

Questions/answers About Christians

by James Blaine Chapman

This sermon explores various aspects of Christian living, including God's method of speaking to His children, the meaning of certain Bible verses, and the importance of spiritual growth and testimony.

Topics: "Faith And Obedience", "Spiritual Discernment"

Description

James Blaine Chapman preaches about the importance of faith, obedience, and discernment in understanding God's will and following His guidance. He emphasizes the need for prayer, reliance on God's Word, and the role of providence in discerning God's calling for special service. Chapman also highlights the significance of avoiding evil, maintaining a spirit of ready obedience, and the necessity of repentance and reaffirming faith in times of doubt or backsliding.

Transcript

QUESTION #30 -- When a person is called of the Lord to some special kind of service, how does he know he is thus called? In what way does God make His will known?

ANSWER #30 -- The method varies in individual cases, but the principle remains the same in all cases. God's method of speaking to His children takes three distinct forms:

(1) He speaks to them through His Word, the Bible.

(2) He speaks to them through His Holy Spirit in the way of inward impressions.

(3) He speaks to them by means of His providences which include human agencies. One may think himself designated for a particular task through the testimony of one of these voices. He should be fairly well convinced when there is agreement between two of these voices. But the perfect agreement of all three of these voices should be evidence enough to produce certain conviction. Take for example the call to the work of the ministry: we know that this call is authorized by the Bible, as to its general phases. A person who is endeavoring to follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit may find an inner conviction in his own heart that this is his calling. Then if other spiritual people begin to say voluntarily that they believe this is his calling, and especially when there begin to open to him opportunities for such service, he should be convinced enough to give the challenge a test. If this is God's way for him, the conviction that it is so will grow, and the blessings of God and the fruitfulness of the service will give continual proof that he is in the right course. Under certain circumstances one of these voices may be silent and another especially

insistent, as though to compensate for the other's lack. This was the case with Bud Robinson, for instance. He had little or no encouragement from the providential and human element point of approach, but his own inner conviction made up for this, so that he was able to go ahead in the conviction that he had found God's way. Bishop Baskom, Pickett, on the other hand (I knew him in the days of his beginnings) did not feel the inner constraint so forcibly, but he was a devout and consecrated Christian, and it was normal for people to call on him to hold services, and it seemed that the preacher failed to come in more cases than usual, and before he or others scarcely saw where the matter was going, he was preaching almost regularly. The chief qualification for hearing the voice of God is the spirit of ready obedience.

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QUESTION #31 -- What is the meaning of Matthew 5:25, "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison."

ANSWER #31 -- This verse is a portion of a paragraph, beginning with verse 21, dealing with the duty of forgiveness. The verse in question is in the way of a practical observation of the poor place in which people come out who persevere in bearing an unforgiving spirit and in attempting to settle their affairs in the civil courts. The Christian way is the way of arbitration and forgiveness -- suffer wrong rather than do wrong.

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QUESTION #32 -- What is the meaning of James 4:4 regarding friendship with the world? What is worldliness?

ANSWER #32 -- The original word in this passage means literally world-system, and it is evident that anyone who is friendly to the prevailing system or reign of evil which is characteristic of this age and of which the devil himself is head cannot at the same time love and serve God.

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QUESTION #33 -- What is the meaning of "Abstain from all appearance of evil"? (1 Thessalonians 5:22) Is it not sometimes impossible to do that?

ANSWER #33 -- I think scholars generally are agreed that appearance is not the best translation of the Greek word *eidos* which appears in this text. In Luke 3:22 the same word is rendered form, "bodily form." In Luke 9:29 it is translated fashion, "fashion of His countenance." In John 5:37 it is translated shape (last word in the verse) . In 2 Corinthians 5:7 it is translated sight, "We walk by faith, not by sight." In 1 Thessalonians 5, verses 19-22 should be read as a paragraph and when so read it will be seen that verse 22 is the complement of verse 21. You are to abstain from the things to which you do not hold. That is, in doctrine and in practice you are to prove by the Word and Spirit of God and your own sincere experience the things that are good and the things that are not good. Then you are to hold fast to what you have found to be good, and abstain from what you have found is not good. The text, then, should read, simply: "Abstain from every form of evil." And I believe it is better to read the text this way and interpret it as it was evidently intended by St. Paul. To "add to" the Word of God by even a too strenuous interpretation is to expose oneself to Satan's advantage.

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QUESTION #34 -- Please explain I Peter 4:18, "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

ANSWER #34 -- Well, since the man who is every bit as good as he knows how to be is no better than it takes to get one to heaven, what shall become of those who ignore the call to salvation and continue in known disobedience until they die? This is still a question, but it is a question which is its own answer. Let us take no chances.

