

# Present Truth

2 Peter 1:12

Dear Readers,

January 2005

“Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1 Timothy 1:2) I pray that you are all doing well in this new year, and that all of your good resolutions will become reformations. I want to remind you that the church in Orlando, Florida, will be hosting a camp meeting, January 26-31, 2005, at the River Forest Campground located in the southeast corner of the Ocala National Forest. I certainly hope to see you there. For more information please contact Bill James by calling (407) 446-7654 or email him at [abj1818@earthlink.net](mailto:abj1818@earthlink.net).

## Preferences vs. Convictions

by Allen Stump

*(The following is an edited transcript of a sermon preached at the Smyrna Chapel August 21, 2004.)*

If you were to go to one of what we might call “the finer restaurants,” something like an Olive Garden, you would not just go in and sit down at a table, but you would be met by a greeter. That greeter would ascertain how many were in your party, and then would have a very simple question. He/she would ask you if you preferred to be in smoking or non-smoking. What he/she is asking is, “Do you want to sit where the smokers sit or do you want to sit where the smokers don’t sit?” Did you notice that you’re being asked, “Do you prefer?” You may not always, depending upon the availability, have a choice. We have what we call *preferences*. Now today, I have preferred to wear a necktie. Some of you haven’t. Some of you have. I have a preference about a lot of things and this is one, but it is not a *conviction*. I don’t have a *conviction* to the point that I would be willing to die for that conviction on the issue of a necktie if somebody put a gun to my head and said you either will or will not wear a tie, according to the opposite of my will.

What I am saying, is that there is a difference in having a preference and a conviction. A preference means that you prefer things. The dictionary says that a preference is the selecting of someone or something over another, but in a religious connection, a preference means that which we would choose, but not necessarily have, to have. A conviction means the state of being convicted. In the matter of faith, and in a religious sense, a conviction is something we feel so strongly about that we are willing to give our lives for that conviction!

Sometimes we hear someone say, “Well, he’s convicted about the truth,” or someone says, “I’m convicted about this matter.” We don’t really mean that we are convicted about something, in a spiritual sense, unless we are willing to die for it. What we simply mean, sometimes, is that we see the truth of the matter. We see the rightness of the argument. However, I want to tell you, friends, that in the context of matters of faith, a preference is something we choose, but something that we could, and are willing to, make a different choice in. A conviction is something that we will not change our choice in, even if it means life or death, for us, or even for someone else! That is what a true conviction is. True convictions come out of only one thing, and that is a belief in moral absolutes and a desire stronger than death to follow those absolutes! The dictionary defines absolute as “perfect in quality or nature, not mixed, pure, and unadulterated.”

Do we really believe, as Christians, in moral absolutes? Do we believe that God is a God of moral

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absolutes, and that the Bible, His Book for us, is a book of moral absolutes? In other words, when God says something, does He really mean it exactly as He says it? Or do we have an ability to change it, or to move it, or to say it really means something else?

We have this happen in our lives all the time. I was quite well reminded of this recently when someone mentioned another person's child and said the child doesn't obey his mother. The mother will have to tell him several times to do something. That is because the child doesn't believe what the mother is saying and has learned he cannot believe what the mother is saying about a requirement of obedience.

### **God Means Exactly What He Says**

When God says something to us, does He really mean it? Does He mean it 100% of the time, and does He mean it exactly as He says it?

I would like to turn to a couple of examples in the Old Testament, just briefly, to refresh our memory about the way God speaks and how He means things. We are going to look at some examples of convictions and preferences in the Bible. In 1 Samuel 15 we find the story of when God commanded Samuel to give a decree to Saul to destroy Amalek. Verses 1 and 2 state: "Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt." The Amalekites were the children of Amalek, the grandson of Esau. Therefore the Amalekites had a connection with the children of Israel. When the children of Israel were passing through, God wanted the Amalekites to be good to the children of Israel and not to fight against them, but the children of Amalek were very hostile toward them. Because their cup had become full, God told Saul to utterly destroy everything. These people had become so wicked and so vile, that they had passed beyond the boundary of God's goodness and mercy, to where they could not even find salvation. Even their animals were so diseased, that they weren't to bring back any of the animals.

Saul and his troops went to battle. They destroyed the men of Amalek, but they brought back King Agag and what they thought were some of the "best" animals. What were they going to do with these folks? Samuel asked, in verse 14, "What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" According to Saul, they were brought back for sacrifice unto

God. He said that they were brought back to give God the glory! In effect, he was saying, "We are going to disobey God's exact word and bring glory to Him by doing it!" As we noted earlier, Saul also brought back King Agag. Why did he do that? When a king wanted to show his greatness he would subdue another kingdom and bring the king back and parade him in front of everybody. It made Saul look good. In fact, Saul said unto Samuel in verse 20, "I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me." However, Samuel didn't agree with that in the least. Samuel declared: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (v. 22) Samuel told Saul that he didn't obey at all and, further, he told him the kingdom was taken from him. In verse 28, he said, "The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou." God gave the kingdom to David. When God speaks, it is our duty to listen and follow His directions exactly.

