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Holiness Writers

THE PRESENT CHALLENGE

By

Russell V. DeLong, Ph.D.

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

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THE PRESENT CHALLENGE

By

Russell V. DeLong, D.D., Ph.D.

Messages for These Troubled Days

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THE PRESENT CHALLENGE

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INTRODUCTION

R. V. DeLong has a purpose in his preaching. He plans to stir people — move them to a realization of their needs — persuade them to do something about their need.

R. V. DeLong is a clear thinker. He not only understands human nature as a philosopher and a psychologist, he knows the proper approach to the interest of his hearers. Then, and quite important, he has facility in expression. Definite purpose and well-organized thinking are not sufficient. But given these qualities, add to them clarity of expression. Now you have a triad of attributes that will guarantee any man an appreciative audience.

These are timely messages; they are based on conditions existing today. There are no abstractions. The author deals with real problems, the needs of real human beings. He offers vital religion as the panacea for the ills of the world.

This book will stimulate your faith and stir your evangelistic zeal. Placed in the hands of unsaved people, it should arouse them to their need of God.

P. H. LUNN

THE PRESENT CHALLENGE

By

Russell V. DeLong, D.D., Ph.D.

NOW THAT THE WAR IS OVER

"Choose you this day" (Joshua 24:15).

Israel faced a crisis. A choice had to be made. The prophet cried out for immediate decision. "Choose you this day," he exhorted.

History does repeat itself. Centuries have passed since Israel was confronted by the crisis of the text but humanity again faces the necessity of a decision, and I fear a quick decision, for God and right.

America is at the crossroads. This expression is trite and overworked. It is used for every trivial experience. But the fact is — the United States of America will either make a definite, clear-cut decision to return to the principles which have made our nation great or continue to drop to lower levels of debauchery, sin, and corruption. And — what is true of the United States is also true of the world. With war ended and peace at hand, two roads bid for postwar travel. Shall it be up or down?

We have to a great extent forgotten God. Church attendance is at an all-time low. Most churches have dispensed with Sunday evening services. Prayer-meetings are almost extinct, and genuine revivals are mostly reminiscences of former days. While these deplorable conditions exist, gambling is at an all-time high. It became "big-business" in 1944 with a total of over \$1,000,000,000.00 gambled. We spent over \$7,000,000,000.00 for alcoholic beverages last year, which is an average of \$54.00 per capita for every man, woman, and child in America.

In 1942, 135,000,000 gallons of distilled liquors were consumed; in 1943 this was increased to 143,000,000 gallons; and in 1944 it was increased to 165,000,000 gallons. In 1939, 54,000,000 barrels of beer were sold. This was raised to 65,000,000 in 1943 and reached a new high of 80,000,000 barrels in 1944. Divorce is increasing at an alarming rate. Rape, murder, suicide, and burglary are increasing.

Juvenile delinquency is the Number One problem of our criminologists, public officials, and educators. Governor Dewey said recently in the columns of the Saturday Evening Post, "Juvenile delinquency today means a crime wave tomorrow." When these children become young men and women they will become criminals unless a turning point comes in the meantime. Behind every delinquent juvenile is a delinquent parent.

Carelessness, selfishness, and irreligion are contributing to the moral toboggan slide of today. America will either decide to return to the faith of our Pilgrim and Puritan fathers, to the moral standards of the Bible and the vital religion of Christ; or slide headlong in the slough of moral corruption, sinful putrefaction, physical breakdown and mental disillusionment. As many more of

our soldiers return what will they find? a half-drunken, gambling, God-forgetting nation? I am not a pessimist — but unless something happens I am afraid that is the answer.

As our fighting men continue to return what will they contribute to the situation? Will the ruthlessness of war with its blood, cruelty, and inhuman deprivations tend to make them less cultured, less careful, and less Christian? If they find upon their return that the civilian population is going rampant in reckless moral abandonment, will not their experiences tend to accentuate present distressing conditions? But, if our returning veterans find our country in a wave of spiritual revival and moral renaissance, will they not feel that the fight they made was worth while, and the result be that they will throw themselves into a movement back to fundamental truths and wholesome moral conduct?

We face the decision. The crisis is upon us. What of our children? What of our nation? The choice is ours. "Choose you this day."

Our present crisis is not the work of Hitler. He did not precipitate it. Dr. E. Stanley Jones is right when he says, "Hitler is a symptom — not the disease." World War II is only a by-product of the real war — the war between right and wrong, righteousness and unrighteousness, good and evil, God and Satan. Periodically an eruption breaks forth in spite of our crust of civilization, education, and culture.

Twenty-five years ago we had a conflagration — World War I. We set up two slogans. (1) "Let's make the world safe for Democracy," and (2) "Let's have one big war to end all war." The bands played, patriotism burned high, Liberty Bonds were sold by the billions, high schools and colleges were depopulated of the finest of our youth, 10,000,000 were killed and 30,000,000 wounded. The Kaiser was the personification of the Evil One. We won that war. Peace and calm came. We set up the League of Nations and the World Court. Countless sermons were preached on World Peace. All seemed serene and complacent. And yet — in less than 25 years we witnessed a worse eruption than before.

Have you ever visited Yellowstone National Park and seen Old Faithful geyser erupt? All appears calm — you watch with expectancy. Soon you hear a rumbling, gurgling sound — and then — boiling water and steam shoots up into the air hundreds of feet, plays a few seconds and slowly dies down. The noisy, gurgling tempest passes. All is quiet and peaceful. But, fifty-three minutes later it all happens again. Why? Because down beneath the quiet surface is a sea of hot substance awaiting the right condition to erupt.

So it is with our world. A geyser every twenty-five years more or less. Our education, culture, civilization, and social service beautifully landscape the environmental surface. We delude ourselves into quiet complacency dreaming that all is well, until a Kaiser or a Hitler appears creating the right formula for a hot, carnal, sinful putrefaction to erupt in war. We fight — and win — and then proceed to clean up the landscape and beautify it. We create the San Francisco Charter. We try to control humanity effectively. We treat symptoms and effects. We don't attempt to deal with diseases and causes.

Why don't we learn that the heart must be treated? Herein lies the task of the Church; not a salve to mollify the outward, but a serum to change the inward; not an organization, but an organic purging; not a system, but a Saviour; not an ointment, but a sin-killing remedy; not an environmental change, but an inward transformation; not an external re-organization; but an internal regeneration; not so much a clean environment as a clean heart; not so much a just society as a just person. Let us not delude ourselves by thinking that an orderly hospital room with clean sheets and an efficient nurse can rid a patient of smallpox. We need a medicine that can cope with the disease. So with society. It is evil people that make an evil society. Let's get good people and then we'll have a good society governed by good administrators.

Our need is not so much more education, better laws, or increased culture. What we need is a concentrated, powerful, spiritual-moral penicillin-sulfanilimide-radium treatment that will transform men. Is there such? There is. Christ's coming was the answer. His power can result in newborn men — new creatures. Old desires, old habits can pass away and "Behold, all things can become new."

The stage is set for a revival. Campbell, Cartwright, Leavell, Sweet, Muncy, Jones, and others have written books recently proclaiming the possibility of it. Will we actualize it?

