

# Milk & Honey

Vol. XXVII December, 2013 No. 12

*Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ*

## Why So Many?

Robert Gessner

Those who are responsible for the flock are experiencing difficult days because so many of the flock are dropping out, quitting, sitting on the sidelines, or burned out. Many are quitting and looking for places that they may attend that require of them no responsibilities. Others are dropping out of their responsibilities, only attending irregularly, looking to others to carry on without them. Others are sitting on the sidelines and have never become active participants in the work of the assembly. Still others, because of a lack of workers, have burned themselves out and no longer joyfully serve the flock and are looking for ways to escape their workload. Why is this happening? Why are so few really active and so many satisfied to do little or nothing? Obviously, it is the work of the enemy and Satan has cunningly devised ways to multiply the drop outs, quitters, sideliners, and burned out ones. Do you share a concern about this? Do you want to avoid having this happening in your own life? Let us consider some passages from the Word of God that will help us to avoid this massive reaction that is taking place in these last days.

1. Luke 18:1 - "Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and *not faint*." One of the basic reasons that many of us are unaware of the needs of the assembly is that we are not praying for the needs of the assembly. When we pray, we become aware of the needs and often God is able to exercise us to join in and help in meeting these needs. If we are not praying, we become spiritually sluggish and satisfied to remain inactive. We may complain about what is not being done, instead of praying about it. How can God use us to do anything if we are not exercised about it as we pray in His presence? Dropping out of the needs of the assembly is brought about by a failure to drop on our knees before God on behalf of the assembly. Lack of prayer leads to a lack of service.

2. 2 Cor. 4:1 - "Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart (*become faint*)." We must recognize that when we became part of a local New Testament assembly, we received a special ministry or responsibility. If we recognize the preeminence of Christ

in the church and the unhindered ministry of the Holy Spirit, we need to take a firm stand and not back away from these truths. "If the Holy Spirit rules in the Church, then man has no right to interfere, no right to decree and institute ceremonies; for in doing so he is most presumptuously interfering with the divine prerogative. If therefore a man sincerely believes this important truth, his belief will certainly influence his conduct so far that he will feel himself called upon to bear testimony against every system in which this truth is practically denied, by separating from it. However, many who once professed to see this truth, and to act upon it, have since lost confidence in it, and as a consequence have retired from their distinct position, and gone back to those systems from which they had emerged. Many a heart which once cherished high and fond expectations respecting the Church is now bowed down with sorrow and disappointment. Those who professed to see and act upon the truth of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, and other collateral truths, have, to say the least, failed to carry them into practice." (C. H. Mackintosh) Let us hold on to these New Testament truths of the church with all our heart and not back away in these perilous times.

3. 2 Cor. 4:16 - "Therefore we do not lose heart. (do not become discouraged). Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day." As we grow older, it is more tempting than ever to want to quit. Our feelings get hurt because old age and long service causes others to take us for granted or to neglect to be responsive or appreciative. Also, as this verse suggests, our body becomes full of aches and problems, making it more difficult to pursue the work of God. But these factors should make us better servants rather than quitters. To be neglected or unrecognized helps us to serve in humility and to recognize that we are serving the Lord Jesus and not seeking the recognition of others. To have bodily afflictions make us more dependent on Him to give us the strength to carry on. "The Lord knows better than we do the demands that may be made on us, and He graciously strengthens us according to His estimate of those demands. When once a man allows himself to slip aside from the position in which faith would keep him, there is no accounting for the extremes into which he may run. The Christian must make up his mind to meet with nothing but trial and disappointment here." (C. H. Mackintosh). As we grow older the Lord may change our

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## The Wages of Sin

J. Wilbur Chapman

There is no incident that more forcefully illustrates sin's ruin than that connected with the painting of Leonardo Da Vinci's great masterpiece, "The Last Supper." Long and in vain had the artist sought for a model for his Christ. "I must find a young man of pure life," he declared, "before I can get that look on the face I want." At length, his attention was called to a young man who sang in the choir of one of the old churches of Rome, Pietro Bandinelli by name. He was not only a young man of beautiful countenance, but his life was as beautiful as his face. The moment he looked upon this pure, sweet countenance the artist cried out for joy, "At last I have found the face I wanted!" So Pietro Bandinelli sat as the model for his picture of Christ.

