

Those Times When Satan Strikes Hard
Peter Nieman Martin, Sr.

I want to share something of a personal sort in a two page paper that can help you if the devil has ever hit you hard! Have you had those times when you felt totally unlike yourself? Thoughts would come to mind that weren't you! I don't mean innocent thoughts but thoughts that would be injurious. Actions would come to mind that wasn't you! These actions would be like those in the world that people commit when they are not thinking. You knew these things were of Satan, and they would hit you so hard that you would have to stop what you were doing to pray! Have you ever experienced that? What terrible times those seemed to be!

I am not writing to you about these things because I have read about them in a book but I have experienced them. Satan has torn at me so mightily (perhaps I am going too far in saying this) that I thought I was losing my mind!! These episodes do not happen every once in a while, but often. Gospel preachers are tormented a great deal! As **you** have been tested by Satan, so have I. But why am I exposing myself in such a fashion? My reason is simple—that you might know what God will do in those difficult times. I want to share with you what these trials have caused me to do for relief.

I have learned to pray in a fervent fashion (James 5:16) and without ceasing (I Thessalonians 5:17). I have come to recognize the truth that Satan prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (I Peter 5:8). This is a major crisis! When you realize that you are that person, a high degree of serious sets in! I have come to learn something else from these experiences—without the Christian armor you are doomed! I kid you not! We will be like a reed shaking in the wind without the armor. Here is what we need to consider so far as the armor goes. Listen to Paul who writes the following exhortation to the Ephesians:

In conclusion, be strong in the Lord—be empowered through your union with him; draw your strength from him—that strength which his boundless might provides. Put on God's whole armor—the armor of a heavy-armed soldier, which God supplies—that you may be able successfully to stand up against all the strategies and the deceits of the devil. For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood—contending only with physical opponents—but against the despotism, against the powers, against the master spirits who are the world rulers of the present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly supernatural sphere. Therefore put on God's complete armor, that you may be able to resist and stand your ground on the evil day of danger, and having done all the crisis demands, to stand firmly in your place. Stand therefore—hold your ground—having tightened the belt of truth around your loins, and having put on the breastplate of integrity and of moral rectitude and right standing with God; and having shod your feet in preparation to face the enemy with the firm-footed stability, the promptness and the readiness produced by the good news of the Gospel of peace. Lift up over all the covering shield of saving faith, upon which you can quench all the flaming missiles of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword the Spirit wields, which is the Word of God. Pray at all times—on every occasion, in every season—in the Spirit, with all manner of prayer and entreaty. To that end keep alert and watch with strong purpose and perseverance, interceding in behalf of all the saints who are God's consecrated people. Ephesians 6:10-18, Amplified. By the grace of God, I have been helped by putting on the armor. I encourage you to put it on and keep it on. God Bless!

Bible Lessons To Really Consider

The Two Covenants

Author: Peter Nieman Martin, Sr.

The covenant of God revealed in Jeremiah 31:31-34 is the basis of New Testament salvation. It represents a prophecy that declares the benefits of salvation that God will bestow on mankind as a result of the coming of His Son. It is directly related to Paul's gospel in I Corinthians 15:3, 4, and Peter's sermon in Acts 2 and Acts 10 as this paper will clearly show. While Jeremiah 31:31-34 identifies with the New Testament, it is not related to the covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis 17:2, 7-14.

Having laid these two thoughts before you, I will proceed now to prove them true according to the word of God. Let us consider Jeremiah 31:31-34. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this will be covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." The elements of this covenant center on the following points:

- (1) the human heart as the storage center of God's law
- (2) the necessity of being taught before one can enter the covenant
- (3) the insignificance of status
- (4) the remission of sins as its promise

God said, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33). Paul, in Romans 10:8, said, "But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach..." If you were to continue reading what Paul wrote, you would find that salvation is the end point. Not only in this case, but also in the case which Jesus made in Matthew 28:19, when he commanded his disciples to teach the people before baptizing them. No man can come to God unless first taught. What is preached is considered by the hearer, weighed, and decided on. All of this activity takes place in the human heart. The human heart is the reservoir of the word of God (Romans 10:9, 10, 17).

The idea of status is swept away because whether poor or rich, infamous or famous, a servant or royalty, sin has placed all in the same condition—unacceptable to God. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). Not only is this so in the Jewish community but in the Greek community as well. God is not a respecter of persons. All must come to God through Jesus Christ, as it is written, "No, man cometh unto the Father except by me." (John 14:6).

The fourth point relates to the remission of sins, a point that cannot be found in the Mosaic dispensation. In the covenant announced in Jeremiah, one finds the idea of the remission of sins. This idea does not suggest the rolling back of sins for in this is a remembrance of sins made every year as is pointed out in Hebrews 10:1-4. The idea in Jeremiah has permanency. What is

critical here is the sacrifice. Jeremiah's covenant involves Christ, the Abrahamic covenant does not nor the Mosaic Law to which it is attached.

The covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis 17 is limited in terms of people, duration, and expectation. The Hebrews are the people intended for this covenant. They are the primary people. In Genesis 17:7-14, there are secondary people who fit in this covenant as well, and they are the unrelated who are born in the house, or who have been purchased with money. The covenant of circumcision impresses itself upon both the primary and secondary. This is not so in the covenant which Jeremiah speaks of. (See Acts 15:1, 24).

The Abrahamic covenant was never designed for permanency. The language of Jeremiah 31:31-34 makes it clear the first covenant would not be permanent. The new was to replace the old. (See Hebrews 8:7-13; 10:1-9). I would like to

The expectations of the covenant made with Abraham centered on the possession of land and being the people of God. The idea of possessing land is not mentioned in the covenant spoken of by Jeremiah, nor is the idea of the remission of sins spoken of in the covenant with Abraham.

It is therefore concluded that the covenants are not the same in terms of people, duration, and expectations. I hope this very brief work helps someone to share some biblical information with another to the glory of God.

The Renewing of the Mind
By Peter Nieman Martin, Sr.
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David said, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. (Psalms 139:13, 14, 16, NIV.)"

Know my dear brothers and sisters that the mind of God is upon us continually. In the 84, 600 seconds that comprise any given day, there is not a second that the he is unmindful of our activities. (See Psalms 139). This is characteristic of God's love for mankind. As I consider God through the writings of Paul, my spirit is stirred to rise to new heights for those writings demand it. Bear with me as I try to lay out a text that has caused me to think this way. If you would get your bibles out and turn them to Romans 11:29-36, you will discover the power behind Romans 12:1, 2.

As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all. Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him? For from him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

When God made promise to Abraham saying, "in thee shall all nations be blessed (Genesis 12:3)," this is the realization of how the Gentiles were brought in. How magnificent it was that God brought the Gentiles into his covenant, and not only so but on equal footing with the Jews! Do you remember when Peter went up to Jerusalem after the conversion of the household of Cornelius and was criticized of the Jews? They said to him, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them (Acts 11:1-3)." This was the attitude of the Jew toward the Gentile -- a basic attitude. Now of the twelve apostles who was to minister to the Gentiles? Not a single one of the twelve was to minister. The Lord had someone else in mind for this momentous task. He had selected Saul of Tarsus a man who considered himself "the chief of sinners"—and this because he was bent on utterly destroying Christianity before his conversion. His hatred was such that he held the cloaks of those who stoned the first Christian martyr Stephen in Acts 8. The power of the Lord in turning even the vilest men to the "ways of righteousness" is seen in the conversion of Saul. He became a man so changed that he would be entrusted with the ministry of Christ regarding the Gentiles. This clearly demonstrates that the "paths of God are past tracing out!"

That God has extended such mercy to the Gentiles is reason enough for us to “present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God which is our reasonable (spiritual) service. We must resist every effort to be conformed to this world. The idea of conformity suggests enslavement as it is written, “Know you not that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.” The idea of conformity is against the idea of conversion because the essence of conversion is rooted in its definition which calls for change. This change despises the ways of the flesh. My how resisting the sins we love is easier said than done! The desires of our sinful nature constantly call to us—enticing us to yield. All too often we do give in-- unmindful of the sorrow the yielding brings. There are those times that we know the consequences but could care less! Pleasure now is the goal! We will not be denied. Eat, drink, and be merry for we live only once!! This is the thinking of the old man—steeped in sin, separated from God---eyes blind to the ways of righteousness, ears deaf to the truths of God.

But what does the world have to offer? Do you know? Is it money, fame or prestige? All of these things are vanity. What shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul? What shall he give in exchange for his soul? Christians realize that to be of the flesh is to desire the things of the flesh. They also know that those who desire the things of the flesh cannot please God from whom all blessings flow. God has called us “out of” this world’s enslavement and “into” his Son’s body, the church. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, behold all things are new. The thoughts which once dominated us have been reduced in power-- in terms of their ability to entice us to sin. The world of God which is growing in us is becoming the dominant force now. There is decreasing room for the other thoughts to dwell. They are being pushed out. The more we grow in Christ the less these old thoughts matter. This is due the transformation brought about by the renewing of our minds.

Solomon once said you are what you think (Proverbs 23:7). We are shaped by our thoughts into the people we now are. Conversion has created change in the way we think. Thoughts of immense power have come into the mind giving light to what was once dark (Psalms 119:130). The law of God is perfect in its converting of the soul (Psalms 19:7). The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes (Psalms 19:8). The testimony of the Lord is sure making the simple wise (Psalms 19:7). Transformation signals change. Paul shows how change truly comes. It comes when our minds have been renewed by right thinking. Psychology has found this to be the case—that people are not changed until their thinking becomes so. How the roots of habit are deepened by the power we give them by repetition of action. The more we do a thing, the more it we do a thing! Breaking this cycle is not easy. Our Lord Jesus Christ has given us the power to break these cycles if we follow his commandments. Is it not written, “If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed: and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:31, 32)”? Let us therefore be the very best we can be in serving God for he has shown us divine mercy in redeeming us by the precious blood of his son. Let us prove the good, perfect, and acceptable will of God in all that we do. God Bless.