Our greatest need in America is

Not for better legislation, but for better legislators —
Not for better business, but for better businessmen —
Not for better banking, but for better bankers —
Not for better farming, but for better farmers —
Not for better teaching, but for better teachers —
Not for better jurisprudence, but for better judges —
Not for better laws, but for better lawyers —
Not for better preaching, but for better preachers —
Not for better art, but for better artists —
Not for better music, but for better musicians —

Moral and spiritual value is the result of personal choice. To live right I must choose right. To be good I must choose goodness and repel evil. To be spiritual I must choose the spiritual.

But you say, "I do choose right and truth and goodness. But I find that I am bound by sinful habits; I find within myself unholy desires, and ungovernable temper, evil tendencies which my mental choices do not overcome. I choose right but I can't do right. I am in a distressing dilemma." St. Paul faced the same. He cried out, "When I would do good, evil is present with me ... the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not that I do ... who shall deliver me?" Thank God, he found the answer. He found personal victory. When you choose, God acts. In our own strength it is futile. It is a losing battle. But there is a dynamic, energizing, regenerating power at our disposal when we choose God.

We as individuals must choose. If ten millions of church members would sincerely and personally re-consecrate and re-dedicate themselves to a genuine revival of vital, soul-transforming religion our nation could be swung back to God and saved from apostasy, crime, debauchery, and sin.

Will you let the movement start this moment in your own life? Will you this very minute choose Christ? If you will, you will be the recipient of a power to change your innermost life. You can become a new creature in Christ. He can become a reality in your life. A new day can dawn. Life will take on new color and meaning. Life can be radiant and purposeful.

"Choose you this day."

THE PRESENT CHALLENGE

By

Russell V. DeLong, D.D., Ph.D.

THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION

"What shall I do with Jesus?" (Matthew 27:22).

One who reads widely and studies extensively is confronted by many baffling problems and faced with a variety of interesting questions. The most important question that has ever come to any individual is composed of only six words which form the text of this message: "What shall I do with Jesus?" These words came from the perplexed Pilate. They were addressed to a mob of frenzied, angry, crucifixion-determined Jews.

This question is of supreme importance. It is universal. It comes to everyone. It cannot be evaded. It is a question upon which one cannot be neutral. You must do something about it. To do nothing is to reject, to turn down, to repudiate Christ. He stands before you today. You must choose.

For the sake of brevity and clearness I shall divide my sermon into three parts, all based on the question of the text.

I. What shall I do with Jesus?

II. What shall I do without Him?

III. What will He do with me?

These are three very personal, very important, and very pertinent questions. Let us look at the first one.

I. What Shall I Do with Jesus?

What shall I do with His personality? To think of His personality inspires awe and amazement and should result in profound reverence. He transcends every other man who ever lived. He confronts the entire human race, revolutionizes its thinking, changes its ideals, and affects its conduct. What shall I do with His personality?

What shall I do with His character? I might ask you, "What do you think of Winston Churchill?" or "What do you think of the late Franklin D. Roosevelt?" or Joseph Stalin? or Harry S. Truman? Your answer would in no sense reveal your character. But — when I ask; "What do you think of Christ?" your answer will reveal your character. This is true of no other man that has ever lived.

What shall I do with His words? He says, "Come, take up thy cross and follow me." This command comes ringing down over the centuries. It confronts all of us. Come always means leave.

Leave your old life, leave your old ideals, leave your old companions. Come — take up thy cross — follow me.

What shall I do with His words, "Ye must be born again"? These were uttered to a moral man. But morality is not enough. Your innermost nature must be regenerated by the Holy Spirit, making you a new creature in Christ.

What shall I do with His words, "Tarry ye at Jerusalem — until ye receive the Holy Spirit"? This command was given to Christians — followers of Christ. He commanded it. It must be important. It was His last command — in fact these were His last words on earth — they must have been of great significance.

What shall I do with His words concerning the Ten Virgins? Concerning the Judgment? Concerning Hell? Shall I heed these warnings and be wise or shall I ignore them and be lost?

What shall I do with His sacrifice? Jesus came, suffered, and died. He was rebuffed, reviled, spat upon, and jeered at. They placed a cruel crown of thorns upon His holy brow and a heavy cross upon His shoulders and at the point of spears they forced Him up Golgotha's brow. At the summit they laid Him upon the cross and drove spikes through His hands and His feet, then raised the cross and dropped it into a hole while He sagged there in excruciating agony and pain. Not only was He suffering this unbearable physical pain, but upon him rested the sins of the world — your sins and mine. What shall I do with His sacrifice?

There are just two things you can do. Thank God, you can say, "O Thou Christ of Calvary, I accept Thee. Let Thy blood be applied to my heart. I accept Thy salvation." Or else, you can reject His sacrifice and wade through His shed blood. As far as you are concerned it is just as though Jesus had never come. An ingrate — unthankful for this great act of atonement. What shall I do with His sacrifice?

Let us turn to the second question.

II. What Shall I Do Without Him?

This is an important consideration. What shall I do without Him in sorrow?

One of the common shrines of man is sorrow. Every human being sooner or later bows here. It makes no difference whether you are wealthy or poor, educated or illiterate, great or small, a king or a peasant — sorrow comes unbidden. The sun may be shining today and the birds may be singing, but tomorrow the lights will all go out and then in your darkness you will need someone. Is there one? "Yes, there's one, only one, the blessed, blessed Jesus, He's the one." You'll need Him.

What shall I do without Him in trouble? Trouble is another common shrine of man. You can't escape it. It comes to everyone. One day you may have to sing with the old Negro, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen, nobody knows but Jesus." Thank God, He does know. In your hour of trouble you will need Him.

What shall I do without Him at the Judgment? One day, in the not too far distant future, you will stand before the Judge of the Universe to give an account of your life. You will need Christ then.

In concluding this message, let us look at the final question for a moment.

III. What Will He Do with Me?

This, too, is a very important question. Let us divide it. What will He do with me now? and, what will He do with me then?

What will He do with me now? He'll forgive my sins. This sounds trite. We have heard it from youth up. We have known hymns written about it. We have heard countless sermons preached about it. It is old and, I fear, a bit empty and meaningless to many. But — it is still the greatest news that has ever come to the human race. I wish I could pour into that statement all the power of my personality until it could take on new meaning, renewed freshness to invigorate your mind and soul until you would see and feel its power. What a pronouncement! The greatest news story of all time. Talk about your ten greatest news stories of 1945, here is the greatest of all the centuries. It is the Number One Highlight of history. The angel spoke to frightened shepherds, "Fear ye not. I bring you tidings of great joy. For unto you is born this day — a Saviour which is Christ the Lord." Oh, what a message! Is it stale? Let it become fresh! Is it old? Let it become new! Is it distant? Let it become present! Is it a generality? Let it become personal! — this very moment. He can forgive my sin.

He'll make life worth while. A young woman twenty-three years of age committed suicide recently in a New York hotel. She left a note behind saying, "I've had every thrill a human being can experience and life isn't worth the living." Life for her was groveling in the mud and mire of sensual, physical living. It had no meaning. Why live? Many are asking this question.

