him. Young men are to be diligent in studying God's word so as to be able to overcome the world. They are to be sober, humble minded. They require to put on the whole armor of God so as to be able to withstand the wiles of the devil. Elder women are to be holy, obedient to their husbands; not gossipers, but by example and precept to teach the younger women godliness, avoiding lightness and jesting. They are to be modest, discreet, workers at home, to love their husbands and their children. If such things are neglected the word of God will be blasphemed instead of being honored.

We are sometimes told that young people require amusement. But the levities of nature will not satisfy the redeemed soul. What joy is there like the joy of the Lord? A great responsibility rests upon the older Christians to seek the welfare of the souls of the young converts. The first outflow of the divine nature seeks fellowship from those who are older; they expect to gain

profit by spiritual conversation, and they need counsel, especially if everything is against them at home. If they do not get this care in the assembly they are staggered and disappointed, and their first ardor is chilled. Then they conform to the wrong ways of those who should be examples to them; and if a miracle of grace prevent not they are spoiled for life. The great need of the church is nursing fathers and mothers so that the young may grow in grace and in the faith, and so real service for God be rendered by each member of the body.

Worldliness is increasing. Changeableness, and lack of stability characterizes everything. Ungracious dealings; walking by sight instead of by faith; the hope lost sight of; correct externals instead of heart watchfulness; lack of communion; little exercise as to subduing indwelling sin; and little earnestness as to eternal realities, characterizes everything

To one member of the body may be given faith on some special thing; to another wisdom, wise counsel—ot the wisdom of the world. Some have a gift for pastoral care; others for other things. There is plenty of room for the evangelist in the world; and plenty of room in the Church for those who can exhort, a thing almost lost so far as to conscience searching power. Teachers are becoming scarcer. Whatever our ministry all should be done to please God our Father, in subjection to the Lord, and in the power of the Spirit.

Consecration, pt 2

Robert Surgenor

Priestly Garments

The garments of Aaron's sons were white linen. The Lamb's wife is seen arrayed in fine linen clean and white: "for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:8). Isaiah writes; "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10).

Henry Soltau remarks "It will be observed from the margin that this might be translated, 'as a bridegroom decketh himself as a priest with ornaments,' and the word for ornaments is the same as that used in Exodus 39:28, 'goodly bonnets.' The garments of salvation, the robe of righteousness, are like the bridegroom's priestly glory; and like the bride's adornments. Might this passage in Isaiah have been in the mind of the Spirit of God, when inditing that portion of Revelation 19:8, referred to above?"

The bridal ornaments are the priestly robes of fine linen (Christ our righteousness). The Church will shine forth in His spotless white and glistening raiment, clean and bright, clothed with Christ.

We are exhorted Romans 13:14, to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ”, and in Galatians 3:27, it is said, “as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”. Considering their clothing in a spiritual way, we can say “But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). The believer’s faith in Christ secures to them the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. If void of holiness, we cannot come into the presence of the Lord to minister in the priest’s office. “Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever” (Psalm 93:5). “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God” (Ecclesiastes 5:1). Keep means, “to be on one’s guard, take heed, take care.”

Believers are holy and royal priests 24/7. Wherever you are, whatever you are doing, you are functioning as a priest. Take heed to yourself for the world is watching. Let us never misrepresent our Great High Priest who ministers on our behalf every moment of our life.

A Public Consecration

The consecration of Aaron and His sons was public for all to see. “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and a bullock for the sin offering, and two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread; And gather thou all the congregation together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Moses did as the LORD commanded him; and the assembly was gathered together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Moses said unto the congregation, This is the thing which the LORD commanded to be done” (Leviticus 8:1-5).

Paul, in preaching to King Agrippa concerning the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, indicated the same action when the New Testament priesthood was initiated. “For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner”. (Acts 26:26).

Jews from many surrounding nations were gathered together in Jerusalem for the Passover when the New Testament priesthood commenced, and was fervently and mightily proclaimed. In our day, it is no secret thing when a sinner is made a priest. A public confession follows. “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed” (Romans 10:9-11). One is reminded of the saved madman in Mark 5. As soon as he was saved, the Lord said unto him; “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel”. The same spirit is seen in John 4. “The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, ‘Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?’ Then they went out of the city, and came unto Him”. When Phillip went to the city of Samaria, souls were saved and the result was, there was great joy in that city.

