

# Things I Have Not Learned

1ST GRADE CLASS



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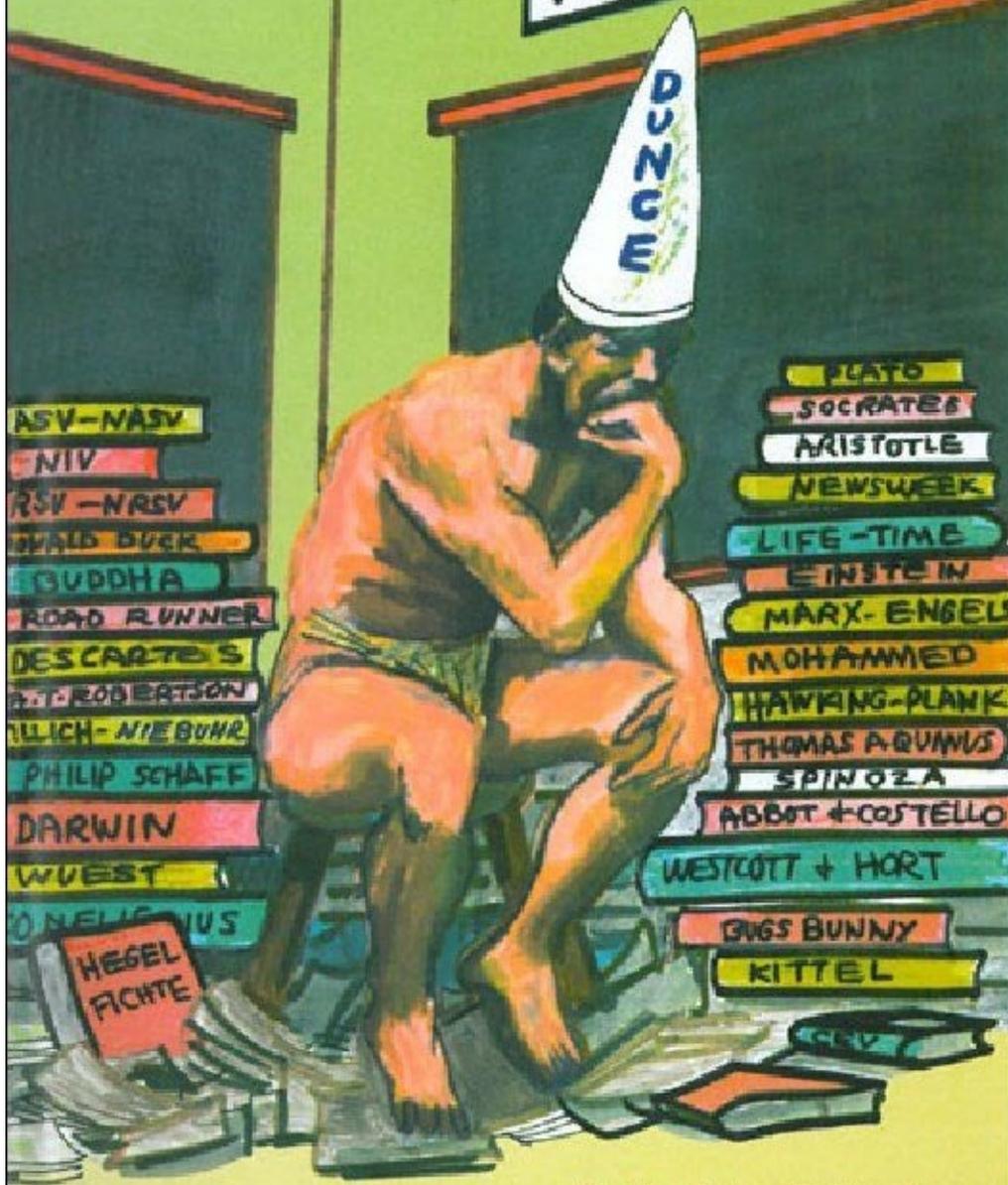
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By Dr. Peter S. Ruckman

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The Scripture quotations found herein are from the text of the Authorized *King James* Version of the Bible.  
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## PREFACE

Years ago, I read a small book by Bob Jones Sr. (1882–1962) called *Things I Have Learned*. As a new Christian, it made an indelible impression on my mind. Bob Jones Sr. (totally *unlike* his son and grandson, Jr. and III) was an old-time Methodist evangelist from Alabama. In his latter years, he had to assume the position of a president or “chancellor” of a university. He was about as “fit” for such a job as George S. Patton would be as head of the Environmental Protection Agency or the National Education Association. In order to convert this old-time farm boy (southeast Alabama: Brannon’s Stand, near Dothan, Alabama) into a smooth, slick “educator,” his portrait in the Christian Hall of Fame (Canton Baptist Temple, Canton, Ohio) bears the title “Robert Reynolds Jones.” That wasn’t his name. His name was “Bob” Jones. We called him “old man Bob.” (Bob Jones III didn’t put his “real name” on the university; at least not the one on the portrait. Imagine “Robert Reynolds Jones University!” Tut, tut!)

