

HOUSE to HOUSE
HEART to HEART

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House to House Heart to Heart

VOLUME 21 NUMBER 4

the TRAGEDY of ALMOST

Allen Webster

After sixty-two-year-old miner William Hyatt's car broke down, he walked twenty-two miles through the Mojave Desert, crawling the last two before collapsing from thirst and exhaustion. He died face down in the sand. Just over the hill—a half mile away—was Saratoga Springs. He almost made it to safety.

After World War II ended, a soldier called his mother from Europe saying, "I'm coming home." He had fought four years, survived horrific battles, and was there when the Allies won. He soon arrived in the U.S. and boarded a small plane for Dallas. Tragically, it crashed. He almost made it home.

On February 1, 2003, the space shuttle *Columbia* returned from its twenty-eighth mission. Having spent sixteen days in space, it was sixteen minutes from landing. Families had gathered in Houston to welcome loved ones home. Something went terribly wrong. A piece of foam insulation broke off and damaged a wing, and the force and heat of reentry caused the *Columbia* to disintegrate and rain down in pieces over Louisiana and Texas. Seven astronauts almost made it back.

King Agrippa listened to Paul preach. The apostle was a compelling speaker, and the gospel was a powerful message (Acts 14:12; Hebrews 4:12). Agrippa understood the teaching; he believed the prophets (Acts 26:26–27). Yet he said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (26:28). He

was as close to heaven's door as he would ever be, but Agrippa only almost made it.

Since salvation is the world's most valuable commodity (Matthew 16:26), missing out on it is life's greatest tragedy. Agrippa was not the last to be "almost" a Christian. Many in each generation come to the kingdom's gate (Mark 12:34), and then walk away.

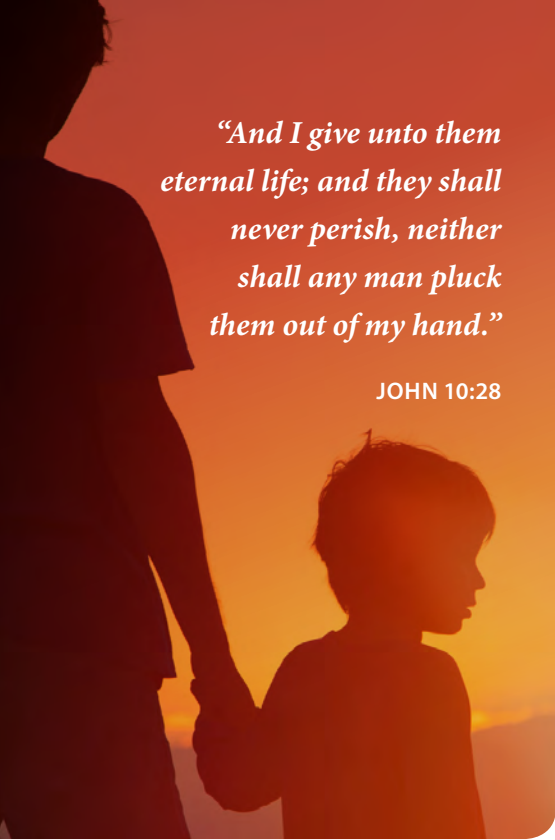
Let's explore why people are only almost persuaded.

"I have a reputation to uphold."

Agrippa may have sent Paul away because he did not want to admit he was a sinner needing a Savior. He and Bernice arrived with great pomp (Acts 25:23), indicating a love for ostentation and hinting at pride. Perhaps he saw himself as "the master of his fate, the captain of his soul," who needed governing and absolution from no one. A king bowing to a Carpenter?

There are two primary reasons people reject Jesus today:

- They do not think that they need a Savior. Many consider themselves basically good—better than most—and find it hard to admit sin. Repentance is unpalatable. What will people think? (cf. John 12:42–43; Matthew 27:24). What might they say?
- They do not think they want a Lord. Proclaiming allegiance to Jesus means He becomes ruler of one's life. That is scary to many people. Yet His yoke is



“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”

JOHN 10:28

easy (Matthew 11:28–30). He does a much better job managing our lives than we ever could (Jude 1:24).