In 2 Samuel, chapter 6, there is a story indirectly about David, who, many times, did want to do God's will, but sometimes he didn't understand the details as well as he should have, and he got in trouble. David and the Israelites were going to bring the ark to the house of God. It had been specified in the book of Numbers (7:9) that the ark was to be carried with staves upon the shoulders of Levites, but they were living in new, modern times, and so they got themselves an ox cart. They decided they could transport the ark in a way different from what God had commanded. So, they put it upon the ox cart and, as it was going, perhaps it hit a rut or a low place in the road, and the cart shook. It looked as if the ark might tip off, and a man by the name of Uzzah reached forth his hand to stay the ark, to keep it from falling off. It sounded like a good thing, didn't it? He is here to serve God. And what happened to Uzzah? The Bible says he was struck down dead that very moment. You see, they didn't follow God exactly as He said in every respect.

Beloved, I want to tell you that God does mean exactly what He says. His Word does not lie. He is not like us. Sometimes we think after we speak, or we speak before we think. You've heard the old proverb about thinking twice before speaking once. Well, we speak twice before we think once many times, but God does not do that. God knows exactly what He wants to say, and He means exactly what He says!

### **The Giving of Ourselves**

Now, let's look at some examples in the Bible about preferences and convictions. Let's consider first some

texts in the Bible about our dedication to God and what it should be like. Mark 12:29, 30 records Jesus quoting from the Old Testament, “The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with...” 99% of thy heart, and with 98% of thy soul, and with 70% of thy mind, and with 65% of thy strength. Is that what it says? It says that we are to love Him with all of our soul, mind, and strength. Everything that we have should be His. Is that true? Do we believe it? Do we have a preference that that is the way it should be? Or, do we have a conviction that that is the way it must be?

Romans 12:1 says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” The Bible says we are to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength and we are to present even our bodies to Him. It also says that, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)

### The Tithe Represents Giving Our Whole Self

In Malachi chapter 3, we read about a principle God has given to help us to publicly demonstrate, and to reinforce the concept, that we are His; that all that we have, and all that we are, are His. God told the people they were “...cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” (Malachi 3:9, 10)

The word “tithe” literally means a tenth. We return the tithe to God in support of the ministry, as recognition that all that we have is His. It doesn’t belong to us. The tithe doesn’t belong to me. We sometimes feel that God has given us the tithe and then He gives us nine-tenths to do with as we want. No, He doesn’t do that at all. It is *all* His. None of it is ours. The tithe is simply a *recognition* that it is *all* His. So, God tells us that we are to give Him everything, and we should be willing to do that.

### Ananias and Sapphira

Acts chapter 5 records a very interesting event. In the early days of the Christian church, people were bringing together pieces of land and goods that they had and they were selling them. They were making a gift to the early church, and to the work of the gospel, with the proceeds. There was a couple by the name of Ananias and

Sapphira, and the Bible tells us that they sold a possession. It says that they “kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, Ananias why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied upon men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.” (Acts 5:2-5) And later, when his wife came in, she lied also and died as well.

Ananias and Sapphira had a preference, didn’t they? They said they were going to give it all, but then they decided they really wouldn’t give it all to God. They would hold back part of it, and so they didn’t fulfill that which they promised to do.

### Abraham

There is another story in Genesis, chapter 22, about a man who was asked to give up everything he had. His name was Abram, later Abraham. God told him, in verse 2, “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” Abraham was asked to give up something far more precious than all of his goods or wealth, in fact, far more precious than his own life. He was asked to give up the life of his only son, Isaac, who was worth more than everything else that he possessed in the earth. Ananias and Sapphira had a preference. They wanted to help the work of God, but only so much. They were willing to give God so much, but they preferred to keep back part. Abraham had a conviction that he was willing to give God everything he had. You know the story of Abraham. He took the knife, and he brought it to the throat of Isaac and was ready and willing to offer his son, if that was what God asked. Fortunately, in this case, God stayed his hand. Think about it today, friends. The giving of yourself today to God, is it a preference or is it a conviction?

### Joshua and Caleb

Sometimes God gives us a command, telling us to do something. Are we willing to do it? Are we willing to obey God if it appears easy and doesn’t cause us hardship? Or will we do things regardless of the cost and the consequences?



God had delivered the children of Israel from Egypt and had led them out into the wilderness. But God didn't want them to stay in the wilderness. He decided that they could go to the Promised Land if they wanted to go. So, He told Moses to send out twelve spies, one from every tribe, and look over the land and bring back a report. You know, they came back and told the people, "Listen, we have never seen anything like this in our lives. It is a land that flows with milk and honey." Do you know what it means to flow with milk and honey? For there to be a lot of honey, there has to be a lot of flowers. For an animal's milk to flow, the mother must have a good diet and conditions must be just right. In other words, the expression "a land that flows with milk and honey" meant that the land was a super-producer. You know the story of the cluster of grapes that was brought back, and the different things that were seen. Every one of those people wanted that land. Every one of them *preferred* to go to the land of Canaan, but some of them got a little scared because they saw the giants, and they did not think that the Lord could deliver them. So, they did not have a *conviction* that they should go. They had a *preference*.

But, there were two men, Joshua and Caleb, who had a conviction! "And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes." (Numbers 14:6) When they heard these spies tell this wicked report that they couldn't go up and possess the land because the people were too great for them, it says they "rent their clothes; And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not." (Numbers 14:6-9) Joshua and Caleb had a conviction, a belief that God wanted them to take the land, and they were willing to die for the honor of God if need be.

