

# Expository Files

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*Front Page*

## Who Do You Trust?

Warren E. Berkley

*“Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish,” Psalm 146:3,4.*

**In certain cases, the erosion of our trust in men is justified and can become a healthy step toward maturity.** A cynical suspicion of all men has an absence of virtue, and can motivate a variety of wrong behaviors. But there are cases where we ought to diminish our trust in men. And it shall always be true, an increase in our faith God is our challenge. *{See the case of God’s people trusting in the Egyptians, not God, in Isaiah 31.}*

**First, there is an essential difference between deity and humanity that should be fundamental to our faith and the obedience of our faith (Num. 23:19).** If we are not clear about the difference between the Creator and the created, we are set on the wrong course (see Rom. 1:18-32). Men are sinners, fallible and carry the capacity to disappoint us. God is perfect, infallible and will never disappoint you (Heb. 13:5). Christ was and is perfect and divine, deserving of our trust. “A man who can read the New Testament and not see that Christ claims to be more than a man can look all over the sky at high noon on a cloudless day and not see the sun,” (William Edward Bierderwolf).

Men, who may stir up exaggerated esteem in us, are simply not worthy of the trust we can place in God. Men and women, even at their best, should not be revered as we revere God. Men can possess great charm, enjoy popularity and esteem and be exalted by their peers, yet be corrupt in character. Their corruption may lie hidden while you follow them and confide in them, to your own peril {Matt. 7:15; Phil. 3:2}.

**If you “faith” is dependent upon the conduct of men, you set yourself up for disappointment.** Love all men, love the brotherhood and note those who exemplify integrity and righteousness, but watch and beware of men (1 Pet. 2:17; Phil. 3:17-19). Learn from good teachers and be receptive to good influence and experience. But keep men in their place (1 Cor. 1:25). Trust God, “with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning,” (Jas. 1:18). As you read the Bible, discover and meditate on “the immutability of His counsel ... in which it is impossible for God to lie.” Find your “strong consolation” in Him (Heb. 6:17,18).

**What happens when we cultivate an unjustified trust in men and submission to them? Read the book of First Corinthians.** “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men,” (1 Cor. 1:25). As it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord,” (1 Cor. 1:31). The first four chapters in First Corinthians put us on alert to the danger. We are taught here “not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other,” (1 Cor. 4:6). There was a form of humanism in the culture of Corinth. It invaded in the church, with devastating results.

There is a subtle, quiet intrusion men can make into our faith, leading to idolatry. Men can make an impression on us (with or without their intention), that tempts us to esteem them beyond what is sound and wise.

Trust in God. Find your motivation, steadfastness and courage in Him, as He is revealed by His Son in His Word. You can’t go wrong this way.

***The Unequal Yoke Forbidden***  
***(2 Cor. 6:14-18)***  
***Warren E. Berkley***

“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of the living God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, ‘I will make dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore, go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.’” 2 Cor. 6:14-18, ESV

In Bible study, one of our earliest purposes should be to discover the original meaning of a passage. To start with present day applications is often premature and sometimes ignores context. First, find out what the passage meant when written to the original recipients. Once the student is clear about that, present applications can be considered.

The original meaning of the above passage is not hidden from us. It lies on the surface. **Attempts to mix righteousness and lawlessness are forbidden.** We cannot just assign any meaning we want to the unequal yoke. We must let the text tell us what that means. It means, attempts to mix righteousness and lawlessness.

This is not about just having two things or two people together in general. The statement is not a generic, catch-all prohibition the reader can throw anything into. The forbidden behavior here is an attempt to put things together that would involve right mixed with wrong, or compromise.

**Paul makes an application of this to idolatry.** Two inquires show Paul making that application of the principle. “What accord has Christ with Belial?” and “What agreement has the temple of God with idols?”

Thus, there is both principle and application in the passage. The principle is, attempts to mix righteousness and lawlessness are forbidden. The application is made to idolatry. Let me add, this is essentially the same as 1 Cor. 10:21, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.”

Imagine a Christian in Corinth having a idolatrous (unbelieving) friend or relative. This proscribes not the friendship or acquaintance itself, nor

believer with unbeliever joining together in things innocent. This forbids the Christian from **participation** with the unbeliever in idolatry. The unbeliever might issue an invitation, “Will you go with me today to the temple and help me offer the animal to the gods? Will you worship with me? Can we eat the meat together unto my gods?” The answer would need to be “no,” to be consistent with Paul’s instruction. The key to understanding this is “fellowship” or “participation” with the unbeliever in wrong. Not all association with unbelievers is forbidden; only that association that would be sinful, an attempt to participate with the unbeliever in their unbelief, in their sin.