What Really Matters
By Peter Nieman Martin, Sr.

The more I think about it, the more sense it makes. The development of inner fortitude is of primary importance to Christian stability. Knowledge of scripture is crucial, but what is of more value is understanding how scripture works within the spiritual makeup of the individual to convert him/ her to the image the scripture represents. So often, we hear about people having times in their lives where difficulties create periods of frustration and distress. The mental landscape of those individuals changes from sunny to gloomy—like we have seen in Indianapolis when rain is in the forecast, and we see the darkening clouds moving eastward from Plainfield. Then there are the droplets on the windshield, and finally by the time we reach home, the storm has arrived in full. What dominates us at this point is focusing on the storm's intensity. What we do not think about much is the good that the rain is doing in some areas.

James, in his epistle, is telling us to radically change the way we think. He is saying that we cannot continue to think in negative ways and expect positive outcomes. He is saying that the face we paint on a situation is the face that we have to live with because that very face is what we have come to accept as our lot. James says, "Count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations, knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience."(James 1:2). Let us briefly look into the text for a moment. "Count it all joy" is the first part of that text. What does it mean? It means to see beyond the situation. It means to not give focus to the uncomfortable nature the situation has placed you in whether it be mentally, emotionally, financially, or socially, but rather keep focused on the larger picture that will come into focus after a while.

The stresses and perplexities of a trial twist us this way and that. The immediate impact is to push us off course like a ship in the sea being driven by strong winds. It is at this point, I believe that James is saying, *"Now stop and consider your bearings. Get your compass out. Which way are you heading now? Which way should you be heading? Go over to the wheel and make adjustments to get back on the right course. Now, mind you, the winds will be against you. Let your sails down while you are in dangerous and contrary winds, and keep them down until you can catch a favorable wind that will help propel you in the right direction. But keep your hand to the wheel! Do not take it off for any reason! Do this, and you will find that you will make it to your destination. Be assured that this set back is nothing of the sort. It is a step up to greater potential. The boat you are piloting will have been found sea-worthy by the end of the present journey—able to hold together in the fiercest winds by God's grace. Rejoice in this! Rejoice knowing that every time your boat leaves harbor, it will return stronger and proven. The reason why? Its captain will have been tried and proven—confident that wherever the travels lead, that God, through the multitude of trials, will bring the ship home again and again."*

What matters is not the nature of the trial, but the name of One who has permitted it. What matters is not the fierceness of the winds but the faith that is being developed which will become stronger than any wind. What matters is not the perplexity the trial has temporarily placed you in, but the perseverance that has developed as a result of it. Getting hit is not the focal point. It is the getting up, and moving forward every time that really matters. It is the staying on course that really matters.

A Very Brief Analysis of Galatians 6:7-10

By Peter N. Martin, Sr.

Do not be deceived and deluded and misled; God will not allow Himself To be sneered at—scorned, disdained or mocked by mere pretensions or professions, or His precepts being set aside. He inevitably deludes himself who attempts to delude God. For whatsoever a man sows, that and that only is what he will reap. For he who sows to his own flesh (lower nature, sensuality) will from the flesh reap decay and ruin and destruction; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap life eternal. And let us not lose heart and grow weary and faint in acting nobly and doing right, for in due time and at the appointed season we shall reap, if we do not loosen and relax our courage and faint. So then, as occasion and opportunity open to us, let us do good (morally) to all people [not only being useful or profitable to them, but also doing what is for their spiritual good and advantage]. Be mindful to be a blessing, especially to those of the household of faith—those who belong to God’s family with you, the believers. Amplified Version.

I have enlarged the boundaries of the study by adding verses 7, 9, and 10. I believe by doing this we can capture the apostle’s purpose in admonishing and encouraging the Galatians. I want to be clear in saying that this passage of scripture does not focus on the Holy Spirit as a person or member of the Godhead. However, it does focus on His teaching, and the benefits derived from being faithful to that teaching. It also focuses on the disastrous consequences which result from being disobedient to it. Let us consider this passage verse by verse.

Verse 7, 8. Do not be deceived or deluded and misled; God will not allow Himself to be sneered at—scorned, disdained or mocked [by mere pretensions or professions, or His precepts being set aside]. He inevitably deludes himself who attempts to delude God. For whatever a man sows that and that only is what he will reap. For he who sows to his own flesh (lower nature, sensuality) will from the flesh reap decay and ruin and destruction; but he sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap life eternal. Never is it possible to sow to the flesh and from that sowing reap the benefits of the Spirit; nor is it the case to sow to the Spirit and reap from that sowing the works of the flesh. This point is clear in the sixteenth and seventeenth verses of Galatians 5.

But I say, walk and live habitually –responsive to and controlled and guided by the Spirit; then you will certainly not gratify the cravings and desires of the flesh—of human nature without God. For the desires of the flesh are opposed to the (Holy) Spirit, and the [desires of the] Spirit are opposed to the flesh (Godless human nature); for these are antagonistic to each other—continually withstanding and in conflict with each other—so that you are not free but are prevented from doing what you desire to do.

As humans, we definitely act on the information dominating the mind. In an unconverted state, we are prisoners to our sinful nature. I believe that Paul was alluding to this in

chapter seven of Romans when he spoke of an inability to do what was right because of the dominance of the sin principle in the flesh. The things of the flesh are counter to the things of the Spirit. They are in great opposition, as much as Satan is in opposition to God. While this last statement may seem bizarre, I believe it to be absolutely factual. I use as a proof text John 8:44 which says,

You are of your father the devil; and it is your will to practice the lusts and gratify the desires [which are characteristic] of your father. He was a murdered from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a falsehood, he speaks what is natural to him; for he is a liar [himself] and the father of lies and all that is false.

I cannot think of language strong enough to lend emphasis to this point, except to say that when we yield to the flesh, we are immediately aware (those of us whose consciences are still sensitive) of the tremendous surge of guilt that rocks our being. Any breeze of temporary joy produced by the sin quickly turns into a tornado of spiritual destruction which draws us into a vortex formed by scriptures which remind us that the wrath of God is ready to be revealed against all who commit such things. Habitual obedience to the sinful nature is a powerful declaration of our independence from God.

In opposition to the guilt one faces when one sins is the peace one realizes when one pays the cost to live righteously. There is a cost to living righteously—overcoming the desire to sin! The apostle Paul says, **“Therefore there is now no condemnation—no adjudging guilty or wrong—for those who are in Christ Jesus, who live not after the dictates of the flesh, but after the dictates of the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life [which is] in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”** Living righteously is a testimony (the most genuine kind) that we are disciples indeed (John 8:31, 32).

I want to take the paper in another direction at this point (but just for a pause). The person of the Holy Spirit is not at issue in this text. The text does not reveal the nature of the Spirit but rather the consequences that we face by rejecting the apostle’s doctrine or the blessings that attend to obeying it. The apostles’ doctrine is the Spirit’s doctrine. By obeying the apostles’ doctrine we are sowing to the Spirit. Think of it this way, by obeying the apostles’ doctrine we are submitting our minds and actions to the will of God. From this submission, the fruit of righteousness is completed in us by the Spirit. When we consider verses 22, 23 of Galatians 5, we can see this operation. **“But the fruit of the (Holy) Spirit, [the work which His presence within accomplishes]—is love, joy (gladness), peace, patience (an even temper, forbearance), kindness, goodness (benevolence), faithfulness; (meekness, humility) gentleness, self-control (self-restraint), continence). Against such things there is no law [that can bring a charge].** I think that the 24th verse is certainly applicable as identifying the true Christians—**“And those who belong to Christ Jesus, the Messiah, have crucified the flesh—the Godless human nature—with its passions and appetites and desires.”**

Fulfilling the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2), walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16), being led by the Spirit (Galatians 5:18), and sowing to the Spirit (Galatians 6:8) are speaking to

the same thing. Let us test this conclusion by simply applying simple to logic to set into motion a natural outcome of events. If the law of the Spirit is the law of Christ then to sow to the Spirit would be the same as sowing to Christ. If obeying the Spirit is the same as obeying Christ (we know that Jesus Christ is not the Holy Spirit), then obeying the law of the Spirit is the same as obeying the law of Christ. If Jesus had begun (John 16:12) what the Spirit finished (John 16:13), the teaching regarding Christianity, then what the Spirit finished was the Law of Christ. Having said this, I conclude that God's law for the New Testament is what Christ began and what the Spirit concluded. The focus of Galatians 6:8 is not that the Spirit is but rather what He has that should identify our walk. What the Spirit has is the law which was manifested by the apostles. There are two realities (1) the apostles were apostles because of their relationship with Christ, and thus His true ambassadors to the world that then was, and (2) the Spirit of God who knows the deep things of God, (I Corinthians 2:10-13) taught the apostles who in turn taught the early church. But the things of the Spirit of God are spiritual which only can be received by the spiritually minded (I Corinthians 2:15). Those receiving the spiritual teaching and who act on it are in effect sowing to the Spirit who produces the fruit in the obedient servant.

Galatians 6:9, 10. And let us not lose heart and grow weary and faint in acting nobly and doing right, for in due time and at the appointed season we shall reap, if we do not loosen and relax our courage and faint. So then, as occasion and opportunity open up to us, let us do good (morally) to all people [not only being useful or profitable to them, but also doing what is for their spiritual good and advantage]. Be mindful to be a blessing, especially to those of the household of faith—those who belong to God's family with you, the believers.

