

Expository Files

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You Can Be Better Warren E. Berkley

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,” (Col. 3:23).

“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus,” (Phil. 3:13,14).



Statements like these in the Bible convince me of this simple thing: **Anything we do that is right, we can do better.**

Several of the parables of Jesus convey to us the value of excellence. I'm reminded of the man who gave three of his servants a different sum of money to use (Matt. 25:14-29). When the master returned, two of the men had used the money wisely and had a return. The third man simply put his money in the ground, unwilling to do the best he could with what he had.

Or in the story about the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:45,46). The merchant was not content to find an artificial pearl or an average pearl. His quest of heart was for a “beautiful pearl,” and when he

found it, he “sold all that he had and bought it.” These parables may have multiple lessons. One underlying thread is excellence. Anything we do that is right, we can do better.

Doing better requires commitment, change and action that is sustained in daily life. But the one who has a right heart toward God and is forgiven by Christ can push through the fears and challenges and do better. Think about it.

You can be a better Bible reader and student

You can be a better individual worshipper

You can be a better husband or wife

You can be a better parent

You can be a better son or daughter

You can be a better brother or sister

You can be a better employer

You can be a better employee

You can be a better leader

You can be a better friend

You can be a better citizen

You can be a better church member

Make your own list, take this thought of excellence and growth into your life this week.

**A Certain Rich Man:
What Was The Problem?**

{Lk. 12:16-21}

Warren E. Berkley

Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull

down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many good laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. Lk. 12:16-21

Let's not criticize the man in the story for his success. Success is not a sin (if achieved righteously). Each of us should be faithful stewards of what God allows us to use, taking responsibility while we are here on the earth, striving for excellence in everything that is right. If we apply ourselves with the energy God supplies and the circumstances are favorable, there may be some success for us in life and that's great. In the phrase, "the ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully," there is nothing to prompt any criticism.

Further, the thought described in verse 17 should not be criticized. "And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?'" When you enjoy some success or have a plentiful harvest there should be good thinking. You should think about what you need to do. One of the highest kinds of business practices is simply **thinking!** Thoughtlessness is never to be commended.

So given what Jesus says about this rich man so far – **nothing wrong!** It is not wrong to succeed. It is not wrong to think. No problem with having a good crop; no problem with thinking about and planning what to do.

Let me add another non-issue: Building Barns and Storing Your Surplus; still no problem! There is nothing inherent regarding building and storage that is morally or spiritually flawed. For instance, if you make more money this year and you think about it, and decide to put that money into some CD's or a Savings Account –

you have not necessarily done anything wrong. To make more. To have more. To save more. These things are not moral or spiritual flaws.

So what is the problem. We begin to realize the issue as we move into verse 19: **“And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’”**

Look at two things: One is the decidedly self-centeredness of this – “I will say to my soul . . . ” etc. He talks to himself about himself and claims full ownership and power over what he has. A related issue is **his use of what he has is all about his own pleasure!** So verse 19 gets us to our focus, to the point of concentration that will help us get the point of the parable. Here is a man who was successful - no problem with that. He was thoughtful - no problem with that. He safely stored his excess - no problem with that.

But he has this focus on himself. And his plans about his resources are self-centered. His attitude is: *I will just take it easy . . . I will eat, drink and be merry.* There is no thought or mention of serving God, or helping people. It’s all about him!

That God owns everything we have... that we are temporary stewards of what God let’s us use . . . that we have obligations of heart that involve our friends, family and neighbors . . . **These vital things were not accounted for by this man and his plans for his windfall profits. So God addressed this man’s foolishness.**

Verse 20: “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’” According to Jesus Christ, it is foolish to think only of ourselves. It is not foolish to be successful. It is not foolish to have a good, thoughtful plan for storage. It is not foolish to retire.

According to Jesus, it is foolish to think only of ourselves. To think we own what we have, and we have obligations to no one but self is tragically flawed thinking and living. To use all we have on our pleasure is foolish. Or, if we think that that our material holdings prolong life – that’s foolish thinking too.