To modern readers, Pharisees are pitiable religious caricatures so proud of their knowledge and goodness that they were blind to how others—especially Jesus—saw them (John 9:41; Luke 18:9–14). They were in the presence of deity but did not recognize Him (John 1:10). They witnessed a perfect life—love personified—and heard majestic sermons yet missed salvation.

Before we judge them, we may have similar difficulty in seeing ourselves as God does. The first plank on the road to Christ’s kingdom is humility (Matthew 5:3). One does not come to Jesus with his nose in the air, making demands. He comes with his hand out, making confession. God hates a proud look (Proverbs 6:16–17), but He never despises a contrite heart (Psalm 51:17).

“I’m too busy already. I don’t need anything else to do.”

Life is busy. Many work forty, fifty, sixty, or more hours a week. Then there are children’s games to attend, grass to mow, meals to prepare, clothes to fold, vacations to arrange, and spouses to love. To such people, even the thought of adding another item to the to-do list is daunting. They think, “I probably need to go to church services, but I have a hard time keeping all the balls in the air already. Besides, Sunday is my only day to relax.”

Henry David Thoreau said, “It is not enough to be busy; so are the ants. The question is: What are we busy about?” Jesus was busy about His Father’s business (Luke 2:49).

Christianity is the most positive part of life—it is abundant living (John 10:10). It doesn’t so much take energy as it gives it; or require motivation as provide it. It is the part that makes all other parts make sense. It connects the dots. It gives breadth, depth, color, and resonance to each day and decade.

Trying to find satisfaction in careers, money, hobbies, pleasures, relationships, and possessions is ultimately a failing proposition. They are, to use the prophet’s phrase, “cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13). A spiritual being (Genesis 2:7) cannot find true, lasting satisfaction in merely physical accomplishments and activities (Isaiah 55:1–3). In making a living, we must not forget to make a life worth living.

Each might ask, “Would I have time to be a Christian if there was a million-dollar signing bonus?” “Would I attend church if each service paid \$1000?” If so, then not choosing Christ is not a matter of time; it is a matter of priority (Matthew 6:33; Colossians 3:1–2). It shows what I value most—pleasing self or God; gaining wealth or knowledge; preparing body or soul.

“I’m timid. I’m an introvert. I’m afraid. I’m reluctant.”

Urgent situations call for action. If a building is on fire, would I be too timid to find a way out? If medical tests revealed cancer, would I be too introverted to arrange treatment? If I inherited property and jewels, would I find the courage to meet the lawyer to sign the papers? These are minor issues compared to matters pertaining to the soul (Matthew 10:28; 16:26).

Salvation is an urgent issue. The stakes are high. The lost soul’s destiny is eternal hell (Matthew 25:30). The saved soul’s destiny is everlasting heaven (Revelation 21:4). There are serious consequences to remaining outside of Christ as one will not go to live with the Father (John 14:6).

Persuasion to become a Christian lies not only in seeing where one’s soul is because of sin, but also where it could be because of Jesus. The Bible contrasts the two conditions:

- Lost/found (Luke 15:4–6, 32; 2 Corinthians 4:3),
- Dead/alive (1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 2:1, 5),

- Condemned/justified (John 3:18–19; Titus 3:7),
- Filthy/washed (Psalm 14:3; Acts 22:16),
- Captive/redeemed (2 Timothy 2:26; 1 Peter 1:18),
- Indebted/pardoned (Matthew 6:12; 18:24; Acts 13:38–39),
- Citizens of the kingdom of darkness/light (Colossians 1:13).

Belief comes from understanding these facts. Conviction to act comes from applying the conclusion these facts support. Since Jesus requires confession (Matthew 10:32; cf. Romans 10:9–10), He will strengthen us to accomplish it (Philippians 4:13). Angels cheer repenting sinners (Luke 15:10). Saints excitedly welcome returning prodigals (Romans 14:1; 3 John 1:8).

“I’m just as good as anybody in the church. I don’t need it.”

It is not a matter of being good; it is a matter of being forgiven. All sinners need forgiveness, for they can never save themselves (Romans 10:3; Titus 3:3–5). Since every mature person on earth, of every rank and all regions, is a sinner (Romans 3:23; 6:23), there is a universal need for Jesus. Trusting His sacrifice, submitting to His gospel, and being baptized into His body are the only way into salvation and grace (Romans 5:2; Hebrews 5:9; Galatians 3:27). Each urgently needs his sins washed away (Acts 22:16).