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QUESTION #35 -- I am a mother who is trying earnestly to guide my children in the right way. But there are so many questions about things the children can do and can't do that I am often at my wits' end. Can't you give us a list of things that our children, especially our children in the public schools, can do? They complain that we just want them to sit around and twiddle their thumbs.

ANSWER #35 -- I do not think I could give you a list that would be dependable or useful. Conditions vary in different communities. But I think in the interest of the positive and the practical that parents should be careful about drawing lines and forbidding too many things. You can bring on a "conscience" about things that other . wise might have remained innocent and you can become guilty of just what your children accuse you. I had a neighbor who listened to the impractical people about him and forbade his children's playing croquet and just about every other game, and forbade their taking part in just about everything that appealed to them. The result was that home became a bore to the children and "society" held an appeal like "stolen waters" that was abnormal. When my neighbor was a grandfather, he said to me one day, "If I had it to do over I would be different. I don't care what the impractical people say, I would make home enjoyable to my children and I would just draw the line on what is actually wicked, not on the innocent things that have no moral character unless you ascribe one to them." But the sad part is that neighbor lost his children to Christ and the church and he thinks it is because he made the Christian life appear to be both barren and impractical. I think about the worst possible attitude for parents is that which holds that everything adults have lost desire for is wrong for children and the young, and that "When the young find salvation they will lose their love for these things too." And in the meantime they compel their children to be abnormal either by enforcing rules which have no meaning to the young or by making outlaws of their children by condemning what they do and yet suffering them to do it. I would say, make the list of prohibitions as short as possible, and make it on the line of what is actually wicked. As to the rest, trust for a spiritual, rather than for a legalistic solution, and you will save your children from many temptations to outlawry and hypocrisy, and in the end they will most likely turn out to be good citizens and worthy Christians.

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QUESTION #36 -- Were the disciples Christians before Pentecost, or were they sinner"? Please explain.

ANSWER #36 -- They were Christians. The evidence is conclusive. Jesus mentions them as having their names written in heaven, and it is unthinkable that Jesus would call and commission men to preach His gospel who were themselves unsaved. Then in the prayer in John 17 there are expressions concerning the disciples that clearly indicate that they were truly regenerated people.

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QUESTION #37 -- Ephesians 4:26 says, "Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Do you think that a saved and sanctified Christian will show no temper in any of its forms, no matter what happens? Will he always be sweet? Was not Christ angry with the money changers in the temple?

ANSWER #37 -- A Christian with a clean heart will not have carnal anger or vindictive wrath, no matter what happens. But anger is an emotion, like elation or any other, which is capable of degrees, and within certain limits is not only permissible, but commendable. Yes, Jesus "looked round about upon them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts," but He was not vindictive. His anger was the anger of pity and mercy, not of wrath and judgment. The meaning of the text you quote is, I think, quite clear and much needed. It is an exhortation to keep anger always within the limits of pity and mercy, as our Master did. God is "angry with the wicked every day" (Psalm 7:11), but He yet waits in mercy to save the penitent, and even delays judgment upon the impenitent beyond any reasonable expectation. Let Christ be our example, and may we all be possessed of the temper of God which enables Him to hate sin and yet love the sinner.

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QUESTION #38 -- Is it the privilege of saints to live free from physical afflictions in this world? What is the Bible teaching regarding divine healing?

ANSWER #38 -- There are no doubt privileges regarding physical health and blessing which the great majority of God's people do not receive on account of their want of prayer and faith. And yet there are instances enough to prove that the basis of God's dealing with His people is moral and spiritual, rather than physical, and that on that account there are some very saintly people who are yet great sufferers. We may not be able to see how it could be the will of God for them to suffer and be sick, but the answer must be in the fact that He has higher purpose than could be served by their healing. And if this principle is admitted, it then becomes necessary for us to pray, "Thy will be done," when asking for physical healing, as when asking for other temporal blessing. However, the Bible teaches that it is the privilege of His people to pray for physical healing, and that when they are enabled to exercise faith for it, God will grant it with or without the use of means. But there comes a time when one is no longer able to pray the prayer of faith, the old house becomes dilapidated, and there is nothing for the Christian to do but to move out into the house not made with hands, eternal and in the heavens.

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QUESTION #39 -- When a Christian gets discouraged or does a little something he should not do, is it necessary for him to go back to the public altar or should he pray such matters out at home?

ANSWER #39 -- He should pray such things through by himself. It is not either wise or best to become an addict of the public mourner's bench.