God made a point of this man’s case by requiring his soul of him. He would die. And that means whatever permanent ownership he perceived he had, he would have it no more. “Then whose will those things be, which you have provided?”

Here’s the foolishness: You work hard to gain stuff. You have more than you need. You think only of yourself. Then you die, and have nothing.

Spurgeon: *He is a fool ... He puts the body before the soul, he hopes to find ease on the thorny bed of wealth, and makes sure of a long life in a dying world. O Lord, keep all of us from being so foolish.*

Jesus wants to be certain we get this, so He says: “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” The two operative words: “for himself.” This parable answers a popular, common mind-set . . . that talks like this:

I work for myself.

What I have is mine.

You get your own stuff. . . this is mine.

And as this attitude is explored deeper you discover, at the core, thoughts that exclude God; thoughts so centered in self, in self-ambition and self-enjoyment, **God is ruled out!!**

What’s happening is, this kind of person is laying up treasure for himself, “and is not rich toward God.” To be rich toward God means

– whatever you have, or do not have . . . **you do have God in your life, with all the attending blessings of fellowship with Him, through Jesus Christ.** Whether you have worldly success or financial ease or not – **you can be rich toward God, because of your response to the cross of Christ.**

The Greatest Mission

Jno. 12:44-50

Brady Cook

John 12:44-50 is an interesting passage for many reasons. Jesus makes this speech immediately after seeing men cower in fear from the Pharisees, so as not to be thrown out of the temple. Law-making was not one of their abilities, as the only One that could realistically install ordinances and rules was God. Nevertheless, they had assumed this power and now were one of the forces to reckon with as far as any Jew was concerned. What makes this passage interesting, however, is that Jesus brings back to mind who He is, and establishes Himself higher than any man-made traditions or laws. Jesus does three things especially notable in these brief seven verses.

Jesus tells of the REASON He came into the world. "I have come as light into the world, that those who believe in Me would not remain in darkness" (v. 46). Sin had entered the world through Adam (Romans 5:12), and subsequently man was separated from God. Although the doctrine of original or "inherited" sin is decidedly false (Ezekiel 18:1-4), man follows suit whenever we sin as well, distancing ourselves from God in the same manner. Jesus' express purpose, according to John 5:31-39, is to redeem those who are separated, as many as are willing to come to the truth. We read in Acts 26:18, that Paul was sent to open the eyes of Jews and Gentiles to this truth, the brightest light in a dark world. This is the Light that we read about,

that we should turn from the darkness of sin, to the light of righteousness.

Jesus tells of the AUTHORITY AND SOURCE of the things He says. Every message needs credibility, or else the message is risky at best. The Gospel was no different, and several of those who listened to Jesus wondered where this Man had come from (Mark 3:2-3). This was a question that the Pharisees had posed another time to Jesus, in Matthew 21, when they asked Him where His authority came from. When we find out that they were too stubborn to make a firm decision, Jesus gives us His answer in John 12:49: "For I did not speak on my own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent me has given me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak." Jesus authority came from God, and the Word that He spoke came from God as well. If we had to choose to follow the Pharisees or Jesus, who would you pick?

Jesus tells the RESULT of the things He says. "I know that His commandment is eternal life..." (v.50). Enforcing strict disciplines that were near impossible was just another day at the office for the Pharisees (Luke 11:46), but what they could not offer was eternal life, merely the illusion of righteousness. While thousands and possibly even millions had followed this doctrine, Jesus condemns them for the misleading of what they had done (ref. Matthew 23:15). Even Solomon, in his great quest for physical and meaningful satisfaction found in the things of this world, chronicled in the book of Ecclesiastes, came to the conclusion that the end thereof is death! What Jesus said is the gateway to eternal life, and those that come to Him and drink of His water will never thirst again (John 4:13-14).

Jesus' commands that he spoke came from God, therefore we would be wise to heed them, Jesus being God himself. What He says we must do, and this goes along with every doctrine that we have: baptism (Matt. 28:19), obeying Government (Luke 20:25), repentance (Luke 13:3), serving others (Mark 10:42-45), etc. When we take a

closer look at John 12:44-50, coupled with other texts to gather more perspective, we find an ironic and heartbreaking reality: the same God the Pharisees claimed to follow was the very same God they hunted and killed.