This encouragement on heels of sowing and reaping puts the Galatians in remembrance of what is expected of them in the new life. *Doing right* requires great effort. It is certainly a worthwhile endeavor. There may come times while trying to act nobly and to do what is right, opposition may rise against us. Paul is saying not to lose heart and grow weary and faint. It is interesting that the Amplified Version uses language that describes a process—**losing heart, growing weary, and fainting**. In his letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul set forth an undeniable truth that would aid the young evangelist in his work—**For God did not give us a spirit of timidity—of cowardice, of craving and cringing and fawning fear—but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of calm and well-balanced mind and discipline and self-control. Do not blush or be ashamed then to testify to and for our Lord, nor of me a prisoner for His sake, but [with me] take your share of the suffering [to which the preaching] of the gospel [may expose you, and do it] in the power of God (II Timothy 1:7, 8 Amplified Version)**. The new life demands that we do well. Listen to Paul as he addresses the Romans, “I am speaking in familiar human terms, because of your natural limitations. For as you yielded your bodily members [and faculties] as servants to impurity and ever increasing lawlessness, so now yield your bodily members [and faculties] once for all as servants to righteousness—right being and doing—[which leads] to sanctification (Romans 6:19, Amplified Version).”

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The world is not excluded in our efforts to do well toward them; otherwise how can we impact the world to follow us in our Christian walk. In Galatians 6:10, we find an inference at work, that being “**love your neighbor as yourself.**” The command to “do good to all men” is given in full knowledge of the fact that “**civil authorities are not a terror to [people of] good conduct, but to [those of] bad behavior. Would you have no dread of him who is in authority? Then do what is right and you will receive his approval and commendation (Romans 13:3, Amplified Version).**” What Paul is asking of the Galatians in verse 10 can only come when they are “walking in the Spirit.”

The next phase of this scripture is directed to members of the church. The Galatians were told to do good to all men, but especially to those of the household of faith. The Church family is vital to the Christian. It is the only unit that can nurture the Christian from birth to maturity. The physical family (unless they are members of the household of faith) cannot do what the Church is capable of doing. Great love should especially be shown to members of God’s family. If motivation is sought as to why we should do such to the body of Christ, we need not go any further than Matthew 25:40, which says, “**And the King will reply to them, Truly, I tell you, in as far as you did it to one of the least [in the estimation of men] of these My brethren, you did it to Me.**”

Galatians 6:12-15 serves as an appropriate ending for a letter that began with a condemnation against those who were trying (and in some cases were successful) to bring new converts under the Law of Moses.

Those who want to make a good impression and a fine show in the flesh, Would try to compel you to receive circumcision simply so that they may escape being persecuted for allegiance to the cross of Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One. For even the circumcised (the Jews) themselves do not [really] keep the law, but they want to have you circumcised in order that they may glory in your flesh—your subjection to external rites. But far be it from me to glory [in anything or in anyone] except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, through Whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world! For neither is circumcision [now] of any importance, nor uncircumcision, but [only] a new creation [the result of a new birth and a new nature in Christ Jesus, the Messiah].

Inasmuch as a new creation is what is important, then how that new creation walks in its new life is critical since that new creation is in Christ Jesus. The Law of Moses is not in Christ Jesus nor is the rite of circumcision (both things contrary to the gospel that Paul preached to them when they first obeyed (Galatians 1:6-9). Only walking in the teaching of the apostles which came by way of the Holy Spirit, could the Galatians hope to inherit eternal life.

Can You Use A Little Spiritual Help This Morning?

All the Crisis Demand Ephesians 6:13

By Peter Nieman Martin, Sr

As we tune our radios to international news and hear reports of the U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan or Israel and Hezbollah, we realize to some degree (because destruction and casualties are involved) the seriousness of war. Too often we become so fixed on the wars in the news that we ignore the war on the home front which is of a spiritual nature-- fought not over territories but over souls. This war like those we watch on television is not without casualties—the battlefield is littered with casualties, some mortally wounded, some seriously injured, and others lightly affected. Christianity while offering the most sublime character achievable in human life is marked with constant warfare; those who connect themselves with Christianity are targets for all of the forces against it which are many.

I would like for you to consider the text coming from the Amplified Version. My purpose for using this version is to magnify some points I believe will be of benefit to you in this warfare. I will quote Ephesians 6:10-18, which appear as follows:

10. In conclusion, be strong in the Lord—be empowered through your union with Him; draw your strength from Him—that strength which His (boundless) might provides.
11. Put on God's whole armor—the armor of a heavy-armed soldier, which God supplies, That you may be able to successfully stand up against [all] the strategies and the deceits of the devil.
12. For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood—contending only with physical opponents—but against the despotisms (authorities), against the powers, against [the master spirits who are] the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) sphere.
13. Therefore put on God's complete armor, that you maybe able to resist and stand your ground on the evil day [of danger], **and having done all [the crisis demands]**, to stand [firmly in your place].
14. Stand therefore—hold your ground—having tightened the belt of truth around your loins, and having put on the breastplate of integrity and of moral rectitude (virtue) and right standing with God;
15. And having shod your feet in preparation [to face the enemy with the firm-footed stability, the promptness and the readiness produced by the good news] of the Gospel of peace. [Isaiah 52:7.]
16. Lift up over all the (covering) shield of saving faith, upon which you can quench all of the flaming missiles of the wicked [one].
17. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

18. Pray all times—on every occasion, in every season—in the Spirit, with all [manner of] prayer and entreaty. To that end keep alert and watch with strong purpose and perseverance, interceding in behalf of all the saints (God’s consecrated people).

In this lesson, I hope to show the importance of mental preparedness, military posturing, and moral perseverance.

Having set these scriptures before you, I wish to come back to them a little later because Jesus is about to tell us how to get mentally prepared for conflict and crisis. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Master says (I will use the KJV),

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. (Matthew 5: 39-41).

In these scriptures, Jesus is talking about mental preparedness. By setting one’s thoughts on such a course, fear is compromised, handicapped. Jesus had begun his remarks in the just quoted text by saying in the 38th verse, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ The idea here is justice. In what follows is a non-violent approach to confrontation. The idea of being struck in the face is hardly appealing. Some would avoid it altogether; but most, if such a thing happened, would retaliate. Only a few would offer the other cheek. There is a certain kind of silent strength in those who offer the other cheek. They are not afraid of risks. The striker has to wonder about the character of the individual struck. To behave in such a manner would be to manifest Christ, not cowardice because it would take far more restraint to resist than to strike back

In the matter of litigation where a suit has been brought and a coat has been demanded, one is asked to part with the cloak as well. It is fully set in the heart to part with more than what is demanded. By being this way, the idea of loss is not really important. What is really important is control! In Luke 21:19, the Master said, “In your patience possess ye your souls.” In the world, there is a sense of trouble. This trouble creates a fear of loss of either life or things. Faithfulness to God offers serenity; the faithfulness of God offers protection. It must be remembered that Christians in loving their neighbors as themselves will not create situations where litigation is a problem. But in those cases where it happens, this is the mindset required to deal with it.

The same is the case with the mile. Your mind is not fixed on the first mile, but rather the second. This is mental preparedness. The ability to go beyond has always been there but when it has suited us. What is being talked about here is what suits heaven. It takes a certain mental toughness-- more than mental toughness, a certain spirit to carry on as these points call for us to do. It is my belief that Matthew 5:39-41 and Ephesians 6:10-17 are closely related.

Having set these scriptures before, let us examine their meaning as it relates to the child of God. The eleventh verse talks about the schemes of the devil. We are certainly reminded that the devil is not

passive. He is always at work, always planning, always scheming. The apostle Peter said, “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (I Peter 5:8).” As I reflect on Job, I am painfully reminded that there are no high walls keeping the devil out! There is no power on earth that can be effective in this battle. Forget the military! Forget nuclear weapons! We need a power beyond our own in order to deal with this! The apostle Paul is showing us what we need. Hear the great apostle again in II Corinthians 10:3-6,

3. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,
4. for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
5. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,
6. and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

Our strength comes from the Lord who is our strength. David said in the long ago, “The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear or dread? The Lord is the refuge and stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid (Psalms 27:1)?” We need to put on the whole armor of God to deal with the devil. The very reason we are getting crushed out here is because we are using our own devices to deal with Satan. Our intelligence is nothing to Satan, he has more! There are a lot of souls out there with the best education saying, “There is no God!” Satan has educated them well!

- (1) We need to tighten the belt of truth around our loins for those of us who have truth. Otherwise, you need to get truth so that you can tighten it around your loins. Bible studies and Sunday school are places where you can learn the truth. Draw the truth closer to you, have it as a constant companion as you go from day to day. Do not leave home without it!
- (2) We need to put on that breastplate of integrity (virtue) and right standing with God. That is the breastplate that says that we are not just going to live as we want to live but as God would have us to live. It also says that the only Master we are prepared to serve is Jesus Christ.
- (3) Our feet need to be shod in preparation to face the enemy with the firm-footed stability, the promptness and the readiness produced by the Good News of the gospel of peace. Our feet march in one direction—forward! They march in the direction of our faith—toward God and in the ways of God!
- (4) We need to have a shield of saving faith upon which we can quench all the flaming darts of Satan. If your faith is weak, your chances of survival will be limited! You will be a meal for Satan if you do not do anything to increase your faith. The time for excuses is far gone. The time for action is now! You are responsible for building up your faith! You are responsible for having on this piece of armor! Aren’t you tired of the darts getting through? Aren’t you tired of the misery they bring? Then do something about it! Build your faith so that it can withstand these darts! Build your faith so you can prove that your shield of faith will quench the fiery darts of the Wicked.
- (5) The helmet of salvation is the full knowledge that God has saved you for His purpose. The helmet of salvation is that God cannot lie! The helmet of salvation is that you know that if you live as God wants you to, heaven will be yours! The helmet of salvation is that you know that your sins will be forgiven when you repent! The helmet of your salvation is that you know that God will deliver you from all of your trials! So what is stopping you? With this knowledge, WHAT can STOP you?
- (6) The sword of the Spirit, the word of God is yours to have. It takes practice, lots of practice.