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QUESTION #40 -- During a discussion in the Sunday school class some held the idea that if we are not persecuted it is a sign we have backslidden. Do you think this is true? If so, what is persecution? Is it persecution when people laugh at us? or must we be persecuted like the apostles were?

ANSWER #40 -- The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia says, "Persecution is threefold. (1) Mental, when the spirit of a man rises up and opposes another. (2) Verbal, when men give hard words and deal in uncharitable censures. (3) Actual or open, by the hand, such as the dragging of innocent persons. before the tribunal of justice (Matt. 10:18). On the basis of this definition there is no exception to that statement in 2 Timothy 3:12, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." But the type of persecution will depend much upon the type of people with whom one is associated, and persecution may be no less painful when it is mental only than when it is verbal or actual. But a Christian should not worry about the question of persecution. Above all, he should not do anything to bring it on. Just let him do his best to live right and bring .men to God and then let him take the consequence in blame and praise, and things will even up about right.

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QUESTION #41 -- In the light of such scriptures as James 2:10, Philippians 3:15; 4:6, and Psalm 32:8, 9, can you define a happy medium between carelessness and a state of morbid introspection?

ANSWER #41 -- I think I can illustrate such a state as you mention better, perhaps, than I can define it: twenty years ago I developed symptoms of a physical ailment that is .believed to be either chronic or mortal or both. The matter gave me considerable concern. But finally I appealed to a physician in whom I had great confidence. He gave me a thorough examination and told me my symptoms were "false," and that I had not a trace of the ailment which I feared. I believed the physician and have lived in peace all these years, even though at times I have felt the symptoms. For whenever I have had occasion to note these symptoms at all, I have fallen back upon the physician in whose skill and integrity I still believe, and I have dubbed my symptoms "false" and continued to rest in peace. This, I think, is the way we are to do regarding our spiritual health. First make sure we are in good health and that we . have the witness of the divine Physician that we are so. Then, after that, . disregard all contrary symptoms as false and reckon ourselves to be dead unto sin and alive unto God, and God will make it and keep it so.

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QUESTION #42 -- Please explain Galatians 6:10. In what ways are we to do good to the household of faith in which we could not do good to the world in the same measure?

ANSWER #42 -- The fellowship of the church involves responsibilities as well as privileges, and those responsibilities contain all the ordinary human kindness in intensified form. For example: it is quite proper for Christian people to co-operate in every possible way in providing for the needs of the sick, aged and poor in the whole community, but it is especially required that they look after the needy in their own group. Why? Well, for one reason, these needy ones have, presumably, contributed to the Christian program when they were able, and in their times of distress they have an especial claim. Then, besides this, the Christian fellowship properly takes the place of such benevolent societies as non-Christian people so often support and promote. The scriptural commandment is really just as clear as I can make it, "Let us do good unto all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

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QUESTION #43 -- Please explain how Cornelius (Acts 10) could be counted good and righteous when he was a soldier in the armies of a heathen nation which supported a pagan religion as the state religion. And after his baptism with the Holy Ghost we have no account of any change in his occupation. History says

these were not policemen, but the select soldiers of the regular army. If his occupation was contrary to the Christian life, how was it that God made him an example of holiness?

ANSWER #43 -- You are making an assumption that I do not make, therefore you encounter a difficulty that I do not experience. I do not think that the soldier life is necessarily unchristian, and that the individual in the army of a pagan nation shares any greater responsibility for the faith of that nation than a citizen of that nation in civilian life. John the Baptist was a fearless and enlightened preacher of repentance and righteous living. Read what he says in Luke 3:14: "And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." And Paul made Christians in Caesar's household, called them saints" (Philippians 4:22) but there was no demand, so far as we know that they quit their positions, which must have thrown them into situations of special temptation every day. If men have theories of the "social gospel" that they feel impelled to enforce, well and good. But let them know that they cannot write the Bible and the history of Christianity all over to make them fit their new-fangled theories -- the Bible and Christian history are already written.

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QUESTION #44 -- Should a Christian write an unkind letter? Is it not better to just accept the criticism and consider it a trial over which we are commanded to rejoice?

ANSWER #44 -- F. W. Boreham went out to Australia, from his ancestral home in England, when he was a young preacher. In those days it took a letter about six weeks to go from England to Australia, and soon a letter came from a man who was dead in England before his letter reached Boreham in Australia. This gave the young preacher an idea, and for forty years he made the habit of filing letters from persons who subsequently were discovered to have died before their letters reached their destination. And finally the young preacher, then grown old, wrote an essay on "Letters from the Dead," in which he speculated on how few would have written what they did if they had known they would be dead when their correspondent received the letter. And, finally, he suggested that none of us should write letters that we would not wish to have read after we are dead. And perhaps this should be brought on down to our words. Yes, by all means, let us receive the criticism (for often it is more just than we at first are willing to admit), and leave the vindication of our case to God.