Years passed on, and still the great painting, "The Last Supper," was not finished. The eleven faithful apostles had all been sketched on the canvas, and the artist was hunting for a model for his Judas. "I must find a man whose face has hardened and become distorted," he said; "a debased man, his features stamped with the ravages only wicked living and a wicked heart can show". Thus he wandered long in search of his Judas, until one day in the streets of Rome he came upon a wretched creature, a beggar in rags, with a face of such hard, villainous stamp that even the artist was repulsed. But he knew that at last he had found his Judas. So it came about that the beggar, with the repulsive countenance, sat as a model for Judas.

As he was dismissing him, Da Vinci said, "I have not yet asked your name, but I will now." "Pietro Bandinelli," replied the man, looking at him unflinchingly. "I also sat for you as the model for your Christ!" Astonished, overwhelmed by this startling declaration, Da Vinci would not at first believe it, but the proof was at hand, and he had finally to admit that Pietro Bandinelli, he whose fair, sweet face had been the inspiration for his great masterpiece, the face of Christ, had now become so disfigured by the sins of a lifetime that no trace was left of that marvelous beauty which before had been the admiration of men!

"Sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:15). \*

## Business Card Tracts

Spread The Word has printed a number of different Gospel tracts in the size of business cards. They are easy to carry and easy to give away. Titles can be seen on our web site, [www.STW1982.com](http://www.STW1982.com).

## He Shall Feed His Flock

Lloyd Cain

*He shall feed His flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isa 40:11).*

The Lord Himself is the greatest example of the work of the shepherd. Notice that "He shall feed ... gather ... carry... lead ...." There are three pictures suggested in the text. We see a shepherd in his activity feeding the sheep; in his affection picking up and carrying the newborn lambs; and in his attention to the special needs of the sheep. He is sensitive to those with young. What is the greatest need of the sheep? Evidently it is the need for food. They must be kept from starving!

What is the greatest need of the young if they are to be kept from straying? It is the need to be affectionately gathered and carried in the early days. What are the special needs of those with young? Jacob, a shepherd said, "The children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me. If men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die ... I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure" (Gen 33:13-14). Sheep are not to be driven but are to be led. The Lord Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is the perfect example of this (John 10:4). How great is His work as a Shepherd! How clear the example for those who would shepherd the flock. \*

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## Shepherding Conference

The Lord blessed the conference held at Greenwood Hills as men with an evident desire to hear His Word heard messages on a variety of topics. The last message of the day was always centered on the Person of Christ. There were also many times of prayer at which assemblies, individuals, and Gospel work were prayed for. Lord willing, the next conference is scheduled for September 18-20, 2014.

## Prayer & the Prayer Meeting

C. H. Mackintosh (Excerpt compiled by Andy Shelor)

The basis of prayer is set forth in such words as the following: "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). From this passage, and many more of like import, we learn that, in order to have effectual prayer, there must be an obedient heart, an upright mind, a good conscience. If the soul be not in communion with God, how could we possibly look for answers to our prayers? We should be "asking amiss, that we may consume it upon our lusts." How could God, as a Holy Father, grant such petitions?

These, beloved reader, are searching questions. But it is well to be thoroughly searched, especially in reference to prayer. There is a terrible amount of unreality in our prayers, a vast amount of "asking amiss." Hence the want of power and efficacy in our prayers - hence, the formality - the routine - yea, the positive hypocrisy. Our God will have reality; He desireth truth in the inward parts. He is real with us, and He will have us be real with Him. He will have us coming before Him as we really are, and with what we really want.

How often, alas! it is otherwise, both in private and in public! How often are our prayers more like orations than petitions - more like statements of doctrine than utterances of need! It seems, at times, as though we meant to explain principles to God, and give Him a large amount of information.

These are things which cast a withering influence over our prayer meetings, robbing them of their freshness. Those who really know what prayer is attend the prayer meeting in order to pray, not to hear orations, lectures, and expositions from men on their knees. If they want lectures, they can attend the lecture hall, but when they go to the prayer meeting, it is to pray. To them the prayer meeting is the place of expressed need and expected blessing - the place of expressed weakness and expected power. They are not prepared to listen to long preaching prayers, which would be deemed barely tolerable if delivered from the podium, but which are absolutely insufferable in the shape of prayer.

Not infrequently it happens that what we call prayer is not prayer at all, but the fluent utterance of certain known and acknowledged truths and principles, to which one has listened so often that the reiteration becomes tiresome in the extreme. What can be more painful than to hear a man on his knees explaining principles and unfolding doctrines? The question forces itself upon us. "Is the man speaking to God, or to us?" If to God, surely nothing can be more irreverent or profane than to attempt to explain things to Him; but if to us, then it is not prayer at all.