A Letter From Jesus
"...written not with ink..."
2 Corinthians 3:2-5
By Jon W. Quinn

Paul wrote several epistles, or letters, that are a part of the New Testament. Peter wrote a couple as well. John wrote three.

But how many epistles did Jesus write? Would you be surprised to know that He did write some epistles? How about this: He is still writing epistles even today! Would you like to read one?

Wait a minute! What about the idea that the faith was "once for all delivered" and other passages that suggest the Lord's written revelation was complete (Jude 3) and the promise that everything the Lord had to reveal to the world would be revealed during the lifetimes of the apostles (John 14:26). How can it be that Jesus is still "writing letters" today long after this? And where are these letters so we can read them?

Think of the faithful Christians you know. The letters that Jesus is writing today are not written with pen and ink, as is the case with the New Testament. Neither are they revelations of new truths, but rather modern illustrations and explanations of what was written back in the first century. With these epistles that Jesus is writing, instead of paper He uses the life of the Christian, the ink is the deeds and words of that faithful Christian, and the plot is the will of the Lord applied to the daily life of the faithful. Consider: as a disciple you are a letter of Christ to the world!

"You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God..." (2 Corinthians 3:2-5).

Read by All (vs. 2)

The lives of God's people ought to say something distinctive to the world. This has always been the case (Isaiah 43:10-13). This means that we live by a different standard - God's. We seek to live righteously, pleasing the Lord in all circumstances. We cannot be God's witnesses if we do not live according to His will. The atheistic German philosopher Frederick Nietzsche issued this challenge; He said, "Show me that you are redeemed and then I will believe in your redeemer." I doubt that it would have really made much of a difference to him, but he did have a point.

Faithful disciples are true to Him in good times and evil. Every day presents its challenges; will I be spoiled, neglectful and casual in good days? Will I be fearful, distrustful, disloyal on evil days? As a child of God, your life is supposed to give witness to the world that God is real, that He has effected your life favorably, and that He is the true and living God who can be trusted and who gives peace and confidence. God has said, "I, even I, am the Lord; And there is no savior besides Me." (Isaiah 43:11).

Lights only shine forth in the darkness if they are in bright contrast with that darkness. Sometimes this will cause the child of God to be subject to ridicule (Matthew 5:11,12). But at the same time, there will be a vivid testimony for all who take time to notice (Matthew 5:16).

There is no way to be a readable letter of Christ, a witness of God, a light shining forth in the darkness, without obeying Jesus and holding fast His word (Philippians 2:12-16).

As letters of Christ, we need to be readable. That means:

1. Avoiding Blurry Ink - Indecipherable or faded print caused by fuzzy living, ill defined priorities and goals - compromise and failure to take a stand; timidity. Desire to please man rather than God.

2. Avoiding Misprints - Taking false stands. Doctrinally and/or morally. (John 14:6) - Jesus is the only way to God. - A misprint might say otherwise.

Written With the Spirit of the Living God (vs. 3)

How does one become a letter of Christ written with the Spirit? This occurs when the Spirit's revelation is permitted to write our lives as we obey Him (Galatians 5:22-24). The Spirit bears witness (Romans 8:16,17). This witness is heard and seen in one who is being led by the Spirit. How so? This all has to do with how we are living our lives (Romans 8:12-14)! Where does the Spirit write? On the heart!

Contrasted with writing on the tablets of stone - that writing revealed us as condemned sinners. This was necessary, but did not fulfill our need for a Redeemer (see the context of 2 Corinthians 3:6-ff; especially vss. 7-9; also Romans 8:1; Galatians 3:19; 24-27).. In Christ, that need for a Redeemer is fulfilled. Is your life a letter written by the Spirit on the tablet of your heart?

A Source of Confidence (vs. 4)

Being a well written epistle of Christ is a source of confidence that by God's grace we are able to succeed in "the day of Christ" - i.e His second coming. What is involved in this success on that day ? Continuing to grow and abounding more and more (Philippians 1:9-11) To grow in our love, knowledge and discernment; to approve excellent things; to have sincerity, to be blameless; to be filled with the fruit of righteousness.