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QUESTION #45 -- Is it possible for the child of God to drift and leak out in his soul and not be aware of it? If not, please explain Judges 16:20: "He wist not that the Lord had departed from him."

ANSWER #45 -- It is scarcely possible for one to commit any outbroken sin without being aware of it, but it certainly is possible for one to make a gradual drift toward indifference and prayerlessness until he finally awakens to the fact that his grace and spiritual power are gone. I do not think it possible for one to continue indefinitely in this depleted state without being aware. God will bring us, like he did Samson, to face a situation demanding spiritual reality, and in that test we will discover ourselves. The very mercy of God forbids that He should allow us to continue in a deceived state. His Holy Spirit is faithful to arouse and convict. The real question of responsibility is to keep one's self ready and willing at all times to listen to the voice of the Spirit -- otherwise one will become self-deceived.

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QUESTION #46 -- Please explain Hebrews 6:4-7. Does this refer to ordinary backsliding from justification and sanctification?

ANSWER #46 -- It refers to any who fall away from Christ and think to find some other way of salvation. Primarily the thought was of Hebrews who were thus warned against the danger of thinking they could go back from Christ to their Hebrew sacrifices of animals and birds. But the scope includes all who attempt to turn from Christ to any other sacrifice for sin. Simple backsliding from grace is not the full intent, although, of course, from other scriptures we know that Christians are always in danger of backsliding, and that it is possible for any to backslide so completely as to become entirely apostatized and hopeless. But any backslider who will truly repent and turn back to Christ need have no fear but that Christ will receive and pardon and fully restore him to divine favor and standing.

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QUESTION #47 -- I was converted when a child. Later I wandered away from God. Then I came back as best I knew how. Took Christ by faith. Joined the church and have held offices in the church and been respected as a Christian. But these twenty years I have been unable to find peace.

Others pray through easily, but I am tempted to think I crossed the dead line during those years of wandering. I am not hard-hearted. I spend many hours on my knees and I rejoice to see others find God. Do souls that are completely cast away have a desire for God?

ANSWER #47 -- Your case is indeed pitiable, but it is not hopeless and is not as unusual as perhaps the devil has tried to make you think it is. Always remember that the devil accuses and the Holy Spirit convicts. The difference is that accusation offers no road to amendment, while conviction applies to sin, righteousness and judgment. That is, the Holy Spirit shows you what to do to get away from your trouble. And this makes me clear to say you are suffering at the hands of the accuser, not at the hand of a merciful God. Therefore you must resist the devil. If it were God, then you should yield to Him and do what He shows you to do. I doubt that you will obtain victory as a crisis. You will learn to stand by standing. You must take the promise of God for your foundation and stand on it regardless of every onslaught of the devil. But it is encouraging to know that "each victory will help us some other to win." You will find rest and peace as you follow on in faith. Resist the devil. Discount your doubts. Believe God more and more. Light will yet break in and deliverance will come, and when it does, Please drop me a line. I shall be praying for you.

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QUESTION #48 -- Some of my friends belong to a church that does not allow eating of meat or fish and frowns on all bright colors, even for children. I seem to need meat and also love colors. These people are fine Christians and believe in the same sound doctrine as the Nazarenes. What is your opinion of these matters? Also please explain I Timothy 4:3 -- the last clause, about meats.

ANSWER #48 -- Personally, I stand firm on the doctrine Paul presents in the 14th chapter of Romans. I trust you will read that chapter carefully. The doctrine there is summarized in the 17th verse, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." And in keeping with this, the apostle bids us not to judge one another in such matters as meat and drink. If one wants to avoid meats altogether and eat only herbs (he must stand the odium of being considered weak, but that is his affair), let him do it, but let him not think he is better on that account or that another is worse

because he eats. And let not the one who eats despise the other. In other words, there is nothing to it either way. It is only when one makes an issue of it -- for or against -- that evil arises. And as to colors, I thank God that He made other colors besides white and black. If one thinks God does not love colors and beauty, let him look at nature in the summer time. This is just more of the meat subject. Just wear colors or don't wear them -- there is nothing to it either way, just so you don't try to foist your notions on someone else. As to the scripture you mention: I would have to begin with the second verse, where the apostle begins, "Speaking lies in hypocrisy," and right on down to the clause you mention,. Hypocrite is the old Greek word for an actor on the stage, and people who put the content of their religion into externals are called hypocrites, with varying degrees of culpability attached. Then if you will follow Paul right on through the sixth verse you will see that he says, in substance, just as he did in Romans thirteen, "This is all nonsense. All nourishing food which God has made for man is good, and if you like it (can give thanks for it), eat it; it can do you no moral harm, and abstaining from it can do you no spiritual good." You would have to go a long way to find more uncommon common sense than you find in the Bible, and this Pauline treatment of the meat question is a case in point.