We believe it would impart great earnestness, freshness, glow, depth, reality and power to our prayer meetings were we

to attend with something definite on our hearts, as to which we could invite the fellowship of our brethren. Some of us seem to think it necessary to make one long prayer about all sorts of things - many of them very right and very good, no doubt - but the mind gets bewildered by the multiplicity of subjects. How much better to bring one object before the throne, earnestly urge it, and pause so that the Holy Spirit may lead out others, in like manner, either for the same thing or something else equally definite.

Long prayers are often wearisome; indeed, in many cases they are a positive infliction. It will be said that we must not prescribe any time to the Holy Spirit. True indeed; away from us be the thought! We are simply comparing what we find in Scripture (where their brief pointedness is characteristic - see Matt. 6, John 17, Acts 4:24-30, Eph. 1, 3, etc.) with what we too often find in our prayer meetings [and, we might add, in our breaking of the bread celebrations]. Let it, then, be distinctly borne in mind that "long prayers" are not the rule in Scripture. They are in fact referred to in Mark 12:40 in terms of withering disapproval. Brief, fervent, pointed prayers impart great freshness and interest to the prayer meeting; but on the other hand, as a general rule, long and desultory prayers exert a most depressing [not to mention, sedating] influence upon all.

All this demands our serious consideration. In short, our prayer meetings are often nothing but a dull routine - a cold, mechanical service - something to be gone through, causing the spirit to groan beneath the heavy burden of mere profitless bodily exercise. We speak plainly and strongly. We call upon the whole Church of God, far and wide, to look this great question straight in the face - to look to God about it - to judge themselves about it. Do we not feel the lack of power in all our public reunions? Why those barren seasons at the Lord's table? Why the dullness and feebleness in the celebration of that precious feast which ought to stir the very deepest depths of our renewed being? Why the lack of unction, power, and edification? Why are souls not smitten down under the Word?

Brethren, beloved in the Lord, let us not be satisfied to go on with the present condition of things. Let us seek to get together as one man and prostrate ourselves before the mercy-seat, and perseveringly wait upon our God for the revival of His work, the progress of His gospel, the ingathering and up-building of His beloved people. Let our prayer meetings be really prayer meetings. The prayer meeting ought to be the place where God's people assemble with one accord, to take hold of the very throne of God, to get into the very treasury of heaven for the whole church of God, and for the vineyard of Christ. Such is the true idea of a prayer meeting, if we are to be taught by Scripture. May it be more fully realized amongst the Lord's people everywhere. \*

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*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. Luke 19:10*

**December, 2013**

## Continued from page 1 — Why So Many

may impose limitations to our service, but we should never quit. "Looking away to Jesus....thinking of Him who endured bitter opposition...so that you may not grow weary, losing heart and fainting in your minds." (Heb. 12:2,3)

4. Gal. 6:9 - "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." Too often we quit because we do not see the desired results. We should remember that a farmer never reaps the same day he sows. We may never see the results until we are in heaven. "As we should not excuse ourselves from any part of our duty, so neither should we grow weary in it. There is in all of us too great a proneness to this; we are very apt to lag and tire in duty, to fall off from it, particularly that part of it to which the apostle has here a special regard, that of doing good to others. If we hold on and hold out in well-doing, though our reward may be delayed, yet it will surely come, and will be so great as to make us an abundant recompense for all our pains and constancy." (Matthew Henry) Remember: Not seeing the results does not mean that there are no results.

"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and *not be weary*, they shall walk and *not faint* or become tired." (Isa. 40:31).

Remember: We can't do anything without the Lord  
We can't do everything; others need to help  
We can't please everyone, but we can please the Lord.

**"But as for; you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. (But continue in well-doing without weakening)"**

2 Thess. 3:13

## \* \* \* \* \*

### 25th Anniversary

In December we will be remembering the Lord's blessings over the 25 years of the York Bible Study. Several brethren will be going back over some of topics considered in the earlier years. Sessions start at 10AM and ends by 3PM.

**Because a special lunch will be provided it would be appreciated if those planning to attend would send us an email or give us a call. (Email and phone information provided below.)**

## York Bible Study Program

### September 2013 - May 2014

Date	Topic	Teacher
December 14	25th Anniversary	Several
January 11	OT Appearances of Christ	Mark Kolchin
February 8	Basic Church Truths	Mike Attwood
March 8	Messianic Prophecy	Bob Spender
April 12	Fruit of the Spirit	Mark Shelley
May 10	Today's Dangers	John Gordon

## Milk & Honey Information

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