**The practice of Jesus may help us understand this.** He was with sinners, even sat at the table with them (Matt. 9:9-13). He was with unbelievers, *but didn’t sin with them*. He associated with them, but was never unequally yoked with them. It is not all association with unbelievers that is forbidden in 2 Cor. 6. It is association (fellowship, partnership) that attempts to combine righteousness and lawlessness; that seeks to put things together that do not belong – “the temple of God with idols.”

**There is another example, showing that not all association or relationship with unbelievers is automatically sinful.** Paul cites a case in 1 Cor. 7. “...if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him,” (1 Cor. 7:12,13). Observe, Paul doesn’t say to these “mixed marriages,” **Come Out!** Her says, **stay in**. We know Paul would not tell people to **stay in** a wrong relationship, so we must conclude – the relationship itself is not wrong.

The unequal yoke in 2 Cor. 6 is not just believer associated with unbeliever. It is believer associated with unbeliever **in sin**.

When we find ourselves in association with someone in sin, it should be our urgent purpose to get out of that forbidden fellowship, that partnership with an unbeliever in wrong conduct. Just as Paul said, “flee sexual immorality,” in 1 Cor. 6:18, he teaches here to get out of any relationship where you are a participant with another in sin.

The unequal yoke is not just anything we want it to be. It is only what Paul says it is. Fellowship with an unbeliever in sin. (See also Eph. 5:11).

## What Is Involved in “Calling Upon the Lord” for Salvation?

Acts 2:21

By W. Frank Walton

*“And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21).* The Holy Spirit through the apostle Peter states the thesis of the first gospel sermon in Acts 2. It is a quote from Joel’s prophecy of the availability of salvation in the Messianic era.

So what is involved in calling upon the Lord? Is it merely saying, as many claim, “the sinner’s prayer” for salvation? Does it only require “faith only” (mental trust in Jesus) for salvation without any overt act of obedient faith? The Bible is its own best commentator, so we look to the context to detail what it means to call on the Lord.

In Psalm 18, the idea of calling on the Lord is totally trusting in the Lord to deliver the helplessly overwhelmed, who realizes his utter impotence to save himself (vv. 1-18). Yet, this entails the response of the believer to obediently follow the Lord’s instructions (vv. 19-24). Why does man need to call upon the Lord? He’s stuck in the hole of sin that he cannot extract himself from by his own meritorious bootstraps. He’s trapped in the debtor’s prison of sin, which he is bankrupt to buy his way out. He’s enslaved to the cruel taskmaster of sin’s addiction, and he needs a Redeemer to liberate him.

Peter in Acts 2 shows that Jesus is the Lord and that the Jews rejected and killed their Messiah.

**1. Trust in the Lord Jesus.** The theme of Acts 2:21 is fleshed out in showing who Jesus is, what He did, and how he fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies pointing to the coming Messiah. His miracles give public confirmation that He came from God (Acts 2:22; cf. ). His atoning death, burial and resurrection is the centerpiece of God’s saving plan (Acts ). This all fulfilled God’s prophecies pointing to the coming Christ, who is the Son of David.

This shows us that in true gospel preaching, the person and work of Jesus must be the focus of faith and commitment. The gospel has not been preached if His saving person is not known (1 Cor 15:1-4). To evangelize these Jews, note that Peter didn’t initially preach on the nature of the church.

This came later after they were converted to Christ and submitted to His authority (Acts 2:42-47). One does not become a member of the Lord's church in order to be saved; rather, one is a member of Christ's one true church because he has been saved (Acts 2:47). The church is the effect, not the means, of salvation. Christ is the Savior; the church is the saved.

**2. Turn to the Lord Jesus.** When the Jews believed that Jesus fulfilled these OT prophecies, and they realized they had killed their Messiah, they were horrified. "Cut to the heart" indicated they were sincerely convicted of their wrong-doing.

Peter, in telling them how to "call upon the Lord", tells them they must "*repent*" (Acts 2:38). To turn to the Lord in submissive trust, one must turn away from sin in repentance. Repentance is renouncing all the vain things we trust in before. It is renouncing the love and practice of sin, in order to turn to the Lord as our first love.