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QUESTION #49 -- What is meant by the phrase, "To doubt is sin." If an individual doubts his sanctification, does he thereby lose his justification? Must he repent and be forgiven or is it necessary only to reaffirm his faith for sanctification?

ANSWER #49 -- I am not familiar with the phrase, "To doubt is sin." I wonder if it is a version of "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23)? If it is that, then of course the meaning is that when you do anything concerning which you are in doubt it is Sin. If you do not think a thing is right and pleasing to God, do not do it. If the phrase is "home made," then I presume the meaning is that doubting God or the promise of God is sin, since we know that faith is simply believing God or believing what God has said. And on this we have the plain words of Jesus, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Faith is the link which joins us on to God, and when it is broken we are separated from God. But this is faith in its most fundamental function, and I do not think we should deduce from this that all who ask for further evidence or who hesitate to accept a given promise for the moment is separated from God. On the second part of the question: salvation does come in epochs -- the first and second blessings. But there is no occasion for anyone who has been troubled with doubt to go to the bottom and cast away his whole confidence. Rather let him hold fast to what he has, reaffirm his consecration, reassert his faith and come out immediately into the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ

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QUESTION #50 -- I am troubled because some people who testify to a high state of grace, even to being sanctified wholly, do not live. what they profess. What can we do about this? Also, Jesus gave parables, could you not give us a material representation of the human and the divine parts in this question of salvation from all sin?

ANSWER #50 -- Thinking of it as a personal responsibility, you and I should acknowledge our obligation to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called." But speaking with reference to others, we have God's Word, God's Spirit and the example of at least some who live worthy lives, so we cannot expect to be excused because the example is not universal among religious professors. The fact that I have known

one who lived a holy life makes me rich as to examples, and all the unworthy persons in the world cannot nullify the one good example I have known. As to parables: I have heard that an arrogant skeptic who claimed the Bible is a human book was effectively silenced by the challenge that he write one parable that would compare with the parables of Jesus. The art of expressing spiritual realities in material symbols is an art indeed, and I think the symbols of the Bible, the journeys of the Children of Israel, the ancient temple, etc., are the best of such pictures that could possibly be drawn.

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QUESTION #51 -- About six years ago I was brightly converted and a little later sanctified wholly. From that time on I loved God and His work, and cared nothing for sin and the world. But about nine months ago I had a serious operation, and since that time have been nervous and tempted to doubt. The devil has even tempted me to kill my two children and myself. But I guard myself by refusing to be, alone. Still the devil tells me I have committed the unpardonable sin. When I go to church I feel like going to the altar, and have gone several times. Please pray for me and if you can help me, please give me any word of advice.

ANSWER #51 -- I am sure you are troubled on account of your physical and nervous condition. Your duty now is to take the best care possible of yourself until you are stronger. Read your Bible and good literature, but do not attend and take part in "high pressure" meetings. Going to the altar will not likely help you. Keep your faith in God firm, eat carefully, sleep and rest all you can, and with your returning health and strength your nerves and your faith will improve also. Some careless preacher is likely to come along and preach on the unpardonable sin and you will have a decided mental break. Resist the devil, stand on the promise of God, believe in His goodness and mercy, rest in confidence. And may God bring you out into a wide and peaceful place.

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QUESTION #52 -- Do you believe it is possible for a person to lose much of his joy and power through failure to testify without being entirely backslidden? And how can he regain his lost joy and power?

ANSWER #52 -- Yes, I do believe one may lose much of his joy and power through failure to testify and yet not be entirely backslidden. In fact I do not account one entirely backslidden until he gives up the fight and ceases to try to do right and to please God. I think the same principle holds here as in business life, where men are advised, "Go back to where you lost your money, and there you will find it." Go back to where you lost your joy and there you will find it But it must not be taken for granted that you will find it immediately and on account of just one act of witnessing. Set in to be obedient to God in all things, and keep it up, regardless of everything it involves. Keep it up regardless of how you feel, and in time God will take care that your feelings are adjusted.