Without Christ — life has no meaning; life has no purpose. Without Christ — life is sensuality; life is physical; life ends in the grave; life offers no future. Without Christ life is empty, disillusioning, disappointing, discouraging, tragic, selfish, and meaningless.

But with Christ — life takes on color! With Christ — life takes on meaning! With Christ — life takes on purpose! With Christ — life is full, radiant, dynamic, meaningful, and happy.

Christ offers something worth living for and worth dying for. He gives unity and objectivity to life and finally offers hope beyond the grave. Amidst battles, sorrows, trials, difficulties, reverses, disappointments, betrayals, and sufferings He'll see you through.

Let us look at the final question for just a moment — What will He do with me Then?

We shall all appear before the judgment bar of God. It will be the climax of our existence. It will settle our eternal destiny. What will He do with me then?

It all depends on what I do with Him now. If I have confessed Him now He will confess that He knows me then. When I stand fearfully before God, Jesus will say, "I know him. He is one of mine." He will confess me. But if I deny Him now He will deny me then (II Timothy 2:12).

The inescapable Christ stands before us. The question is now yours to answer, "What shall I do with Jesus?" Obey Him. Accept Him. Open wide the door of your heart just now. Say with Charlotte Elliott,

Just as I am without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me;
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee
Oh Lamb of God, I come — I come.

Do you come? He'll meet you just now.

THE PRESENT CHALLENGE

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THE ALLURING ATTRACTION OF THE CROSS

"And when they were come to a place called Calvary, there they crucified him" (Luke 23:33).

The most significant event in the history of man took place on the summit of a hill, enacted by one lone figure silhouetted against a darkened sky as he hung between two thieves on a roughly hewn cross. Single-handed He was fighting the greatest battle of all ages. A bloodthirsty mob had cried for His blood in Pilate's judgment hall, which echoed and re-echoed with the devilish demand, "Let him be crucified — let his blood be upon us and upon our children."

Pilate evaded responsibility. He feared the populace. He washed his hands but he didn't wash away his guilt.

They took Jesus and placed a heavy cross on His shoulders. They goaded Him up Golgotha's brow. Weak and worn, burdened and tortured, He trudged painfully to the summit. He was raised upon the cross, a crown of thorns upon His head. A howling mob stood at the base of the cross, hissing and jeering and crying: "If thou be the Son of God, come down," "He saved others, himself he cannot save." But Jesus had more important business that hour than saving Himself. He was saving us.

What a picture? So terrible, yet so sublime. So awful, yet so grand. So painful, yet so productive. At length Jesus breathed out, "It is finished," and when He did, "the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom" Our salvation was completed The Holy of Holies was wide open for every penitent soul A new moment had come; A fresh day had dawned. Man was reconciled with God, and his sins were forgiven The debt and penalty of sin had been paid in full. Yes — it was the supreme highlight of all human history.

The cross of Christ does something to you. The cross attracts the attention, invites the understanding, allures the emotions, and challenges the will. One's better self is stimulated in its presence. There comes from the cross a pull, a tug — a drawing, some explainable spirit grips one's soul. You stand transfixed in its presence. It confronts you with purity, goodness, and truth. The best within you is stirred. Your higher, better nature would clasp it and accept its Christ as your Saviour.

Dr. Leslie Weatherhead in his recent book, *A Plain Man Looks at the Cross*, illustrates this overpowering appeal of the cross as he recounts the stirring event in London, as a young girl sings to a sophisticated, critical audience.

The scene is the Queen's Hall. A cultured audience has gathered to listen to a concert. Here you have not the uncivilized savage possessing little of culture or education. Rather, you have the West End of London rolling up in expensive motor cars and stepping from them dressed in evening clothes. One of the items on the program is a song by a young girl whose name is unknown. She is

making her first appearance before the critical musical public of London. She sings, with perfect voice and that artless grace which is the height of art, a song which she has practiced many hours with her distinguished tutor. At the end of the song the applause is deafening and continued, and both tutor and audience demand that she shall sing again. Once again she sings the same song.

It is a long time since the audience has heard anything so fresh and understanding and altogether captivating. It is imperative that she should sing yet again. Hurriedly she and her tutor confer together. She has arranged to sing only this one song. The tutor was not ready to risk more. She was to have this one chance only. "What else have you got?" he asks. From her music case she takes out a song and says simply, "I should like to sing this to them." She goes to the platform. The noise and tumult and cheering subside. In perfect stillness she begins:

There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.

She sings it to Gounod's glorious setting. The effect is electrical. It is a long time since many of those who listen have heard any religious message, and a very long time indeed since they have heard the message of the Cross. The beautiful voice goes on:

We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains He had to bear;
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.

The silence became almost tangible. The tension is almost more than people can bear, and still the voice goes on:

He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by His precious blood.

No chocolate boxes are passed during that song. No whispered comments of the singer's ability are exchanged. That night in the Queen's Hall, the singer is forgotten by many, in a song which carries them away on its wings to a lonely hill outside a city, where a Man whose great loyalty and love nothing could break — a Man who was all that God could pour of Himself into a human personality — hung in anguish on a cross of shame. The singer goes on:

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in.

There are few dry eyes. Women weep openly, unable to restrain their tears. Men grip the seat in front of them, their knuckles white with the intensity of their grip, their faces strained by the depth of their emotions. The singer seems almost unconscious of the audience. The song is so precious to her own heart that she is not singing to please the audience. She has forgotten it is there. She is bearing out, through Gounod's music, the adoration of her own heart for the crucified Lord. So to those final and wonderful notes the young voice travels on:

Oh dearly, dearly has He loved,
And we must love Him, too,
And trust in His redeeming blood,
And try His works to do.

The soloist forgets to bow. Certainly the audience notices no omission. There is no applause — only a great silence.

So it is in Africa, so in London, so with the outcasts, so with the educated and civilized, so with men in olden days, so with modern men and women who are willing to be quiet and to consider. His words are true, and they are true only of Him: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto myself." And when bound to His cross, He is lifted up before men's eyes, by some strange power which defies analysis, dying, He brings them life; bound, He brings them liberty; suffering, He redeems them from the greatest anguish the soul can know, the agony of hopeless despair; and everlastingly loving He challenges them, and claims them, and will never let them go until He makes them His forever.

Christ is pulling upon your heart just now. Your better self is saying: "Give yourself to Him." Your heart craves for His word of peace. Your entire being wilts and surrenders in the presence of the cross of Christ.

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,
The emblem of suffering and shame,
And I love that old cross where the Dearest and Best
For a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross,
Till my trophies at last I lay down,
I will cling to the old rugged cross,
And exchange it some day for a crown.

May I inject a bit of personal testimony? When I was a high school senior, sixteen years of age, I was away from God, burdened and bound by sin. One night I left the back seat in a church in Everett, Massachusetts, and walked down the long aisle and knelt at an old-fashioned altar,

confessed my sins and left my burden at the foot of the cross. Jesus spoke, "Peace," to my troubled heart. He can do the same for you. When I arose from my knees the people were singing:

Alas! and did my Saviour bleed,
And did my Sov'reign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?