Beloved, do we have a conviction or a preference about doing God's will, no matter how easy or how hard it seems? Outwardly it seemed impossible for the Children of Israel to take the land. They had to believe in Him who was leading them.

## Daniel

Are we interested in following God in every small detail of our lives? When I say small, I don't mean insignificant, though, but I mean things that other people might

think we could get by with, things that might not show to other people. In Daniel 1, the Bible says that King Nebuchadnezzar came into Jerusalem, ransacked it, took out the vessels from the house of God, and took certain of the princes of the children of Israel back to Babylon. He made them eunuchs and turned them over to people who trained them so that they could be skilled in all the wisdom of Babylon. Part of this regime involved a change in their diet. Instead of eating a very plain and wholesome diet, they were going to have a diet with all the fancy dainties of the king. This would include, no doubt, unclean meat. It would include fermented wine. Besides that, many of these things had been offered to idols.

Now, there were four individuals who had a conviction here. We don't know how many of the princes of the children of Israel were taken to Babylon, but there were more than four. There were a lot of them who just went right along with the rest of the herd into the chow line and ate the king's food. But there were four who said, "We can't do this." And it says, in Daniel 1:9, 10, that "God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? Then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king." What the prince of the eunuchs was saying was, "It's fine if you want to go out and get yourself in trouble, but not if you have this *conviction* that gets someone else into trouble. It is fine if you want to do it to yourself, but only if it does not affect others."

Friends, a real conviction is a conviction no matter what the consequences are. There is a statement I really like that says, "We should choose the right because it is right, and leave consequences with God." (*America in Prophecy*, p. 431) "Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And at the end of the ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." (Daniel 1:11-15) So, they got what they wanted to eat. They had a conviction that they wanted to serve God in the best way possible

and God honored that conviction. “Them that honour me I will honour.” (1 Samuel 2:30)

## Our Way or God's Way?

How do we worship God? How do we serve Him? Can we serve Him in any way we choose? Or do we need to serve Him as He has asked us to serve Him? If we turn back to the book of Genesis, chapter 4, right in the beginning of the history of this earth, we find a conflict occurring very soon thereafter. It says, “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering; But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.” (Genesis 4:1-5) Here we have two different brothers, each claiming to worship the same God, one with a *preference* and the other with a *conviction*: Cain, with his preference that he could serve the Lord in the way that he thought was fine, and Abel, with the conviction that he would serve the Lord exactly as God had designated. God had made it clear to them that they would have to have a blood sacrifice. Cain brought some good things. He may have brought some very good things, but it wasn't what God required and God did not accept it. We, too, can bring things before God, and He doesn't accept it, friends, if it is not what He requires of us. Many of the people in this world believe that they can honestly worship God on Sunday just as well as the seventh day, and yet they know that the seventh day is the Sabbath. God doesn't accept that, friends. When we knowingly disobey God, He cannot accept it. Many times God has winked at our ignorance, but the days of that ignorance, for many, have passed, friends. How are we today? Do we serve God with a preference or a conviction?

Some of you have been to the ocean and walked along the beach. You have seen creatures that sometimes get washed up on the beach, or you see them in the water. They have a dome-like appearance and little tentacles coming down. We call them jellyfish. One of the great, distinguishing characteristics of a jellyfish is that it has no backbone. A jellyfish is an invertebrate, I wonder, friends, are we spiritual jellyfish? Sadly, many ministers have no backbone to stand up for what they know to be the truth. Jesus called them hirelings. (John 10:13, 13)

Do we have any backbone? Are we full of preferences but no convictions?

## Death Decrees in Daniel

We are familiar with how Nebuchadnezzar set up a great image on the plain of Dura. It was made of gold, to represent him and his kingdom, and everybody was to bow down to it. The Bible says, in Daniel chapter 2, verse 2, that he brought together a great delegation of people from all over his kingdom. No doubt Zedekiah was there that day, representing the kingdom of Judah, a vassal kingdom at this time. Nebuchadnezzar said, “We are going to play some music, and when you hear the music you will bow down, and, if you don't bow down, we have a fiery furnace to help encourage you.” As they played the music, that plain with all those people standing erect suddenly became much more visible as everybody bowed down. But there were three people who didn't—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. How they must have stood out like a sore thumb! Do you know why? These men stood because they did not have a preference on the matter. They had a conviction. It wasn't a preference about who their God was and how they would serve Him. They had a conviction that they would worship the Lord God only, and they would not bow down to images or give credence to any such thing. This, truly, was a death decree situation for them.

