

THE ASSEMBLY MESSENGER

Proclaiming the Timeless Truth of the Church to a New Generation of Believers

Volume 02-58

Dear Reader,

The first article for this issue is from the 2002 *Scripture Almanac*, a publication of *Moments With The Book*, Bedford PA, written by brother Paul L. Canner, and used with permission of both. I felt it meshed in so well with the subject of the last Newsletter on *Why things happen to Christians*, that it should be the opening article in this issue, so I thank the brothers for allowing its publication.

May it be our desire to be more conformed to the image of God's dear Son. Incidentally, *image* has the thought of *representation*: we while still here on earth should be the moral representation, the expression, the visible manifestation, of God's dear Son. Such will be fully true in glory. Let's now see what brother Canner has to say.

"All Things Work Together for Good"

The phrase in our title is often quoted apart from its context. But it does not apply to everyone in every situation. The verse goes on, "... to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

A few years ago a Jewish rabbi wrote a book entitled, "When Bad Things Happen to Good People." Some Christians rephrase this title to ask the question, At the same time this is not simply a doctrine about something that is far off in the future. It describes God's purpose in the "all things" that "work together for good to them who love God." Those elements in our lives that, on the surface, seem to be bad, irritating, troublesome, painful, sad, etc. are given to us by God for the purpose of helping us now, here on earth, to become more conformed to the image of Christ. If this is a blessing that we will some day enjoy in heaven, then it stands to reason that the more we approach this state of conformity to Christ down here, the more we will begin to taste the joys of heaven while awaiting "the coming of the Lord" to take us to be with Himself (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). This serves to put all of our trials and troubles in the proper perspective: they are part of God's school for us; they are one of God's means of working out in measure His eternal purposes in our lives even now

"Why do bad things happen to God's People?" There is a simple, two-word answer to this question, based on Romans 8:28: "*They don't!*" Hebrews 12:11 explains that "*no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*" So when seemingly bad things are happening to us, it really means that God is up to something ... and that He is up to something *good!*

"*All things work together for good ... to them who are the called according to His purpose.*" What is God's purpose for His people? We find the answer in the next verse. We often read Romans 8:29 as if it is beginning a new subject. But verses 28 and 29 are joined together by the word "For" (or "Because"): "*For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.*" Here is God's eternal purpose for His blood-bought children — that we should "*be conformed to the image of His Son.*" This is unconditional, true of every believer in Christ. Every last one of us believers, when we are caught up to the glory, will be conformed to the image of Christ in the sense of being delivered from our sin nature and made perfectly holy and morally like Christ. "*We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is*" (1 John 3:2).

while we await the day of the completion of His purposes.

The "all things" will only work together for good when we "love God" in the sense of seeing His holy and wise hand in those things. If we chafe under the trial, complaining about it like the Israelites (1 Corinthians 10:10), trying to escape it like David (1 Samuel 21:10-15; 27:1), or seeking vengeance like Simeon and Levi (Genesis 34:25-31; 49:5-7; Romans 12:19-21), we will not get the good out of it. Only "those who are exercised thereby" — those who allow God to change them to be more like His dear Son — will come out of the trial experiencing "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11).

The horrible events of September 11, 2001 — the terrorist attacks in New York City and at the

Pentagon — force the following questions upon us: Why did God allow the deaths of so many “innocent” people? Couldn’t He have thwarted the efforts of the hijackers? What good could possibly come from such a tragedy? I suggest that God may have allowed it as a wake-up call to a nation that has been rapidly turning away from Him. Here is how Jesus answered people’s questions about the eighteen persons killed when the tower in Siloam fell: Do you think “that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:4-5).

Paul L. Canner

Note: Brother Canner has published a very good tract on the World Trade Center disaster, with some of the thoughts similar to the above paragraph, entitled *The Twin Towers*, available at gospel-lit@mwtb.org or 814-623-8737.

Our second article is also from a publication, this time entitled *Truth and Testimony*, published six
The new man (Eph.4:24; Col.3:10) is what believers are “in Christ.” They are “a new creation” (2 Cor.5:17). Note that Christ is nowhere said to be “*the* new man,” for we read as to this, “which was *created* according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph.4:24). Christ is not a creature! But it is quite correct to say that the new man is Christ *characteristically*.

One new man (Eph.2:15) embraces all believers from among Gentiles and Jews.

The inner man or **inward man** (Rom.7:22; 2 Cor.4:16; Eph.3:16) is what is formed in the soul by the sovereign operation of God in new birth. It is formed by the activity of a divine Agent — the Holy Spirit — who uses a divine instrument, the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, which lives and abides forever.

The outer or **outward man** (2 Cor.4:16) is what we are naturally and externally.

The hidden man (1 Pet.3:4) is what has been wrought in us by new birth: a new being. The graces of this hidden person of the heart are to be ornamented by obedience to the Word of God.

times annually in England, but available by subscription in North America by calling 815-933-0096. The article is used by permission from the Volume 5, No. 4, 1999 edition. It was also published in *Precious Things* magazine a number of years ago.

The New Testament writers used a number of expressions as to *men* which we have a tendency to either read right past, thus missing what the Holy Spirit has for us, or we mix them up, thinking they are equivalent. We are indebted to brother Norman Anderson, now with the Lord, for his clear explanation of some of these terms. Let’s see what he has to tell us.