At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day!

But drops of grief can ne'er repay
The debt of love I owe;
Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do!

As you read these words, make your confession, leave your burden at the cross, and you, too, can know the peace that Christ can give.

THE PRESENT CHALLENGE

By

Russell V. DeLong, D.D., Ph.D.

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE

"There is none like it, give it to me" (I Samuel 21:9).

The words of my text leaped from the lips of David when the priest mentioned that they were keeping in the synagogue, as a relic of a colossal victory, the sword with which he had slain Goliath. "There is none like it, give it to me," he exclaimed.

The sword in spiritual warfare represents the Bible as definitely indicated in Ephesians 6:7, "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

The Bible is different! It is unique! "There is none like it." Why?

The Bible is not just another book. It is THE Book — the Book of books. But why?

Many answers might be given and considered at great length. Let us mention some briefly and then focus our attention on what appears to me to be the outstanding major reason.

It is a fact that forty different men of varying vocations ranging from peasants to kings, wrote the sixty-six books of which the Bible is composed, and wrote at different times over a period of 1,600 years. Each brought his bit — his contribution — from his standpoint — from his station in life — and when they are put together we have an uncontradictory volume of sixty-six -books fused into one Divine Revelation, all pointing man to God's purpose for his life.

"There is none like it" for popularity. The Bible is always — every year — the best seller.

"There is none like it" for guidance.

"There is none like it" for literature. It stands at the very apex of all the great literature of the world. It is sublime in style, lofty in thought, and correct in expression.

"There is none like it" for durability. Other things are transient and passing. Friends, fortunes, and fame may pass, but God's Word endureth forever. You can depend upon it. It is sure and steadfast, always abiding. Atheists, skeptics, agnostics, and infidels have destroyed the Bible by the thousands. Great bonfires have been made with the Bible as fuel. Predictions have been made that the Bible would soon be extinct. In the laboratory the Bible has been placed under the microscope by critics. It has been analyzed, torn to pieces, destroyed, and yet it goes on in greater power and influence than ever. When atheists and infidels have rotted in their graves, when the sun has burned to a cinder and the moon has turned to blood, when the stars have fallen from their sockets and the earth has been rolled together as a scroll and cast behind the walls of oblivion forever, God's Word will go on in triumph. "Heaven and earth may pass away, but my word shall not pass away."

The Bible is God's will for man. If it is not, then we, as human beings, are all mariners at sea without a compass or a chart. Your idea of right and wrong is as good as mine. There is no final tribunal of truth. There is no center of authority. Everything is purely relative. The Bible answers all the great questions of life: Where? Whom? What? From whence? Whither? How? It offers proposed solutions and, when followed, will produce satisfaction and happiness.

We might build argument after argument concerning the Bible as God's Word, but I think the greatest argument is this fact: men and women in the maze of modern complexities who will follow the precepts and truths as laid down in the Bible will find the riddle of life solved and discover the road to happiness.

Suppose I ordered a large, old-fashioned floor clock for my home from Montgomery Ward in Chicago. When it arrives, to my surprise and astonishment, it is unassembled. In the packing box I find wheels, pivots, posts, face, hands, crystal, body, nuts, screws, springs, and all that it takes to make a clock — hundreds, if not thousands of parts. I am bewildered and perplexed. What shall I do? As I dig down through the parts I find a book of instructions. I am informed that if I put a to a, b to b, c to c; put 1 to 1, 2 to 2, 3 to 3, etc., I can assemble the clock and make it function. So I follow the instructions, putting this wheel on that pivot; cogging this wheel to that wheel; attaching this spring, etc. After several hours of work, following the instructions in the book, and not without some problems, I have the clock assembled and to my satisfaction and delight it runs. I conclude that the man who wrote the book of instructions made the clock and that the man who made the clock wrote the book of instructions. The author of the book and the creator of the clock are one and the same person.

Human beings and society are faced with many problems, desires, instincts, habits, ambitions, disappointments, sorrows, death, and a thousand and one complexities. Life is a maze of snarled, tangled perplexities. The Bible is the only book that will solve the riddle of life. If you will follow the instructions, put a to a, and b to b, confess your sins, obey the Ten Commandments, do right, follow the sermon on the Mount, you will find that life will work out happily and with prosperity. You will discover that the One who wrote the Holy Book of Instructions, made man. You will conclude that the Being who created man with all his internal strivings, instincts, and desires, wrote the Book. The Author is the Creator and the Creator is the Author.

The Bible is the only book which solves the mysteries of life and brings happiness and contentment of spirit. Tennyson will no do it; Emerson falls short and even Shakespeare is inadequate. The Supreme, Intelligent God who wrote the Book, the Bible, has given us instructions which will untangle the sorrows of life and bring harmony out of discord. The poem, "The Anvil" clearly pictures the potency of the Book.

I paused one day beside the blacksmith's door,
And listened to the anvil ring the evening chimes,
And looking in, I saw upon the floor
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had," said I,
"To wear and batter out those hammers so?"
"Just one," he answered, with twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

And so I thought, the Anvil of God's Word,
For ages skeptics' blows have beat upon,
Yet, though the noise of infidels was heard,
The Anvil is unworn — the hammers gone.

THE BIBLE — YET IT LIVES

"Generations follow generations — yet it lives.
Nations rise and fall — yet it lives.
Kings, dictators, presidents come and go — yet it lives.
Torn, condemned, burned — yet it lives.
Hated, despised, cursed — yet it lives.
Doubted, suspected, criticized — yet it lives.
Damned by atheists — yet it lives.
Scoffed at by scorners — yet it lives.
Misconstrued and misstated — yet it lives.
Ranted and raved about — yet it lives.
Its inspiration denied — yet it lives.

"Yet it lives — as a lamp to our feet.
Yet it lives — as a light to our path.
Yet it lives — as a guidebook for Heaven.
Yet it lives — as a standard for childhood.
Yet it lives — as a guide for youth.
Yet it lives — as a comfort for the aged.
Yet it lives — as food for the hungry.
Yet it lives — as water for the thirsty.
Yet it lives — as rest for the weary.
Yet it lives — as light for the heathen.
Yet it lives — as salvation for the sinner.
Yet it lives — as grace for the Christian.

"To know It is to love It.
To love It is to accept It.

"To accept Its Christ means Life Eternal."

Jesus stands at the door of your heart. Will you accept Him? He will untangle the snarled strands of your life and bring peace and happiness. Lift the latch, turn the knob, open the door and say, "O Thou Christ of the Bible, I bid Thee enter."

Nothing, either good or bad, can come to you unless you yourself open the door. The old Stoic was right when he said, "I rest content that nothing can harm me unless I open the door to the enemy." True! But it is also true that nothing good can come to me unless I open the door.

It is reported that when that great masterpiece, "Christ Standing at the Door," was first unveiled, a critic remarked to the artist, "There is a glaring omission." "What is it," asked the painter. "You have forgotten to put a door knob or latch on that great oaken door." The artist answered, "But you, sir, have missed the great truth of the painting. That door represents the door to the heart of man. That is Christ knocking. There is no latch on the outside. If the door is ever opened the latch will have to be lifted from the inside."

