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**UPON THE ROCK
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THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS BY ROGER A. RUSH

An ABC special presentation by Peter Jennings on the search for Jesus, raised far more questions than answers. It was clear from the start that truth would take a back seat to error, The preponderance of material favored the views of liberal theologians. The influence of the Jesus Seminar (a group of anti-Biblical intellectuals) was apparent from the start. Although there are many conservative theologians with outstanding credentials who uphold the historicity of the Biblical narrative, their voices were not heard. In typical fashion, under the guise of fair and objective investigation, a thoroughly one-sided presentation was made.

Throughout the program the reliability of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) was called into question. Frequent references to contradictions were made. Accounts of events not found in John but in the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, Luke) were immediately suspect. But, I can assure you, if the gospels provided identical narratives the charge of collusion would be immediately leveled and their use as historical documents dismissed just as readily. The slight difference or discrepancies between the gospels are easily explained. And, they do not constitute contradictory testimony. The gospels provide complementary accounts of Jesus, not contradictory ones.

We must take into consideration both the purpose of the narrative and the audience to which it was originally addressed. Consider the following.

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Matthew was written primarily for Jewish readers, and thus emphasized Jesus as the Messiah (Matthew 1:18-25). Mark was designed for Gentile readers, and is briefer with fewer references to the Law. Luke wrote as a historian (Luke 1:1-4). From a historical perspective, it would be impossible to improve upon his work. And, John specifically wrote to produce faith (John 20:30, 31). Though as historical reliable as the Synoptics, it was not John's intent to provide a strictly historical document.

It would be a mistake to conclude that any similarities between various accounts in the gospels constitutes differing records of the same historical events. Although similar in content, Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and Luke's account of the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17-49) are records of two different sermons presented on two different occasions at two different locations. It would not have been uncommon for Jesus to have preached similar sermons before different audiences. In fact, preachers still do it all the time. These two sermons in no way provide contradictory material.

Jesus did some things more than once. John records the cleansing of the Temple early in the ministry of Jesus (John 2:13-17). The Synoptics record a similar event during the week of His crucifixion (Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:12-19; Luke 19:45-48). Given the lucrative nature of the practice, those driven from the Temple by Jesus would have quickly returned to their dishonest ways as soon as Jesus left Jerusalem. It is not surprising that he discovered them engaged in the same reprehensible conduct when He entered the city at the close of His ministry. Again, there is no contradiction, just additional historical information.

UPON THE ROCK

**PAUL HOOVER
EDITOR**

**LARRY
REYNOLDS
COEDITOR**

**MARK
REYNOLDS
ASSOCIATE
EDITOR**

**ROGER RUSH
ASSOCIATE
EDITOR**

**JASON
RIDGEWAY
WEBSITE
EDITOR**

**CHIC BARRETT
COPY EDITOR**

If I knew it would be the last time I would be there to share your day, Well, I'm sure you'll have so many more, so I can let just one slip away.

For surely there is always tomorrow to pick up from an oversight, And we always get a second chance to make do with the first.

There will always be another day to say our "I love you's." And certainly there's another chance to say "I love you." Anytime you want.

But just In case I might be wrong, and today is the last day, I'd like to say how much I love you and I hope we never forget,

That tomorrow's not promised to anyone, And today may be the last chance you get to hold me close one tight

So if you're waiting for tomorrow, why not do it today? For if tomorrow comes, you'll surely regret the day.

That you didn't take the extra time for a smile or a hug or a kiss. And you were too busy to grant someone else the chance to grant you one last wish.

So always hold them dear. Take time to say "I love you." "Thank you," or "It's okay,"

And if tomorrow never comes, you'll have no regrets about the day.

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COPY EDITOR**

involving himself/herself in pro-life movements, but again, we do not see how one could involve a whole congregation of God's people in such a thing. Some may not be able to do so, and others may not have the understanding to do so. We have known many Christians who have involved themselves in pro-life movements, and were encouraged by brothers and sisters. Some of those were preachers who were given time off from certain home duties to lobby congress persons, make speeches to political groups, etc. But just how one would involve the spiritual Kingdom of Jesus Christ in such a movement, we know not.