In Daniel, chapter 6, we have another death decree. There are prophecies in the book of Daniel, aren't there? There are several prophecies and there are several stories. The prophecies tell us what is going to happen and the stories tell us how to live and how to be ready for those things. The book of Revelation speaks about a death decree, and we will talk about it in a minute. In chapter 6 of the book of Daniel, we have another death decree mentioned. This one involved worshiping and serving the king only, and no other God, for thirty days. We know the story. The Bible says Daniel prayed three times a day. He opened his windows toward Jerusalem. It was very public. People knew where he stood. His witness was clear. In verse 10 it says, “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed...” He wasn't ignorant about the writing of this law. He did not go into his house and then into his closet where no one would see him. Now, I am not saying that God couldn't accept His worship in a closet. In fact, Jesus says, “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” (Matthew 6:6) However, to publicly pray had been a practice

of Daniel for so long. People knew that Daniel would be coming to that window at that certain time, and people had seen this decree just like Daniel had, and they were wondering: "Is Daniel going to open his window today?" Daniel, who wanted his witness to be clear, opened his window and, it says, "he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God." (Daniel 6:10, 11) And in the last part of verse 13, when they went to King Darius, they said very specifically that he "maketh his petition three times a day." They didn't watch him just once. They didn't watch him just twice. They watched him all three times to make sure they had plenty of evidence, and Daniel gave them plenty of evidence. He didn't mind, because he had a conviction, and he was willing, if it were necessary, to die for that conviction. But, he also had confidence that the God He served would not allow him to die, and he didn't die. The Bible says that the Lord sent an angel to stay the mouth of the lions, into whose den he was thrown.

## *Easy America*

Today America is one of the most financially and physically prosperous nations in the world. It is also one of the most spiritually bankrupt nations of the world. I received a letter last night that almost made me want to cry. I have this good friend in Romania and he was telling me how he had gone to the German camp meeting where David Clayton, and some of the others were, and he said, "Oh, you don't know how I missed seeing you. I wanted you to be there so much." And he said he thought more of me than anyone else while he was there, with the exception of his wife, Andy, who was home. I had talked to this brother about coming to America for our camp meeting last year, and he said, "America? Oh, America is so wicked. I don't want to go to America." Most people from the third world countries can't wait to come to America, but he says, "Oh, America is a wicked place. I don't want to be there." This wicked place, friends, is going to get more wicked, and the Bible says, in Revelation chapter 13, that it is going to form an image to the beast, and it is going to cause anyone who will not worship the beast to not be able to buy or sell, and if they do not conform, they will have a death decree upon them and they will be killed. We live in a country that is very easy today. I don't know how many of us are going to handle it when we come up to those hard trials.

This last year the summer Olympics were held in Athens, Greece, and before any one of those Olympians went to Athens, he/she had been practicing, many of them for years, or perhaps even their whole lifetime, to be prepared to participate in one, two, three, or four events at the Olympics. Recently Lance Armstrong completed and won his sixth straight Tour de France, and this man works out, they say, like no one else. If you gave me his best bicycle, and you let me try to run just one of those stages in the Pyrenees, it would kill me! I wouldn't be able to do even one of those multiple stages he does, because I have never trained for that kind of thing. I have not gotten ready for it. We are living in America, friends, and we complain and we whine about the least little inconvenience. Someone makes us feel unwelcome at church and we are persecuted. Someone might accuse us of something and, even get us arrested, and we think we are persecuted. The fact is, we hardly know anyone who has ever really been persecuted. Today, friends, there are people still in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and in China who are dying for their faith because they have convictions about things, and I don't know how many people in America really have convictions about anything. I don't know how many convictions I have today. Do you know how many you have today? There would never have been a martyr if nobody ever had a conviction.

## *We Can Be Ready*

Well, we have great times ahead of us. Will we be ready? We can be ready; God has made every provision for us. Notice the promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful..." Remember that, friends, above all things. God is faithful. One of my aunts was recently diagnosed with a very bad and serious type of lung cancer from which only 5% of the people go into remission. No one, according to medical science, ever gets cured of this kind of cancer. I told my aunt the other day, "We don't know the future, but we know who controls the future," and that the most important thing is to keep our hold upon God, knowing that He is faithful "who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13) He doesn't say that He is always going to take the temptations or the trials away. We, indeed, may have to pass through much persecution. We will enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation, if you please (Acts 14:23), but God is faithful and God will be with us. Paul says in Philipians



4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Jude 24 says, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Paul says that Jesus is coming back for a "glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." (Ephesians 5:27) So, yes, we can be ready. Will we want to be ready? That is an interesting question.

## Will We Be Ready?


In Romans 2:4, the apostle Paul says, "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Somebody says, "You know, I need to repent. I am convicted of something." Is this real conviction? Well, if you are willing to die about it, yes, it is, but what is it that brings us to conviction? It is that we believe in moral absolutes and we believe that there is a good God, who, because of His goodness, leads us, guides us, and directs us to repent, to change our thinking, and to change our ways. What is that goodness? "For when we were yet without strength, *in due time* [at just the right time] Christ died for the ungodly." (Romans 5:6) Sometimes we are not "on time," but I'm glad Christ was on time, aren't you? I am glad Jesus was on time. At just the right time, in due time, "Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:6-8) In 1 John 4:9, the apostle John says, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." How do we know that God really loves us? God sent His Son. God so loved you that He did something special. He sent His only begotten Son. Do you know why He did that? It was because He had a conviction. God had a conviction! He didn't have a preference about the future of man. He had a conviction and a love about, and for, man that was stronger than even death! Jesus came, and Jesus went to the cross and died, because He had a conviction and a love for man stronger than death!

