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“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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DON'T EVER GIVE UP A Challenge To All Caregivers

Part Two

By Bob Spurlin

EVALUATING MY CAREGIVER

This shut-in can only speak for himself, but there are times when my pain, discomfort, and stress will be more than one can bear. To hear those say that he or she has never complained about being sick or shut-in is questionable having visited such individuals over a thirty-year period as a minister of the gospel. Such an attitude defies soundness of logic. It seems that at times all members of the human family would have a weak moment and would express some negative thoughts. This preacher can only say that it has been my objective to keep such complaints and negative thoughts at a minimum. My caregiver in the backdrop of the last eight years has faced various obstacles in handling the disappointments and regrets linked to such a disease. My caregiver has been able to handle the peaks and valleys with great faith and courage. She is able to take the most unpleasant and challenging circumstance and transform it to an experience of hope and stability. As much as possible in coping with this particular disease my caregiver makes such an existence manageable. Her glowing presence, enchanting smile, and lifter of my spirits gets me through one day at a time. Yes, my caregiver is the hero of my life, my wife—Beverly.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE CAREGIVER

Putting together the material in this book made it necessary to call on various people for advice and input. This chapter addresses the subject of caregivers and the single caregiver that I know best in the world is my personal caregiver, Beverly—my wife. My wife composed the material below and her analysis and deep feelings on the subject adds much to this section. She is my sunshine and the apple of my eye and always makes my day a little brighter. Thanks, Beverly, for faithfully standing by my side during this time of challenge. *(The remainder of this article was written by Beverly.Ed)*

My husband rarely complains to his caregiver, however I know his pain and discomfort is greater than he expresses. I can sense it in his eyes and face with each passing day. We have been a couple for nearly thirty-three years as husband and wife and to see your spouse confined to bed is difficult to grasp. One day he was healthy, active, and energetic in all of his duties. The preacher conducting our wedding ceremony so long ago asked us to repeat the vows, “For better or worse, in sickness and in health.” Those vows meant something to me and in good or bad times this spouse and caregiver provides the care needed for my husband’s daily existence.

A caregiver misses the joy of being a couple. When going to a restaurant to get “Carry out orders” for my husband and I to eat, it does not begin to substitute for sitting together enjoying a good meal and exchanging conversation with each other. While waiting on the meal preparation this caregiver could not help but look around and see other couples sitting together, gazing at each other with love, and only wishing that it was my husband and I.

One of the joys missed is the physical intimacy with my bedridden husband. There are many basics included in the marriage union: (1) emotional, (2) spiritual, and (3) physical. Each ingredient is of equal importance and the caregiver must learn to cope with the insufficiency and absence of the needs unfulfilled because of the invalid state of the spouse. There are many fundamental items that one can do to compensate for those because of a disabled state. Giving reassurance and comforting words of love will fill the emptiness normally taken for granted. Paul writes, “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies; He that loveth his wife loveth himself” (Eph. 5:28). Wives have an equal responsibility to their husband to love them as they would their own bodies. The closest physical bond known between those in the human family is the husband-wife union; it is little wonder that God used this union to describe the intimacy between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:22-33).

My spouse was always willing to help me with projects connected to my job in the school where I work.

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TED J. CLARKEEDITOR
Phone(870) 625-3217
Fax(870) 625-3137
E-Mailcocfcgn@ozarks.com

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This caregiver misses the instances where my husband would read a story to a group of students asking and answering questions of the children. His skill as a communicator and preacher served him well in such tasks mentioned. The last time he took part in such occasions was in his wheelchair and the students were so engaged in the story that Bob's disabled state was of no concern to them. Some of my second graders still ask about my husband and what his condition is like.

As a caregiver, taking care of my spouse has been a duty fully accepted, knowing that he would do the same for me if my health declined. So often, we reflect on our trips that we made as a family to the Great Smoky Mountain national park, Yellowstone, or just visiting friends that we have known in past years. Those trips were so memorable and filled with exciting and remarkable events that they have become permanently etched in our memory and will never fade away.