There is no such thing as “secret discipleship.” Perhaps there are some who would like to be saved, but they are not willing to be brought into the congregation, willing to submit to a public consecration. To be ridiculed, mocked, and separated from the scorner’s company is not in their agenda. Let me ask you, how many neighbors that you converse with, how many people you work with, have heard your testimony personally from your lips? Paul said that he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Where do we stand? Aaron and his son’s consecration was viewed by all.

The Priest’s Washing

Consider the first act of Aaron and his sons’ consecration. It was performed by another. Notice. “And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water” (Exodus 29:4). Water is symbolic of two things, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit. Notice. “Except a man be born of water (the Word) and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). “Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:25-26). “He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:38-39).

Just as Aaron and his sons were washed by Moses, so upon entering the priesthood under grace, we were washed by another. Titus 3:5 emphasizes this. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour (Titus 3:5-6).

This is what took place when we were saved. He saved us, by the washing (bathing) of regeneration. The removal of our defilement took place when the Spirit of God operating on us caused us by faith to receive the Word of God in our heart, thus, our sins were remitted and our defilement removed. Having our sins washed away, we were regenerated, born again. Thayer says regeneration means “the new birth.” As D. S. West puts it, “It is evident that the terms ‘new birth’ and ‘regeneration’ refer to the same event, but viewed in different ways. The new birth stresses the impartation of

spiritual life where there had been spiritual death, whilst regeneration emphasizes the introduction of a new state of things in contrast with the old. Then, it is stated, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Thayer says that renewing indicates, "a renewal, renovation, complete change for the better." The new birth and regeneration are not successive events, but refer to the same event in different ways. Thus, the power of God transforms the life of a Christian so that his mind is brought into alignment with the mind of God. The word "wash" in Exodus 29:4 is "bathe." This brings us to John 13 where we find the Lord pouring water from a bason and washing (cleanse) the disciples' feet. "Simon Peter saith unto him, 'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head'. Jesus saith to him, 'He that is washed (bathed) needeth not save to wash (to cleanse - especially the hands or the feet or the face); his feet, but is clean every whit'" (John 13:9-10). Bathing is identified with obtaining salvation, but washing is a continual thing that the believer accomplishes in his Christian life. As stated, the word in Exodus 29: 4 is really "bathed". Just as we were "bathed" by another on salvation's day, so Aaron and his sons were bathed by another (Moses) on the day they became priests.

The Priest's Anointing

Following this, they were anointed with oil. This corresponds to 2 Corinthians 1:21; "Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God". Aaron was anointed before any blood was shed, but his sons were not anointed until blood had been shed. We are cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, then immediately anointed into the priesthood. Christ, typified in Aaron, was sinless, thus, there is no need for cleansing for the remission of sins. He was always the anointed One of God. Notice that the anointing of Aaron involved the pouring of it on his head. It was very costly, as Exodus 30 relates, its contents being of sweet incense, stacte, onycha, galbanum, with pure frankincense. The psalmist describes this event. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments" (Psalms 133:1-2). Aaron's clothing was unique, and his anointing was unique, yet he was a human being, just as his sons. Yes brethren, Christ was as much a man as us, yet vastly different in many aspects. How wonderful that He is not ashamed to call us brethren (Hebrews 2:12). "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: The Lord Himself who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38). The Lord Himself made this anointing known in His preaching. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel" (Luke 4:18)

The Sin Offering

The first sacrifice on the day of their consecration was a bullock. "And thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the bullock. And thou shalt kill the bullock before the LORD, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And thou shalt take of the blood of the bullock, and put it upon the horns of the altar with thy finger, and pour all the blood beside the bottom of the altar. And thou shalt take all the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul that is above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and burn them upon the altar. But the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his dung, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it is a sin offering" (Exodus 29:10-14). Of all the offerings on this sacred occasion, this was the largest. Aaron and his sons were to put their hand upon the bullock's head. The word "put" means "to lean upon, support or brace oneself." Five men, 10 hands, pushing down hard on the bullock's head. That beast would feel this. These men were transferring their sins onto the bullock. They were identifying themselves with it. This reminds us of a NT truth. "Who His own self sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24). Thus, we have the truth of substitution. Philip Bliss had this thought when he composed these words;

Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood,
Sealed my pardon with His blood:
Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

Joseph Denham Smith appreciated the same truth:
All Thy sins were laid upon Him,
Jesus bore them on the tree;
God, who knew them, laid them on Him,
And, believing, thou art free.