If we don't need convictions today, then we better be ready to apologize to the apostle Paul, who was beheaded by the sword of a Roman executioner. We better be ready to apologize to Peter, who was crucified upside down. We need to be ready to apologize to James, who was killed with the sword. We need to be ready to apologize to millions of Christians who decided that they

would rather die than sin. We need to apologize to those saints who were spread with pitch and tar and lighted in the Roman amphitheaters for lights in order to have the games. Made to be human torches! We are going to need to apologize to the Christians in Rome who were fed to lions while their brothers and sisters were burning as torches to light their execution!

The Bible says sin is the transgression of the law of God. (1 John 3:4) And, Jesus does say that the greatest of all commandments is to love the Lord God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength but, let me ask you this: Is there any one of those Ten Commandments that God has ever given us a license to break, at any time, under any circumstances? Is it ever okay to commit adultery? Is it? No! But, it is okay if we allow the edges of the Sabbath to sneak past us a little bit, right? It is okay to hold back our tithe a little bit this week because an unexpected expense came up, such as a washing machine broke, or because I need to feed my family. Or it is okay that I over-indulge myself in working this week, because I know I can sleep Sabbath afternoon. It is the day of rest, but we make it a day of rust, and we steal from God! We are so selfish that we want everything for us the first six days and then, when we give God the seventh day, we are so tired from taking everything the first six days that we rest the seventh day and really don't give that to Him either. If we lived temperately and righteously, and I know I am speaking to myself, we would never need the Sabbath for physical rest. We need it for spiritual time, and that is what we need the Sabbath for.

Well, friend, do you have preferences or convictions? We may find out that we have a lot more preferences than we realize when we are brought to the test. Friend, let us be thankful that God chooses to allow us to have some trials and tribulations now, so that we might build up and be ready and convicted to do what is right because it is right, and that we might truly surrender every thing, and every aspect of our lives and being, to the Lord Jesus Christ, to serve Him all the way.

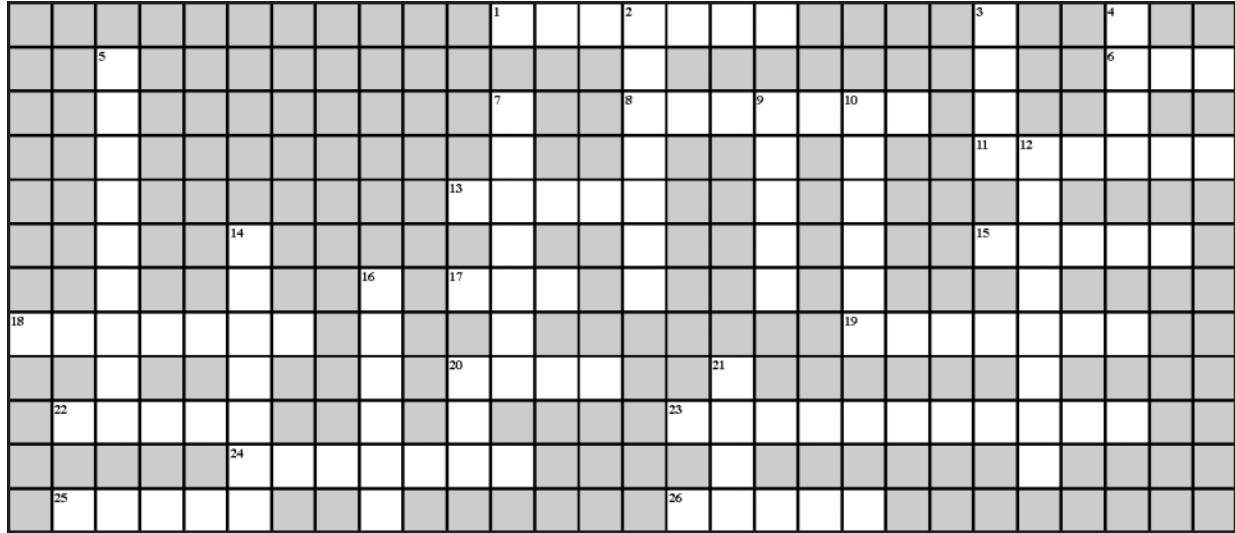
I want you to think about the things in your life that maybe you are not fully turning over to the Lord, things in your life that are just simply preferences and are not convictions. Remember this, the Bible says that every word of God is pure. Every word of God, that He gives me, is exactly what He says, in the exact way He means it, and He wants me to surrender all. May God grant you conviction and not preference. 

(Allen Stump is the pastor of our chapel, my associate worker, and a good friend. You can contact him by sending correspondence to *Present Truth* or, by e-mail, at [allen@smyrna.org](mailto:allen@smyrna.org). Editor)

# Something for the Young at Heart

This month we are continuing a series of crossword Bible studies that are based on the "These Last Days" Bible Lessons. In order to maintain the flow of the study, this crossword puzzle is not split into Across and Down sections—Across or Down is indicated at the end of each line.