Personally, this writer spends a lot of time emailing, writing letters to, and phoning politicians, but he does that as a citizen of the USA, and not a citizen of the Kingdom of Christ. If he must make a choice between working for the Kingdom of Christ, or the USA, he always chooses to do the work of Christ first. The reason? Jesus said, "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God; and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

IF

If I knew it would be the last time that I'd see you fall asleep, I would tuck you in tighter and pray the Lord, your soul to keep

If I knew it would be the last time that I'd see you walk out the door, I would give you a hug and kiss and call you back for more.

If I knew it would be the last time I'd hear you lift your voice in praise, I would video tape each action and word, so I could play them back day after day.

If I knew it would be the last time, I could spare an extra minute or two,
To stop and say, "I love you," instead of assuming that you know I do.

Inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16) does not negate an author's personality or individual background. Inspiration does insure accuracy. It is not surprising that Luke's gospel contains many medical terms not found in the other three, or that John, written after the Synoptics, would mention things not found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

The full picture of Jesus is seen by examining all four gospels. Each in itself provides only a partial view of Him. I can illustrate it this way. Suppose a photographer took a picture of the west side of a building. From that picture would you know how many entrances there were to the building? Of course not! Only upon seeing pictures of all four sides would it be possible to provide the correct answer. One perspective is incomplete. Though we would have an accurate picture of one side, it would still be an incomplete picture. In the same sense, one gospel presents an accurate but incomplete picture of Jesus. By looking at all four gospels we get a full and complete view of Him.

There is no reason to question the reliability of the gospels (or any book of the Bible). All four were written before the close of the first century by individuals in a far better position to know what actually happened than any modern day liberal theologian.

If you want to know about Jesus don't waist your time watching Peter Jennings and ABC. Read the New Testament and you will know the truth (John 8:32).

SELF-CONTROL

BY PAUL HOOVER

INTRODUCTION

There are several issues closely related to self-control. One of these issues is freewill. We must understand that we truly were created with the ability to choose. Because we make choices we are responsible for our actions. We must also recognize proper authority as we make our decisions. In the minds of many people humanism and evolution wage war against the authority of God. We must, however, make our decisions based on a true desire to please the

creator.

It may be easier to see a lack of self-control in the lost world around us than it is to see it in ourselves. Perhaps some of us fail to see our need for true self-control. But what would you call continuous opposition to and defiance of a godly eldership? What would you call rejection of truth taught in a sermon and backed up by the Word of God in favor of an opinion, which has no Biblical support? Or, talking behind someone's back without, ever having gone to him or her as the Bible commands? What about a desire for entertainment so strong that we support with our finances and allow into our minds, words, and images that are simply ungodly? What about a love for sports so deep that we choose them, over the services of the church Jesus' died for? All of these things display a serious lack of self-control.

SELF-CONTROL AND FREEWILL

Some professed Bible believers believe that man does not have freewill. During the reformation Luther was one who professed this belief. It is a devastating error. If one's every action and thought is predestined, self-control is a foolish notion. If one is totally controlled by an outside force he is guilty of no wrong and cannot be credited with any right.

You may say, "Yes, I know some denominations believe that, but what does that have to do with us?" This is what it has to do with us. Some of us believe it too. We do not profess it. In fact, we would likely all deny it. But, have you ever heard a Christian say in defense of their wrong actions, "That's just the way I am?" Or, "that's Ole Brother Bob, that's just the way he is." What is being said in both cases? Aren't we saying that people simply have no control over what they do? Yet, the Bible teaches the reality of freewill from man's creation through the final pages of the New Testament.

One of the first things God did with Adam after his creation was to allow him to exercise freewill by making decisions. "Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name"

will?

It seems to this observer that if we allow ourselves to become sidetracked from doing the most important spiritual work in the world then there will be no one to do that work. When one reads the New Testament, he finds no authority for a congregation of God's people getting involved in politics, though we should speak out as a body of people, and as individual people against that which is evil. Paul never instructed the church at Rome, for example, to become, involved in the politics of his day. However, history records that many of the Christians in the pagan empire would take children they found deserted and raise them, giving them love, and care.

Deserting children in the days of Paul was one way the people had of accomplishing what we would call "population control" It was also a way of getting rid of unwanted children such as those who were inferior in some way, physically and mentally Churches often do that kind of work today by contributing from their treasure to homes that care for such children, although we do not know of any such homes existing in the days of the apostles. It seems that the practice of pure and undefiled religion would permit such today.