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QUESTION #53 -- Please explain James 5:19, 20: "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he, which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

ANSWER #53 -- Of course we know that none can forgive sins but God only, and that every essential change in the state or standing of a man before God is a work of divine grace. But the apostle is simply showing how great the task accomplished when one becomes the instrument in turning another to God by

whom these blessed and vital changes are made. It is in this accommodated sense that we speak of one as "a soul winner," and even the wise man said, "He that winneth souls is wise."

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QUESTION #54 -- The Bible tells us to have confidence in our fellowmen, but how can you have confidence in one when you know he is lying even while he is yet talking?

ANSWER #54 -- I do not know of any requirement for believing in one when you know he is wrong. The scriptural warning is against prejudging. That is, against suspecting and misjudging.

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QUESTION #55 -- Please explain Romans 14:23, especially the last clause, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

ANSWER #55 -- The whole section along here deals with the subject of "Charitable Living," and the application is to oneself, as well as to his neighbor. Toward the neighbor the attitude is, "I am not so concerned about the length of my menu as I am about my brother's soul. Therefore, if my eating of certain things offends my brother, I will just not eat these things. For after all, the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and if I find myself restricted by the conscience of others, I accept it for the kingdom's sake." Toward myself the attitude is, "I will give God and righteousness the benefit of the doubt, and will live in all good conscience. If I am perfectly clear, then I will go ahead. If I am uncertain, then I will stay on the safe side. For even though a thing might not be wrong within itself, yet if to me there is doubt, I shall be condemned if I go ahead; for in that case I at least show that pleasing God is not a serious matter with me. So that whatever is not clearly right or at least harmless is sin if I do it."

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QUESTION #56 -- Please harmonize the following two texts: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (John 2:17), "Let your moderation be known unto all men" (Philippians 4:5).

ANSWER #56 -- The word "moderation" is just a synonym of "gentleness." And the root idea of gentleness is "pliability" or ability to yield. Our own blessed Lord is the best example of what this gentleness is in combination with a zeal that brooks every hindrance and stops not for even death itself. The idea that zeal implies coarseness and the disposition to "rule or ruin" arose from some other source, not from the example or teachings of Jesus of Nazareth or the holy apostles who followed on after Him.

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QUESTION #57 -- I am troubled about evil thoughts. Can you help me?

ANSWER #57 -- There is a difference between evil thoughts and thoughts of evil. Take an illustration: I am here on this camp ground. My neighbor's cabin is only a few feet away. He has in his cabin a number of things which I could use very conveniently. He scatters his property about and goes away for an hour to the post office. I think how it would be possible for one to step in there and steal while the owner is away. That is a thought of evil. But in my heart I know I would not do it, even if I knew I would never be even suspected, so the thought is not evil. But if this should be changed and I should decide that I would steal

except for the danger of being suspected, that is an evil thought and is sin. There is an old saying, "I cannot keep the birds from flying over my head, but I can keep them from making nests in my hair." Likewise, thoughts of evil come unsolicited, for this is a sinful world. But I can refuse lodging to any of these intruders, and can make sure that my affections are set always on things above, and that my will is always to do the will of God. And while certain of these two things, remember that nothing outside of us can get in to do us harm and mar our standing with God without our consent.

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QUESTION #58 -- In Matthew 22:39 Jesus says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." To whom does the word "neighbour" refer in this case?

ANSWER #58 -- This is the question they asked Jesus (Luke 10:29), and in answering it He gave the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 30-37), and according to this parable, my neighbor is any man who has need of me, and who is brought by divine Providence into the place where I can serve him. Ordinarily we call those who live near us "neighbors," and so they are and should be, but even those who live at a distance are my neighbors to the limit of their need of me and to my limit to meet and supply that need.

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QUESTION #59 -- Some people think that people who really walk with God will not be compelled to accept relief (government or other such relief as is provided for those in distress), and they quote Psalm 37:25, "I have been young, and now am old; and yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Do you think this is a fair and proper interpretation?