Oh, what a truth! The will decides the destiny of man. Jesus is knocking. He stands without. You must lift the latch. Open the door. Bid Him Enter. Your intellect tells you that you ought to do so. Your heart wants Him. Let your will answer the call of your mind and heart.

Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night,
Jesus I come, Jesus I come,
Into Thy freedom, gladness, and light,
Jesus I come to Thee.
Out of my sickness into Thy health,
Out of my want and into Thy wealth,
Out of my sin and into Thyself,
Jesus I come to Thee.

Leave your bondage, sorrow and night. Forget your failures and defeats and come to Him.

Out of my shameful failure and loss,
Jesus I come, Jesus I come,
Into the glorious gain of the cross,
Jesus I come to Thee.
Out of earth's sorrows into Thy balm,
Out of life's storms and into Thy calm,
Out of distress to jubilant psalm,
Jesus I come to Thee.

Just now let Him in. Open the door. Meet Christ now and hear Him speak peace to your troubled soul.

THE PRESENT CHALLENGE

By

Russell V. DeLong, D.D., Ph.D.

HOW MAY I BECOME A CHRISTIAN OR FIVE STEPS FROM SIN TO SALVATION

The jailor asked, "What must I do to be saved?"

St. Paul answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:30, 31).

Everyone is lost. All have sinned. Sin has caused us to be deprived of God's presence and, in thus being denied the light and life of God, to have become depraved in nature. Deprivation and depravation are the twin results of man's sin. Man's days have been full of sorrow, suffering, bereavement, and death. His life has been bound by sinful habits, uncontrollable desires, ungovernable tempers, and unbridled instincts. Misery, woe, guilt, and condemnation have caused anguish of soul and distress of spirit.

There has been a persistent search for some means by which to salvage this human wreck. Many solutions have been proposed — none have succeeded. There is only one remedy for man's sin and that is found in the atonement made by Christ on the cross. This mighty act of Jesus preserved the dignity and force of the moral government of the universe and at the same time revealed the tremendous love of God. Justice and mercy, law and love, government and forgiveness were united in the drama of Calvary.

Education, philosophy, social service, and even religion have been tried and have failed to atone for man's sin. Church membership, baptism, and confirmation are helpless unless preceded by something more vital.

There is only one remedy for sin. There is only one panacea for man's ills. There is only one solvent for the troubles of the race.

Salvation is to be found only in Christ and in the power of His shed blood to atone for man's sin

There are just five (5) short, but all-important steps from sin to salvation

Step Number One

To realize that you are a sinner, to know in your heart that you have violated the laws of God, to sense your shortcomings is the first step toward salvation. There is no help for the man who feels no need. But to the man who confesses his sins, admits his transgressions, and keenly senses his dire need of a Saviour, there is glorious hope.

Step Number Two

It is not sufficient to take Step Number One and confess your sins, you must be genuinely and contritely sorry that you willfully transgressed the laws of God. You must feel the awfulness of sin. You must realize that your actions have hurt the loving, benevolent heart of God. You must have that "woe is me" feeling of total unfitness and lostness. You must feel completely undone and eternally lost. A "godly sorrow for sin" is an old-fashioned expression but absolutely essential as the second step toward salvation. The man who takes the first step will find the Holy Spirit helping to condition him for the second step.

Step Number Three

The genuineness of Step Number Two is evidenced by a willingness not only to confess and be contritely sorry for sins committed but by a sincere desire to make restoration and restitution for wrongs done to God and man. If you've stolen you must restore. If you've lied you must correct. As far as it is possible you must rectify the results of your evil acts. What you cannot do is not required. The devil will magnify the difficulties of this step, but remember that God is able to give you power to be victorious.

Step Number Four

The fourth step is of paramount importance. You must believe that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world. St. John 3:16 must become significant to you, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Specifically, your belief must become personal — that He died for your salvation. Belief in yourself, or your good works, or your church membership, or your baptism, or your confirmation, is of no avail. None of these can save you. Your only hope of salvation lies in Christ. This hope must become personal. That "whosoever" must be focused on you — you must be included. Your cry must be, "O God, save me." The burden of your prayer must be, "It is my sins, my transgressions that sent you to the cross." The completion of Step Number Four is taken when you say, "I believe He died for me."

Step Number Five

The final step to victory is that your belief must now become active faith. Belief must be consummated in personal trust. Not just intellectual faith, not just the result of a dialectical mental exercise but that faith must be active. It must result in the personal testimony, "I believe He died for me and that He saves me now."

Imagine a man drowning. You hurl a life preserver to him from the deck of a ship. It falls within his reach. He sees you, he observes you throwing the preserver, he believes that it will save him. He believes — yes — but he must act — he must reach out and grasp the lifesaver. He can say, "I believe" until the waves engulf him and he drowns. He must say, "I believe it will save me and

therefore I take hold of the preserver," and he is pulled to safety. So with the man in the ocean of sin, Christ offers salvation — he throws the life preserver. Not enough to believe — I must accept and act. Belief must become active faith by saying "I believe He saves me now."

St. Paul said to the jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." The jailer believed and was saved.

In I John 1:9 the promise is, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Our initial task is to confess. God's final act is to save.

Philip, after leaving the great Samaria revival, encountered an Ethiopian Eunuch and said to him as recorded in Acts 8:37, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest." And the Eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." He was saved. He climbed the ladder from sin to salvation. There are five rungs — just five important steps. Will you take them just now?

A soldier in a foxhole took them. He found Christ and salvation and left the following poem behind as a glorious testimony:

A SOLDIER FINDS CHRIST IN A FOXHOLE

[This poem was brought into the Chaplain's office by a patient just in from the fighting front. His buddy still fighting wrote it and sent it in. It is probable that the author died shortly after but he had found Christ.]

Christ, I thought I knew all the answers,
Until madmen started this war.
I never gave you a second thought —
Nor even talked to you before.

The age-old story of Bethlehem,
And the drama of Calvary
Were nothing more than mere fairy tales —
Yes, Lord, mere fairy tales to me.

But tonight my helmet is heavy,
And so is the pack on my back;
Barbed wire has left me two torn hands,
And my feet leave a bloody track.

My shoulders sag 'neath this heavy gun;
My body is weary with pain;
And my whole tortured being cries out
For rest and release, but in vain.

For the first time in my life I know
Your head hurt from a thorny crown,
And your tired bleeding shoulders ached
When that heavy cross weighed you down.

Those nails cut into your hands and feet;
Every inch of your flesh was torn;
And your bruised body was weary —
My God — once You, too, were careworn.

But you didn't quit — you carried on
Until the grim battle was through,
And now I know you did it for me
So I'll go on fighting for you.

I want you to know that I'm sorry;
It was my sins that put you to death;
And I'll keep on saying I'm sorry
Until I draw my last breath.

Christ, I never knew that war could be
The means of saving my soul;
How little I thought that I would find you —
In this muddy foxhole.