We are not sure what the questioner means by "local politics," but a Christian who is a citizen of this country may run for any office he pleases, and other citizens, who are Christians, are free to vote for or against that person since this is the type of government under which we live. However, nothing but conversion to Christ is going to dean up the morals of this country and while a Christian might attempt to aid in that effort using a political office, the church should not, other than by individual vote, attempt to sway politics.

Regarding pro-life movements, much of what we have said above would apply. However, abortion is not a political problem, but a moral one that has been made political by the Supreme Courts doing what it had no constitutional, or moral right to do, and that is permitting the murder of unborn human children. The command of Jesus, "Thou shalt do no murder," should not be limited to human beings outside the womb. It makes no difference what political party is in favor of this or any other sin such as homosexuality, that party is wrong, and God is right! This student can see nothing wrong with the Christian(s)

Without the miracles referred to the revelation of God made through these individuals would never have been accepted. It was necessary for miracles to be performed for the unbelievers to accept that message as being from God.

People often try to uphold the presence of miracles today by trying to create a false need for them. The assertion is made that if it was necessary to confirm the message and the messenger in an unbelieving age then it is necessary to reconfirm today. This is not true because as has already been pointed out, once a message is confirmed and recorded, it never needs to be reconfirmed again. Since we are not the messengers of God in the sense that those referred to were, then we cannot be confirmed today. Whenever a will is entered in probate court and that will is determined as being genuine, that will stands forever. One may go back and contest it a thousand years afterwards but unless definite, incontrovertible evidence can be arrayed to demonstrate that the evidence offered the first time was false the first confirmation and recording of it always stands. We accept that in matters pertaining to this life. Why are people unable to accept it in the religious realm?
(This article is taken from notes while attending Memphis School of preaching. I am unsure of the author.)

IN ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTIONS

BY D. GENE WEST

SHOULD THE CHURCH BE MORE ACTIVE IN LOCAL POLITICS, PRO-LIFE MOVEMENTS, AND THE LIKE?

If by “the church,” the querist means a given congregation of the church, we would simply point out that there is no New Testament authority for such a work to be done. If this student of the Bible understands the Book of Ephesians correctly, the work that is to be done by local churches is limited to evangelism, benevolence, and the edification of the congregation in love. It would seem that our work is limited to that spiritual sphere in which no work will be done if the church does not do it. If we do not preach the Gospel to the lost, who will? If we do not edify the Body of Christ in love, who will? If we do not reach out to the indigent with love, aid, and the Gospel, who

(Genesis 2:19).

The mighty warrior and servant of God, Joshua, believed in freewill. “Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD! And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. So the people answered and said “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods” (Joshua 24:14-16).

The New Testament is filled with choices and conditional statements. Notice these examples in 1 John. “If we say that we have fellowship with Him...” (vs 6). “If we say that we have no sin...” (vs 8). “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (vs 9). The “if” in these verses tell us that we are creatures of freewill. Two of the final verses in the book of Revelation say this “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book if anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (22:18,19).

Without freewill, a great deal of the Bible would be pointless. We are all creatures who possess freewill. We are responsible for our choices. Yes, the drug addict is responsible for his actions. The alcoholic, though he may be sick, is also a sinner. The homosexual is accountable for his choice. Christians who are out of control in the way they dress, talk, recreate and so on are equally accountable.

SELF-CONTROL AND AUTHORITY

The control factor in self-control” is of great importance. There must be a standard, which determines whether we are in or out of control. Many people who drink alcohol or take drugs feel that they can do these things within certain parameters and still be in control of their lives. Their idea of control is based on their own standard and does

not consider the authority of God at all. The evolution hypothesis, as well as other forms of atheism, lead people away from the authority of God.

True self-control is impossible if the control center (the authority) is erroneous. There are people all over the world, both religious and non-religious, who do not drink, do drugs, have sex outside of marriage and have good morals. But, even so, if their lives are led with no adherence to the will of God they are out of control.

Look at the following quotes. “The New Moralist does not accept at all the notion that there are moral standards which are revealed by God. He does not believe that God laid down laws which are for all men, at all times, under all conditions. He is, therefore, a relativist” (Ernest Harrison, *A Church Without God*, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1967, p. 118). Joseph Fletcher, the father of Situation Ethics, said concerning legal codes (specifically the Ten Commandments), “situation ethics has good reason to hold it as a duty in some situations to break them, any or all of them” (Situation Ethics, *The New Morality*, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1966, p. 74).