This confidence is a source of strength (Philippians 4:13). It shows itself in a living faith in the power of God and it directly effects our behavior, helping us to maintain righteousness even in the face of opposition (2 Timothy 1:12).

Our Adequacy is From God (vs. 5)

I am adequate to the task because of God's grace and power. Remember Paul: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" He would speak of "Christ in Me" (Galatians 2:20) explaining that while the confidence was his, the power is God's (2 Corinthians 4:7).

This mindset will make one strong! Total surrender and dependence on God taps in on the power of God. Where we are inadequate, God's power takes over and supplies our needs by His grace through our faith. Recognizing this causes us to think of ourselves as being rich, though we know it is by God's doing, our rich blessings come from Him and we are not boastful as though it was of us (1 Corinthians 4:6,7). We simply know that by faith in our powerful God we will not fail.

The letters that Jesus is writing today are not written with pen and ink, as is the case with the New Testament. Neither are they revelations of new truths, but rather modern illustrations and explanations of what was written back in the first century. The paper is the life of the Christian, the ink is the deeds and words of that faithful Christian, and the plot is the will of the Lord applied to the daily life of the faithful. God bless every disciple to be a clear witness to God's power!

What God Wants Us to Do
Deuteronomy 10.12-13)
By Wayne S. Walker

During the early days of this earth's history, God spoke to all mankind in some way through the heads of families. However, as He began to carry out His scheme for the redemption of mankind, He chose the descendants of Abraham, the nation of Israel, as His own peculiar people through whom the Messiah would come to bring salvation. God sent the Israelites down into Egypt during the days of Joseph in order to preserve them from famine, but when a new Pharaoh arose who did not know Joseph and the Egyptians enslaved his people, God raised up Moses to deliver them from Egyptian bondage, lead them through the wilderness, and bring them to the borders of the promised land. While they were waiting in the plains of Moab just east of the Jordan River for the time when they would cross over and conquer Canaan, Moses gave a series of speeches to remind them of what God had done for them and to prepare them for their new home.

These speeches are recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, which means the second giving of the law. In Deuteronomy 10:12-13, Moses said, "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to

love Him, too serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?" The heading in the New King James Version calls this "The Essence of the Law." We recognize that these words were spoken to the nation of Israel, not to us, and that the law which contained them is NOT God's law for us today. Yet, the Old Testament Scriptures are preserved for our learning, and this passage states some general principles that are still true. In simple, easy to understand terms, these verses explain what God wants us to do.

"Fear the LORD your God"

Though derived from same basic root meaning of awe and terror, there are two senses of the word "fear." One is a feeling of being afraid or scared, and the other is a state of deep reverence and respect. When God tells His people to fear Him, the word is being used in the second sense. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge....The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom..." (Prov. 1.7, 9.10). Anyone can gain bits and pieces of knowledge, but the only way to have proper understanding concerning the knowledge of this world that brings true wisdom is to begin with reverence and respect for the God who created it and us.

What does fearing God mean? In Eccl. 12.13-14 Solomon concluded his search for meaning to life by saying that we are to "fear God" But how do we show that we fear God? It is by keeping His commandments; Moses will talk more about that later, but this is an essential part of fearing God. Yes, we certainly should be afraid of what would happen if we disobey God (Heb. 10.26-30). However, God's people do not obey Him just because they are afraid or scared of being punished but because they have an abiding reverence and respect for God because of who He is and what He's done. Such reverential fear will guide and control everything that we do. "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be

shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12.28). Moses told Israel to fear God, and we need to fear God too.

"Walk in all His ways"

We all know that the literal meaning of the word "walk" is to locomote by means of the legs and feet. However, we often use it as a general figurative to refer to a person's way of living and doing things. Thus, throughout the Bible, the term identifies a person's conduct, behavior, or manner of life. Both Enoch and Noah "walked with God" (Gen. 5.24, 6.9). God told Abraham, "Walk before Me and be blameless" (Gen, 17.1). Therefore, using the idea of walking in this sense, everyone basically has two choices.