## How to Give Your Heart to Christ



Answers are on page 12

➤ God saves us according to His \_\_\_\_ rather than because of our works. Titus 3:5—**15 Across**

➤ We are saved by \_\_\_\_\_. Ephesians 2:8, 9—**13 Across**

**Note:** "Who can say, I have made my heart clean?" (Proverbs 20:9) "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." (Zechariah 4:6) "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Corinthians 2:5)

➤ Yet \_\_\_\_ are an important element in faith, for without them, faith is dead. James 2:14-26—**25 Across**

**Note:** "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right." (Proverbs 20:11)

➤ Jesus came to call \_\_\_\_ to repentance. Mark 2:17—**2 Down**

➤ To repent, a man must \_\_\_\_ his way and his thoughts. Isaiah 55:7—**1 Across**

➤ A sinner should ask God to cleanse him from his \_\_\_\_\_. Psalm 51:2—**17 Across**

**Note:** "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139:23, 24)

➤ Your search for God will be successful when you search for Him with all your \_\_\_\_\_. Jeremiah 29:13—**9 Down**

➤ If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not \_\_\_\_\_. Psalm 66:18—**21 Down**

➤ Jesus wants people who want to be made \_\_\_\_\_. John 5:6—**22 Across**

➤ Only a few people will receive eternal life because the way is \_\_\_\_\_. Matthew 7:14—**10 Down**

➤ If you love any human more than Jesus, you are not \_\_\_\_ of Him. Matthew 10:37—**11 Across**

➤ No man can serve two \_\_\_\_\_. Matthew 6:24—**14 Down**

➤ To be a disciple of Christ a man must forsake \_\_\_\_ that he has. Luke 14:33—**6 Across**

➤ Paul said, "I \_\_\_\_ daily." 1 Corinthians 15:31—**20 Down**

**Note:** "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

➤ If a man wants to follow Christ he must \_\_\_\_ himself... Luke 9:23—**20 Across**

➤ Take up his \_\_\_\_ daily... Luke 9:23—**26 Across**

➤ And \_\_\_\_ Jesus. Luke 9:23—**16 Down**

➤ When we come to Jesus in that way, He will in no wise \_\_\_\_ us out. John 6:37—**4 Down**

➤ When we confess our sins to God, He will \_\_\_\_ us... 1 John 1:9—**7 Down**

➤ And \_\_\_\_ us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9—**18 Across**

➤ Whoever confesseth and \_\_\_\_ their sins shall have mercy. Proverbs 28:13—**5 Down**

➤ God has \_\_\_\_ the sins from those people who have given them up. Psalm 103:12—**24 Across**

➤ If we are guilty of the darkest of sins, they can be as white as \_\_\_\_\_. Isaiah 1:18—**3 Down**

➤ He will do this for us if we are willing and \_\_\_\_\_. Isaiah 1:19—**12 Down**

➤ Without Jesus we can do \_\_\_\_\_. John 15:5—**8 Across**

➤ The first step to victory is to have a \_\_\_\_ mind. 2 Corinthians 8:12—**19 Across**

➤ Then there must also be a \_\_\_\_ of those things. 2 Corinthians 8:11—**23 Across**



# Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

by George McDaniel

## Gallbladder Tips

Every year in the USA nearly a half million people have their gallbladder removed surgically. If you still have yours, you probably don't spend much time thinking about it, even if you are very health conscious. The purpose of this article is to show the importance of the gallbladder to health and what you can do to keep yours if you should begin to have problems.

The gallbladder performs some very important functions that make it worth keeping. The most important is to regulate flow of bile to optimize fat and fat-soluble nutrient absorption. Bile is produced by the liver and released continuously in a small, steady trickle. The bile is caught by the gallbladder and stored for use. When you eat a meal containing fat, the fat is not digested by the stomach. The undigested fat passes into the duodenum, the first portion of the small intestine. Receptors there sense the fat and trigger the release of the hormone cholecystokinin (CCK). CCK stimulates the gallbladder to contract, expelling a quantity of bile. The bile arrives at the exact time and in the exact amount needed. The bile emulsifies the fat (breaks it down into small particles) so that the fat-digesting enzymes from the pancreas can do their work. Without the gallbladder, that coordination is lost. The small, steady trickle of bile from the liver is still there, but it is no longer matched to the amount of fat eaten either in quantity or timing. In this case, the fat is not digested, and can't be absorbed into the body, so it just passes on out. Unfortunately, the fat-soluble vitamins (ADEK) also just go out with the undigested fat.

Even if you have an adequate intake of these vitamins, you may end up with a deficiency. However, an obvious deficiency may take years to develop, and the symptoms are not usually identified for what they really are. Also, they are rarely traced back to gallbladder removal.

Back in the 1960s, a Dr. James Breneman, who was chairman of the Food Allergy Committee of the American College of Allergists, came up with a way to prevent gallbladder attacks. He asked 69 individuals who suffered from recurrent attacks of gallbladder pain to go onto an elimination diet to determine their food allergies. All 69 people were completely free of gallbladder attacks when they avoided their individual food (and other) allergies. All 69 had their symptoms return when they ate the foods they were allergic to.

The primary offending foods were eggs (92.8 percent), pork (63.8 percent), onions (52.2 percent), chicken and turkey (34.8 percent), milk (24.6 percent), coffee (21.7 percent), and oranges (18.8 percent). Other offending foods were corn, beans, nuts, apples, tomatoes, peas, cabbage,

spices, peanuts, fish and rye. In addition, 14 of the study participants had gallbladder attacks caused by medications.

Food, medication, and other allergies vary from person to person, and the same allergen can cause different symptoms in different people. If you have a problem and think it may be due to an allergy, it is best to work with someone knowledgeable and skilled in nutritional and natural medicine. If you are not able to do this, and you have a problem you think may be caused by allergies, then eliminate from your diet the foods found in the above list. If the problem goes away in a few days, then add the foods back into your diet one at a time. If the symptoms reoccur, then you have found the problem.