When people consider the Law of God to be something they can obey or reject as they see fit the results are disastrous. When people overlook God’s authority even momentarily, serious problems arise. ... “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16,17). Though Adam received this commandment Eve was made aware of it. We know this because she was able to tell the serpent what the rules were concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

In her conversation with the serpent there was never a time when God’s law could not be recalled. Notice how the serpent approached Eve in order to deceive her. “Has God said you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” He asked a question that he already knew the answer to. Eve also knew the answer. She replied, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but, of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, you shall not eat of it.” Eve also knew the penalty for breaking God’s law. She continued,

following Moses were but God’s spokesmen to call the people back to the law he had revealed to them through Moses and to point to a new lawgiver of the spiritual Israel that would one day come into existence. At Sinai God confirmed his revelation to Israel by causing the mountain to quake and thunders and lightening appearing before the eyes of Israel in order that there might never be a question surrounding the source of their law. He further confirmed that revelation by causing the face of Moses to shine so that the Israelites were afraid to look on him. (Ex. 34:29ff.) Moses was inspired to write the law as God revealed it to him so there would be no error in it.

2. **The Prophets** were inspired and their message was a “Thus saith the Lord.” More than 4800 times the phrase, or its equivalent, appears in the Old Testament indicating that the message the prophets had was truly God’s message.

3. **John the Baptist** was God’s spokesman to turn the hearts of the people back to the Father (Malachi 4:5-6); God’s spokesman to prepare the way for the Lord (Isa. 40:3-5). It is affirmed that John was filled with the Holy Spirit. Thus he was supernaturally endowed to proclaim the message of God.

4. **Christ** came to bring the message of redemption—a message that had only been told in promise (Romans 1:2,3). There were instances when Jesus had to speak with authority and often his teaching was a contrast with that which had preceded, (Matt. 5:32-44). The miracles he performed were necessary to confirm the message that he proclaimed then and which later would be proclaimed by his apostles. Without that miraculous conformation the religion of Christianity could never have made any headway.

5. **The Apostles** - Beginning on Pentecost the apostles were able to demonstrate the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. They spoke in other languages on the day of Pentecost and were able to confer the different supernatural gifts in the early years of the church. They were inspired (a miracle) to speak God’s will. They were ambassadors of Christ (II Corinthians 5:20). They were therefore, authorized to reprint the government of Christ and in order to do this they must be miraculously guided in order to loose what God had loosed in heaven and bind what God had bound in heaven. (Matthew 16:18,19).

Testament prophecies. To claim that Jesus performed miracles solely out of compassion would be to make him a respecter of persons for then he would have healed the whole world because he had compassion on the whole world. Jesus did not act solely from the foundation of compassion even though compassion was in the framework of his life.

On one occasion when John, while in prison, hearing of the works of Jesus, having a question in his mind, sent two of his disciples with a question. "Art thou he that should come or do we look for another?" The answer of Jesus was, "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." (Matthew 11:2-5.)

Why would this answer at once satisfy John the immerser who needed all the encouragement and assurance that he could receive at this time? The answer seems obvious to this writer John, a Jew, would be assured beyond any question by the fulfillment of Old Testament scriptures. If he could see the fulfillment of the Old Testament, there would be no doubt, left in his mind. This is what Jesus meant when he told them to go and tell John what was occurring.

There might be many allusions seen to the Old Testament in this very passage but I believe that one or two will suffice. Observe if you will, Isaiah 35:1-5; 61:1 (where meek equals the poor of Matthew 11:5) and other similar passages.

The miracles of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, had a dual purpose. This dual purpose was: (1) to reveal God's will to man, and (2) to confirm God's message or messenger to man. With this twofold purpose of miracles in mind one can see each miracle of the Bible in its context. Just a brief survey of the highlights of the miracles surrounding God's revelation of himself will indicate the first purpose of miracles.

1. **Moses** stood as the great lawgiver and judge of the nation through whom God revealed his will to his people. All of the prophets

"You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die" (Gen. 3:1).