ANSWER #59 -- I do not think the interpretation is fair or correct, or that the application is necessary or kind. Of course we would all prefer to get through without appealing to the government or other relief agencies. But to make such an appeal is not begging. If one has been a loyal citizen, has paid his taxes and done his duty, he is as much entitled to the relief provided for his time of stress and need as one is entitled to his insurance when he has a fire (and he is so entitled, if he has kept his premiums paid up) . I have been a week now right in the midst of a drought stricken community in the West, and a large per cent of these people must have help or they will suffer and the state and the nation will be made poorer by their suffering. Relief is provided for them, they are entitled to it, and it is their duty, as well as their privilege, to receive it; for if they do not receive it their poverty makes others poorer. But the case of the industrial worker who is left stranded and without work is exactly parallel, and he is no beggar when he applies for relief. He owes it to the community and to the nation to make the application and to receive the relief and thus to be ready to render his share in the nation's recovery. It is just as religious to take this emergency relief as it is to accept help when your family is ill or when your automobile is stuck in the mud. Some of the best people I know are receiving relief today, and are grateful for it, and they will come out of the time of emergency with their faith in God and in humanity. When I was a child they used to correct me for mimicking a neighbor boy who was lame by saying, "You better not mock him; you might get crippled sure enough." So I would not say an unkind thing about anyone who has found it necessary to apply for emergency relief, lest I find myself in need, and then it would be difficult indeed to make such application. Let our people who find it necessary to get help from the relief agencies do it all in good faith and with good heart. Let them serve God through it all, keep their faith in Him and in humanity, and go on unabashed to the day when they will be able to return to the community and the nation their contribution in

kind. In the meantime, let them not forget to pray and to make the moral and spiritual contributions which are, after all, our country's greatest need just now and all the time.

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QUESTION #60 -- What do you think of Christians listening to barn dances and shows over the radio?

ANSWER #60 -- I think this is poor occupation for followers of the pure, devoted Christ. I do not believe He would do it. Rather, I believe He would pray, engage in worthy conversation, read worthy literature, and go about doing good.

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QUESTION #61 -- Some of my friends think it is wrong to call a doctor or take medicine. They are good people. What do you think of doctors and medicine? Does the Bible anywhere forbid medicine?

ANSWER #61 -- I know there are those who will be offended by anything I might say on such a question as this, and I don't like to offend anyone. And yet I think the question is pertinent, and ought to be answered. And about all readers of this book have Bibles and concordances, and if they are interested, they probably know all the proof texts on their own side of the matter quite as well as I do. So instead of quoting Scripture, I am going to tell you what I think all the way through.

And I do this in the full confidence that I am in agreement with the teachings of the Scriptures, not as to certain proof texts only, but as to the whole tenor of the blessed Book. In the first place, the Bible does teach that God heals the body in answer to the prayer of faith, and without the use of natural remedies, and that it is the privilege of all God's people to seek to offer such a prayer for themselves and for others, and to invite others to pray for and with them that this prayer of faith may be offered.

This is the important part of the subject, and the point upon which we should lay the principal emphasis. Let us seek to offer the prayer of faith for healing, and let us encourage others to do likewise. On the other hand, I believe the Bible nowhere teaches that it is wrong to have doctors and to take medicine, and that the almost universal judgment of sane people is that doctors and medicine are helpful, and at times indispensable. And it is foolish and hurtful to the influence of Christianity for one to place himself in position where to avail himself of such help would be, to him, compromise.

Our chance for doing good depends upon our ability to stay in our bodies for a while. And very largely our usefulness depends upon our keeping these bodies reasonably healthy. Therefore take enough thought about meat and drink to know what you can use and what you should avoid. Be temperate in eating, sleeping, working and recreation. Dress for comfort and health as well as for decency. Then if you get a cavity in your tooth, have the dentist to fill it. If your teeth become a menace to your health, have them extracted and use plates.

If you catch cold, do whatever you can to break it up. If you fall and break a limb, have it set and splinted. If you don't know what to do, see a doctor and do what he advises. Pray for healing and for health. And by all means, in spite of dirt and the devil and automobiles and disease germs, you may live a while. And while you are at it make your years and months and days and hours and minutes count for the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom. On such a road as this you can be holy and happy and useful, and you can go to heaven when you die or meet Jesus in glory when He comes.

And what better could you do by putting yourself in a strain where you are likely to break your nerves and the nerves of others by claiming all sorts of privileges and immunities which the rank and file of God's holy people wonder if you really possess?

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QUESTION #62 -- I have a neighbor who is a good Christian. Her husband has recently been reclaimed from a period of backsliding that lasted a number of years. While in his backslidden state he, took their children to picture shows and other places of worldly amusement. Now the little boy says he would rather go to the show than to church. Will any amount of praying undo the damage that has been done? and are not parents responsible. if they let their children do things they themselves condemn?

ANSWER #62 -- One of the most pathetic pictures I have seen is that of an old man coming to God and then trying to undo the evil he did while living a life of sin before his children. God does overrule in many such cases, but moral damage can never be assured of a complete cure. If a man suffers the loss of a limb as a consequence of sin, getting saved will not give him his limb back again. Likewise no one can ever gather up the effects of a bad example. But it is one's cross to always work to undo what he has done and to pray God to forgive and restore and save. Yes, up to a certain point, a parent is guilty of whatever he consents to let his child do, and it is during this period that most thought and deed habits are established. As a rule, the "twig is bent" by the age of twelve, and the tree will grow according to that bent. Only the miraculous grace and goodness of God enables us to pray and hope for the salvation of a sinner on up until he is a hundred years old.