To further the cultural myth that Bob Jones Sr. had been a nice, sweet old man, his son and grandson did two things. They made a painter paint a portrait of him AFTER he was sixty-five years old. Then they released (to various radio stations) little “talks” which had been made in a sound studio at WMUU, where his voice would be quiet, smooth, and well-modulated, with little or no “ranting and railing” in it. This was to obliterate Bob Jones Sr.’s real character and calling. He was called to be a Methodist evangelist. His “platform preaching” would give Billy Sunday a “run for his money.” It was fiery, vituperative, noisy, negative, and evangelistic. Although those kind of sermons were preached occasionally in the University’s “chapel” before 1955, they were not released for broadcast; they would hurt the “enrollment.” What Bobby Jr., III, etc., needed was a respectable, sweet, old Christian educator who wouldn’t deeply disturb anyone. They manufactured him out of thin air. I have seen “old man Bob” stomp across the platform like a mad bull, slam his foot down so hard it would shake the platform; and when he drew back, the people on the front row needed a towel to wipe off some of the spit. But this is not “proper” for a cultured center of Christian education, which is “Christ-centered” and has “high academic standards.” *Culture and apostasy* always follow education (see *The History of the New Testament Church*, Vol. I, pp. 4, 5, 1980).

At any rate, Bob Jones Sr. (never to be confused or associated with Bob Jones Jr. or III) was a sort of Christian philosopher (if there could be such a thing: Col. 2:8). Through the years, he had condensed the great truths that he had learned into short sentences, since “simplicity was truth’s most becoming garb.” I have given five of these on pages 27–28. They can be found in his own book called *Thing I Have Learned*.

This work has been titled *Things I Have Not Learned*, since ninety percent of what you are about to read are things that were learned directly from others by a personal interview with them.

In seventy-four years, I have never been very original about anything. What I haven’t learned directly from the Holy Bible (*AV, 1611*) I learned from talking with men in various professions who had a great deal more experience than I could ever have. I learned how to

draw and paint by copying others, and I learned how to write and read by studying books written by others. My preaching is only twenty-five percent “original.” Twenty-five percent of it came from Thomas DeWitt Talmage (1832–1902), a Presbyterian pastor; twenty-five percent of it came from Sam Jones (1847–1906), a Methodist evangelist; and twenty-five percent of it came from Bob Jones (1882–1968), a Methodist evangelist. I have always liked the Methodists (“Fighting” Bob Schuller [1880–1966], John Wesley, Bob Jones Sr., and Sam Jones) better than the Baptists (Truett, R.G. Lee, Wally Criswell, and Jack Hyles). All four of my “mentors” (Schuller, Wesley, and the two “Jones Boys”) were old-time Methodists.

Bob Jones Sr. wrote two things to me, in private correspondence, that I have never forgotten. The first was: “The fine things you see around here are Bobby’s, *not mine*. I am kinda of an old, roughneck type.” The other thing he said was: “Pete, don’t ever get yourself into the position of a FIXER.” I “read” him. I could always read “between the lines.” What Bob Jones Sr. was saying was that he was an old-time, Bible-believing, Bible-thumping, Hell-fire-and-damnation Methodist, soulwinning evangelist; and his son was NOT. His son was “the Bowen Museum of Roman Catholic paintings,” the Greek department with the Roman Catholic Jesuit text of Nestle’s (*ASV*, *RV*, *RSV*, *NRSV*, *NASV*, and *NIV*), the “revolving stage,” Unusual Films, the “Artist’s Series,” and so forth.

#### Culture.

Evangelism, Education, Culture, Apostasy. No man on earth could change that order. All *apostasy* in the Body of Christ originates in Christian educational centers of “higher learning.” There is not *one* exception from Alexandria (A.D. 200) to Liberty University (A.D. 1966).