**3. Confess Jesus as Lord.** Not all of Peter's preaching on Pentecost is recorded in Acts 2. He must have preached a long sermon! "*With many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!'*" (Acts 2:40). Since the New Testament is harmonious on the steps of salvation in calling the Lord, Romans 10:9-17 informs us that "calling on the Lord" for salvation involves an essential step of a loyal confession of Jesus' deity: "*if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' you shall be made...with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*" (Rom 10:9,10; cf. Matt 16:16,18, 1 Tim 6:12).

**4. Be Baptized into the Lord.** In the process of calling on the Lord, Peter preached "*be baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins*" (Acts 2:38). Baptism (immersion in water) is an act of faith where we appeal to the Lord to cleanse us by his blood (1 Pet 3:21, Rom 6:3-4; Rev 1:5). Rabbi Saul was told: "*Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name*" (Acts 22:16). This clearly shows that calling on the Lord isn't merely saying the man-made "sinner's prayer." It involves obedient faith to accept the Lord's saving action.

### ***Working Together With Him*** ***2 Corinthians 6:1***

*By Jon W. Quinn*

I'd like to introduce to you the newest member of the Chicago Bulls basketball team. I'd like to tell you that the Bulls have asked me to join their organization and work with them to win another NBA title. I'd like to tell you that I consider it a great honor to work with such capable athletes and staff, the best in the world! I'd like to tell you all this, I really would, but I cannot because I have not been asked.

It would be a great honor, would it not, to be asked to assist a knowledgeable and successful team, headed by dedicated, concerned and capable leader in an important task?

We have been asked to join just such a team as described in the above paragraph! "And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain." (2 Corinthians 6:1). The greatest honor of all, to be a part of the greatest team of all, led by the greatest leader of all, in the most important task of all time. Sadly, many who would never think of turning down a position with the Bulls seem disinterested in working with God or even worse, antagonistic or insulted if you even suggest they are wanted on His team!

**We Have Received a Very Great Privilege - "Together With Him"**

Who is the "Him" of this verse? It is God. "The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, the world and those who dwell on it." (Psalm 24:1). The whole earth is His! Everything it contains. Every being that flies, swims, crawls, slithers or walks on 4, 8, 100, or 2 legs. He to whom the world belongs invites you and me to work with Him in His very special project. He has requested your cooperation! But you need to cooperate (Psalm 24:3-5).

Something important to understand about His request; We need Him, He does not need us! So don't get too uppity about being asked. (Acts 17:24-28). And don't think His purpose will fail without your assistance; His work will continue whether you lend your help or not. The failure will be yours.

The "Him" of this verse is the One who formed us (Isaiah 43:7). This "forming" has reference to redemption, the physical redemption of Israel of old from captivity and the foretelling the spiritual redemption in Christ (43:1,2; 5-7; 12-15). What He did with Israel He does with us

spiritually in Christ. You who have obeyed the gospel have been redeemed, and there is work to be done “together” with Him. (Isaiah 55:8-9) Trust God’s wisdom and judgment in the instructions He has given us to show us how to live and how to do His work. We ought not to even try to improve on the divinely ordained design/work/mission of the local church.

### **This Privilege Involves Activity: "Workers"**

“...for the people had a mind to work.” (Nehemiah 4:6). Too many do not have their mind set on doing the work God has for us. The people described by Nehemiah had a job to do and they realized its importance. Despite all odds they were successful, by God’s grace, in part because of their attitudes. They “worked together with Him” to rebuild the wall. God protected and provided for them, and gave them the leadership to direct them to success.

Think about Jesus’ attitude about time and opportunity: “We must work the works of Him who sent me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work”(John 9:4). Because of this attitude, Jesus was able to claim success at the end of His walk on earth (John 17:4).

The point of the parable of the talents is that everyone needs to be involved in this work. We do not all have the same ability in every area, but must not allow that to keep us from doing that which we are able to do(Matthew 25:15).

Many other passages echo this principle. Do the job now, for there will come a time when the work for you will be over. Do not go to your grave without having accomplished God’s work for you (Ecclesiastes 9:10) !

How much does God expect of me? How about “always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). If it is less than that, then start making a few changes. Your efforts will never be in vain!

### **Direction -"With God"**

Looking at Jesus at Gethsemane we have a good example of working with God no matter what (Matthew 26:39). This is an attitude we simply must have to give proper direction to our efforts. God’s will be done! Always! Without exception!