The serpent then appealed to Eve's desire. He said, "You won't really die. Your eyes will be opened and you will be as gods. You will know good and evil." Now Eve had the opportunity to employ self-control at that point. After all, the serpent was saying that the words of God were lies. She should have ended the conversation right then. A lack of self-control at that point led to her fall.

Eve practiced situational-ethics. God said, "Don't eat of that tree." God said, "If you do you will die." BUT!!! The serpent said I wouldn't die. And the tree is good for food. The fruit looks so good. I think it would make me wise. SO!!! She ate it. Eve had no self-control. She weighed the commandments of God against her own desires and reasoning, and she chose self-indulgence. As a result sin entered the world. Eve died just as God said she would.

"But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27). Paul may have had some specific things in mind when he wrote this. There is certainly a general truth here that we must all apply. Paul is talking about strength of will. He is talking about self-control. The discipline of his body tells us that self-control does not come easy. Some of us are not willing to put in the hard work the apostle saw as necessary. Some of us want easy religion.

Again, most of what we consider the big stuff is fairly easy for most of us to control. It's like the 5' tall 400 lb. man who said, "I think running on pavement is bad for my ankles so I restrain myself from running marathons." Let's face it; he wasn't going to do it anyway. But, what about the so called "little stuff?"

Poor attendance won't really cost our souls will it? "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). Many things constitute seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness. 1) Personal Bible study. 2) Attending the collective Bible studies of the church. 3) Attending the Worship Services of the church. 4) Practicing all aspects of Christianity. But there are those in the church who place a, higher

priority on entertainment, sports and recreation than on the kingdom of God. People who do this are out of control.

A little hypocrisy won't really cost us our souls will it? "Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5). Many people's favorite motto, verbalized or not, is, "Do as I say not as I do." People who have a higher standard for others than they do for themselves are out of control.

We could also discuss cruel vicious words men in the church who cause division use when they don't get their way in business matters. The result would be the same. They are out of control.

There is a spiritual chain that leads from an unfruitful life to a life that bears fruit. In 2 Peter 1:5-8 Peter identifies the links of the chain. They are faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance (self-control), patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity.

Peter taught that these things must not only be in us but the must abound. He also taught that these attributes keep us from being barren (useless) and cause us to be fruitful.

In Galatians 5:22, 23, we find a very similar list. All of the things listed make up a single entity. Collectively they are the fruit (singular) of the Spirit. If one link of the chain is broken we do not live in the Spirit.

All of those little things" we talked about are not so little after all. If we do not practice self-control abundantly, we break the chain. If we break the chain, we bear no spiritual fruit.

Where does that leave us? "And seeing a fig tree by the road, He (Jesus) came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, 'Let no fruit grow on you ever again.' Immediately the fig tree withered away" (Matthew 21:19).

silent and not prophesy at all (chapter 14)? If the apostle is not discussing different situations, his writing approaches being unintelligible.

"But," someone may ask, "why bother to wear veils when no men were present?" The answer is as Paul stated it—to show submission. When the entire assembly was gathered together, the women were to keep silent. When they met by themselves; however, they could exercise their spiritual gifts—but even then they needed to show that they were subject to authority. In other words, they were always to show submission, but in different circumstances there were different ways to do so. Roy Deaver made this point in the 1978 Freed-Hardeman lectureship book, *The Future of the Church*. He suggests that the absence of men may have been the very reason that some of the women were removing their coverings (102).

Viewing 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 as relating to other gatherings than a mixed assembly does not then negate 1 Timothy 2, and it is in harmony with all the facts we possess on the subject of worship and the text itself.

THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

CONTRIBUTED BY LARRY REYNOLDS

In a resurgence of superstition and belief in the occult with all of the ramifications to be seen connected with Eastern religions, multitudes are falling prey to the claims of Neo-Pentecostalism and, its attendant "so-called miracles." One of the first things in understanding miracles of the Bible is to comprehend the purpose or design of the miracles that were performed in Bible times.

We need to see the error that is involved in the claims to the supernatural today. Basic to our understanding of the falsity of such claims is to see the place miracles occupied in the Bible. Many think that Jesus came working miracles simply out of compassion, and that a significant portion of the miracles of healing were performed because of this compassion. Let it be emphasized that Jesus did have compassion but that was not the purpose of his performing miracles. He performed the miracles in harmony with and fulfillment of Old

- a. "...he who prophesies edifies the church" (4).
- b. "... that the church may receive edification" (5).
- c. "...let it be for the edification of the church..." (12).
- d. "Yet in the church..." (19).
- e. "Therefore if the whole church be gathered together in one place..." (23)
- f. "...he is convinced by all, he is judged by all" (24)
- g. "...Whenever you come together..." (26)
- h. "Let your women keep silence in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in the church" (34-35).