“I am waiting for others. When they go, I will too.”

Some are only almost persuaded because they want a spouse, friend, child, or parent to commit to Christ first. Granted, Christianity is best when shared by a family and among close friends. Yet someone must go first. And one may have to go alone. Jesus said, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37). It is in the best interest of your family for you to obey God now (2 Corinthians 6:2). Your example will help them (1 Corinthians 7:16).

There are life responsibilities that must be personally met. “Every man shall bear his own burden” (Galatians 6:5). No one can be educated or tested for you; no one can exercise for you; no one can be vaccinated for you; no one can rest, eat, or breathe for you; no one can cast your vote. No one can die for you, and, certainly, no one can face God for you. Each will be judged according to his own deeds done in his own body (Romans 14:10–12). God

grants each the power of choice (Joshua 24:15) and does not allow transferring. Remember, not to make a choice is a choice.

**“I don’t know enough yet.
I’ll study a little more.”**

If one delays because he does not know everything, he reverses Jesus’ command: learn, be baptized, then learn more (Matthew 28:19–20). If we wait until we know it all, then we will never obey.

Facts do not change after reflection. The Bible either is or isn’t true. God either loves me or He doesn’t. Jesus either is or isn’t God’s Son. He either died, was buried, and came alive on the third day, or He did not. Baptism either is or isn’t necessary. The facts do not change if I delay, although time may erase them from my mind.

Those on Pentecost heard only one lesson before becoming Christians (Acts 2:41). The Ethiopian treasurer had one study before his decision (Acts 8). In fact, every example in Acts—Lydia, the jailer, Cornelius, Simon, the Corinthians, Saul—became Christians as soon as they were told what to do. If we do what they did, would we be wrong?

“Look at all the hypocrites. Why should I identify with them?”

If one were rushing to a hospital during a heart attack or after a stroke, would he refuse to take a highway where two cars had wrecked on the ramp, another farther down had stopped with a flat, and still another was being towed with a stalled engine? Why reject the road to heaven (Matthew 7:13) because some people on it have broken down?

Louis Pasteur discovered immunization and practiced vaccination at the Sorbonne in Paris. In 1885, he showed in some cases he could prevent rabies from developing after a bite. That year, a strange looking group traveled from Russia to Paris. They refused to be sidetracked. If any stopped them, they repeated a one-word mantra: “Pasteur, Pasteur, Pasteur.” The reason for their rush? They had been bitten by a rabid animal. When they learned a man in Paris might save them, they rushed to him. Were there hypocrites in Paris at the time? Were there snake-oil doctors peddling remedies that did not work? Probably. But how foolish it would have been to let this deter them from finding the man who could help them.

One seeking salvation is on a march to Jesus (John 12:21). He is the only one with a sin vaccine. Christians might disappoint us; Christ never will. When one rejects the gospel, he is not rejecting the hypocrites, but Jesus Himself (1 Samuel 8:7; Luke 7:29–30). Each finds in Him, as Pilate said, “no fault at all” (John 18:38).

“I am afraid I couldn’t hold out. I just can’t live up to the gospel’s standards.”

It is important to count the cost before following Christ (Luke 9:23; 14:28). It is a life-long commitment; it will require lifestyle changes; it leads to persecution.

Still, one should never doubt his ability to hold out. It is not a matter of Christians holding on to God; it is a matter of God holding on to Christians. We are safely in His hand (John 10:28–30). He is able to save to the “uttermost” (Hebrews 7:25; 2 Timothy 1:12). Thankfully, God does not

expect His children to be perfect—if He did, no one would make it (1 John 1:8–10; 2:1–2). Each has sinful habits to overcome and much to learn about right living, but if the Corinthians could overcome their past (1 Corinthians 6:9–11), then with God’s help and longsuffering, we certainly can (Philippians 4:13).