It takes long hours to learn how to use it effectively, along with lots of prayer. Don't drive souls away when you should be drawing them because of ill use with the sword. Don't let Satan trick you as to a scripture's meaning and cause you to transgress. Remember that "wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding (Proverbs 4:7)."

Now is the time to be a Christian in the fullest sense of the work! Now is the time to tell the world that you have had enough of its lies and deceptions, of its sin and iniquity. You will no longer serve it in the way it demands; you will no longer conform to her ways. God has called you to a higher standard, and you are out to meet it. Now is the time for you to stand and be counted amongst those who serve God through Christ. Remember the words of Paul to the Philippians as he closes the letter to them. "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. (Philippians 4:8, NAS)

MINI LESSONS TO GET YOU THROUGH THE DAY

By Peter Nieman Martin, Sr.

The Significance of Hope

Psalms 71:5

David, in his psalms, spoke continually of trusting in God during his most difficult periods in life. Here we have a king blessed with all the majesty which surrounds a king (servants for every imaginable thing, bodyguards, a great army, counselors and advisors, all the material possessions necessary for a comfortable life) but realizes that these things cannot deliver him from all of the troubles of life. David realized early on the need to trust in God. Listen to his language in Psalms 71:1-21 as he speaks to God.

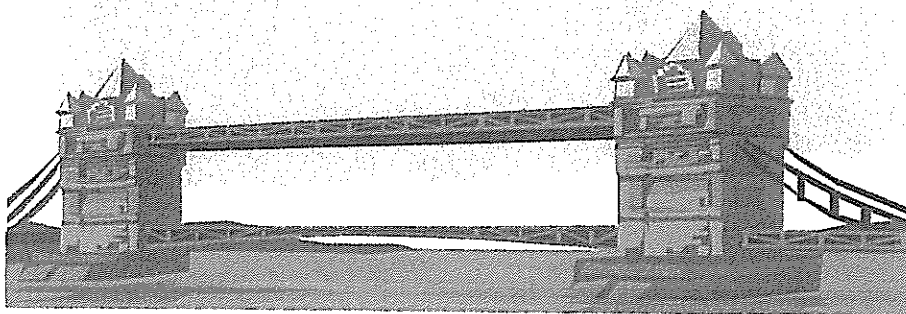
IN YOU, O LORD, do I put my trust and confidently take refuge; let me never be put to shame or confusion! Deliver me in Your righteousness and cause me to escape; bow down Your ear to me and save me! Be to me a rock of refuge in which to dwell, and a sheltering stronghold to which I may continually resort, which You have appointed to save me; for You are my rock and my fortress. Rescue me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the grasp of the unrighteous and ruthless man. For You are my hope; O Lord God. You are my trust from my youth and the source of my confidence. Upon You have I leaned and relied from birth; You are He Who took me from my mother's womb and have been my benefactor from that day. My praise is continually of you. I am as a wonder and surprise to many, but You are my strong refuge. My mouth shall be filled with Your praise and with Your honor all the day. Cast me not off nor send me away in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent and my powers fail. For my enemies talk against me; those who watch for my life consult together, saying, God has forsaken him; pursue and persecute and take him, for is none to deliver him. O God, be not far from me! O my God, make haste to help me! Let them be put to shame and consumed who are adversaries to my life; let them be covered with reproach, scorn, and dishonor who seek and require my hurt. But I will hope continually, and will praise You yet more and more. My mouth shall tell of Your righteous acts and of Your deeds of your salvation all the day, for their number is more than I know. I will come in the strength and with the mighty acts of he Lord God; I will mention and praise Your righteousness, even Yours alone. O God, You have taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared your wondrous works. Yes, even when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not, but keep me alive until I have declared Your mighty strength to this generation, and Your might and power to all that are to come. Your righteousness also, O God, is very high [reaching to the heavens]; You Who have done great things, O God, who is like unto You, who is Your equal? You Who have shown us[all], troubles great and sore, will quicken us again and will bring us up again from the depths of the earth. Increase my greatness (my honor), and turn and comfort me.

I think such a long quote merits our deepest attention. It speaks loudly to those things that are deep within which trouble us no end. While our problems seem imposing and unconquerable, they are manageable. Were sanity a bridge spanning one part of our

thinking to another, the columns upon which that bridge would rest would be faith and hope. Our coping with situations rests in God. Situations are complex in nature, generally multi-layered, and often beyond our ability to easily change to our advantage. Job is so right. "Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble." It seems the more we fool with "the situation" the worse it gets. But not to worry! Help is near! How near? Paul put it this way in writing to the Romans. He said, the word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart (Romans 10:8). I want you to consider the idea of the word being near you and in your heart in a general sense. Consider the scriptural material out of which HOPE is constructed, and tell me if it is the kind of material that crumbles under pressure arising from trials.

1. We are more than conquerors through him that loves us. Romans 8:37.
2. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Philippians 4:13
3. God will not give us more than our ability to bear. I Corinthians 10:13.
4. We may be troubled on every side, but not crushed! II Corinthians 4:8
5. We may be perplexed, but not driven to despair! II Corinthians 4:8
6. We may be persecuted, but not deserted to stand alone. II Corinthians 4:9
7. We may be struck to the ground but not destroyed. II Corinthians 4:9
8. God delivers us out of all our afflictions. Psalms 34:19.
9. We will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Psalms 27:13.
10. The Lord is our light and our salvation. Psalms 27:1.
11. The Lord is the strength of our lives. Psalms 27:1.
12. God will strengthen your heart! Psalms 27:14.
13. In time of trouble, God will hide us in his pavilion. Psalms 27:5.
14. We are to wait on the Lord and be of good courage. Psalms 27:14
15. God hears the voice of our supplications. Psalms 28:6.
16. The Lord will never leave us nor forsake us. Hebrews 13:5.

The shield of which Paul speaks of in Ephesians 6:16 is to be layered generously with these 16 points, and the hundreds of others that can be found in the scriptures. Faith and hope are constructed from these divine promises



FAITH

HOPE

Now we can walk across knowing there will be no collapsing, and just on the other side of hope is the realization of a stronger spiritual you because of God's love for you.

REWORK — DO A MORE THOROUGH CHAPTER TREATMENT.
PRAY MIGHTILY THAT GOD WILL GRANT YOU THE POWERS TO DO IT.

Hebrews 6:1-6. A brief examination of its inference.

By Peter Nieman Martin, Sr.

“Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.”
Proverbs 4:7, New International Version.

Solomon’s point on “getting an understanding” declares the powers of the mind when that mind is zealously affected by a divine purpose. Driven by the need to acquire an understanding, the mind will allow nothing to get in its way but only those things that contribute to the purpose at hand. And when understanding comes, it is like the dove bearing a freshly plucked olive branch in its beak to Noah.

Let us set before us the text that needs examination. Leave all preconceived notions at the door, and allow the epistle itself to shed an abundance of light on the matter at hand. I am confident that the epistle is strong enough to grow the following scriptures tall enough to allow all to see:

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame (Hebrews 6:1-6, King James Version).

I have found in my studies of scripture that you sometimes have to stare at the passage under consideration for a long time, absorbing its content. Then comes meditation where the various contexts are considered based on the content. From this comes the direction of the passage and its limits as far as that direction is concerned. I believe this process to be true in the examination of all passages whether in the Old or New Testament. I will apply it here in the examination of this passage because I believe in doing so, with God’s help, I will land on safe ground doctrinally when all is said and done.

The first word of Hebrews 6:1 is ***therefore***, and adverb or conjunction, according to Mr. Webster, meaning as a result of this or that; for this or that reason; consequently; hence. It is an inferential word that is used to draw a conclusion from something previously said. However, what was previously said that would cause the Hebrew writer to conclude what he has concluded? I believe that once this is determined, we can make remarkable sense out of Hebrews 6:1-6. The entire Hebrew epistle is a tremendous document, and I, for the purpose of making this effort as comprehensive as I am able, would like to establish a doctrinal pattern beginning from chapter one. Please bear with me.

The first chapter addresses not only the deity of Jesus as the Word of God (verse 2), but also the fact that he is God’s Son and a prophet (verse 2). Added to the fact of being God’s Son and a prophet, he is priest

and king (verse 3). He is better than the angels are (verses 4-14). Why are angels considered here? Angels served in the giving of the law. The Jews had judged them to be of great importance because of this. If angels served in the giving of the law, the law had to be tremendously important. Stephen, in his powerful defense recorded in Acts 7, stated in the 53rd verse, ***“Who have received the law by disposition of angels, and have not kept it.”*** Again, in Hebrews 2:2,3 ***“For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”*** If the law was important because of the angels’ association with it, then certainly the gospel would be far more important given Jesus’ association with it. Is not the creator superior to the created, for the scripture says, ***“Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire (Hebrews 1:7).”***

The second chapter focuses in on the humanity of Jesus—made lower than the angels and made like unto his brethren for the cause of tasting death for every man, and that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. But, in that chapter is also, an exalted Jesus who accomplished all that God had given him to do. In verses 9 and 18, we see evidence of a resurrected Jesus in whom the Hebrew Christians could place all of their faith, as the Jews in the Old Testament had placed their faith in God.

One could not think of the Old Testament without thinking of Moses and his role in delivering the children of God out of Egypt and as God’s lawgiver. Nevertheless, Jesus surpassed Moses in glory. The third chapter of the Hebrew letter states in verses 3-6, the following: ***“For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we’ if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”*** Implied in the sixth verse is faith, and such as required to be identified with Christ. Hebrews 3:7-12 addresses ***unbelief***, the kind that caused rejection by God and that did not allow entrance into the rest. Verses 13-15 admonish the Hebrew Christians to continue in the faith regardless what happens, and verses 16-19 serve as reminders of what happened in the Old Testament among those ***who stopped believing***.