Most doctors use Dr. Breneman's treatment when someone is admitted to a hospital with gallbladder pain. They take away all food and give the person IV fluids until the pain goes away. Unfortunately, most doctors don't realize why this works.

The primary valid reason to remove a gallbladder is the situation where a gallstone has slipped into the bile duct and is too large to pass through. This results in bile backing up into the system. The skin and eyes become yellow and severe pain occurs. The person will feel very sick. This qualifies as a medical emergency.

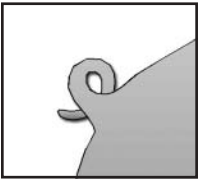
Most people with gallstones have no symptoms. These are called silent gallstones. Many surgeons will remove the gallbladder of anyone having gallstones, as a preventative measure. When allergy avoidance stops gallbladder attacks, it stops them whether gallstones are present or not. If you still have your gallbladder, do all you can to keep it.

If your gallbladder is already gone, what should you do? You are probably on a low fat diet. This puts you at risk of essential fatty acid deficiency as well as fat-soluble vitamin deficiency. Also, if you eat more fat, it won't be digested. There is a nutritional supplement consisting of bile salts in tablet or capsule form. This can be taken anytime you eat a meal containing more than a tiny bit of fat. It will help to digest the fat. It is not as efficient as the body's natural means, but will help to increase assimilation of nutrients.

If you are vegan, and can't stand the thought of eating anything of animal origin, I don't know what to suggest to replace bile salts. Lecithin is an emulsifier and might help some, but would probably not be as efficient as bile salts.

The best solution, of course, is prevention. Keep your body intact, if possible. Eat a nourishing diet and do all the other things mentioned in these articles to maintain good health. 

(George McDaniel is my father-in-law, and has been a registered nurse for many years, which, along with much research, has taught him many useful health principles. *Editor*)



## From His Tail to His Snout

by John T. Reagan.



Psalm 84:11

Do you think, brother, that in God's great plan  
When He was prescribing the best food for man,  
Think he made a mistake in leaving the swine out  
For he was not good from his tail to his snout?

1 Corinthians 3:17

Oh, the carcass of an old dead horse or a cow  
Don't get too rotten for a dirty old sow;  
Though we holler a lot about boils and gout  
We eat Miss Piggy from her tail to her snout.

Ezekiel 33:11

We couldn't eat the buzzard, we'd think it a crime,  
But how much more filthy is he than the swine  
That we make into pie, or we cook him with kraut  
And eat him or die, from his tail to his snout?

Isaiah 66:2-4

We cook him with cabbage or boil him with greens,  
With his mangy old hide we season our beans;  
With his scabs and his boils within and without  
Sweet Piggy we eat from his tail to his snout.

Isaiah 55:2

On filth they feast, while in stink-holes they lay  
And still for their carcass our money we pay;  
The preacher, professor, or the judge on his bench  
Eat the carrion-eater, his filth, and his stench.

Ezekiel 22:26

In the filth you can see him clear up to his eyes  
His slimy old carcass all covered with flies;  
Most dead with cholera (due to butcher, no doubt),  
We still think him good from tail to snout.

2 Corinthians 6:17

We eat the old grunter, we eat the young shoat;  
The fat that we fancied may be pus or bloat;  
It would smell as good, and as healthy no doubt  
As the hoofs and the hide, the tail and the snout.

Isaiah 66:17

We may like him lean, or may like him best fat;  
Just as well eat the dog, or else eat a cat;  
Just as well eat the buzzard, the owl or the bat,  
The lizard or the snake, the mouse or the rat.

Romans 12:1

Our most sensitive natures would almost run wild  
If we handled the corpse of a man or a child,  
But we sit at our table and cram down our throat  
With the greatest relish—the corpse of a shoat.

Deuteronomy 14:3

God made him a scavenger, He says he's unclean;  
What other creature is as filthy and mean?  
If we eat his flesh, or touch his dead carcass  
With sin and disease it surely will mark us.

Leviticus 11:7, 8

'Tis sad, brother, although God's Word is just,  
We eat the slop-eater, for eat him we must;  
The dirtiest of beast we will not do without,  
But eat them we will, from the tail to the snout.

Matthew 15:8

Now we sing and we talk of God's love so divine;  
Like vultures, then feast on the dirty old swine.  
We might shun many ills, and diseases, no doubt,  
By not eating him—from his tail to his snout.

1 Corinthians 10:31

Yes, we worship the Lord, and pray and shout,  
But that old hog flavor we can't do without;  
For ham, bacon, and sausage, we go the whole route  
And eat the whole hog from his tail to his snout.

2 Peter 2:22

In God's Word we find he is classed with the dog,  
No matter how highbred he still is a hog.  
Though you wash him, or teach if you will,  
He still will go back to his mire and his swill.

Genesis 1:29

We'd be better off if we obeyed God's command,  
And ate vegetables, grain and fruit of the land,  
Then it wouldn't take half of the tonic and pills  
To relieve all mankind of their swine-fed ills.



Genesis 9:5

You may think of fresh pork as a very rare treat  
But our bodies are made of just what we eat,  
And the food he has eaten, the filth of the land,  
Goes into our body as food, second-hand.