The second thing Bob Jones, Sr. meant was: “I got myself into a pickle when I took this job on, because I wound up having to deal with a thousand things I was unequipped to deal with. I would rather still be preaching city-wide meetings.” Following *The Peter Principle* (Dr. Laurence Peter, 1970), Bob Jones Sr. finally got to the top of the educational hierarchy: his “final placement” was in his “maximum level of inefficiency.” For this reason, I have never been a chancellor of a University, or president of a College, and never will be. With three earned educational degrees on a *secular* level (B.A., M.A., and Ph.D.), two earned degrees on a *religious* level (Th.M., and D.D), plus an honorary degree (B.D.), I have never devoted fifteen minutes to controlling, or operating a College, University, or Seminary, or even teaching in one. If I couldn’t teach Hebrew and Greek better than Robert Sumner, David Cloud, Chuck Swindoll, James R. White, or Arthur Farstad, I would resign my church. But I am not going to get “trapped” if I can help it, as a “fixer.” I was called to TEACH and PREACH a Book. I limit myself at that point. No alumni meetings, no alumni association, no “work-loan” scholarships, no graduate seminars, no enrollment drives, no fund raising campaigns, no national advertising, no faculty and staff meetings, no alumni breakfasts, no pressure on people to make out their wills to the work, no “Gospel Fellowship Associations,” no Child Evangelism Fellowships, and no promoting of the school through Bible conferences or revival meetings. I remain a junkyard dog; a buck sergeant, “*Feldwebel*.” I let the big dogs strut their stuff as thoroughbred celebrities; the Germans call them “Golden Pheasants.”

So here are the things that I have learned from others, as I went down the road of

God's purpose for my life. (What is not found in this book will be found in *The Full Cup* [1992] and *Memoirs of a Twentieth Century Circuit Rider* [1992].)

# The Experts

Somewhere between the ages of ten and fifteen I picked up a peculiar idea. I cannot remember who taught it to me, if indeed *anyone* did. All I know was that from fifteen years old and upward I got the peculiar idea that older men—say 40–80—would be smarter than younger men. For this reason, nearly all of my closest friends from the time I was fifteen onward, were men in their forties or fifties. I suppose my lack of closeness to my own father (Col. John Hamilton Ruckman) had much to do with this, but I grew up convinced that if a man was under *forty years old* he probably didn't know much about life.

Now, we all know that this is not entirely true. Many men in their “thirties” have been through a great deal, but the general rule is that no man under forty has had time to REAP all of what he SOWED before he was thirty. When “the ships come in” and you have to go down to the dock to unload them, you always become “wiser” about right and wrong and good and evil. The law is inexorable (Gal. 6:7). If Elvis Presley had lived to be fifty, he would have voted Republican. Men “over forty” are not all “burned out,” by a long shot. They become more “conservative” because they have lived to see the EFFECTS of their “free choice” and “free will” and “liberated life-styles” as they started down the “home stretch.” It never turns out like you see it on TV, in the magazines, and newspapers.

Older men have an advantage over young men. They say that youth is “heat without light,” and old age is “light without heat.” So somewhere, between forty and sixty, BOTH are present—*normally*. No matter what the circumstances are, older men have had time to see how their “plans” worked out. Young men don't know how their own plans will work out. They *might* have them figured right, and they might have them figured *wrong*, but they don't KNOW. The older guy knows. He *saw* it “work out.”

I had never read Jeremiah 6:16 till I was twenty-seven years old. As a matter of fact, until I was twenty-seven, I could not have found the book of Jeremiah in any Bible without using an index. I have now read the passage somewhere around 150 times. Since the day I first read it, I began to “**ask for the old paths.**” I found them, and that is what I want to tell you about. Laban said: “**I have learned by experience**” (Gen. 30:27), which, of course, is the best and most thorough way to learn anything. But! blessed is the man who can learn from the mistakes of others without having to repeat them himself!

## I. THE MILITARY MAN

All of the “Ruckmans,” for four generations, were military people. Grandfather Ruckman and Great-Grandfather Ruckman were Generals, “Dad” Ruckman was a full Colonel, my brother was a Sergeant, and I was a “Shavetail.” All of us were infantrymen. I wanted to be a thirty-year man, so after failing West Point exams, I worked my way up through the CMTC and the ROTC into the Infantry School at Ft. Benning. But I dumped the service after forty-six months of active duty in World War II (1943–1947). I remember the most profound thing I learned while in the infantry, and the most important lesson my

father ever taught me.

A man learns three things in the infantry: 1. *Get down.* 2. *Stay down.* 3. *Don't get up.* Your life depends on that “nugget.”

I learned one great thing from my father. He said one time, “Peter, there are only THREE answers to any question.”

“And what are those?” I innocently asked.

He replied: “Yes, Sir; No, Sir; and No excuse, Sir!”

Now that doesn't look like much, does it? How does that sound alongside saying, “It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this, but in a sense we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground; the brave men living and dead who...etc.”? (Dishonest Abe's Gettysburg Address.)

Well, if you are a *Christian* you will find out at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3; 2 Cor. 5; Rom. 14) that there are only THREE answers to a question: “Yes, Sir”; “No, Sir”; and “No excuse, Sir!”