Chapter 4 continues dealing with unbelief for the first eleven verses. The third word in the first verse is the word ***therefore***. That inferential word is here declaring that if the Christians slipped into disbelief, like the Hebrews of the Old Testament, the same result would happen—they would miss the promised rest. The 12th and 13th verses of chapter four affirm the idea that nothing escapes the word of God. It establishes the fact that God has discerned all the intents of the heart, and if unbelief is present, it God knows it and judges it as such. Hebrews 4:12, 13 is similar to I Chronicles 28:9, which says, ***“And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.”*** The last three verses of chapter four reflect on the priesthood of Jesus, serving as a point of entry into the fifth chapter, where they (the last three verses of Hebrews 4) fit seamlessly into the first ten verses of this new chapter (chapter 5). Under the law, the priesthood of Aaron, the Levitical order, ministered sacrifices to God (Hebrews 9:6, 7).. Was that priesthood still in effect at the time of the

Hebrew epistle? The answer is no. The priesthood had changed. God had made Jesus a high priest after the order of Melchizedek (Psalms 110:4). The Levitical order was over (Hebrews 7:1-12).

I want to bring your attention to Hebrews 5:11-14, which says, ***“Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their sense exercised to discern both good and evil.”*** Look intently at the words of this text, and you will discover that it applies to two things: (1) more to be said about Melchizedek, and (2) the immaturity of the Hebrews to whom this epistle is written. This is the pivotal point of the study because it sets up the inferential design of Hebrews 6:1. Was it possible for the Hebrews to understand the weightier issues concerning the priesthood of Melchizedek as long as they were in an immature state? Of course not! There is a brief lapse of time between Hebrews 5:11 and Hebrews 6:16, and the reason for this (I humbly believe) is to reassure the saints here of why they should remain faithful and move to a point of maturity. They needed to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

However, what of the chief scriptures found in Hebrews 6:1-6? Analyzing them one by one under the light of biblical scrutiny and fairness of doctrine, what do they say? ***“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection: not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.”*** I would now like to provide the New International Version’s Hebrews 6:1. ***“Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God.*** In the King James Version, the term leaving is used. In present day grammar, the term leaving is a present participle (a verb with an ING ending) which is used in the construction of progressive tenses. Yet there are those times when the simple present (leave--as is used in the New International Version) conveys the same meaning as the present participle. The definition of leaving simply means vacating. The Hebrews are admonished to vacate what is evidently elementary. The elementary teachings of Jesus do not include his priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, but rather repentance and faith. Faith and repentance, one can successfully argue, are things involved in the conversion process (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). These people need no foundation for they had been converted long enough understand these matters. Verse 2 talks about ***“instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.*** Instruction about baptisms for conversion was no needed seeing it followed along the same lines as faith and repentance. If one wanted to argue the baptism of the Holy Spirit, then certainly Acts 2 and Acts 10 would nicely address that subject as having fulfilled the prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:28) and John the Baptist (Matthew 3:10, 11). There is nothing complex about these subjects so far as doctrine goes. The laying on of hands is elementary and would be so to the Hebrews in light of Hebrews 2:4, ***“God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.*** The Hebrew writer said, ***“And God permitting, we will do so.”*** Do what? Go on to maturity. This is the thought here

The fourth and fifth verses are critical to our study because they answer the questions inferred by the sixth verse: those questions being how is Christ crucified afresh all over again and how is he subjected to public disgrace? But not only questions raised by the sixth verse, but there is an answer at its very beginning. What is it exactly that crucifies the Son of God afresh and puts him to an open shame? The

answer is obvious by the first four words of the sixth verse (NIV) and the first five words (KJV), which say respectively, “if they fall away” and “if they shall fall away.” Of whom is it speaking? Christians are the answer here. However, let us be more specific. Those Christians who were once enlightened, who have tasted of the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Ghost, tasted the goodness of the word of God, and the powers of the coming age are the ones in view. What is grammatically interesting about the fourth and fifth verses is that the language is in the perfect tense that is to say that all of the things have been acquired. These spiritual intimacies is so unique and complete that to abandon these things places one in jeopardy of being eternally lost. To abandon these things is to abandon the Lord, and to abandon the Lord is apostasy! A child of God may be eternally lost! Let us be clear as to what constitutes apostasy. It means rejecting the faith—not sinning before a sinner a single time. To agree with the latter is to not have a proper understanding of the scriptures. Things that accompany salvation (Hebrews 6:9) are those things that fight against apostasy. What triggers apostasy is unbelief (Hebrews 6:6), and what guarantees salvation is belief (Hebrews 6:12).

The tenth chapter of Hebrews makes further doctrinal points as we consider the spiritual context with Hebrews 6. “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed in pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for he is faithful that promised) 10:22, 23. An act of faithlessness would be to forsaken the assemblies. Understand this; this scripture is not addressing sporadic attendance but rather a ceasing to attend at all. A strong spiritual constitution would enable us to attend as many services as possible because we realize that spiritual strength is where the people of God are.

In my conclusion, Hebrews 6:1-6 have nothing to do with sinning before a sinner in a single act and as a result putting Jesus back on the cross and putting him to an open shame. I find it exceedingly difficult to justify how such an idea exists. Seriously, even if I dropped my guard and took a non-serious look at the text, I would not arrive at that conclusion. We must understand that sin is sin regardless where it is committed. We must be mindful of sin at all times, for the danger is just as great before another Christian as it is before a sinner.

A Fair Interpretation of I Peter 3:19, 20: Determining the messenger and the recipients of his message.

Peter Nieman Martin, Sr.

That this is one of the most difficult scriptures in the bible, there is no doubt. The complexity of the passage is bewildering and the interpretations advanced are controversial. One wonders how sense can be made of something so bewilderingly complex and controversial, yet the words of Jesus are so true—“Seek and ye shall find.” I have mightily wrestled with this passage; however, like Jacob wrestling with the angel, I have not come away without a blessing, for which I give all the glory to God. I have always respected able men who, through much reading and study, have brought ideas to the table worthy of further analysis by those of us tracking the truth. They make the journey so much more bearable because of the work and time (in some case decades of focused study). Two such men (both dead now) have helped me in doctrinal analysis and textual examination of difficult passages—Brother Guy N. Woods, one of the finest twentieth century doctrinal scholars in our brotherhood; and Albert Barnes, one of the finest scholars of New Testament doctrine whose writings are even now treasured as doctrinal gold mines to bible prospectors whose picks, shovels, and sifters are at ready to mine sound doctrine. I have examined the writings of these men carefully, and I am not ashamed to quote them in this paper.

The target of this examination is the fourth and fifth words of I Peter 3:19. The entire text reads as follows: **“By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison...”** The question of the hour is **who went?** This question raises other questions that in turn raise other questions, but I have discovered that if we answer the main questions, the others go away! The kinds of questions that go away are (1) Do the 19th and 20th verses prove the Catholic Doctrine of purgatory? (2) Did Jesus preach the gospel of salvation to the people who died in the flood after he had died on Calvary? (3) What was contained in His message? (3) How long did He present His message? (4) Did the people who died in

the flood accept the preaching of Jesus? (5) Is God a respecter of persons? (6) Is Romans 9:15 applicable here?—For he saith to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” (7) If, as some scholars have concluded, Jesus is preaching a message of victory, why then are the antediluvians the recipients? Is not a victory announcement suited for the righteous? Why then present it to the disobedient? These are just some of the questions that can be avoided in arriving at a fair conclusion. Let us now proceed at the gathering of data for analysis in arriving at this fair conclusion.

Barnes, in making a point concerning the 18th verse --*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.*”—, stated “Evidently by the Spirit referred to in the 18th verse is the Divine nature of the Son of God; that by which he was quickened again, after he had been put to death; the Son of God regarded as a Divine Being, or in that same nature which afterwards became incarnate, and whose agency was employed in quickening the man Christ Jesus, who had been put to death. The meaning is, that the same ‘Spirit’ which was efficacious in restoring him to life, after he was put to death, was that by which he preached to the spirits in prison.” Exactly what is Albert Barnes advocating here? “The word ‘spirit’, so far as the mere use of the word is concerned, might refer to his own soul, to his Divine nature, or to the Holy Spirit. It is evident (1.) that it does not refer to his own soul, for, (a) as we have seen, the reference to the former clause is to his human nature, including all that pertained to him as a man, body and soul (Barnes alludes to Jesus being put to death in the flesh); (b) there was no power in his own spirit, regarded as that appertaining to his human nature, to raise him up from the dead, any more than there is such a power in any other human soul. That power does not belong to a human soul in any of its relations or conditions. (2.) It seems equally clear that this does not refer to the Holy Spirit, or The Third Person of the Trinity, for it may be doubted whether the work of raising

the dead is anywhere ascribed to that Spirit. His particular province is to enlighten, awaken, convict, convert, and sanctify the soul; to apply redemption to the hearts of men, and to lead them to God. The influence is moral, not physical; an influence accompanying the truth, not the exertion of mere physical power. (3.) It remains, then, that the reference is to his own Divine nature—a nature by which he was restored to life after he was crucified; to the Son of God, regarded as the Second Person of the Trinity. This appears, not only from the facts above stated, but also (a) from the connection. It is stated that it was in or by this spirit that he went and preached in the days of Noah. But it was not his spirit as a man that did this, for his human soul had no existence. Yet it seems that he did this personally or directly, and not by the influences of the Holy Spirit, for it is said that ‘he went and preached.’ The reference, therefore, cannot be to the Holy Ghost, and the fair conclusion is that it refers to his Divine nature. (b) This accords with what the apostle Paul says, (Romans 1:3, 4) ‘which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh,’—that is, in respect to his human nature,—‘and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness,’ that is, in respect to his Divine nature,—‘by the resurrection from the dead.’ (c) It accords with what the Savior himself says, John 10:17, 18: ‘I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.’ This must refer to his Divine nature, for it is impossible to conceive that a human soul should have the power of restoring its former tenement, the body, to life.