3 John 2

No wonder we are weak and heart beats are slow,  
Sanitariums full, hospitals o'erflow,  
For we eat such unclean, abominable things  
That are creeping, crawling, or flying with wings.

Psalms 119:105

God forbade us to eat these dirty old creatures,  
No matter what is the theory of preachers;  
If left to man's opinion—we'd not know the right,  
But thank the Lord, in His Word there is light.

Luke 4:2, 5

And now, my brother, you may no doubt recall—  
Indulgence of appetite caused Adam's fall.  
Our Saviour was tempted on this point, no doubt  
Then why do we eat from his tail to his snout?


Revelation 22:11, 12

Now I've told you my story, recited my piece;  
If you can eat pork with your conscience at ease,  
If sin, filth, or disease, you care little about—  
Keep on eating the brute, from his tail to his snout.

---

**The author of this poem wrote:**

A returned Missionary Baptist Minister with ten letters after his name, writes me upon receiving the poem, "From His Tail to His Snout," as follows:

"Literature received, glad to get it. Forty-five years ago when in Inland China I saw hogs eating dead children. At once I ceased eating hog, my stomach trouble, dyspepsia and indigestion disappeared, so that was proof positive what caused it. So I say to people, 'If you want cancer for breakfast, rheumatism for dinner and tuberculosis for supper eat hog.' I don't want any for God classed it with rats and mice. I am often asked. 'What do you season with?' We use vegetable shortening; it's cheaper and better. Long may you live and scatter the truth." 

## E-mail Notice

Our e-mail provider had some difficulty, which resulted in the loss of some of our e-mail. If you sent us an e-mail on November 20-24, or December 5-10, we have lost the e-mail. If it was important, please send it again so that we can answer it as soon as possible. We are sorry for any inconvenience this has caused. *Editor*

## Welcome Back to Our Missionaries

During the month of November, Esther McDaniel, Heidi Stump, Leon Holt, Leland Brummett, and Liana Manning took a mission trip to Africa. Due to security reasons, we were not able to make this news public before.

As many of you know, Esther McDaniel has been working with great zeal to help support and establish orphanages in Africa. She and the others visited the "Hope for Children Center" in Oyugis, Kenya, ministering to the orphans and helping with the construction of new buildings. They also visited the "Glory Children's Center" in Nairobi.

Brother Leon Holt did the work of an evangelist sharing God's Word in Kenya and Uganda. Heidi held a vacation Bible school-type program for the orphans and the village children. Leland and Liana were tremendous supporters as well! They returned from Africa early in December. We are hoping to print a brief report of the results of their journey in the next issue of *Present Truth*. *Editor*



## Letters from our Readers

"I would like to receive your tracts and books." *Nigeria*

"I just discovered your article: 'Healthful Living,' of December 2001, and would very much appreciate further information. Please tell me what the studies are that '...people who eat a vegetarian diet live, on average, about seven years longer than people who eat flesh foods.'" *E-mail*

(That is a good question. I made a general statement based on a broad range of health statistics. The BBC reported: "Eating little or no meat can help people live longer, researchers have found."—<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/2838083.stm>. Dr Michael Greger M.D. says, "Vegetarians outlast the general population by perhaps as much as ten healthy years."—[www.drgreger.org/october2003.html](http://www.drgreger.org/october2003.html). Another report says, "Vegetarians live about 7 years longer, and vegans about 15 years longer than meat eaters. These findings are backed up by the China Health Project (the largest population study on diet and health to date)."—<http://thecookshouse.tripod.com/reasons.html>. *Editor*)

"Thank you for the information, but I would like to be taken off of the mailing list." *California*

"Please add to your mailing list." *Nebraska*

"A friend gave me *God's Love on Trial*, which I found very to the point, and I have believed in the three person God head all of my life. Though I found it hard to imagine how the three picked which one was the Son of God. I am still searching for the truth. You have given a lot of time and consideration in writing the little book I am thankful you took the time to write it." *E-mail*



# Present Truth

“Please send your newsletter to [my new address].... I have enjoyed your newsletter. Thank you. May God bless you with his knowledge and will.” *Arizona*

“I haven’t known the truth about God until recently, maybe about six months, thanks to [www.presenttruth.info](http://www.presenttruth.info). My dream is to come and live in West Virginia and fellowship with you all.”

“I really enjoyed reading your web page. May God bless your work.” *E-mail*

“I am new to your publication and website,... Thank you for all of your inspired work and may you continue to walk in the footsteps of those who went before you.

“I have been fascinated with the new stimulating thoughts I was reading on the Son of God. If there are any Bible lessons or other material on the topic, kindly enroll me in it or send them to me.... I would appreciate if you would also send me the book, *God's Love on Trial*. *Cyprus, Asia*

“I have read a portion of your book *God’s Love on Trial*, available on Internet and have been very interested. As my access to the Internet is limited, I’m asking if it is possible for you to send me that book. Rwanda

“Daily I’m discovering things on your website I’d not seen before. I’m delighted.” *Washington*

## Answers to Crossword Puzzle on page 8

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**Note:** If you move, please send us your new address. If you inadvertently get deleted from our mailing list, without your request, please write us and verify your valid address.

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