

# When Strength is a Disadvantage

By Gary Henry

"And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

NORMALLY, WE THINK OF OUR OWN ABILITY AS AN ADVANTAGE. Whatever we think we need to do, we'd rather be able to do it than not be able. We cringe at the thought of personal insufficiency, of coming up short. But in our relationship to God and in our work in His kingdom, there is a sense in which our own personal strength can be a disadvantage. "Natural strength is often as great a handicap as natural weakness" (Hannah Hurnard).

Whenever there is something that we can do and we know that we can do it, we are tempted to believe that our strength is our own: this is OUR ability, WE have learned how to do this thing, and so forth. We begin to feel independent and self-sufficient, and our need for God recedes into the background. It is strange but true, the more we think of the things God has made us able to do, the less we pay attention to the God who made us able to do them.

To Paul, God said, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul, like all of us, probably enjoyed days when he felt adequate and sufficient to do what had to be done. But in truth, God could do a good deal more with Paul on the

other days — when Paul felt weak rather than strong. So God gave Paul a "thorn in the flesh" to multiply the number of days when he would feel weak. Those would be the days when he was most conscious of his dependence on God's help and therefore the days of his greatest usefulness.

When a "thorn in the flesh" makes its painful appearance in our own lives, our natural response is to want it to go away as quickly as possible. Yet if it is God's will for us to continue to deal with it, our attitude needs to be the same as Paul's: "I take pleasure in infirmities ... For when I am weak, then I am strong."

"God uses chronic pain and weakness, along with other afflictions, as his chisel for sculpting our lives. Felt weakness deepens our dependence on Christ for strength each day. The weaker we feel, the harder we lean. And the harder we lean, the stronger we grow spiritually, even while our bodies waste away. To live with your "thorn" uncomplainingly — that is, sweet, patient, and free in heart to love and help others, even though every day you feel weak — is true sanctification" (J. I. Packer).



# The Auburn Beacon



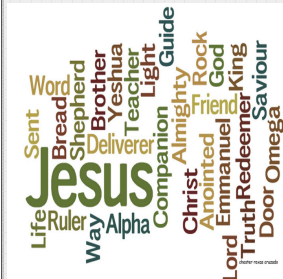
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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

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## Abiding in the Doctrine

By James R. Cope



**Thoughts to Ponder**  
Live near to God, and all things will appear little to you in comparison with eternal realities.

Some who have had a great deal to say about "fellowship" have sought to lessen the force of **II John 9-11** by giving it a meaning out of harmony both with its context and other plain Bible teaching. The passage reads:

*"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed: for he that biddeth him God-speed is a partaker of his evil deeds."*

**Position Proves Too Much:**

Brethren who believe that everybody ever baptized for remission of sins ought to be in full fellowship with each other tell us that the "doctrine" of **vss. 9 and 10** refers to "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" of **vs. 7**. The absurdity of such an interpretation is seen in its consequences. This position would mean that he that abideth in the "doctrine", i.e., "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh", "hath both the Father and the Son." This conclusion forces the position that any who acknowledge the deity of Jesus or regard Him as God's Son have fellowship with the Father and Son and with one another. Since there are many who have never obeyed the gospel -- have never been baptized for remission of sins -- yet who believe "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh", they must be in fellowship with all who have! But this is too much for and unacceptable to these brethren because they draw the line of fellowship at "baptism for remission of sins." Some of the most able defenders of the Scripture teaching on the deity of Jesus have been men who never obeyed the gospel. Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists and Roman Catholics can be numbered by the

thousands who believe "that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." Then why not fellowship them? The proof test of these liberals does not mention baptism. Why, then, draw the line of fellowship at baptism?

Everybody knows that one cannot deny the deity of Jesus and be saved, but a mere acknowledgement of His deity does not guarantee salvation. "Among the chief rulers also many believed on Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (**John 12:42,43**). Were these "chief rulers" saved? Certainly they recognized His deity, i.e., "that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." Then how could they, if living today, or their kind who do live now, be withheld "fellowship?"

The strained interpretation these men place upon the passage under consideration sounds a great deal like denominational preachers' use of passages which mention that we are saved by faith and from which they seek to establish the doctrine of salvation by "faith only." denominationalists do this to avoid the force of other passages which teach the necessity of being baptized or doing what God commands. These liberalists on "fellowship" among us seek to confine the "doctrine of Christ" to His coming "in the flesh" rather than to the entire New Testament teaching for the same reason, i.e. there are numerous precepts within the "doctrine" taught by Christ through His apostles which show obligation of Christians to "receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed" who "abideth not in the doctrine" taught by Christ through His apostles. The deity of Jesus is that which gives credibility to His authority for His claim to "all authority in heaven and on earth" grows out of and rests upon His deity, but multiplied