The largeness of the bullock proclaims that the Lord Jesus' death was sufficient for the cleansing of all mankind. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference" (Romans 3:21-22).

Notice the character of some at Corinth before their conversion to God. They were "fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Christ's sacrifice was large enough to embrace and cleanse them all.

After slaying the bullock, they were to place its blood in two areas. First, on the horns of the altar, then the remainder was to be poured out beside the bottom of the altar. The blood on the horns of the altar proclaim the fact that blood had been shed. Four horns on the

North, South, East, and West, made this truth known. A bullock has 10 gallons of blood. From a container, that shed blood was poured out at the base of the altar, typifying that the very basis of our faith, the foundation of our ability to enter the holiest, was only by His blood. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness (liberty) to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19).

The fat, caul, and the kidneys were to be burned ("burn incense") on the altar. The flesh, skin, and dung was to be burned ("burned up") outside the camp. As to the inwards, they added fragrance to the sin offering, while the rest of the bullock was taken outside the camp to be consumed by a devouring fire. "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (Hebrews 13:12). The offering of Christ, on our behalf, brought infinite pleasure and delight to the heart of God. Yet at the same time, we see a righteous and angry God submerging Him under the waves and billows of His almighty wrath. No human mind can comprehend all that took place at Calvary.

(continued)

Is Toleration Good?

H.B. from "A Study of the Psalms and Other Papers"

by G. V. Wigram

Edited by James Brown

(The editor's comments are in italics. The article below is an excerpt from G.V. Wigram's "A Study of the Psalms and Other Papers" written by one known only as "H.B." Since the following observations he makes were penned about 150 years ago, coupled with the apostle Paul's writing over 2,000 years ago ("a falling away first" and "the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2 Thessalonians 2:3,7)), one need not be surprised about these ever-deepening attitudes that are gaining even more momentum in current (2024 A.D.) ecclesiastical modes of thought. Read on:)

There is a great cry now-a-days against intolerance and bigotry, and a proportionate laudation of tolerance and liberality; and people are frightened by hard names and deceived by soft ones, and at last, from mere habit, believe what they assert, or what others assert to them, and think that toleration must be the right thing. Progress in the search after what the world calls truth is said to be hindered by dogmatic opinions or teaching. In secular things, however, such as natural science, etc., dogmatism may be admitted. In spiritual things, and in those things which concern the truth of God and the salvation of men's souls, dogmatism, they say, is inadmissible. We are told that what men on these subjects think to be true today, may tomorrow be found susceptible to modification, or to be proved altogether erroneous; that doctrines and practices, good and true in one age, are

unfitted for a succeeding period of the world's history, and may be pronounced "obsolete" What would do very well in times past as the foundation for man's hope for eternity, is quite unsuited to this more advanced age; the doctrine of which today will in turn pass away, and be succeeded by others more advanced, and so on. In the face of such a state of things, we are told that it is presumption for any man to express conviction in a settled opinion upon any religious question or doctrine. Many, indeed, are asking, "What is truth?" and "Who will show us any good?" but very few wait for an answer.

Toleration, then, is the order of the present day; and men may hold what they please provided they will not interfere with their neighbor's opinions and limit the suitability of their own opinions to themselves. But it was not always so, neither will it always continue, but it is the cry of the moment, and therefore is worthy of examination.

What, then, is tolerance, and why and what are we to tolerate? The very word implies a state of imperfection. If all were of one mind, there would be no tolerance needed; if good universally prevailed, there would be nothing to tolerate; if evil was universal, it would certainly be intolerable, though for all that must be endured (as it will be in the "place prepared for the devil and his angels". Tolerance, then, implies the coexistence of good and evil, in which evil is tolerated by (that which assumes to be) good, for tolerance must be the superior toward the inferior."