Some “Men” in the Epistles

Our old man (Rom.6:6) has reference to all that believers were in the flesh [our fallen, sinful nature], but they have died to that, in the death of Christ.

The old man (Eph.4:22; Col.3:9) is man in general, under the headship of fallen Adam, or “sin in the flesh.” It is what we were in fallen Adam.

The natural man (1 Cor.2:14) is the unbeliever. He is devoid of any work of God in him and consequently is not born of God or sealed with the Holy Spirit.

The spiritual man (1 Cor.2:15) is a believer, not only sealed with the Holy Spirit but walking according to the Spirit. He is thus *spiritual*.

The carnal man (1 Cor. 3:1, 3-4) is a believer walking according to the flesh.

The first man (1 Cor. 15:47) is the order or rank or condition in which man was created.

The Second Man (1 Cor. 15:47) is the order or rank or condition of our Lord’s manhood — heavenly, holy, sinless.

The first man Adam (1 Cor. 15:45) is Adam himself, the fallen head of a fallen race.

The Last Adam (1 Cor.15:45) is Christ, the Head of a race taking character from Himself.

The earthy man or **man of dust** (1 Cor.15:48) shows that the origin of the first man was “dust” — “for dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Gen.3:19). His character is commensurate with his origin: “dust.”

The Heavenly Man (1 Cor.15:48) shows the origin of “the Second Man” is “from heaven.” His character is spiritual and heavenly, and this is the character that belongs to all who are of His order.

Let me use a quote from *The Bible Treasury*. “When the Spirit of God calls our Lord *The Second Man*, it is as good as telling us that all other men are but the reproduction of the first man.” Our Lord Jesus Christ is different, distinct and distinguished from the first man. Truly Man — spirit, soul and body — He has superseded and thus displaced the first man entirely.

Our Lord has been raised from among the dead by the glory of the Father. Having accomplished While Scripture teaches that “our *old man* is crucified with Him” it never teaches that *the first man* has been crucified. Human relationships belong, not to the order of the *old man*, but to that of *the first man*, however sadly they have been marred by the features of the *old man*. These relationships will continue for believers until our Lord comes for us, or until death intervenes. While in trusting Christ, we “have put off the *old man* with his deeds, and have put on the *new man*” (Col.3:9-10), we will not put off *the first man* until we leave this responsible sphere.

Morally, we are now of the order of the *Second Man*, and the Spirit of God, occupying us with Christ in glory, produces in us those features which, in Christ, always delight the heart of God. It is our privilege so to respond to this work of the Spirit, that we introduce into the relationships of everyday life the graces of the *Heavenly Man*. Shortly we shall be with Him in the glory; then we shall certainly and forever be done with the order of the first man.

Believers are:
Heavenly in origin (1 Cor.15:47)
Heavenly in character (1 Cor.15:48)
Heavenly in destiny (1 Cor.15:49)

“And as we have borne the image of the one made of dust, we shall bear also the image of the heavenly one” (1 Cor.15:49, JND).

Norman Anderson (slightly edited)

The third article on the prophecy meeting or open-ministry meeting, so-called, according to 1 Corinthians 14:29-32, was published in the *Lord is*

redemption by His sacrificial death for sin at the cross, He has ascended up where He was before. Being by the right hand of God exalted, He has sent down the Holy Spirit to indwell His own, whom He has left in the world, to be for them in His place, “another Comforter.” Also, as the *Last Adam*, He has given them life in association with Himself as glorified. Thus He has a company here in the world, from where He has gone, in which, by the Spirit, He is reproducing His life with the beautiful moral traits which belong to it. He is “the Heavenly One”; His own are “the heavenly ones.”

All like Thee, for Thy glory, like Thee Lord,
Object supreme of all adored.

Near calendar, 4-16-00. This daily-meditation calendar is available each year through *Believers Bookshelf* (USA and Canada) in daily tear-off sheets and in book form, and is highly recommended. Now let’s see what brother Mawson has to say.

Having come together for ministry we must recognize, not gifted men and *our* time of profit, but that the *Lord* is there, and the Holy Spirit. If the Lord’s presence is realized, songs of praise will rise from glad hearts to Him, quiet expectation will mark all present, and He will not disappoint those who wait upon Him. The ministry given will not be something laboriously prepared for the occasion, but it will be fresh and spontaneous because it is from the Lord for the moment. Words of that character will be better than ten thousand drawn from memory, for they will be the fresh flowing forth of living water, not the pumping up out of a stagnant pool.

When should these meetings be held? In some places they are held once a month, or once a quarter or once a year. Is it not clear from 1 Corinthians 14 that such meetings were *regular* meetings, no less often than those for the taking of the Lord’s Supper? They were not special occasions held only when a Paul or Apollos could be present. If there is faith and power for the gathering together of 1 Corinthians 11, why not for that of 1 Corinthians 14?

Much failure evidently marked this meeting at Corinth. But the apostle did not tell the Corinthians to cease to hold it, but instructed them how to conduct themselves in it. Chapter 14 is the God-breathed Scriptures for our instruction also. It is specially said to be the commandment of the Lord. It would be a sad thing if it became a dead or useless chapter because of our lack of faith.

J.T. Mawson

Amen!