**“I’m going to someday;
I just don’t want to right now.”**

Felix once planned for a “convenient season” that (so far as we know) never came (Acts 24:25). History records that he lived a sinful life and was brought before the emperor on corruption charges. The Athenians said, “We will hear thee again of this matter” (Acts 17:32), but no record exists that they obeyed Christ later. Agrippa was almost persuaded, yet he turned away (Acts 26:26–29). Each would never again be as near to God as when he decided to wait.

Are you at salvation’s door? Are you almost persuaded? Have you said, “Some other day, some other time”? *Someday* is not on a calendar; *sometime* is not on a clock.

God is holding open the door for you. Come on in.



Abounding

Christianity is the abundant life (John 10:10). In what should we abound?

1. In faith (2 Corinthians 8:7)
2. In knowledge (2 Corinthians 8:7)
3. In love (1 Thessalonians 3:12; Matthew 22:37–39; 19:19)
4. In hope (Romans 15:13; Colossians 1:27; Titus 2:13; Lamentations 3:26)
5. In diligence (2 Corinthians 8:7)
6. In every good work (2 Corinthians 9:8)
7. In thanksgiving (Colossians 2:7)
8. In the Christian graces (2 Peter 1:5–8)
9. In rejoicing (Philippians 1:26)
10. In everything (2 Corinthians 8:7)



“Always abounding.”

1 CORINTHIANS 15:58

God’s Plan for Saving Man

- God’s Grace, Ephesians 2:8
- Christ’s Blood, Romans 5:9
- The Holy Spirit’s Gospel, Romans 1:16
- Sinner’s Faith, Acts 16:31
- Sinner’s Repentance, Luke 13:3
- Sinner’s Confession, Romans 10:10
- Sinner’s Baptism, 1 Peter 3:21
- Christian’s Work, James 2:24
- Christian’s Hope, Romans 8:24
- Christian’s Endurance, Revelation 2:10



Before He's One

Before your child has come to seven
Teach him well the way to heaven!
Better still the truth will thrive,
If he knows it when he's five!
Better yet, if at your knee
He learns it when he is only three!
Best of all is when you have begun
To teach of Jesus before he's one!

The Obvious

To prove his love for her, he swam the deepest river, crossed the widest desert, and climbed the highest mountain. She divorced him. He was never home.

—Rose Sands, *The Saturday Evening Post*

"Dwell with them..."

1 PETER 3:7

Chastity and Fidelity

Paul Johnson wrote, "Chastity before marriage, fidelity within it." Christian husbands and wives must flee fornication (1 Corinthians 6:18) and keep themselves pure (1 Timothy 5:22) before and after marriage.

For more material on the home and family, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, grandparents, and family finances, go to www.housetohouse.com.

THE Husband

Facts about Husbands in Scripture:

Made first from dust (Genesis 2:7).
Was not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18).
Woman was created from the man (Genesis 2:23; 1 Corinthians 11:8–9).
God joins the husband to his wife (Matthew 19:6).

Duties of the Husband:

Cleave to his wife (Genesis 2:24).
Love his wife (Ephesians 5:25, 28–29).
Dwell with wife intelligently (1 Peter 3:7).
Give honor to his wife as weaker vessel.
Dwell with full knowledge, that prayers be not hindered.

Suggestions to Husbands:

1. Make an honest effort to continue the courtship frame of mind. Tell her often that you love her and act so as to prove it to her.
2. Be careful not to criticize her before others. Keep family matters private. Work at truly communicating together.
3. Be considerate of financial matters with her. Have a full understanding of income, debts, and mutual spending.
4. Compliment her on her looks and accomplishments. Make certain she knows that she is important as a vital, valuable part of the entire family.
5. Thank her for the seemingly little things she does for you. She likes being appreciated, as you do.
6. Do not be jealously suspicious of her. If true love abides, there will not be a cause of suspicion.
7. Be patient and understanding, especially during times of fatigue, nervousness, and sickness. No one can always be on the mountaintop.
8. Share recreation together. "Those who play together never really grow old."
9. Be a leader to your wife and family. Lead financially, materially, and especially spiritually.

THE Wife

Facts about Wives in Scripture:

Made from man's rib (Genesis 2:21–22).
Called "woman" because she was taken from man.
Because of sin, pain in childbirth increased (Genesis 3:16).
Weaker vessel (physically) (1 Peter 3:7).