The article continues for 6 more pages, substantiating the lead assertions with a good many sound premises derived from many scriptures explaining that true Christian forbearance and acceptance (with impunity) of evil moral practices or doctrinal heresy are not the same. The former manifests grace, the latter, of course, does not. He also differentiates between Matthew 7' "Judge not" and First Corinthians 5', "Judge them that are within". If you can locate the Wigram book, it is a worthwhile article that uses irrefutable, systematic logic with scripture to validate the central concerns. However, for the purposes of brevity and readership edification, we will close with the author's last paragraph that gives needful and pithy exhortation for a time such ours. He writes:

"We ask our readers to examine their own position and practice as to tolerance, and to ascertain whether their own hearts are persuaded and satisfied with God's revelation (we do not say with man's interpretation of it, but with the revelation itself) of Christ the Son of the living God, He who has the words of eternal life, God manifest in the flesh, crucified in weakness, declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection of the dead, and now by the right hand of God exalted. Is He so the ground of their peace and confidence? Has the Word which reveals Him so laid hold of their souls that they can say, "Let God be true but every man a liar?" Do they believe God rather than man, and know and recognize the immeasurable claim which He has, not only on our

love, but on our obedience and life? Lukewarmness is a hateful thing in the sight of One who has spared nothing for the benefit and blessing of those He loves. Where love in One is "stronger than death", how hateful to find Its objects careless and indifferent. To such, Christ says, "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16).

But even this is not His last word to them; for He adds in verses 18-22, briefly paraphrased by this editor: *"An offer to anyone who has ears to hear, a warm invitation to have fellowship with Him"* H.B.

Using the Laodicean example, the repeated insistence upon tolerance of a rapidly-growing complacency and broader acceptance of things most surely not believed among us, a careless approach to the lowering of moral and doctrinal standards of what passes for honoring God, and daring to call it "the grace of tolerance for the sake of unity", we conclude that such an attitude will finally reach a point of such gross dishonor to God that it will leave Him no choice but to corporately dismiss the entire apostate system, yet, while still preserving a few. Brethren, let us be careful about what we support or just shrug our shoulders at, and instead, earnestly contend for the faith, staying close to both His name and His word until our Lord comes to establish the restitution of all things. J.B.

Our Daily Struggles

The Right Attitude to Face Daily Trials

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" 1 Peter 2:11

Carlos Fariñas

The entire first letter of Peter is a call to encourage believers to remain joyful and not faint despite the sufferings and anguish that life may bring, especially because of the testimony of the Gospel. In the quote mentioned above, we find the plea of the Spirit through Peter that teaches us several important things to face our daily struggles. First, I emphasize that our Lord treats us as "His beloved," which takes on enormous importance when we consider the responsibilities entrusted to us as citizens of heaven, and the anguish that lies ahead in carrying out such a commission.

Second, we see that when the call is made to us, we are treated as "strangers and pilgrims" We could say that the Lord knows us as "His beloved strangers and pilgrims." The two adjectives used when addressing the beloved are also important, because first He reminds us that "For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). We live on this earth as strangers; we belong to heaven as the Lord Himself said: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John

17:16). The patriarch Abraham gave us a beautiful example of this truth in ancient times for us; let us consider what the Letter to the Hebrews tells us: "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:9-10). Not only are we told that he lived in his own land as a foreigner, because he was convinced that he belonged to a better land, but he did so with the character of a pilgrim, that is, he was passing through without a fixed place here, but walking with his eyes fixed on where God dwells. The Apostle Paul also speaks to us about this: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God...For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:1,3).

But Peter tells us something else of utmost importance, which is that we have a fierce and daily battle between our carnal passions and the already redeemed soul. Paul referred to the believers in Galatia the same truth: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." (Galatians 5:17). Having said all this, we can then understand what the Apostle Peter tells us at the beginning; we must put all our intention and will to not please our carnal desires. But brothers, this is not easy, the Word of God mentions it as A BATTLE.

But we do not only have the theme of this article from Peter; he says much more in his precious letter. Regarding the ministry that has been graciously granted to us, he tells us: "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; 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: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing." (1 Peter 2:14-17). We are told that if we leave all things in the hands of the Lord, He will judge them in due time for all the abuses they perpetrate against the saved (1 Peter 4:5), and then he lists a series of exercises that will be useful to keep us busy with our earthly commission and overcome the anxiety produced by unsatisfied carnal desires, such as: the genuine exercise of fervent love for one another; practicing hospitality in a broad way, and occupying ourselves with the exercise of our gifts granted by the Holy Spirit for the glory of God (vv. 8-11).

So, beloved of God, we have a permanent struggle from outside and sometimes also from within the group of believers; for which reason we are obliged to cling to the Lord and always keep in mind His own sufferings for the truth, so that our spirit does not grow weary and faint as we wait for His return.