Some people choose to walk in the ways of this world, which is in actually walking the way that Satan the tempter wants us to do. Paul wrote about those who "walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2.1-2). Because all have sinned, each of us has chosen to walk this way at one time or another. Many continue to travel in the ways of the world, but a few decide to change and walk in all the ways of God. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 Jn. 1.5-7). To walk in the light simply means to walk in all of God's ways, just as Moses told the Israelites to do.

"Love Him"

In an earlier part of this second speech, Moses had already pointed out the importance of loving God. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our

God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deut. 6.4-5). The Israelites were to love the Lord with all heart, soul, and strength, and then in the succeeding verses to teach their children to love God. Again, while this was written in the Old Testament law, Jesus said that it's the greatest commandment. "Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" This is the first and great commandment" (Matt. 22.35-38). Thus our Lord Himself put His divine stamp of approval on the idea that the most important thing that we can do is to love our God.

However, as in the case of fearing God, we must ask, what does loving God mean? Is it just having a tingly, emotional feeling when we think of God? "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 Jn. 5.3). Again, we shall note that Moses has more to say about keeping God's commandments, but it is interesting to note that this is the acid test for both fearing God and loving Him. This leads to conclusion that what Moses says here is not five different, separate things that God wants us to do, but that he uses five separate terms to identify different aspects of the same thing, namely the kind of attitude that God wants us to have, and that includes loving Him.

"Serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul"

The word "serve" basically means to work for and wait on. Families, especially wealthier ones, used to have, and some still do, servants who would cook for them, bring their food, clean their houses, tend their grounds, and so on. For example, Abraham had many servants, the oldest of whom he sent to find a bride for Isaac

(Gen. 24.1-6, 34). So when the Bible says that we are to serve the Lord, this is the background of the word. We are to work for Him, wait on Him, and do what He tells us to do. However, we have to remember that because God is what He is--divine, almighty, and infinitely wise--He does not need our service. There is really nothing that we can do for Him that provides for His needs. Rather, He wants us to serve Him because that is what WE need to do.

Because we are created beings, we are going to serve someone or something; and as we mentioned in our discussion of walking, it is either going to be the things of this world or God. "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6.24) Some think they can serve both God and mammon, which refers to the things of this world, equally, but Jesus says we cannot--either one or the other will capture first place in our service. One word that is sometimes translated "servant" is also translated "slave" (in the ancient world, many times household servants were actually slaves), and again we're either going to be slaves of sin or slaves of righteousness (Rom. 6.13-18, 23). So we can choose to serve sin, but the wages of that service is death, or we can choose to serve God, who in return gives us eternal life. "Keep the commandments of the Lord and his statutes"

We have already talked about the importance of keeping the Lord's commandments as it relates to fearing and loving Him, but now Moses specifically says that God wants us to keep His commandments and His statutes. Why? The purpose of God's commandments and statutes isn't to take all the fun out of life or to trip us up so that He can gleefully cast us into hell. "When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you?' then you shall say to your son:...'And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD

our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day" (Deut. 6.20-25). God's commandments are for our good. God is our Creator. He knows what is best for us. And He has given us commandments and statutes that are in our best interest.

We see this in the physical realm. Those who continually break the commandments of the civil law live in shame, have to keep on the run and hide, get a bad reputation, are often in jail or receive other punishment, and sometimes suffer an early and tragic end to their lives. However, those who keep the commandments of the civil law do not have to worry about all these problems. Consider what David thought of God's commandments. "Trouble and anguish have overtaken me, yet Your commandments are my delights (Ps. 119.143). "You are near, O LORD, and all Your commandments are truth" (Ps. 119.151). Yet, someone says, all these passages are in the Old Testament and talk about the commandments that God gave to Israel. Besides, someone else says, Christianity is more than just keeping commandments. And it is certainly true that being a Christian involves more than just keeping certain commandments. But Jesus Christ does have commandments for His people today and says, "If you love me, keep My commandments" (Jn. 14.15). As we noted previously, we simply cannot fear the Lord or love the Lord without keeping His commandments and His statutes.