Do you recognize your need of a Saviour? Do you believe that He has the power to transform your life? Present yourself humbly. There is nothing you can bring that will buy your salvation. You come to Him as a sinner unworthy of His divine grace. You deserve nothing but the penalty of sin. You must throw yourself on the mercy of God imploring His grace and forgiveness. Jesus paid the debt of sin on Calvary. Will you repent and accept His gift? Charlotte Elliott, a sinful, young society woman, came to Him saying,

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

The love of God knows no bounds. No matter who you are, love reaches out for every penitent soul.

Just as I am, Thy love unknown
Hath broken every barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

Do you come? If you do, He will receive you.

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

THE PRESENT CHALLENGE

By

Russell V. DeLong, D.D., Ph.D.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S DEPARTURE

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (St. John 16:7).

The glory of anything is its ability to perform the function for which it is created.

The glory of an automobile is to get you from where you are to where you want to go without too much difficulty.

The glory of a cook is her ability to provide good and palatable food.

The glory of a hunter is his ability to take aim, pull the trigger, and bring down the game.

The glory of a radio is its ability to get the station you want without too much interference.

What was the glory of Christ's departure? What function was to be created by His departure? Let us meditate on four considerations:

I. The Preparation for the Departure.

Jesus called twelve men. They staked their all upon Him as the Messiah. He commissioned them as ministers. They saw Him heal the sick, cleanse the leper, open blind eyes, unstop deaf ears, and raise the dead. They sat at His feet and heard His matchless words. All of their hopes and fears, ambitions and desires were wrapped up in Him.

After a brief ministry of three years, Jesus decides to depart. Before He does so, He makes a final address to His disciples, which is recorded in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapter of St. John. Herein He gradually unfolds the shocking, startling news, namely, that He will depart. They were bewildered, astonished, and confounded. At the close of the address He prays for them. That prayer is found in the 17th chapter of St. John.

II. The Unreasonableness of His Departure.

There are five reasons why the departure of Jesus appears irrational.

1. He was only a young man of thirty-three, — too young to die.
2. His ministry had been of very short duration — only three and one-half years.

3. The disciples had brought upon themselves the hatred, ridicule, and ostracism of the world. Jesus had a moral obligation to them.

4. The disciples needed the quieting presence of the Master.

5. The early Church in its formative period needed the guiding genius of its founder to pilot it amidst the rocks of opposition.

In the light of the above five reasons which seem to make His departure from the world untimely and irrational —

III. What, Then, Was the Glory of His Departure?

What was the function to be performed? Why did He decide to leave in the face of so many pertinent, important demands to remain? The answer is found in the words of my text which is taken from the climax of His last address, St. John 16:7.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

There is the answer! Jesus departs in order to send the Holy Spirit to His followers.

IV. Why the Necessity of the Holy Spirit?

1. That He might be a Comforter. Jesus in His final address to His disciples said, "I will pray the Father that he may give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever."

The word "comforter" comes from the Latin prefix "cum," meaning "with," and the word "fortis" meaning strength, power. It is the word from which we get "fort," "fortify," and in music, "fortissimo." Therefore, "Comforter" means "with power," "with strength."

Some years ago when my daughters Carolyn Jane and Marilyn Lou were 6 and 4 years of age respectively, they were attending school across the boulevard from our home in Lowell, Massachusetts; Carolyn in the first grade, and Marilyn in Pre-Kindergarten. The boulevard was highly traveled, hundreds of automobiles and heavy trucks passing in both directions each hour. Crossing the street was indeed a difficult and dangerous undertaking.

One morning about eleven-thirty, I was busy in the back yard of our home and it occurred to me that it was about time that the girls should be coming for lunch. I looked around the corner of the house and to the boulevard where cars and trucks were rushing in both directions and I thought if the girls do come out of the school now and see me, they'll rush across the boulevard and be killed. Just then, sure enough, little four-year-old Marilyn came toddling around the corner of the school and saw me.

My heart stood still. But just then, to my relief, the policeman on our beat walked out in the midst of the traffic and put up a white-gloved right hand in one direction and his left hand in the other; all the automobiles came to a quick stop, and the trucks, with screeching brakes, came to a trembling standstill. Then he beckoned to Marilyn and she came over and tugged at his pants leg while he patted her cheek and led her to me. She rolled up her big brown eyes and said, "Daddy, Mr. Dooley is a friend of mine." I should say, and why not?

Then I thought of the people of God. When all the cohorts of the damned press in on the soul, the dark clouds gather, the heavy artillery of hell threatens our destruction, financial reverses come, sorrow and bereavement cause all the lights to go out — just then, thank God the great policeman of the skies walks out into the earthly and hellish traffic and puts up one hand in one direction and the other hand in the opposite, and the hosts of earth and hell come to a standstill, for He says, "I have a child coming across this highway today. So far shalt thou come and no farther." Thank God, there is a "strong one" — the Comforter.

2. We need the Holy Spirit as a Teacher.

In that final address Jesus said to His disciples, "I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he the Spirit of Truth is come, he shall guide you into all truth." He shall lead you forward into the great vistas of divine truth.

3. We need the Holy Spirit as a Purifier of the heart. John the Baptist cried out, "I indeed baptize you with water, but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." St. Peter testified that when the Holy Spirit came. "He purified their hearts by faith." Anger, jealousy, fear, covetousness, pride, and all other sinful manifestations will be gone when carnality is eradicated from the heart by the purging fire of the Holy Spirit.

4. We need the Holy Spirit as an Enduer with Power.

The last words Jesus said to His disciples before He ascended from Mt. Olivet into heaven were, "Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you, but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high."

The greatest need of the Church is the power of the Holy Spirit. We have plenty of organizations, boards, committees — wheels within wheels. What we need is the mighty, dynamic of the Holy Spirit to get the machinery functioning.

Your greatest individual need as a Christian is the power of the Holy Spirit to make you a triumphant, victorious person.

That is why Jesus departed — that He might send the promise of the Father — the coming of the Holy Spirit to His followers. That is the glory of His departure. Have you received Him? If not — for you the departure of Jesus was in vain.

Open the door of your soul for the incoming of the Holy Spirit. Pray with Charles Wesley:

O that now from heav'n might fall,
And all my sins consume!
Come, Holy Ghost, for Thee I call;
Spirit of burning, come!

Refining fire, go through my heart;
Illuminate my soul;
Scatter Thy life through ev'ry part,
And sanctify the whole.

His holy fire can burn out the old nature of sin. However, the Holy Spirit will come to your heart only when you consecrate your entire personality. This means complete surrender. It means no longer self but Christ; no longer my desires, but His desire: not my will, but His.

Surrender yourself to Him just now.

All to Jesus I surrender,
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.

All to Jesus, I surrender
Lord, I give myself to Thee,
Fill me with Thy love and power,
Let Thy blessing fall on me.

As you read this beautiful verse of consecration yield yourself completely to God this very moment.

THE PRESENT CHALLENGE

By

Russell V. DeLong, D.D., Ph.D.

IS LIFE WORTH THE LIVING?

"But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (St. Matthew 19:22).

The story of the Rich Young Ruler is recorded in three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. From the three accounts we are able to get a vivid picture of the earnest seeker after eternal life. Three things are apparent — he was young, rich, and influential. This young man came to Jesus already possessing everything that nature could bestow upon him — wisdom, riches, power, authority, youth, and health.