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QUESTION #63 -- In Deuteronomy 14:21 it says, "Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien." Please explain what this scripture means.

ANSWER #63 -- As a precept for the ancient Hebrews, I judge there is no question as to the meaning. The Hebrews were forbidden to eat blood, and when an animal died "of itself," even though it were killed by choking or other such means, not involving disease, they could not eat the flesh, seeing the blood had not been drained away before the flesh was set. But restrictions like this were not forced upon Gentiles, and so such flesh might be given or sold to non-Hebrew people. One of the purposes of the Hebrew prohibition of certain meats was to emphasize the fact that they were a peculiar people in the earth -- a people for God's own special possession. There is quite a general aversion to eating the flesh of animals that have not been bled even yet, so that the bill of rights sent by the Jerusalem church to Gentile converts, found in the 5th chapter of Acts, contained a prohibition of "things strangled, and from blood." I believe the New Testament bill of fare for Gentile Christians is very broad and very long, and that "nothing is to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving." And yet, the aversion to eating blood and "things that die of themselves" has some basis in refined feelings, and I believe it is well for all people to observe the sense of mercy involved. As a lad, I was taught not to kill doves because they assisted Noah in finding the time to leave the ark. And to this day, I think I should feel half like a cannibal if I ate a dove. Yet I do not think even this is a crime within itself. Only it is just a good thing to cater to any sense of refinement and pity that may influence us to be gentle in a world so largely governed by force.

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QUESTION #64 -- What is gossip, and is it a sin?

ANSWER #64 -- The simplest idea in the word gossip is chatter, light, harmless, meaningless talk. I would say that a moderate amount of talk is not only not wrong, but is quite right. It is boorish to sit about and say nothing. Better remark on the weather, on matters of health, and any other question of minor importance and seek a common interest for more useful conversation. I often use such a method to "get started" so I can talk to a man about his soul. But like eating and work and play, talk must be governed. Solomon said, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin," and John Wesley thought one could not profitably continue conversation, even on religious subjects, for more than one hour at a time. And we all have experienced a sense of leanness after a talk feast, even when we could not actually recall any harmful thing we have said. And then it is so easy for one to drift into news spreading without due regard for truth, necessity and kindness. So I think it better to lean toward too little than toward too much talk.

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QUESTION #65 -- Is it right for a person to ask the preacher to have prayer in the home or should the preacher ask for the privilege?

ANSWER #65 -- Either way is right, but as in all things pertaining to the rules of host and guest, the head of the house should ask the minister to offer prayer. On the other hand, if the head of the house is slow about making the suggestion, then the minister should be free to do so.

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QUESTION #66 -- Please explain Luke 3:14, "And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages."

ANSWER #66 -- Well, all I can say is that John advised soldiers to be good soldiers. They were not to take advantage of anyone on account of their being armed and the others not. They were not to bring false testimony against any, and they were to take the pay that was due them and not seek to supplement it by asking subsidies for doing their duty. And I think this is the same advice that would be given a soldier, a sailor, a merchant, a farmer or anyone else today. Be good in the sphere where you serve, and do not violate the rules of your calling.

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QUESTION #67 -- What is the difference between zeal and fanaticism?

ANSWER #67 -- The difference is in the love quality. Proper zeal is a correct admixture of light and love. Fanaticism is "loveless light"

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QUESTION #68 -- Please explain Matthew 12:25, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand."

ANSWER #68 -- The statement is of universal application -- every kingdom, every city, every house. Division will kill even the individual who is divided within himself, so that no one can serve both God and the world. If it is suggested that in the world of evil there is much confusion, war and strife, and yet evil

lives and goes on, just remember that this world of evil is united in that it is all evil In the end every unit of intelligent life must be entirely good or entirely bad. Wheat and tares may grow together in the field for a while, but in the end the field must yield up wheat or be given over to tares.

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QUESTION #69 -- Please explain Matthew 5:33-37. If I should be subpoenaed into court what should I do about taking oath?

ANSWER #69 -- Personally, I do not believe this text or any other forbids the taking of the legal oath. But such as do so interpret it need not be worried in America, for here you are allowed to affirm if you have scruples against taking oath. The reason I do not like to affirm is that I do not like to suggest that I am in a class with the atheists who can do nothing but affirm, seeing they do not believe in God..

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