Surprisingly, the worst sinner of all had this same attitude! “Just tell me what you want me to do and I'll do it!” And, then he did! It is Paul who describes himself as “the chiefest of sinners” but look at what he became! (Acts 9:6).

If I am lethargic about the Lord's work, is that really so bad? At least I'm not persecuting Christians like Paul once did. No, but I will find passages directed at me telling me to get my act together (Matthew 12:30; cf. Revelation 3:15,16). Working “with God” means accepting His authority instead of man's (Matthew 15:9).

### **Unity -"Together"**

“Together” applies to God and all His workers. We all are to work together. All of us!

We need to be of same mind & judgment so we can pull together in the same direction (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). We find three outstanding fellow workers in 1 Corinthians 3:6; God, Apollos and Paul, all providing a different ingredient to the work which ultimately has the same goal; getting people from here to heaven.

It is important for all the members of the body to be working together, so that newer members can see by their example how to successfully apply the teachings of Christ to their lives. (Philippians 1:27). Motivators for unity ought to be natural outgrowths of the gospel received into the human heart. Consolation in Christ, love, fellowship of the Spirit, affection/mercy all work to bring unity to disciples (Philippians 2:1-2).

### **Strength of the Command: "Urge You"**

The word “urge” means to “encourage”; “appeal”. We are given the appeal to serve God in a reasonable way (i.e with the proper amount of dedication (Romans 12:1). It is important to help one another be stirred up to do likewise (Hebrews 10:24; 3:13-14). Consider this article just such an appeal to you to be active in the Lord's work; make it a real part of your life. (Acts 11:23; 14:22).

***The Samson Puzzle***  
***Judges 13-16***  
***By Ethan R. Longhenry***

The personality of the judge Samson is quite a puzzle indeed. We can read much about him that seems rather contradictory, but if we attempt to sort through Samson's puzzle we can learn much from this example of faith.

Regarding Samson it is written in Judges 13:3:

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, "Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not; but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son."

Whose births, in the Bible, are presaged in similar ways?

1. Isaac (Genesis 18:1-10)
2. Samuel (1 Samuel 1:9-20)
3. John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-17)
4. Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 1:28-34)

We also can read of some of Samson's exploits in Judges 14:5-6:

Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnah, and came to the vineyards of Timnah: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid; and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.

Who else in the Bible engages in such an exploit? We read of David doing a similar thing in 1 Samuel 17:34-36:

And David said unto Saul, "Thy servant was keeping his father's sheep; and when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant smote both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God."

Furthermore we have the example of Samson's parents, Manoah and his wife. In Judges 13 their story is told, how the wife saw the angel of the LORD and told her husband about it. Manoah did not doubt her but petitioned the LORD to send the "man back again to inform them what the child would be. There is not the same doubt and constant faithlessness seen otherwise in the book of Judges; they show the proper hospitality in offering to kill a young goat so as to have a feast, offer it to the LORD, and prostrate themselves when they see that they had seen the angel of God. Likewise, in Judges 14 they appeal to Samson for him to marry an Israelite woman and not to go after a Philistine woman. These people are probably the best examples of faith that we can find in Judges.

Returning to Samson, moreover, we read in Judges 13:25:

*And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.*

While we do see the Spirit of the LORD on other judges (particularly Othniel, Judges 3:10, Gideon, Judges 6:34, and Jephthah, Judges 11:25), we see it more consistently on Samson (Judges 13:25, along with 14:6, 14:19, and 15:14). Furthermore, we know that Samson was under a Nazirite vow from birth, separating him from the people (Judges 13:7).

Another particularly interesting matter with Samson may be found in Judges 14:1-4:

*And Samson went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines. And he came up, and told his father and his mother, and said, "I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife." Then his father and his mother said unto him, "Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, "Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well." But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD; for He sought an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines had rule over Israel.*

This is rather interesting. While God never wholesale commands Israelites to never intermarry, and there are examples of faith from non-Israelites

(particularly Jael the Kenite and Ruth the Moabitess, Judges 4-5, Ruth), by far the majority of the discussion of intermarriage is negative. The incident of Baal-peor, where Israelites married Moabite women and worshipped idols, was legendary (Numbers 25:1-9, Deuteronomy 4:3). The same is true of Solomon and his wives (1 Kings 11:1-10), and also at the time of Ezra (Ezra 9). Yet here God is directing Samson, against the pleas of his parents who want him to do the thing that ordinarily you would think God would want of him, to marry a Philistine woman!