It is also a striking fact that he was religious. He kept the law. To the query of Jesus concerning the commandments he replied, "All these things have I kept from my youth up."

What more must he do? He was the keeper of the Law — a moral man. He asked, "What lack I yet?"

Yes — what could such an ideal person lack? But he was dissatisfied — "he came running." He was in a hurry to meet Jesus — he wanted and needed something.

So it is with all human beings. Nature can satisfy an animal. But give man the best of food, a palatial mansion, a high-powered automobile, money, and clothes, yet he will walk out at eventide as the sun drops beyond the western horizon longing and craving for something nature cannot give. Why? Because he is "super-nature" — made for a higher, better clime than this.

So with the Rich Young Ruler — so with all persons created in the image of God. We want — we need — we must have something more than things.

In Miami some months ago a multi-millionaire, sixty-three years of age, committed suicide. Life had given him money, mansions, travel, romance, position, power, education, pleasure — but not happiness.

Happiness cannot be purchased. Happiness is a by-product of virtue. The source of happiness is within — not without.

Unhappiness, discontent, condemnation, dissatisfaction with life are the result of personal, subjective states of my soul. We get all snarled up — domestic conflicts, business upsets, financial reverses pull the spirit to pieces. It is reported that every second hospital bed in the United States is for the mentally afflicted. The personality "falls to pieces."

What is at the bottom of all of this? It is a fact that all schools of psychiatry agree that behind every "anxiety neurosis" is a sense of guilt. A psychiatrist probes the personality to locate the cause of guilt. When it is found and confessed, there comes a relief but not a cure. Phillips Brooks once said, "It is an awful hour when the first necessity of hiding anything comes. The whole life is different thenceforth. When there are questions to be feared and eyes to be avoided and subjects which must not be touched then the bloom of life is gone. Put off that day as long as possible. Put it off forever if you can."

Sin produces guilt. Only confession and repentance can bring one to forgiveness. Christ can speak peace, sin is forgiven forever, and guilt is removed. Life becomes happy, radiant, buoyant, colorful, purposeful, meaningful, and worth while.

The Associated Press carried a story recently of an eighteen-year-old girl who committed suicide in New York leaving a note behind saying, "I have found nothing in life worth while." Without Christ life is worthless.

One of the most beautiful stories I know had its setting in London many years ago. A magnificent cathedral in that great city housed the finest pipe organ in all the world at that time. The sexton was an old man who had served for more than half a century. He was very proud of his position, and doubly so, to be the sole custodian of that finest of pipe organs. One day a young man knocked at the door of his home and said "Mr. Sexton, I would like permission to play upon your great organ."

The old man replied, "That is the finest pipe organ in all the world. We do not allow everyone to play it. I cannot grant your request."

But the young man replied, "I have come hundreds of miles for the express purpose of playing the finest organ in the world. Please permit me to play."

The old man again refused.

But the young man persisted. "Please permit me. I have come hundreds of miles. Please, just one piece."

The old man relented and said, "Very well, young man. But remember, just one piece."

Together they walked to the great cathedral with its massive pilasters and spires pointing heavenward. They entered the large archway and walked down the long aisle to the console of the organ which the old man unlocked and said, "Now remember — just one piece and we'll be going."

It was a glorious setting. The sun was casting her gorgeous rays through the stained glass windows filling that sanctuary with all the colors of the prism. The old man sat down to wait. The young man ran his fingers over the keys and from the organ came the most beautiful melodious music ever heard in that cathedral. The old man lost himself. He was a barefoot boy running over his father's farm up the hills and down the dales. Now he was at the old swimming pool. He could hear the shouts of glee and the splash of water as his boyhood pals dived in. Then the music changed to a more somber tone.

He stood at the grave of his mother and the tears flowed down his cheeks. Suddenly the music broke forth in a more jubilant outburst. And then — it stopped. The old man came back to earth, arose, rushed up the aisle and cried, "Please, please play one more piece. Please, another piece for me." The young man's fingers ran over the keys and the old man sat down and again was lost in the beauty and grandeur of it all. Again the organ stopped. He rushed down the aisle and said, "Young man, that is wonderful playing. What is your name?"

Now the young man was hesitant. But the old man insisted, "I must know your name."

The young man finally yielded and said, "My name is Mendelssohn."

The old man cried, "Mendelssohn — Mendelssohn — to think that I might have refused to have allowed the great Mendelssohn to play upon my organ."

But a greater than Mendelssohn confronted the Rich Young Ruler. He confronts you. The One who made us — the One who made the pipe organ of your soul — can sit down at the console of your life in the Inner Sanctum of your being and upon your heart strings, ambitions, desires, instincts, and talents can bring forth harmonious notes so that life will be beautiful and worth while and all who contact you will be elevated and lifted heavenward.

Or else — the devil can sit down at the console of your life and bring forth sour, discordant notes that will make your home a hell and your life a misery.

Jesus can make life worth while. He can make you happy and content. He can make you rich.

Dr. Haldor Lillenas, the famous hymn-writer, has written one of the finest poems I know which beautifully illustrates the truth of my message. It is entitled, "Poverty."

POVERTY

If in my heart there is no love for those by sin defiled
And if I lack compassion for a wayward, wand'ring child;
If I possess no strong desire to help him in his need,
To lead him back to paths of peace, Then I am poor indeed.

If I have lost the tenderness, the grace I once possessed,
If I cannot appreciate another soul's distress;
If I have not within my breast a willingness to feed
The hungry multitude of earth, Then I am poor indeed.

If I have not the strength to feel another's burden sore,
If I am blind to all the needs that clamor at my door;
If I am deaf to all the cry of hearts that break and bleed
Without the sympathy of love, Then I am poor indeed.

If I cannot appreciate the good in those I meet,
If in my blindness I abhor the outcast on the street;
And if my hard, cold heart desires to crush the bruised reed —
Then know that I have lost my wealth, Then I am poor indeed.

And if I thrill not at the touch of dimpled baby hands,
Nor feel the wealth my humble home and all its love commands
And if the finer things of life are lost in grasp and greed
Then in my heart a beggar dwells, And he is poor indeed!

If I have love for those who hate and tears for those who fall,
If I have mercy for the one who loves me not at all;
If I have patience with the one who holds another creed,
A heart for all the wide, wide world, Then I am rich indeed!

The Rich Young Ruler was materially wealthy but he was spiritually poverty-stricken.

He chose to commit spiritual suicide. He went away sorrowfully. We never hear of him again. He missed the golden moment. He might have been another St. Paul or St. Francis or John Wesley. He decided to refuse. It was in reality "the great refusal."

Christ stands before you this very moment. Let Him take the controls of your life. Let Him sit at the console of your heart and make your life worth while.

THE PRESENT CHALLENGE

By

Russell V. DeLong, D.D., Ph.D.

CHRIST OR CHAOS?