In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Paul never talks about what is done "in the church" or "in the assembly." He only discusses appropriate head coverings for men and women whenever they pray or prophesy.

That Paul is referring to some other gathering in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is not only possible, but gleanings from history make this notion far from farfetched. Christians did meet at other times and other places than for the weekly assembly. Everett Ferguson records the following comments from Justin (writing about A. D.150) in his book, *Early Christians Speak*: "We are always together with one another" (67). In addition to the regular first day of the week meeting for common worship...Christians met at other times (75).

Ferguson himself comments: Paul perhaps refers to the different kinds of gatherings when he mentions what occasions a Christian woman might have for appearing in public..." (86).

We know that the brethren in Jerusalem met daily (Acts 2:46). In Acts 12 the church met continually to pray for Peter's release from prison (5, 12). Therefore, it is entirely within the realm of possibility that the women needed to "cover" themselves only when leading in prayer or prophesying in private gatherings of women only.

If Paul's admonitions of chapter 11 do not pertain to private gatherings, why would Paul say there that the women need a covering in order to speak but then just a few verses later tell them to keep

CONCLUSION

A lack of self-control may well be at the center of every sin we commit. Self-control is not something we should expect from everyone else while excluding ourselves. Self-control must be practiced in every area of our lives or we will not be pleasing to God.

THE PRAYING PEOPLE OF GOD (A STUDY IN ACTS) BY TOM MCLEMORE

A reading of Acts reveals that God's people are a praying people. This is in fulfillment of the Lord's teaching, e.g., Jn. 14:13, 14; 16:26. Acts begins and ends with praying people and has people praying throughout. This fact ought to impress upon us an ideal for God's people today. At least three things are revealed from an analysis of prayer in Acts.

PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER

This is observed in Acts 1:14; 2:42. Again, this is in fulfillment of the Lord's will (Luke 18:1). According to Acts 6:4, nothing was allowed to take priority over prayer.

The history of the early church is a history of the activity of the resurrected Lord with, in, and through the early Christians (Acts 1:1; 4:36; 16:27). It is no surprise that constant rapport between heaven and earth was maintained! It was not just in times of crisis that they prayed, though prayer is appropriate in times of crisis (Acts 4:24; 12:12; 16:25). They were persistent in prayer.

It should be the same with us today. The essence of the Christian walk is constant contact with God through Christ.

PARTICULARS OF PRAYER

There are three recorded prayers in Acts: Acts 1:24; 4:24-30; 7:59, 60. These recorded prayers are instructive as to form and content. We observe prayer being offered in a wide variety of circumstances. Note by whom prayer is offered: gatherings of Christians (Acts 1:13; 2:1; 2:42; 3:1; 4:23; 12:12; 16:16; 20:36); as few as two (Acts 16:25; cf. Matthew 18:20); and solitary Christians (Acts 9:40; 22:17; 28:15). There is the need for all three today. There is a vital need for attendance at services of the church, for meeting together at other times to pray, and for private, individual prayer.

Sometimes prayer was accompanied by fasting (Acts 13:3; 14:23). Sometimes prayer was offered while kneeling (Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36). It is observed that prayer may be offered at any time: midnight (Acts 16:25); noon (Acts 10:9); or 3:00 p.m. (Acts 3:1). Furthermore, it may be offered at any place: an upper room (Acts 1:13); the temple (Acts 3:1); a housetop (Acts 10:9); by a river side (Acts 16:13); in a prison (Acts 16:25); on a sea shore (Acts 21:5); aboard ship (Acts 27:35); or on the road (Acts 28:15).

One thing which ought surely to be noticed is that when God's people pray, things happen! It was during prayer that the Spirit was poured out (Acts 2:1ff.; cf. Acts 1:14). During prayer the house was shaken (Acts 4:31). It was during prayer that prison gates were opened (Acts 12:12).