Duties of the Wife:

Love her husband (Titus 2:4).
Obey her husband (Titus 2:5).
Be a keeper at home (Titus 2:5).
Be in subjection to her husband (1 Peter 3:1; Colossians 3:18).
Conduct herself modestly (1 Peter 3:3–4; 1 Timothy 2:9–10).

Suggestions to Wives:

1. Endeavor to make the home a comfortable, enjoyable, loving place to return to at the close of each day.
2. Dress with an eye to your husband's likes. Take pride in your appearance. Remember the days of dating and how much time was spent "getting ready."
3. Learn to manage personal finances well, and meet financial setbacks as they might arise. Be economically minded. Live within your means.
4. Do not criticize husband's failures before others. Speak of each other in a positive way in public. The wise saying, "If you can't say anything good, do not say anything at all" applies to marriage.
5. Make a special effort to get along with his relatives and friends. They are important to him.
6. Learn to discuss your husband's business intelligently. Be a part of his successes and his troubles.
7. Take time out to play with him, enjoying recreation together. Leave life's cares behind for special times together.
8. Never nag or quarrel with your husband. (Make a special effort to kindly and gently instruct him toward overcoming his weaknesses, in private.)

—Unknown

"Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.

PSALM 71:18



THE MYTH OF SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

The idea that most of the Founding Fathers of the United States were atheists or deists who advocated the separation of church and state is a myth. Most of the Founding Fathers saw the Bible and the Christian religion as the very foundation of the newly formed Republic.

Consider the origin of the phrase “separation of church and state.” This phrase is used as a shield declaring “freedom from religion.” It is falsely claimed as part of the Constitution listed in the Bill of Rights. However, this is not the case.

First, remember what system the Founding Fathers had under England. The establishment of a state religion had caused tremendous upheaval and even wars as the state religion went back and forth between the Church of England and Catholicism. Many fled from England to obtain greater religious freedom in the colonies.

The phrase “separation of church and state” does not appear in the Constitution. It appears in a letter written by Thomas Jefferson, as president in 1802, to the Danbury Baptist Association in response to their concern that the government might make laws to establish a state religion or take away their right to worship as they saw fit. Jefferson’s studied response cites the first amendment and assures them that it builds “a wall of separation between Church and State.” By this he is assuring them that they will be able to worship freely, and that there will not be a national religion established.

This phrase was then taken out of context many years later by the Supreme Court in *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947) and again as they removed prayer from school in *Engle v. Vitale* (1962).

If Thomas Jefferson meant the phrase to mean no mention or display of religion in government, then why did he allow church services to take place on Capitol Hill? Two days after writing this letter, he started attending church services in the House of Representatives. These services, which continued until the end of the Civil War, were acceptable to Jefferson because they were nondiscriminatory and voluntary.

An honest look at the evidence leads to the realization that the Christian religion played a vital role in every facet of government from the founding of our Republic clear through today.

Answer the Bible quiz below and return it to receive a free bookmark with more evidence of America’s godly heritage.

—Luke Griffin

Bible QUIZ

VOLUME 21:4



Send us your answers (address on front) to receive a FREE Bible bookmark. We'll grade and return your questions and enclose the "God and Country" bookmark as a way of saying "thanks" for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Questions Taken from the King James Version

Answers to Last Issue: *The Mighty Deeds of King Jesus:*
 1. Peter's (Matthew 8:14); 2. Sleeping (8:25); 3. Sea, obey (8:27); 4. Centurion (8:8); 5. His faith (8:10); 6. Immediately (8:3); 7. Servant (8:5-6); 8. Sicknesses (8:17); 9. Save, perish (8:25); 10. Two (8:28); 11. Into a herd of swine (8:31); 12. Ran into the sea and died (8:32); 13. Blasphemy (Matthew 9:2-3); 14. Twelve years (9:20); 15. Twelve (Luke 8:42); 16. Don't tell anyone ("See that no man know it") (Matthew 9:30); 17. Every, every (9:35); 18. The prince of the devils (9:34); 19. His twelve disciples (Matthew 10:1).

Jesus' Story about Dirt

Directions: Find your answers in Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-24; and Luke 8:4-18.