For nearly eight years multiple sclerosis devastated my spouse with a disease that has altered our lives

forever. The first twenty-five years of our marriage my husband was a partner and willingly helped me as a preacher's wife in so many ways that challenged us both. He was willing to perform household duties like vacuuming, washing the dishes, mopping the floors, and often would manage the washer and drier. My spouse never felt superior when aiding me with domestic duties in the house, or chores outside with mowing and manicuring the lawn, helping me with planting fruit trees or flowers. All of these joint efforts brought us even closer together.

These are some of my memories and thoughts about my life as a caregiver. There will always be ups and downs for all married couples and this wife and caregiver feels blessed that she can still exchange memories with her husband that only we can share together. **We will never give-up**, but keep persevering regardless of the difficulties that visit us from day-to-day. Paul writes, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengthenth me" (Phil. 4:13).

2101 Glenwood Dr.
Hartselle, AL 35640
Phone (256) 773-0295
E-mail: PRECHTEACH@aol.com

[Editor's Note: The above article is from Bob's latest book, entitled, **Don't Ever Give Up!** It is a marvelous collection of faith building and soul lifting chapters to help us with our daily needs. Proceeds from the sale of Bob's books help him in his ever increasing expenses in dealing with his disability. **Don't Ever Give Up!** is available from him postpaid for \$11.50, at the address above. Why not order several and give them to friends or family, or members in your church that are suffering. Also, send Bob and Beverly a card and encourage them!

– Ted J. Clarke]

**THE MILK
AND THE MEAT**

By Richard England, Sr.
(Editor, FCGN 1962-1967)

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:12-14). The inspired writer of the book of Hebrews powerfully proclaims the obligation of all Christians to increase in ability to understand more difficult and complex ideas that have to do with God, Christ, and the revelation of the Holy Spirit. God does not expect any one to know everything in a moment or a day. Nevertheless, growth is required. Those who do not grow are not following the plain, simple teaching of the Bible (2 Peter 3:18).

There is no shame in starting out as a babe in Christ. After all, when we first become Christians we have just been born again (John 3:3, 5) and entered a new life (Romans 6:4) as new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17). As babes we need milk. But, with the passing of time, we should become mature in Christ and ready for meat. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able" (1 Corinthians 3:1-2). The people at Corinth were said to be carnal (worldly) because they had not grown as they ought. Their shortcoming was a lack of fundamental religious and social understanding and practice evidenced by the conditions that prevailed in the church. "Now I

besech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (1 Corinthians 3:3).

Those to whom the book of Hebrews was written failed to get any further than the first principles of God's message. They were not ready to see and appreciate the in-depth meaning of the parallels between Melchisedec and Jesus Christ. Yet, it is of great significance that in chapter 7 the writer proceeds directly with the lesson for which he had just said they were not ready. Isn't that interesting? The obvious reason for doing so is that he intended for them to get busy and do some growing right away, so they could comprehend the ideas expressed and implied in what he said. He wanted them to know why the law had changed (and had to change), how Jesus was like Melchisedec, and why Jesus is the Perfect Priest. Such understanding was, and is, far beyond the reach of babes.

The entire scheme of redemption which was conceived in the mind of God, brought about in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and revealed by the Holy Spirit is unfolded in the pages of the Bible. Those who know only the first principles of the doctrine of Christ should desire to know more and more of the wonderful promises of God concerning strength, happiness, fulfillment and accomplishment in this life as well as the tearless wonder and grandeur in the life yet to be.

Regular Bible study at home, classes arranged and conducted by the church, and even formal school settings for Bible subjects help gain greater knowledge of the Word which results in increased faith in God, Christ, and the world to come.

Include some "meat" in your diet!