An earthquake occurred while prayer was being offered (Acts 16:28). While the age of miracles is past, and while we should not expect miraculous manifestations in response to prayer, there is still a lesson for us, viz., that God acts when his people pray!

PURPOSE FOR PRAYER

Prayer was offered at the outset of great enterprises and endeavors (Acts 13:3), as well as at their conclusion (Acts 14:23; 20:36). In Acts, God's people prayed for assistance. They prayed for guidance (Acts 1:24), boldness (Acts 4:29), and divine power (Acts 8:15; 9:40; 28:8).

Following is a brief summary of the text Paul begins by reminding them to keep the traditions he delivered to them (2). Next, he establishes authority: The Father, Christ, man, woman (3). Then he talks about how men and women honor or dishonor their head (4-7). A man dishonors his head if he wears a covering. A woman dishonors her head if she prays or prophesies while uncovered. But nothing is said about a worship assembly. These principles would apply in or out of the assembly. Paul reminds the women that man was created first and woman was created for the man (8-9).

Then comes the much-wondered-about comment of Paul's that the woman must have a symbol of authority upon her head "because of the angels" (10). Whatever interpretation is placed upon that phrase, it nevertheless does not require a gathering of men along with the women. Paul concludes this section by affirming that men and women are dependent upon one another (11-12).

"Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?" (13). Notice that Paul does not say "in the presence of men" or "in the assembly" He has been speaking in general terms throughout this section. He closes with comments about the length of hair and the fact that there is unanimity of thought on this subject throughout the churches of Christ (14-16).

As Paul moves to the next subject (the Lord's Supper), he makes it clear that he is talking about something that does occur in the assembly. He claims that they are coming "together not for the better but for the worse" (17). Verse 18 is somewhat repetitive: "For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you...." All of these clear statements could be taken to imply that the previous discussion (2-16) concerned something that was not occurring in the assembly, when they came together in one place. It would scarcely be surprising to learn that women met together in the absence of the men in order to exercise their spiritual gifts.

It is important to notice that in the other discussion involving spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 14), Paul leaves no doubt that he is discussing something that takes place in the assembly. Notice the explicit statements from this chapter which follow.

remains disqualified from leadership positions because of it (1 Corinthians 11:2-16).

Some have theorized that Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 2:8-14 is the general rule, but that 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is an exception to that doctrine. In other words, if a woman covers her head, then she may lead a prayer or deliver a prophecy in the assembly because she is showing proper submission. Most female preachers obviously do not believe this idea since they do not wear a covering on their heads. But the theory is incorrect anyway. First of all, Paul leaves no leeway for modifications to the general explanation he gives in 1 Timothy 2. How would wearing a head covering in any way diminish or change the two reasons for women being in submission? The idea of an exception lacks merit. Second, nothing in the text indicates that Paul is writing about a mixed assembly.

One "brother" states unequivocally that if we admit the context is a public assembly (which has yet to be proven), then forbidding women to pray in public is wrong. But why single out praying? The text mentions "praying or prophesying" (1 Cor. 11:4). Prophesying, according to Thayer, is "a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproving and admonishing the wicked or comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden, especially by foretelling future events" (522).

So if 1 Corinthians 11 2-16 is referring to the public assembly it would authorize a woman to pray and to preach as well (as long as she wears the covering). If such were the case, it is surprising indeed that Jesus did not appoint female apostles, issue appropriate head coverings, and send them out to convert sinners.

The fact is, however, that no one has presented convincing evidence that 1 Corinthians 11 refers to an assembly with men present. D. A. Crist wrote a tract, which was approved by the Dunkard Brethren Church, entitled "The Doctrine of the Prayer Veil." Its thesis is that women may teach men (contrary to 1 Timothy 2:8-14) if they wear a covering when they do so. His thesis falls because he does not devote even one paragraph to prove that this text involves males and females worshipping together.

Again, though God may not work miracles today, there is still assistance available to his people through his providence in response to prayer. They prayed for forgiveness, both for themselves (Acts 8:22) and for others (Acts 7:60; 8:24). This was in fulfillment of the Lord's teaching (Matthew 6 12, 14, 15). Prayer involved the giving of thanks, whether for food (Acts 27:35) or for the encouragement of seeing the brethren beloved in the Lord (Acts 28:15).

We, too, must be people of prayer. Let us give due consideration to persistence in prayer, the particulars of prayer, and the purpose for prayer. Let us anticipate great things happening when God's people become a praying people!