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Sick			
Sam Cox (Friend of Anna Stallings)	Owen Mauldin (Seth and Summer Mauldin's Son)	Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey's dad)	Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	David Hartsell (Holly and Brad's Father)	Kate Miller (Daughter of Brandon and Erin Miller)
Emma Hettinger (William Herd's Mother)	Neal May (Manna Jones' Mother)	Roger Whatley (Daphene Whatley's son)	Andrew Hagewood (Friend of Sarah Norman)
Betty Bradford	Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather)	Danny Weldon (Rusty Weldon's brother)	Sandra Qadeer (Rafia Qadeer's mother)
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Meredith NeSmith (Jessica Anderson's Cousin)	Emily Stallings (Anna's sister)	Madi Wise (Friend of the Robert's)
Marty Meeks, Russell Dickerson (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Joe Perkins (Scott Perkin's Dad)	Toni and William Herd	

July Birthdays
3 - Nathan Rouse
6 - Nathan Bradshaw
6 - Mac Searcy
11 - Kay White
11 - Hannah Alexander
11 - Clint Stagner
12 - Aurie Adams
14 - Laurel Jerkins
15 - Bradley Seymore
25 - Yvette Rouse
28 - Jacob Bradshaw

News and Notes
☒ - Laura Weldon had successful surgery and is recovering at home!
☒ - Tom Davis, Walker's uncle, has lung cancer and will have surgery on July 15.
☒ - Joshua Carter will be speaking tonight.
☒ - Ryan Hasty will begin working with the University church on August 12. We are thankful to have another experience and capable worker with us!
☒ - We are expecting between 30-40 new students with us this fall. Let us be praying for them and be making plans to connect and encourage them on their arrival.

**Elders**  
Walker Davis  
(334) 703-0050  
Larry Rouse  
(334) 734-2133

**SCHEDULE OF SERVICES**  
Sunday  
Bible Class ..... 9:30 AM  
Worship ..... 10:20 AM  
Evening Worship ..... 6:00 PM  
**Wednesday**  
Bible Classes ..... 7:00 PM  
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thousands have been convinced of His deity who rejected His authority for "he that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself so to walk, even as He walked" (I John 2:4-6). "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). There must be walking as He also walked, there must be walking "in the light as He is in the light" for the "fellowship" which God approved to exist, and this walking and this fellowship obviously involve more than abiding in the doctrine "that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh."

#### Connecting Scriptures:

This is not all. The apostle John makes a direct connection between walking "after His commandments" in vs. 8 and abiding "in the doctrine of Christ" in vs. 9. In vs. 6, he says, "And this is love, that ye walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it." The commandment "heard from the beginning" is clearly "that ye walk after His commandments." Obedience to His commandments admits recognition of His authority, but there were deceivers who sought to destroy faith in the deity of Jesus by denying "that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh"; hence, John's admonition concerning Christ was to urge the disciples not to be led into unbelief by these "deceivers" whom he also identifies as "anti-christ" (vs. 7).

It is likely that John had in mind the Great Commission wherein the Lord had said to teach those baptized "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 18:20). If so, it was the "great salvation" of Hebrews 2:3 which "began to be spoken by the Lord" and was "heard" by Paul, John, and the other apostles from the time it began to be spoken and which "the elect lady and her children" (vs. 1) had "heard from the beginning" of their own contact with gospel teachers.

The force of John's reasoning then is this: if it be not admitted that Jesus is divine, His authority and hence obedience to His commandments are useless; thus the apostle's exhortation in verse 8 "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward", followed by the declaration of verse 9 concerning transgressing and abiding "not in the doctrine of Christ." In other words, if it be denied that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" there is no basis in fact for obeying His commandments, but since "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" and has thus established His authority and right to issue commandments, disciple need to obey Him implicitly in everything He teaches that they may have "both the Father and the Son" and "receive a full reward."

Paul pursues a similar vein of thought in I Corinthians 15:58 involving the practical aspects of the resurrection of the dead. It is in view of the resurrection of Christ which vouchsafes the Christian's resurrection that he exhorted, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as

ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." John reasons that since "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" Christians should abide in His teaching.

#### Identity Of "The Doctrine":

But this is not all yet. There are numerous passages which teach the absolute necessity of saints abiding in the "doctrine of Christ", "the apostles' doctrine" ... the doctrine taught by Christ through the apostles. That the two are identical is readily discerned from the following passages. Nobody understands "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42) to mean the doctrine about the apostles yet it may be properly rendered "the doctrine of the apostles." The apostles were "ambassadors for Christ" to whom God "committed the word of reconciliation" (II Corinthians 5:19,20). The "word of reconciliation" was the gospel. It involves more than the coming of Christ in the flesh (see I Corinthians 15:1-4).