- In talking about dirt, in what unusual place did Jesus choose to sit to teach?

- When Jesus talked about dirt, where did the great crowd stand?

- Which type of dirt is said to grow the seed the quickest?

- "The seed is the _____ of _____"
(Luke 8:11).

- What two things happened to seeds on the way side? (Luke 8:5) _____
- Whom do the birds represent? (Luke 8:5, 12) _____
- What happened to plants in stony places?

- What did the seed lack that landed on the rock? (Luke 8:6). _____
- The thorns _____ the good plants.
- What different yields did the seeds produce in the good ground?

- What two characteristics do "good soil" hearts have? (Luke 8:15). _____
- When one hears the word but does not understand it, who is said to take it from his heart?

- What three experiences cause a "stony heart" to discontinue spiritual growth? (Matthew 13:21; Mark 4:17) _____
- What three experiences are said to "choke" the word? (Mark 4:19) _____
- Good hearts (soils) do three things: _____ the word, and _____ it; _____ fruit (Matthew 13:23).
- According to Luke 8:12, why does the devil take the word from hearts?

- "Take heed _____ ye hear" (Mark 4:24).
- "Take heed therefore _____ ye hear."
- "Blessed are your _____, for they see: and your _____, for they hear."

STARVING

We are told that a bird can go nine days without food, a dog 20 days, a turtle 500 days, a snake 800 days, a fish 1,000 days, and some insects 12,000 days. For man, three to six weeks is about the limit.

Sooner or later nourishment is necessary for all God's creatures.

Have you noticed that we are not often asked to "read" the Word of God? Rather we are urged to study it, meditate upon it, and compare spiritual things with spiritual. In other words, God wants us to put in consecrated effort when we approach the Scriptures, for in this way we will more readily assimilate its sweet nourishment and good doctrine.

Many are starving to death spiritually, not because food is unavailable but simply because they will not eat of it. What home does not have a Bible or opportunity to attend worship? A Bible on the shelf is of no more value than food in the refrigerator.

Feed your soul!

"Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour."

2 PETER 3:18



Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.

Recommended Resource



The Gospel Broadcasting Network is unique in the world of religious TV—commercial free and no requests for money! Sponsored by the churches of Christ, GBN is available on many cable systems, through the GBN smartphone app, Roku devices, and gbntv.org.

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New Tracts!



Booklet: Is the church of Christ Unique?



Booklet: How to Deal with Negative People

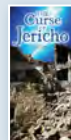


Tract: How to Prepare for the End of the World



Tract: Little Town of Bethlehem

More subjects:



The Curse of Jericho



Reboot Your Cranium



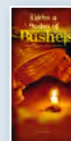
God's Law Versus Man's Law



How To Love Your Spouse the Way God Wants



Jesus Made a Blood Donation for You



Under a Bushel of Bushels



Standing Knee-Deep in a River, Dying of Thirst



Date Rape



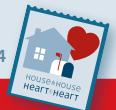
Women Glorifying God



World's Greatest Architect

Don't see the topic you need? Visit www.housetohouse.com for more subjects.

VOLUME 21:4



Is Worshiping God a “Little” Different Ok?

“Just being a little different,” shows an attitude that leads to that difference. This attitude is important to consider.

In 1 Samuel 15:1–3, King Saul was told to destroy all the Amalekites and their animals because of their opposition to God and His people. But he didn’t. He spared King Agag, and he brought back the best animals “for sacrifice unto the Lord.”

Samuel spoke for God when he said, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Samuel 15:22–23).

For us today the Bible says, “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 a salvation?” (Hebrews 2:2–3). All through the Bible, God has always demanded obedience.

Cain brought a sacrifice to God, but it wasn’t accepted (Genesis 4).