Conclusion

In short, Moses is trying to encourage the people of Israel to obey God. No, we do not necessarily obey the specific statutes of the old covenant, but God still wants us to obey Him and, in fact, commands us to do so, plainly telling us that the wonderful spiritual blessings which He has for us, both in this life and in the next, are conditioned upon our obedience to His Son. "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey

Him" (Hebrews 5:8-9). Have you obeyed His word? Are you continuing to obey His will? Remember the Bible tells us that everything which God wants us to obey is "for your good."

Topic Page:

Conveying The Message

David Smitherman

It's Saturday morning, the children are watching TV, their rooms are a mess, and mother needs their help in getting things cleaned up. The problem? How to convey that message and, hopefully, not incite a riot.

Mom has an idea. She begins by *setting an example*: doing what she wants them to do in hopes that her example will be followed. No luck.

Another approach is taken. This time mother makes a *necessary inference*: She says, "Children that don't help with cleaning up their rooms don't get to go outside and play. You children are not helping to clean up your rooms..." The kids just change positions on the couch.

But mom doesn't give up. She makes a *simple statement*: "Your rooms need to be cleaned up and I need you to help me." You'd think the kids were deaf.

Finally, in a tone of voice that can no longer be ignored, mom issues a *command*: "Get up from that couch, turn off the TV, and help me clean up your rooms." Success at last.

Example, necessary implication, statement, and command. What other forms of communication could this mother have used in order

to cause these children to understand what she wanted them to do. What other forms of communication are available to all of us as we seek to cause others to understand what we want them to know and do? "Getting the point across" means we must set examples, make implications or statements, or give "orders."

A man is reading his Bible, wanting to know what God's will is. His desire is to know what kind of conduct meets with God's approval. But how is this man to know what God wants done and how he wants it accomplished?

As he reads the life of Christ and notices His teaching methods, he soon realizes that Jesus communicated His will to others in various ways. When He wanted to teach about humility *He set an example* of one way in which it could be demonstrated (Jo. 13:15). *He used necessary inference* when teaching important truths about Himself (Matt. 22:41-46). When talking about entering the kingdom of God *the Lord made a simple statement* (Jo. 3:3-5) and, when giving the Great Commission to the apostles, *He gave commands* (Matt. 28:18).

This man also sees this same teaching method in the epistles. Inspired men urged the following of *examples* (Acts 20:35; Phil. 3:17); taught by *necessary inference* about the priesthood of Christ (Heb. 7:11-17); made *statements* about what baptism does for us (Gal. 3:27); and gave *commands* regarding disciplinary action (2 Thess. 3:6).

Examples, necessary inferences, statements and commands: God communicates His will to us in the same way we communicate ours to others. Thus, understanding God's will and establishing authority for all of what we do (Col. 3:17) should pose no problem to the man truly desiring to know and do the Father's will.

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:

Acts 2:36-38

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

(Acts 2:36-38).

Plan #2

On the back page of a tract, sinner 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.

Focusing on Focus

Expository Files 15.9; The Final Page

By Jon W. Quinn

There is a print publication I have been receiving for years called "Focus Magazine". The most recent issue (August, 2008) is their 100th issue - a milestone to be sure. I do not know if this "special issue" will become a valuable collector's item one day (I'm guessing not - at least by any monetary standard that defines "valuable"). But I do want to say that this publication has been extremely valuable to me through the years.

It is about this time that one will often write about how well he knows the editors and what good fellows they are. But I do not personally know these brethren. Of the eight past and present editors I do not think I have ever met a single one of them (though I have corresponded with the most recent addition to the editorial board). Other than that, I know them only by their writings.

The magazine does have a web site. For more information, refer to:

<http://focusmagazine.org/focus/>

I have appreciated the Scriptural, spiritual focus of Focus Magazine through the eleven years of its existence. I believe that the men responsible for it are dedicated and faithful, and their thoughts presented in its pages honor God and glorify His name. For that, I am glad, and pray that, if the Lord wills, they may continue their work for many years to come.