These matters are all brought up because of the singularly contradictory character of Samson. We can read of Samson in Hebrews 11:32:

And what shall I more say? for the time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah; of David and Samuel and the prophets.

We see, then, that Samson is included in the "hall of fame" of faith, and yet we read of his exploits. His anger is legendary (Judges 14:20-15:6), he fornicated with harlots (Judges 16:1), and his overweening pride got the better of him (Judges 16:20). Of all the judges he was the least successful, since even though he killed thousands of Philistines, the Philistines oppressed Israel long after his death! On the other hand, his birth was presaged in the same way as notable men of faith, his parents are the best examples of faith in the entire book of Judges, his exploits parallel that of Israel's greatest king, and he is listed in the "hall of fame" of the men of faith.

What, then, shall we say in regards to these matters? God uses Samson for His own purpose. Even though Samson did certainly err in many ways, God found a use for Samson. Through Samson's death many more Philistines met their end, and perhaps some refreshment was found for Israel. Samson paved the way for the eventual successes of David over the Philistines. Later on, Samson is considered an example of the faith-- not, of course, because everything he did was holy and pious, but because he was, for the greater part of his life, consecrated to God in His service. It may not have always made the most sense in how God used Samson, but His ends were achieved. Despite his imperfections, he sacrificed himself for the greater good of Israel.

Lord willing, we will meet Samson in Heaven and have the opportunity to

ask him about his life. Let us learn from his example while we are here on earth, and strive to allow ourselves to be workers in God's service.

*Topic Page, Jan. 2007*

## THE SOWER AND THE SOILS

**Kevin Kay**

It was a common sight on the hillsides of Palestine in the days of Jesus -- a sower sowing seed. So when Jesus uttered the immortal words, "Behold a sower went out to sow...." (Mt. 13:3), He was describing a scene that the multitudes, who had come to hear Him preach, knew all too well. They were familiar with the smell of freshly plowed ground. They knew what it was like to carry a heavy bag of seed. After all, they were farmers and husbandmen. So when Jesus said that some of the sower's seed fell by **the wayside** and was trampled under foot and eaten by birds (Lk. 8:5), they knew from their own experience that the seed which fell on the narrow hard-packed footpaths that circumscribed the plots of common ground in Palestine quickly became the food of birds. When Jesus said that some of the sower's seed fell on **stony places** and sprang up quickly, only to be scorched by the searing heat of the sun (Mt. 13:5-6), they knew that He was talking, not about soil mixed with small stones, but about shallow soil barely covering a submerged stone ledge which provided no room for a tender plant to sink its roots deep into the earth. When Jesus said that some of the sower's seed fell among **thorns**, they understood that Jesus was talking, not about ground visibly infested with weeds when the seed was sown, but about soil that was adulterated with thorn seed which eventually sprang up and choked out the plant so that it produced no fruit (Mk. 4:7). When Jesus said that some of the sower's seed fell on **good ground** and brought forth fruit (Mk. 4:8), they knew about that kind of ground, too.

But Jesus was talking about much more than a sower and his seed and the soils that received it. This was an "earthly story with a heavenly meaning." But its meaning was beyond the immediate grasp of the disciples (Lk. 8:9), so they asked Jesus to explain the story's significance. His explanation indicates that the Parable of the Sower contains three basic elements: the sower, the seed, and the soils. While the **sower** is not

specifically identified, he obviously represents a faithful teacher of God's word (whether Jesus or the apostles or some other teacher). The **seed** is identified as the word of God (Lk. 8:12), and the **soils** obviously represent different kinds of human hearts.

Although the power and the function of the seed is not the primary focus of this parable, it is important for us to understand that God's word is the germinating seed of spiritual life (Phil. 2:16). The gospel really is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16-17). By it one is begotten again (1 Pet. 1:22-23; Jas. 1:18, 21). and built up in the most holy faith (Acts 20:32). Without it, there can be no salvation from sin. But while the power of life resides in the seed, the production of life will be dependent upon the condition of the soil into which the seed is planted, and this is the primary focus of this parable.

The **wayside soil** represents what we might call the **hardened heart**. This is the person who is exposed to the gospel, but he does not give the word a fair hearing (Lk. 8:12). His heart is too hard to allow the word of God to penetrate. Perhaps his heart has been turned to stone by arrogance, or the love of sin, or religious prejudice, or misguided intellectualism, or any number of other things, but regardless of the cause, the wayside soil allows not even a trace of spiritual life to be produced.