Is Barnes correct in his analysis? I believe he is for the following reasons: in regards to the human spirit, it is written in Ecclesiastes 8:8, **There is no man that hath power of the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wicked deliver those who are given to it.** Even in the case of Jesus, he died like any other man. His death was complete as any other man. The ‘quickening principle’ did not come until his resurrection.

There are those who sincerely believe that it was by this ‘quickenning principle’ he was able to preach during that intermediate period between death and resurrection, but I believe that they are sincerely wrong in their conclusions. Why? Does work follow death, even for Jesus? **“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.”** This passage, in the context of what is under consideration raises a critical question—would Jesus preaching to the disembodied spirits in the hadean world between his death and resurrection be considered as the work of God? If so, where is the scriptural justification of it? It is doctrinally evident (I use the strongest voice possible in this conclusion) that the works were completed before he died (Luke 24: 44; John 19:30).

I wanted to establish the principles surrounding the 18th verse, in particular ‘the spirit,’ before advancing to the reason for this paper—who actually preached and to whom. I think it is time to address these points. The 19th and 20th verses state, **By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison which sometime were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water.** Barnes remarks, *The idea, however, would be conveyed by this language that he (Jesus) did this personally, or by himself, and not merely by the agency of employing another.* Is it possible in scripture that one is said to preach while in actuality another is the actual instrument of the work done? Guy N. Woods, our able brother, said, *it is alleged that since it is said that Christ went and preached he must therefore have actually and literally gone in his own person. The objection is invalid because no special significance is to be attached to the repetition of the idea involved. It is a simple pleonasm (the use of more words than are necessary for an expression of an idea; redundancy) for “he preached”, of which many examples may be produced. It is, for example, said of Christ that “he came and preached peace to you that were afar off (Gentiles), and to them that were nigh (Jews). (Ephesians 2:17.) Certainly, our Lord never, at*

any time following his resurrection, preached to the gentiles in his own person. Such preaching as is here alluded to was done through the apostles, principally by Paul. If Christ could preach to the Gentiles through Paul, why not to the people before the flood through Noah? As a matter of historical fact such, he did, and such these passages affirm, Paul and Noah being the agents or instruments through which the preaching was accomplished.

In an overall context, bridging I Peter 3:13-20, Barnes remarks, "this interpretation accords with the design of the apostle in inculcating the duty of patience and forbearance in trials: in encouraging those whom he addressed to be patient in their persecutions. With this object in view, there was entire propriety in directing them to the longsuffering and forbearance evinced by the savior, through Noah. He was oppressed, reviled, disbelieved, and we may suppose, persecuted. It was to the purpose to direct them to the fact that he was saved as the result of his steadfastness to Him who had commanded him to preach to that ungodly generation.

I hope this paper added little more light to the first paper.

The Necessity of Staying to the Old Paths: A Personal Skepticism of the New Hermeneutic.
Peter Nieman Martin, Sr.

Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding
Proverbs 23:23.

Solomon's proverb represents the 'true economy' of doctrinal prudence. The typical economic system is dependent on buying and selling material goods for profit, but in the 'spiritual' marketplace, we are advised 'to buy' only—selling is forbidden. Our spiritual goods are vastly more important to us than any material commodity in the marketplace. We are strongly urged to keep that which can only grow in value, and which has a benefit in the life to come. Wisdom, instruction, and knowledge are powerful allies in this spiritual struggle. Needless to say, the bible classes ought always to be full that we might ward off any beguiling influences. It is bad enough that we must be on guard against the 'doctrinal influences' that dominate denominational churches; it is even more alarming when one must be on guard against his own brethren. This paper is not to suggest that the entire church 'has gone to seed'. Indeed the majority of Christians are striving to hold on to the old paths. However a few have fallen under the spell of 'intellectual progression' or to put it another way, postmodern theology. I will let Brother J. E. Choate present his fine work in this paper as an addendum. His paper entitled *The Paradigms and Parameters of Postmodern Theology* is an excellent work (in my humble opinion) Brother Choate has been extremely vital in the fight against 'change agents'. He is one of the ablest brothers to defend the 'old paths'. I have studied this work with great care, and I feel confident in passing it on to you that you may be instructed in knowing the designs of false brethren. While our dear brother edifies in the area of postmodern theology, I will tend to the 'new hermeneutic' and its design to destroy the need for 'example, precept, and necessary inference'.

What is the definition of hermeneutics? It is the application of certain logical principles to a document in order to determine the author's original meaning. Hermeneutics can be applied to any literature, and when it comes to studying scripture, it is called 'sacred hermeneutics'. In determining meaning of scripture, we have sought to begin the study by asking three simple questions: Who is doing the talking? Who is he talking to? What is he talking about? This would get us on a reasonable path to understanding the truth. This method would provide a 'basis of context' for determining dispensations and laws that were in effect during those historical periods when God dealt with mankind. Like medicine using a wide array tools to

reach a satisfactory diagnosis, hermeneutics using a number of tools to arrive at a 'spiritual' diagnosis with 'reasonable' accuracy. Allow me to provide a case in point. In the matter of marriage, the Lord taught in Luke 16:18, "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." It is fairly certain that the Book of Luke was written after Paul's death. For that matter, all of the gospels were written after his death. Since the Lord's biography is contained in the gospels along with his teachings, it is understood that the Holy Spirit guided Paul to write what he wrote in I Corinthians 7:10, 11. This portion of Paul's letter to the Corinthians was based on Christ's teaching during his personal ministry. Paul was writing to the Corinthians about the Lord's commands regarding marriage. Would I Corinthians 7:10, 11 apply today? Absolutely! How could we tell? If it is argued that Luke 16:18 applies to formulate New Testament doctrine for all saints, and this text is embedded in I Corinthians 7:10, 11, then what would apply to the Corinthians would apply to us. The Holy Spirit would be the agency through whom Paul would make known the teaching of Christ to the Corinthians concerning marriage. But the 'change agents' as they are called would have us to believe that 'proof texts' are 'old hat'. They represent a desire to be 'restrictive', 'exclusive', and 'dogmatic'. In other words, 'if you do not teach what we teach, you are headed for the lake of fire'. The rationale behind the kind of conclusion is where there is no proof text employed one can be made to believe anything. Most importantly, the absence of the proof text would mean the demise of the biblical meaning of "the one true church." I have decided that a long paper is not needed to show the critical errors this "new hermeneutic". This will suffice to put you on guard. If you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them.

The New Testament Concept of Giving: A Simple Examination of a Practice Nearly Nineteen Hundred and Seventy-Five Years Old.

Peter Nieman Martin, Sr., Gospel Preacher and Editor.

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." II Corinthians 8:9.

Introduction

Simply stated, this profound truth sets the tone for this subject that I will do my best in the Lord to bring to the light. Giving's importance has been rooted in the Chief Giver, God since the beginning. The natural beauty that we see—the flowers in their myriad colors and varied textures, the evening sky painted in such a way that Da Vinci could only marvel, and attribute such handiwork to God, the endless families of creatures that roam the earth and fly through its environment are all evidences of God's giving nature. This is all besides the blessings that have come to the human race for their benefit and enjoyment. The manifest complexities of God's endless power create for us a sound confidence that God will answer our needs. **"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." *Ephesians 3:20.***

The design of this paper is not to examine every concept of biblical giving regardless of dispensation, but rather view giving in the New Testament as the apostles through divine inspiration command us. I think this is our safest course. We are, after all, New Testament Christians. The apostles were closest to the body of truth that we must obey. The Holy Spirit revealed the body of truth— **'the faith' once delivered the saints—** through them.

The Collection For the Saints

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians will serve as our origin. Most brethren quote from the 16th chapter, verses one and two, on Sunday before the collection is taken up. Here are those verses in the King James Version. **"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."** What significance did this passage have in regards to giving in the first century? What significance does it have today? If we can answer both questions to the satisfaction of scripture, I believe we will be well on our way to formulating sound doctrine. Everett Ferguson states in his book *The Church of Christ: a Biblical Ecclesiology for Today*, the following: "This passage is talking about church giving to meet church needs. Paul's instructions indicate that giving is to be **periodic** ("on the first day of the week"), **personal** ("each one of you"), **planned** ("whatever one may prosper"), **preventive** ("so that contributions need not be taken when I come"), and

purposeful ("to take your gift to Jerusalem"). It is evident by these remarks (I believe them to be sound in that they only represent what can be read) that the giving answered a church need, albeit a remote need inasmuch as Jerusalem was the target for the gift. The specific nature of the funds was to care for the saints affected by a famine in the region of Jerusalem. Luke declares in Acts 11:27-30 that **"in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."** The passage speaks of the necessity that demanded the relief.

The Reason for the Collection

Now, let logic guide us through the information heretofore presented. The Corinthians had obviously asked Paul about the collection for the saints, and in the first verse, he responds. Paul had directed the churches of Galatia to take up a collection each Sunday for the Jewish brethren, and has directed the Corinthians to do the same. However, one may ask, "Is this not an isolated incident to take care of a remote problem And if so, does it not disqualify this text as a pattern for twenty-first century giving for situations that do not follow the context of Judea's dilemma?"

Was the problem remote? Absolutely! Did I Corinthians 16:1, 2 represent a logical means to assist in raising funds for the remote church problem? It did indeed! Would it serve as a means of answering a local church need? Certainly? Does there have to be a dearth in order for the church to collect funds after this manner? Absolutely not! Could the church use the same method of giving to raise money to support preaching? In Philippians 4:15-17, Paul said, **"Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account."** Could such a collection be for that purpose? Definitely! Could it be in the support of a local preacher? Indeed! Based on I Corinthians 9:11-18, this would be the case.

Having focused on I Corinthians 16:1, 2 initially, (I will revisit those scriptures after looking into II Corinthians 8 and 9), I wish to look at the relevance of those two chapters to the 16th chapter of I Corinthians. The thirty-nine verses addressed in those two chapters are about giving. From an historical perspective, Paul wrote the second letter from Macedonia about a year after the first one; he wrote the first letter while in Ephesus. It is quite obvious by just looking at the first six verses of II Corinthians 8, that the 'gerund' "exciting" should be the operative term. Paul was striving to excite the Corinthians to liberal giving using several very logical reasons to do so. Judge for yourselves if my thesis is in error. Here are the passages in both the King James Version (KJV) and New International Version (NIV).

Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia. How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yeah, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves ton the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. Inasmuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. KJV.

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part. NIV.

That excitement is in view cannot be denied because the language is in a **comparative** mode. The Macedonian effort is used as a model to excite a more financially stable region into action. Consider the following from Smith's Bible Dictionary. "**Corinth was a place of great mental activity, as well as of commercial and manufacturing enterprise. Its wealth was so celebrated as to be proverbial.**" No doubt, the brethren of the Corinthian church had the same spirit as the brethren of the Macedonian churches, and if that is the case—the actions would prove to be, mutual based on what a man was able to give. Now if poor saints could do what Paul affirmed they did, then certainly saints from a thriving commercial city could do their liberal part. Titus is given the responsibility of overseeing the collection effort in Corinth, and Paul desires that he complete it. The seventh and eighth verses of II Corinthians, chapter eight are particularly interesting, and I will explain why. I will present them in both versions (KJV, NIV).

Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. (KJV)

But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love toward us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving. I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. (NIV)

The interesting point is found in the eighth verse where Paul begins by saying, "I am not commanding you." Why is he saying this? The answer is clear. What he is not commanding is that they excel in this grace of giving. Paul was quite aware that any

degree of excelling was internal and personal. The Macedonians had first given themselves to the Lord. Theirs was a personal decision, and out of that decision, they were then able to give themselves to Paul and the others in keeping with God's will. In the NIV, the tone and dynamics of the language are abundantly clear in II Corinthians 8:5.

"And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will." That one thing happened before the other could is evident in the placement of the conjunction **and** and the adverb **then**. The definition of **then** as an adverb is **soon afterwards**. "And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and **soon afterwards** to us in keeping with God's will. There are times when men are motivated by the actions of others. In addition to the financial handicaps the Macedonians had, there were, of course, the persecutions that they were undergoing. They were troubled on every side. Notwithstanding, they were full of joy despite their predicament. Surely these people were favored of God to have been blessed by him to think the way they did. If the Macedonians proved to be too unworthy as an ideal for giving, Paul then appealed to the highest ideal, the Lord. The utter genius of the Holy Spirit, although such would be a highly inappropriate description of divine wisdom can be seen in what Paul had to say in II Corinthians 8:9. **"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.** In the history of humankind, no man has ever stepped so low from so high out of love, nor has anyone suffered so greatly for so many for the evil they done. Jesus Christ's sacrifice is the purest type of giving. If he is unable to inspire men, it is because they are so insensitive and indifferent to his cause. It is impossible to have the Holy Spirit and be indifferent to anything Jesus has done or is doing. Is II Corinthians 8 and 9 an extension to the I Corinthians 16:1-5? It is indeed, and the very things that are true for I Corinthians 16:1-5 are true for II Corinthians 8 and 9.

The parallel nature of the texts is indisputable, and the bridging together of the contexts is seamless because they are only separated by time and not by content. In this content is **nothing about tithing**. Were the most brilliant engineer from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to devise a radar capable of detecting even the smallest trace of a substance, that radar would be unable to detect tithing in these texts.

Matthew 5:20. Is it visible on the New Testament radar as being justification for tithing? Let us consider the text. In the King James, it reads, **"For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven."** It has been said that the Jews regarded the scribes and Pharisees the most religious in all of Israel. Yet their religion was largely an outward show of self-righteousness. This point is amplified in Matthew 23:2, 3. **"The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not."** The rebuke does not stop there. Read the rest of the chapter! I believe that it is safe to conclude that the righteousness of the Pharisees and scribes fell short of the righteousness demanded by the law. It was not because the scribes and Pharisees were keeping all the law blameless that Jesus said what he said. ? Where in Matthew 5:20 is

tithing hinted as something we must do. Where is it inferred that we should attend to the matters announced by the Lord in that text? Are we the targets of this particular address?

However, let me stop here! Who is Jesus talking to in Matthew 5? He is teaching his disciples—Matthew 5:1, 2. Is he talking to us in Matthew 5:20? Were we ever under the Law of Moses in any way? **Whatever the law saith it saith to them that are under the law** (Romans 3:19). Was the law our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? NO—the law was given to the Jews (Exodus 19). Or was the law **our schoolmaster** of the Jew to bring them to Christ. We were never under the Law of Moses.

The Dilemma of Ananias and Sapphira

Now let us examine Acts 5. What was the sin of the husband and wife and why was the penalty so harsh? Let us consider the passage.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. (KJV)

Now a certain man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept some of the money you received for the land? Did it not belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, was not the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God. When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him and buried him (NIV)

These six verses of Acts 5 represent the gist of what happened in the sale of the property. The crime was a lie or deceit. Ananias misrepresented the sale of the real estate. What he had laid at the apostles' feet was what he said the property was sold for—but that was not the case. Consider the seventh and eighth verses as you analyze the crime. I will use the NIV. "About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land? "Yes," she said, "that is the price." Were they asked to tithe? No. Did they die because they

did not tithe? No! They lied about what they gave the apostles. They had the power to keep back part of the sale, and simply tell Peter that what they had laid at the apostles' feet represented only a portion of the sale. Both would have lived! Acts 5 is not about tithing, it is about deceit. The death penalty was the consequence of that sin. One need not spend great amounts of time deciphering this text. It is understood by what is stated. Even our twenty-first century senses are adept enough to see why they died!

The Issue of Malachi 3:8-10: Is it a commandment for us?

What does it say? I would like to begin with the sixth verse. **"I the Lord do not change. So, you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,"** says the Lord Almighty. **"But you ask, 'How are we to return?'**

"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, **"and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it (NIV).** To whom is this sublime language addressed? An oracle: **The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi. Malachi 1:1).** Is it in any way designed for us as New Testament Christians? The answer is no. The saying is chiefly to Israel, and it in no way formulates the apostles' doctrine of Acts 2:42, nor was it taught by the Lord for us to practice.

Does Abraham's Tithing to Melchizedek create a precedent that binds New Testament Christians to doing the same?

This brief and unimaginative work should not expire without a commentary on Hebrews chapter seven. The first ten verses are expressed as follows in the NIV:

This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means "king of righteousness;" then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace." Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever. Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is—their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater. In the one case, the tenth is collected by men who die; but in the other case, by him is declared to be living. One might even say that Levi, who collects the

tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor. (Hebrews 7:1-10).

I want to ask a legal question. Is this a precedent for New Testament giving? This is not a legal precedent! It is an argument about supremacy. Chapter's one, two, three, and seven deal with supremacy! Now I want to see what the text implies under logical scrutiny. First, the main idea is that Melchizedek is superior to Abraham. And if this is the case, then as a priest, the priesthood of Melchizedek is superior to that of Aaron. This point is justified by Abraham paying a tenth to this priest. Under the law, Levi was commanded to collect the tenth. Here, in the context of this passage, he is paying the tenth through Abraham. But someone says that the paying of these tithes predate the command for the Levites to collect tithes. Therefore, it should transcend the Law of Moses and apply directly to the Christian Dispensation. This argument would have merit if a bridge could be constructed from Genesis 14 to Acts 2, but that cannot happen—there are no transportable materials! There are no engineers! There are no plans from the Holy Spirit to design such a heavenly construct! One may then ask, "Is not its appearance in the Book of Hebrew enough to justify it as a command?" If its appearance is there to teach New Testament Christians how to give in a method delivered and approved by the Holy Spirit, then most certainly it would be justified as a New Testament command for giving. On the other hand, if it is limited to what Abraham did, and as an isolated event existed for the purpose the Hebrew writer is using it to prove—this account is in no wise a command! Rather it is part of a brilliant and irrefutable argument showing the nature of a superior priesthood and superior priest. That the Holy Spirit is revealing Jesus, as he ought should be no surprise here because Jesus said he would (The Gospel of John, chapter 16, verses 15, 16).

In Conclusion

Let me close by saying that giving in the New Testament centers around the Son of God as the very focal point and preeminent example of giving. Too often we look at giving as merely a physical display, an action that is outward, but indeed it is more. Giving is a grace (II Corinthians 8:7). Ferguson, in work entitled *The Church of Christ* states that "Christian giving is rooted in Christ's act of giving (2 Corinthians 8:9). The doctrinal basis for all Christian giving is what Christ did. It is the nature of God to give (John 3:16), so to give is to share in a divine activity. God's grace comes to his people so that they might show grace to others."

Rather than looking into the Law of Moses for answers to New Testament giving, one's time is better spent looking at the historical context of 2 Corinthians 8-9. The Law of Moses did not serve as an expression of church unity, but it is certain that the Gentile Churches in their contributions to the Jewish believers did. And because the Holy Spirit chose to make this a context for New Testament giving as opposed to the concept of tithing, one need not think that this New Testament concept of giving is inferior to what the people gave the Levites. To the contrary, it is superior in that it is based on a spiritual concept, and that is love. And inasmuch as we are all of the same priesthood, we are all commanded to give. This is a fellowship is it not? Our collective efforts aid in the

business of God's work whether it is aiding Christians afar or locally. This collective effort, when reduced to its individual components, is found to be represented by individual stewardship. We are stewards of God's blessings. If God creates all and owns all, then what we have is a blessing, a prospering, and a gift. And a Levitical dictum does not determine how this gift should be returned. ---Not in the New Testament! One gives as God has prospered him, one gives not grudgingly nor of necessity for God loves a cheerful giver, one gives as one purposes in his heart. Now if one wonders if there is a principle attached to the benefits of New Testament giving, there is. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully (2 Corinthians 9:6). In verse seven, we find **"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."** Is there a relationship between verses six and seven? You be the judge.