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

"I'm a frightened man," says Dr. Harold C. Urey, Professor of Chemistry at the University of Chicago, writing in a recent issue of Collier's magazine (January 5, 1946). He opens his sobering article with these astonishing words, "I write this to frighten you. I'm a frightened man myself. All the scientists I know are frightened — frightened for their lives — frightened for your life." Dr. Urey played an important part in the discovery and development of the atomic bomb. He says, "As a scientist I tell you there must never be another war." Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, Professor of Physics at the California Institute of Technology, says, "There are no specific counter measures for atomic bombs." He adds, "There never will be." Dr. Arthur Compton, Nobel prize winner, told Congress that "control must insure that nations which have atomic bombs will never use them." But how can this assurance be guaranteed?

It is all very dangerous and very frightening business. Dr. Urey is justified in being frightened and is doing a valuable thing to frighten us to the danger of the present situation.

There is a better way to live than the world has yet discovered. The history of the human race has been that of perpetual crime, horrible murders, cowardly suicides, and constantly recurring wars. And now the atomic bomb. Humanity has progressively and scientifically devised better and more terrible means to obliterate the enemy. Look at the record — stones, bow and arrow, spears, swords, firearms, machine guns, increasingly large caliber guns, tanks, aircraft, rocket bombs, battleships, and finally atomic bombs. For every offensive weapon a new defensive implement was devised — shields, forts, heavy-armored warships, antitank guns, antiaircraft guns, radar.

The past century has witnessed phenomenal scientific progress in the fields of mechanics, hygiene, and medicine. But little progress, if any, has been made morally and religiously.

Someone has aptly suggested that we declare a scientific holiday for one hundred years until we can bring our morals abreast of our science. To retard scientific progress arbitrarily is unthinkable, but to increase moral practice and religious life is absolutely imperative if the race is to survive.

A revival of religion is not merely the cry of churchmen but is the demand of scientists if we are to escape complete annihilation.

Not only are scientists and religionists sensing the necessity of a moral and spiritual renaissance but also statesmen and politicians, educators and criminologists, jurists and businessmen, statisticians and columnists.

President Truman, in his Christmas address at the lighting of the White House Christmas tree, said to the nation, "I do not believe there is one problem in this country — in the world — today which could not be settled if approached through the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. Would that the world would accept that message in this time of greatest need."

Drew Pearson, the famous columnist in his Christmas message entitled, "World Choice — Christian Principles or Destruction," says, "The atomic bomb offers the world two alternatives: (1) We can get into another war and see the globe made into a ball of fire by the hand of man himself, or (2) We can use practical Christianity to prevent war, and by harnessing the energy of the atomic bomb make the world a virtual Garden of Eden."

A very interesting and suggestive cartoon appeared recently graphically depicting old man 1945 making his exit and the babe 1946 making his entrance. Unrolling a scroll listing the outstanding events of the past year with the atomic bomb blown up in large type is a man representing the Future. He is pondering on the problem, "How can we control the Atomic bomb." Down in the lower left corner of the cartoon the artist has drawn a fierce, desperate sensuous, cruel appearing man who defiantly asserts, "No way has been found to control the old Adam." The old Adam plus the atomic bomb can turn this world into a hell.

What is the old Adam? It is called by various names — "old Adamic nature," "the old man," "native depravity," "carnality," "the principle of sin," and "inbred sin." In brief, these terms refer to the nature of man. Sin is twofold — inherited and committed. The bent toward sin is constitutional. The act of sin is volitional. The sins I premeditatively commit must be forgiven before I can be justified before God. But my sinful nature which causes me to commit sinful acts must be cleansed. Complete salvation is a two-fold matter.

If a man is drowning I have two necessary things to do — I must get the man out of the water and then I must get the water out of the man. In bringing to man full salvation — first I must get the man out of the ocean of sin and then I must get the sin out of the man. If I get the man out of the water and neglect to get the water out of the man he will expire. If I get the man out of sin but fail to get the sin out of the man, it will not be long until he is back committing sins. St. John puts it thus in his First Epistle: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

There we have full, complete salvation — forgiveness and cleansing — justification before God and purification of the heart. Forgiveness of our sins — plural — our committed acts — thank God, He will forgive — wipe out — cast them in the sea of His forgetfulness to be remembered against us no more forever. We then stand legally before God as though we had never committed a sinful act. But St. John also says that God will do more than forgive us our sins, He will also "cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That corrupt, depraved nature — the old Adam — that which causes us to commit sinful acts — can be cleansed. Forgiveness is a forensic, judicial, legal act changing our relationship to God from a sinner — a rebel — to a son. Cleansing is a work wrought in us whereby the old Adam is crucified, killed, extirpated, eradicated — and our innermost nature is purified.

The Wesleys taught and spread this glorious truth resulting in a sweeping revival which saved England from a revolution. Toplady incorporated it in that great universally loved hymn, "Rock of Ages." Notice this verse:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make me pure.

There it is — twofold deliverance — "save from wrath" by forgiving my transgressions, and "make me pure" by cleansing my innermost nature — the double cure.

The control of the atomic bomb is possible by the elimination of the old Adamic nature. The old Adamic nature can use the new atomic bomb to annihilate the race. Or the old Adamic nature can be cleansed and man can use the new atomic bomb to rejuvenate the race. Atomic power can bring a new day to civilization. Adamic use of atomic power can bring an end to civilization.

Yes, Drew Pearson's article is timely, "Why not try Christianity?" President Truman's Christmas plea is vital — we must solve our problems as he says, "In this time of greatest need," by putting in operation the "teaching of the Sermon on the Mount." True.

But how? You can't just "try Christianity." You can't just resolve to follow the Sermon on the Mount. You can't just say, "I'll forget the past," and resolve to live differently. You must repent of your sinful acts and stop your sinful living. The Reader's Digest carried this pertinent quotation recently, "Repentance was perhaps best defined by a small girl: 'It's to be sorry enough to quit.' "

You must be a Christian before you can successfully "try Christianity." You must have Christ in your heart before you can carry out His ideals. Here is the promise made by God, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This is personal. It is for you.

Our nation — our world — needs God. We need to humble ourselves and seek Him. We must come away from our sinfulness and kneel at the foot of the Cross of Calvary seeking His forgiveness. We need the purifying fire of God's Holy Spirit to burn out of our nature the old Adamic tendencies.

Will we pay the price for vital, soul-transforming, life-changing religion or will we pay the price of complete and terrible destruction by the atomic bomb in the hands of sinful men?

The cleansing of human nature is a personal matter. I must confess my sins. God will forgive me. I must acknowledge my need of inward cleansing. The blood of Christ is available for complete cleansing. Do you believe it? Can you cry out with Phoebe Palmer —

Oh! now I see the crimson wave,
The fountain deep and wide;
Jesus, my Lord, mighty to save,
Points to His wounded side.

I see the new creation rise,
I hear the speaking blood;
It speaks! polluted nature dies!
Sinks 'neath the cleansing flood.

I rise to walk in heaven's own light
Above the world and sin,
With heart made pure, and garments white,
And Christ enthron'd within.

Amazing grace! 'tis heav'n below
To feel the blood applied,
And Jesus, only Jesus know,
My Jesus crucified.

Let us all approach Christ just now. If you need forgiveness, confess your sins to Him. If you need to have that internal, Adamic nature cleansed, make your prayerful plea. His blood can avail for you.