The **stony soil** represents what we might call the **shallow heart**. This is the person who immediately and impulsively and joyfully accepts the gospel without looking down the road and counting the cost (Mk. 4:16-17). This person does well until he is faced with obstacles and opposition because of the gospel. When the novelty and the excitement wear off and when the tough times come, he withers away, because he failed to consider the cost of discipleship (cf. Lk. 14:25-35). While the stony soil produces life (momentarily), there is little growth.

The **thorny soil** represents what we might call the **overcrowded heart**. This is the person who hears and believes the gospel and even begins to grow until he becomes distracted and preoccupied with other things (Mk. 4:18-19). It may be the pursuit of any one of what I call the pernicious P's: profession, position, power, prestige, profits, possessions, pastimes, pleasure, projects, or politics. Whenever anyone becomes absorbed with "getting ahead" and "climbing the ladder" and "making his mark," even though none of these things are inherently sinful, he makes a mistake of

eternal proportions. While the thorny soil produces life and growth, there is no fruit. But “the whole point of planted seed is not the growth of a plant, however luxuriant, but the production of fruit. The child of the kingdom of heaven is not just to look good, but to do good and be good. The problem with the heart of the thorny soil is that it has become too crowded with competing concerns, and the seed of God cannot prosper in a divided heart.” (Paul Earnhart, “The Crowded Heart,” *Christianity Magazine*, January 1993, p. 27).

Of course, the **good ground** represents the **good and honest heart** (Lk. 8:15). Unlike those with hardened hearts who refuse to hear and believe, this person hears, understands, and accepts the word. Unlike those with shallow hearts, who accept the word but then later fade away when opposition comes, this person holds fast the word that he has heard. Unlike the overcrowded heart who eventually becomes distracted by other things, this person refuses to become enamored by the glitter of the world, and he bears fruit with perseverance. The good ground produces not only life and growth, but also fruit, and that’s what the Christian life is really all about.

As you think about these words of Jesus, let me ask you some probing questions. Are you like the wayside soil? Prejudiced and disinterested. Are you like the stony soil? Unwilling to sacrifice. Are you like the thorny soil? Preoccupied and distracted. Or are you like the good ground? One who will hear and accept God’s word, hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance? Only you can answer those questions. But the wonderful thing about this is that each one of us can change if we need to. We can become "good ground" if we really want to. This is not possible in the natural realm, ground is ground; it cannot change itself, and it is not responsible for the kind of ground it is. But men and women are responsible for who and what they are, and they can actually change from one type of person to another. This means that if you want to understand, if you want to be faithful in spite of tribulation, and if you want to serve God despite the allurements of the world, you can. If you look at yourself in the mirror of God’s word and you know you’re not the “good ground,” you can change if you want to. Do you want to? Will you change?

**Plan of Salvation**  
**By Jon W. Quinn**

Plan #1

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."  
(ACTS 2:38)

Plan #2

On the back page of a tract, sinners were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

The Sinner's Prayer:

"O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan #2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown to us in the Bible.

The Final Page

***Directions for Discipleship in a Fallen World***  
***By Jon W. Quinn***

When a conversion to Christ occurs, many things change; the new Christian has new purpose, responsibility, and a new relationship with God. But at the same time, there is a perplexing realization that many things also remain the same. He or she still lives in the same fallen world with its evil, corruption and suffering. And temptation is still there as well, and ultimately the disappointing realization that there is still a long way to go before perfection is reached; mistakes are still made and there will be times where one will stumble. How does one live successfully as a Christian in such an environment?



First, we must learn the nature of Satan and sin. Satan can be very deceptive sometimes even appearing to be the opposite of what we might expect (2 Cor. 11:13-15). Sin deceives, often offering more than it can deliver while obscuring the horrible reality of the ultimate outcome.

Second, we must develop a hatred for sin. God hates it. We must not be merely indifferent about it (Psa. 119:04).

Third, we should remember how Jesus met temptation. He was absolutely successful. He met every temptation with Scripture (Matt. 4:1-11). The Scripture was His absolute authority for right and wrong and His guide for conduct. It should be for you and me as well.

Fourth, we should pray for strength and guidance in doing what is right. Again, this is like Jesus handled His dread of the cross. He found strength in this approach (Matt. 26:39).

Finally, be positive about good and negative about evil (Rom. 12:9). Christianity is not only putting away sin, but also adding goodness and kindness to our lives as we obey the gospel of Christ.