In his work on 2 Corinthians, Albert Barnes made a practical discovery. He states, **"The main idea in this verse is, that the act of giving should be voluntary and cheerful. It should not seem to be extorted by the importunity of others (verse 6); nor should it be given from urgent necessity, but it should be given as an offering of the heart."** After all, cheerfulness has its origin in the human heart. He sets forth three sensible and pro-scriptural ideals in regards to 2 Corinthians 9:7. First, **the heart is usually more concerned in the business of giving than the head.** Secondly, **We should follow the dictates of the heart in giving.** Thirdly, **giving should be voluntary and cheerful.** I will make a few comments on these three areas and close this presentation for the present. In regards to point one, it is necessary to understand the human heart to understand the nature of purposing. The bible is all too familiar with the human heart. We find in the Book of Jeremiah that **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9).** Barnes says better what I would like to say—"If liberality is evinced, it will be the heart which prompts to it; if it is not evinced, it will be because the heart has some bad passions to gratify, and is under the influence of avarice, or selfishness, or some other improper attachment. Very often a man is convinced he ought to give liberally, but a narrow heart and a parsimonious spirit prevents it."

Point two declares we should follow the dictates of the heart. Jeremiah 17:9 are looking at the human heart uninfluenced by the Spirit of God. A heart that is prompted to do good should be followed. But too much thinking is not good. Often the death of doing something good is caused by too much deliberation. Give the mind enough time to reason and the desire to do something good grows cold, and then dies. But somebody is saying that we need to be told what to give to please God, and that the promptings of the heart are not enough. That is unfortunate. I am persuaded that God knows the heart. **"For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. (1 John 3:20, KJV).** What is in view in the second principle, and indeed in the first as well, is the necessity of having a benevolent heart. Without it, love cannot be measured!

God loves a cheerful giver. Giving from the heart is the true test of love. It is just you and God, one on one. Those feelings producing cheerfulness are prompted by a realization of

God's abundant goodness, and not by the necessity to keep an archaic law on giving designed for a priesthood no longer in existence and for a cause no longer needed since the Mosaic dispensation ended. I will close with these final remarks by Mr. Barnes whose remarks do not contradict the context of the passage. **Yet there is much, very much that is not so, and there is therefore, much benevolence that is spasmodic (short-lived episodes of giving) and spurious (counterfeit); that cannot be depended on, and that will not endure. No dependence can be placed on a man about giving who does not do it from the steady influences of a benevolent heart.** So you see, it is not the tenth or the tithe, but rather Spirit's influence on the human heart that determines giving in this spiritual church that is here and now, and not in the wilderness with Moses, nor under the voices of condemnation from the Old Testament prophets. We follow the apostles' doctrine guaranteed as true by the Holy Spirit.

I hope this small effort is helpful in your understanding of New Testament giving. I sincerely thank God for allowing me to do it.

Understanding I John 3:1-9: Capturing divine favor through hatred of worldliness
By Peter Nieman Maritn, Sr.

“Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.” King Solomon

The doctrine of Christ as found in John’s first epistle is crucial to our Christian maturity. We are all striving one day to reach it, but in the mean time this lesson may be of benefit to get us a little farther (distance wise) and further (degree wise) towards that goal. I want to focus on **I John 3:1-9** that I might share what little understanding I have with you.

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous. He that does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.
(New International Version)

1) How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

The first verse is crucial to our new identity. We are what we have not been before our conversion, children of God. As individual Christians, we can rest in the fact that regardless of what you were in the past, God has redeemed you and made you his! What Paul said of the Colossians is certainly true of each of you. *“Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:12-14).* Our labors to please God should abound now that we have an eternal inheritance so great in the heavens. There are times that we view ourselves as unworthy, and we are correct when we leave out Jesus and His work of atonement. But as long as we are in him, we are worthy! Satan has a way of toying with our self-esteem until it evaporates into nothing. But consider the words of David in Psalms 8:3-5, *“When I consider your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you should care for him?”*

Nevertheless, there you are! God is both mindful of and cares for you! That being true of God concerning you should leave your self-esteem very high indeed!

The world does not know God in the intimate sense. Those who profess there is a God without doing what he requires, professes His existence out of an oral tradition having been told of him by others. There is no intimacy between the world and God that can only exist through obedience. The moral characteristics of God and that of the world are so diverse that enmity results. If that is true of the world and God, the same bodes for the world and us. The world does not know us because we know God. God has made us new creatures in heavenly places in Christ. In addition, unless we want to leave our heavenly abode (in heavenly places in Christ) to rejoin the world by being partakers of its ungodly deeds, we do well to not know the world. In this sense, to know is to approve of its ways. Paul, in the strongest language to the Romans had this to say in verses one and two of the twelfth chapter, *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your body as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.”* The apostle Peter in like manner, said in his first epistle, *“For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery (seductive behavior), lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing (drinking parties) and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation (wastefulness of time and energies), and they heap abuse on you (I Peter 4:3, 4).”*

2) *Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we shall be has not been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

Verse 2 sets forth an interesting beginning by saying what we shall be has not been made known. Mr. Albert Barnes in his work, **NOTES ON THE NEW TESTAMENT Explanatory and Practical** had this comment to make that I thought relevant to the direction of this paper. He said, *“It is not fully revealed what we shall be hereafter; what will be the full result of being regarded as the children of God.”* He had more to say but I wanted to stop here. What Barnes has stated brings to mind that we cannot begin to conceive what awaits us in future bliss. It is too altogether great for one in flesh to suppose for we only know what we are and what we are trying to become. Paul speaks of **“one hope in your calling”** to the Ephesians (Ephesians 4:4). Paul had a sense of it when he wrote the Philippians saying, *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far (Philippians 1:21, 23).”* Paul is not saying that he will be like Christ at his death, but rather that dying in the Lord would mean the cessation of labors. Paul realized that the change would not come until the Lord returned (I Corinthians 15:50-57). Paul knew that the reward comes with the Lord (II Timothy 4:8). John writes that when Christ comes we will be like him because we will see him as he is. The Holy Spirit through John is confirming the second coming of Christ and what shall happen to the faithful on his return. As mentioned before, all will be too magnificent to understand in this lifetime.

In I John 3:3, it says, “*Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.*” If it makes sense that when Jesus comes, we will be like him because we shall see him as he is, then it also stands to reason that we want to be like him in character now! In a sense we become mildly obsessed with fashioning ourselves after the Lord. The apostle Paul stated in I Corinthians 11:1, “*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*” Let us examine in minute detail the language of that text. Albert Barnes makes an excellent point regarding this verse for which I want to give him full credit. He says, “*The first verse in this chapter properly belongs to the proceeding, and is the conclusion of the discussion which the apostle had been carrying on in that and the previous chapters, and in reading should be read in connection with it.*” That Barnes would say that I Corinthians 11:1 would serve as a fitting conclusion to chapter ten makes absolute sense for several reasons. In the first place, prior to the numbering of verses, the whole was simply an unnumbered letter. Moreover, if you look at the 33rd verse of I Corinthians 10, it says, “*Even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved,*” it is found to be somewhat similar to a text in Romans that reads as follows: “*Each of us should please his neighbor for his good to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself, but as it is written: ‘The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me (Romans 15:2, 3).’*” Based on these two points alone, *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ* should rest with I Corinthians 10:33.

The biblical definition of sin confronts us in I John 3:4. *Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.* The breaking of God’s law is sin whether done ignorantly or knowingly, pure and simple. The term lawlessness when defined is disorderly conduct, and in this case disorderly conduct against a divine command. This kind of conduct can appear in two forms: commission and omission. Under the law, Jesus had this to say in Matthew 23:23, “*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.*” Placed in a New Testament context, one might say that making worship while failing to visit the sick is a sin of omission. Both are required to please God. The same would be true of not committing fornication but not giving.

Jesus appeared that he might take away our sins, and in him is no sin. The primary function of our Lord’s first coming was to save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). This very matter required the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Since the Lord came to bear our sins, and in him is no sin, we ought to strive to be no practitioners of sin! Those who live in him cannot continue to practice sin. Let me alter that—they do not continue in the practice of sin! There is no sin in him. The conclusion is flawless: if we are habitual sinners, we are not in him! Those who are habitual sinners have neither seen him nor known him. I want to expand this point to give it a broader viewing surface. The habitual sinner has no concept of Christianity. The captain of their salvation they have not come to know. Were they intimately acquainted with his mission and their condition repentance would be the operative force in their lives. The power to repent is present, of that we are certain. Paul presses the argument in Romans. *What*

shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer (Romans 6:1, 2). Again in Romans 8:5, he says, Those who live according to the sinful nature has their minds set on what that nature desires. To desire to live in sin is to have no relation with the Lord whatsoever. Verse six of I John 3 does not teach a doctrine of sinlessness, but rather not continuing in sin.

I want to move to the ninth verse at this point to show differences between the King James Version and the New International Version that is critical to understanding this passage. I will list both passages to make the point.

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God (King James Version)

No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God (New International Version).

The New International Version provides the better rendering of the passage. One may demand to know how such a statement could be justified and I will seek to explain my reasons for arriving at that conclusion. In the first place, the sixth verse uses progressive language in the King James. The terms "abideth" and "sinneth" are both progressives, which denote continued action. The term "commit" in verse nine is where the problem is. It can produce a false meaning that Christians must live in sinless perfection. How could that be ascertained as its meaning? The word "commit" for some may have the definition of the commission of one sin. Of course this could not be the meaning at all. The reason is quite simple. The apostle sets forth the idea of forgiveness in both chapters one and two. If forgiveness is advanced, then the notion of sinless perfection is not in view. To say that we have not sin makes God a liar (I John 1:10). Even the Lord weighed in on this matter. He said, "Verily, Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever commiteth sin is the servant of sin (King James Version). In the KJV, it is here given in the progressive tense. The idea is that one does not continue to practice sin. See also Romans 6:16, 17.