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The church of Christ in your area has a number of **free** Bible Study services to offer you. If you have a desire to study the Scriptures to come to an understanding of God's will for you, or to make certain that you know what to do to be saved and remain saved, we will be delighted to sit down with you in your own home and study the Bible with you. If you would like to study through a Bible Correspondence Course, we will gladly lead you through such a course by mail. If you desire a Bible tract on a particular subject, we will do our best to locate material on the subject you request and get that to you. If you have questions about any of the articles that appear in **Fulton County Gospel News** or any other Bible topic, we will do our best to give you an answer from the Bible. Of course, there are no charges for any of these services offered by churches of Christ.

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– Mammoth Spring Church of Christ

"DO NOT BE LIKE YOUR FATHERS AND YOUR BRETHREN"

By Robert Ball

If we notice any pattern in the history of the Israelites during the period of the divided kingdom it is that they have their spiritual ups and downs. We may also observe that they were inclined to follow the reigning king's lead in this regard. This resulted in their frequent refusal to heed the word of God that was proclaimed to them by His prophets (e.g. Amos 7:12-13; Ezekiel 3:4-9; Jeremiah 5:30-31; 6:16-17; Isaiah 30:8-11).

The kings of Israel (the northern kingdom) were more consistent than the kings of Judah (the southern kingdom) in that all of its kings (every single one of them) did evil in the sight of the Lord God of Israel. Judah had many kings who did evil in the sight of the Lord as well, but it also had some good kings who did right in God's sight. Two examples of kings who did right in God's sight are Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:1-20:21) and Josiah (2 Kings 22:1-23:30).

Hezekiah restored temple worship in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 29:20-36). He also sent runners throughout Judah and Israel with letters from him urging the people to return to the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. He sent letters saying they should come to the temple of Jerusalem and keep the Passover to the Lord God of Israel (2 Chronicles 30:1-20).

It was in these letters that Hezekiah says something that I believe is important for God's people to remember. There is a lesson that Christians today may learn from Hezekiah's words and it is an encouraging lesson. He said, "And do not be like your fathers and your brethren, who trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, so that He gave them up to desolation, as you see" (2 Chronicles 30:7).

As I read this verse of scripture I thought about the Lord's church

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today. The church is a great brotherhood and we are to love it (1 Peter 2:17). Many of us who love the Lord and His church are concerned about the direction in which some congregations are being led. It is evident to anyone who can read the Bible with an honest, unbiased heart that error is being taught and accepted by many in our brotherhood. There are indeed false teachers among us (2 Peter 2:1).

Surely each of us will agree that it would be wonderful if false teachers were never among God's people. But the Bible clearly teaches that they will enter in among us. The false teachers among God's people today are not the first to occupy this place. Neither is it the first time some of God's people have chosen to hear and believe the message of such teachers. Hezekiah asks the Israelites not to be like their fathers and brethren who had listened to false prophets and turned from God's law. In his plea Hezekiah also mentioned some of the forefathers who had lived faithful to God. He mentioned Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (2 Chronicles 30:6). We too can find strength and encouragement from those in the past who chose to remain faithful to Christ even in the face of great trials brought about by false doctrine.

As much as we regret anyone's decision to leave "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), we may find encouragement in the fact that there are also those who choose to abide in it. Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed" (John 8:31).

As much as it pains us to see brothers and sisters in Christ depart from the faith it should not surprise us that some do. According to Paul the Holy Spirit said it would happen. "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:1-2). Paul was informing

Timothy of what would happen later in his lifetime. It happened in the days of Timothy just as Paul prophesied (e.g. Hebrews 6:4-6), and it continues to happen in the church today.

My point is simply this, let us pray for the church everywhere making request of the heavenly Father that our brothers and sisters in Christ will choose to abide in the faith. But let us also find comfort and encouragement that even if some choose to depart from the faith, all will not. Let us not be like our fathers (i.e. Christians of the past) and some brethren today who choose to depart from the faith. Let us rather be like our fathers and brethren who choose to abide faithful to the Lord's way.

7700 West 20th Avenue
Hialeah, Florida 33016
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GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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