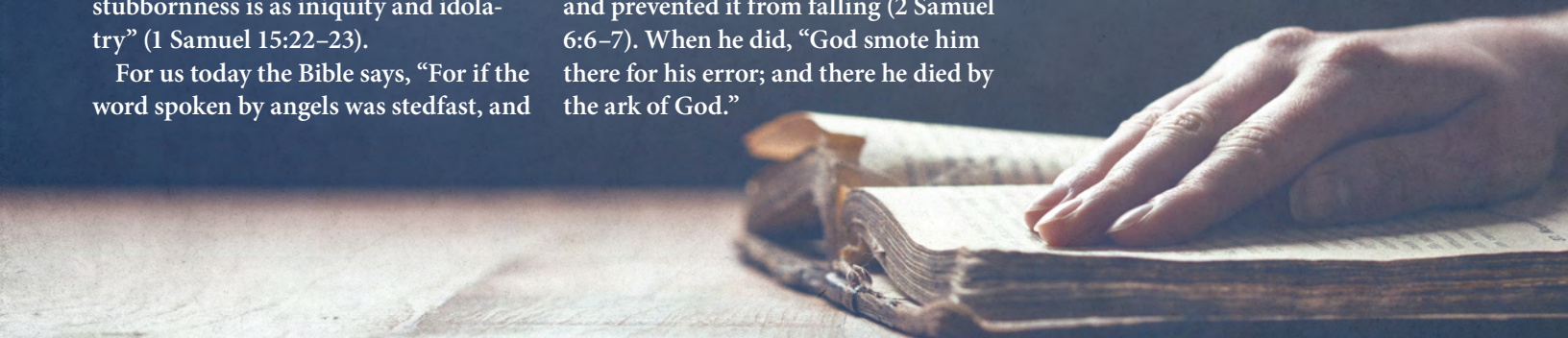
Nadab and Abihu offered “strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not” (Leviticus 10:1), and God destroyed them.

God said that no one was to touch the ark of the covenant. When it was about to fall, Uzzah reached forth his hand and prevented it from falling (2 Samuel 6:6–7). When he did, “God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.”

Our purpose is to “fear God, and keep his commandments” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Jesus still asked, “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). Christ is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:9).

Let us all have the conviction to accept what God has said and the determination to live by it. We shall be judged only by Him and His word: “The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

—Ferman Carpenter, Austin, Texas



The *Righteousness* of a Thief

“What about the thief on the cross?” Was the thief saved apart from water baptism? Really, we cannot know whether or not the thief had been baptized. The sacred text says that John baptized all of Judea and Jerusalem (Mark 1:5). That this could have included the thief, most will admit. It is not asserted that the thief was among this number—just that he could have been.

Further, the fact that the thief was being crucified shows that he was a Jew. Crucifixion in Palestine was only practiced by the Romans against the Jews. “What’s the point?” Simply this: Jews, at the time of Christ, were the children of God. In the case of the thief, you have a penitent child of God begging for acceptance by the Son of God. Jesus willingly received him.

Even apart from these considerations, we must realize that what Jesus did for

the thief has nothing to do with us. The Son of God had the power to forgive sins on earth (Matthew 9:6). It mattered not what the thief had done or was willing to do. If Jesus decided that his sins were forgiven him, they were forgiven! A testament is not in force until he who made the will has passed away. Since Jesus had not died, the New Testament, the better covenant, had not come into power (Hebrews 9:16–17). None of the terms of the New Testament, including baptism, could be applied to those who lived before it came into force. This, of course, included the penitent thief.

What we need to do is to humbly give ourselves in service to the Savior and keep His commandments as evidence of our love for Him (John 14:15; Romans 6:16–18). In this way, our consciences will be made clear before God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Accord-

ing to the better covenant, this is done when one is baptized for the remission of sins (1 Peter 3:21; Acts 2:38).

Friends, consider prayerfully and humbly this appeal and remember the words from the mouth of Jesus: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). —adapted from Floyd Chappellear



I Met the Strangest Man

He said he believes in the Bible as the Word of God—but he never reads it.

He said the church would be more effective in its ministries if more of its members were really dedicated—but he never becomes involved in any ministry.

He said he feels the church assemblies are times for edification and praise to God—but he seldom attends.

He said he believes the younger generation needs stronger spiritual values—but doesn't exemplify strong spirituality in his life before his children.

He said the church is not doing the work the Lord intends it to do—but he is not working.

He said he believes that God hears and answers prayers—but he seldom prays.

He said he knows the Lord is coming again—but lives as though the Lord will never come.

Great changes come to the world through small decisions by ordinary people. Be the change God wants to see in our world!

"Making a difference"

JUDE 1:22



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