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH (PART 2)

GARY W SUMMERS

Three passages in the New Testament set forth restrictions concerning the role of women in the church. Each is important and will be examined, but only one of them is a general passage, not involved in the exercise of spiritual gifts. Therefore, we begin with 1 Timothy 2:8-14.

1 Timothy 3:15 provides a context for chapters 2 and 3; after he has concluded remarks about men and women, elders and deacons (and their wives), Paul says, "But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God the pillar and ground of the truth."

God expects certain behavior in His house, the church, and the preceding verses deal with the subject of leadership and fellowship. 1 Timothy 2:8 begins with the words: "Therefore I desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting, up holy hands without wrath and doubting." The word translated "men" in this verse is not the word *anthropos*, which means all mankind (male and female); it is a word which can be properly translated as men only. God's desire and design is for the men to lead in public prayers everywhere—whether in the assembly on the first day of the week or in a gathering in a private home or at a

fireside devotional at camp. The same is true of public preaching or teaching. Contrary to what many are today advocating, God has designated a pattern which must be followed and proper conduct to be observed. Men and women are equally guilty when they choose to violate God's order.

Since men have been commanded to lead in prayer, what about the women? After discussing appropriate adornment for them (1 Tim. 2:9-10), Paul writes, "Let a woman learn silence in all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man, but to be in silence" (1 Tim. 2:11-12).

What do the words *silence*, *submission*, and *authority* mean?

According to Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words; the word *silence* means "quietness, a tranquility arising from within, causing no disturbance to others" (3:242). Such demeanor accompanies her godly character. She does not need to be rebuked by others to be quiet; the desire arises from within. This spirit is the precise opposite of the one which desires to dominate (which demands the right to teach and preach publicly).

The inspired apostle Paul taught that a woman is not permitted to have or exercise authority over the man (in the church). Some have erroneously argued that if elders grant women leadership roles, then their public teaching and preaching in the presence of men would be acceptable. But man has no more authority to abdicate his leadership position than woman does to assume it. If men are too weak to lead, then women ought to spur them on, as Deborah did Barak—not replace them. God determined that the role of leadership falls upon men—whether they want it or not. He denied that aspect of service to women—whether they want it or not. No one, male or female, has the right to tamper with the way God ordained it. Those who seek to change God's system evidence a lack of faith in God's wisdom.

The women are to learn "in all submission." The same word is used in 1 Timothy 3:4. One of the qualifications of an elder is that he must be "one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence." No one has written books or articles trying to defend the children's right to rule over their father. If we can understand the way in which children must be submissive to their

parents, we should be able to comprehend how it applies to women, also.

The third word of concern in this text deals with authority. Thayer traces the derivation of *authenteos* in his Greek-English Lexicon. The Greek word is a compound word joining together *autos* (self) and *entea* (arms). Originally, then, it referred to "one who with his own hand kills either others or himself." Later it came to mean "one who does a thing himself, the author." Finally, it came to mean "one who acts on his own authority, autocratic." The word's only appearance in the New Testament is in 1 Timothy 2:12, and Thayer defines it as "to govern one, exercise dominion over one" (84). Women who presume to take upon themselves public roles of leadership (over men) act on their own authority—and in violation of God's authority.

Why has God determined that things be according to this pattern, when men and women are of equal value to Him (Gal. 3:28)? Women do not lack competence, and in worldly pursuits they have succeeded at just about everything they have tried (physical prowess remains the one inequality). So what are the reasons behind this arrangement?

1. "For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Tim. 2:13). This citing of the order, of Creation transcends any appeal to the culture of the first or any other century. Nothing that has occurred since the foundation of the world can alter the fact that God formed man first. He did so intentionally. In other words, He created man for the leadership role. Our 20th century technological advances can not negate the fact that women were designed to have children and that men are to provide for them and protect them during this vulnerable time (and all other times as well). Paul reminds the Corinthians that originally the woman came from the man and that woman was created for the man (1 Cor. 11:8-9).

2. "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into the transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14). This reason pertains to mankind's fall, long before any culture was formed. Whether this difference between men and women involves more gullibility on the part of the female gender or that women respond more emotionally than men, thus being more susceptible to deception, makes for an interesting discussion, but whatever the major distinction is, she