Acts 13:7 says Sergius Paulus "desired to hear the Word of God" but 13:12 declares he was "astonished at the doctrine of the Lord." Was he astonished that Jesus Christ had "come in the flesh?" The Jewish council said to the apostles, "Did we not straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine" (Acts 5:28). These rulers understood the apostles' "doctrine" to be identical with their "teaching" by Christ's authority. Paul's charge in Romans 16:17 is on the same point: "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." (This is precisely the word used in II John 9,10). Romans 16:18 shows the "good words and fair speeches" of these trouble makers to be the cause of the "divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine", not that Christ had come in the flesh only but the commands He had given through them. "For", says Paul, "your obedience is come abroad unto all men."

Finally, it is singular indeed that not once in the entire New Testament is the word translated "doctrine" in II John 9 ever made to mean the substance of the teaching, but, on the contrary, without exception it refers to the act of teaching. Twenty-nine times the word occurs in the text and twenty-nine times, whether translated "doctrine" or "teaching", it signifies the act, not the substance. Another word is used by the Holy Spirit when the substance of the "doctrine" is intended.

These heralds of fellowship need to get passages which will justify their position if they intend to take in everybody who will be "taken in" by them. II John 9-11 denies them the very plea they make for fellowship. This being true it is not difficult to understand why they seek to "explain away" its obvious import. Such has ever been and shall continue to be the course of false teachers. - Preceptor Vol 1, No. 6, , April, 1952



# When a Young Person Grows Old

By Mark K. White

Unless thwarted by the Lord's return, or an "untimely" death, all young people will eventually grow old. Regardless of how many creams and rinses are used, the aging process takes its toll on most members of the human family. Aging is an irreversible part of life, for if you live at all, you get older. The curse of our generation is an inordinate preoccupation with youth. No one wants to be old. At least, no one wants to look old. People do not mind feeling old as much as they detest looking old. But while the human family may take such a grim view of aging, the Bible does not so regard the aged. In fact, a special and significant honor is bestowed on the "hoary head" (Leviticus 19:32; Proverbs 16:31). God enjoins us to "rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man." And "a silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness."

When a young man grows old, there are some definite changes which take place. Solomon gives a detailed description of the aging process in Ecclesiastes 12:1-7. Old age is called the "difficult days" in verse one. These days of difficulty are brought through hampering physical maladies which make it hard to really enjoy living. When our hands are racked with arthritis; the legs cease to carry our weight; our teeth are few and brittle; and our eyes grow dim, it is a "difficult" day indeed (verse 3). Even worse, the slightest of noises awakens us and robs our tired bodies of needed rest. Our ability to make melody with a clear, strong voice is gone (verse 4). And we are now frightened easily by heights and are more prone to worry about the dangers in our path. Sexually, we are either powerless or completely devoid of desire. Our physical strength wanes, and even the weight of a "grasshopper" is a burden too heavy (verse 5). In the difficult days of old age, the "silver cord" (nerves / spinal cord) is loosened and the "golden bowl" (brain) is broken, and senility takes hold. The heart and circulatory system is "shattered" and "broken" and death is not far behind (verses 6 and 7). A more complete and graphic description of what happens when a young man grows old has never been penned! But Solomon was not writing to an old man about something he was already experiencing in his

While we may think the young deserve a chance to have their fling with life and settle down to spiritual things later, Solomon teaches just the opposite. In fact, age may work against us in our struggle to shun the world and obey God. And when we look back on a youth misspent — what a sad, empty, haunting gaze it will be.

aging body. There would be little value in telling an old man that his dusty frame was returning to the earth. He would know this without being told, being in the midst of the process himself. Solomon addresses the young who are not yet to this point of life. He said to the young, "**Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, 'I have no pleasure in them!'**"

Solomon addresses the young man before he wastes the precious time of his youth on frivolity. He is hoping that the young man will listen to wisdom and do something constructive with his days of brightness and strength. Solomon urges that the young "remember" the Creator, but this involves more than a mere mental recall of God. Consider what God did when He remembered Hannah (1 Samuel 1:19). God did something for her. He gave her a son. Likewise, the young are to remember God by serving Him with the strength and vitality of their youth. This will also keep the young man from looking back on his youth with regret, as he remembers how he forgot God and wasted his time with vanities.

To be sure, it does not miraculously become easier to serve God as we get older. In fact, there is no time in life when worldly things automatically lose their appeal. Solomon advises that we get ourselves on target early in life. He labors to get us to see that it is ridiculous to put off commitment to God until later in life. While we may think the young deserve a chance to have their fling with life and settle down to spiritual things later, Solomon teaches just the opposite. In fact, age may work against us in our struggle to shun the world and obey God. And when we look back on a youth misspent — what a sad, empty, haunting gaze it will be.