At the White Throne Judgment, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address will sound like the pitiful whining of a Ward Boss at the Third Precinct in downtown Chicago.

## II. THE FARMER

How could any preacher with a seminary education and forty-six years of evangelistic work have time to learn what it would be like to operate a full-time farm and raise a family on a farm? It couldn't be done. So I picked me out a man who had done it. He was a sixty-year-old Christian farmer in Baskin, Louisiana. He lived in a three-bedroom, brick home. It was paid for. He owned more than 1,000 acres. They were paid for. His two Christian sons operated two-thirds of the land. Both of them lived in three-bedroom, brick homes that were paid for. Both of them were Christians and had children. (You should do so well!)

Now, this “redneck” had to know *something*.

One day I said, “Now I know you would give all the glory to God for all of the good things He has given you, but from a human standpoint—I mean just from your own decision making and so forth—to what do you attribute your success as a farmer?”

Immediately he said, “Well, God was just good to me.”

“I understand that perfectly,” I replied, “but I mean if you could put your finger on one human factor or philosophy of your own that contributed to any of it, what would you say it was?”

That old, archaic, uneducated, segregationist, red-neck, out-of-touch-with-the-times hillbilly said, “Well, mah wife and I always lived within our means.” He then explained, “When we had nothin' to eat, we didn't eat. When all we had wuz black-eyed peas, we ate black-eyed peas. Sometimes we had to sleep in the backend of the car. We have slept for weeks in a chicken coop.”

And there it was. **“Owe no man anything,”** (Rom. 13:8). **“The borrower is servant to the lender,”** (Prov. 22:7). That old man would not borrow more than he could pay back. He would not get in debt, not even to eat or to get a decent place to sleep.

### III. THE DOCTOR

I never could find time, in seventy-four years, to study medicine, work as an intern, and then “practice,” so I had to go to a “pro” to learn something. I asked this doctor (who had been “practicing medicine” most of his life) what was the most important thing he ever learned while “doctoring.” He said, “Well, you learn something new almost every day.”

“I am sure that is right,” I replied, “but I mean, if you could tell me in one sentence what thing impressed you the most in the years you have been dealing with patients, what would it be?” The answer he gave me was one of the most peculiar statements I have ever heard.

He said, “Well, the thing that really upset me was to see that no matter what kind of medicine you recommended to a patient, he nearly always got well if he had confidence in YOU!”

### IV. THE WARDEN OF THE PENITENTIARY

One time, way back in 1953, I preached in the federal penitentiary at Atlanta, Georgia. About 400 prisoners came to the auditorium to watch me draw. Fourteen of them made a public profession of Christ right before their cell mates. At that time Atlanta only had about 1,200 prisoners in it. I imagine that today the “population”—that is what they now call it, instead of “being in stir”—would be above 4,000.

After the service, I talked with the warden. I asked him, “How long have you been a warden?”

He said, “About twenty-five years, although I have only been warden here about five years.” I then sought to learn something.

I asked him, “Could you tell me, in a line or two, the thing that has impressed you most in being a prison warden? I mean, I don’t have time to serve in your capacity for even a year. I couldn’t learn much of anything.” I will never forget what he said.

He waved his hand at the “cages” and said, “Preacher, the thing that has impressed me most is that every man in here was doing the same thing when we caught him.” (Knowing there must be at least twenty federal offenses—there are ten times that many now!—I wondered at his statement.)

I asked, “What do you mean by that?”

He replied, “Every man in here, preacher, was trying to get *something* for *nothing* when we caught him.”

## V. THE CON ARTIST

One of my closest friends in the ministry, for years, was an ex-gangster named Edmund Dinant; another one was an ex-“card sharp” and “con man” named Paul Kirkindal (rescue mission superintendent, Blytheville, Arkansas). Paul used to sell “gas pills” that supposedly could convert water into gasoline. He operated a money converter that could convert one-dollar bills into ten-dollar bills, and he had a ring trick he performed with a confederate that would net them nearly \$20 a day, five days a week. I have sat within two feet of him and watched him deal out fifty-one cards with the last card being the ace of spaces: it was on the TOP of the deck when he began to deal the hands. He had dealt “second card” through the whole deck, and you couldn’t spot it if you bent over his shoulder and stared.

One day I said, “Paul, what is the greatest truth you ever learned in your years as a pool shark, ‘pitch man,’ and stick man on the midways?”

He grinned and said, “Ruckman, I learned that you can’t CON an honest man.”

I never forgot *that* one. No man can be deceived about Bible translations if he is an *honest* man. The only men you can deceive about Bible translations—say James White, Bob Jones III, Stewart Custer, Broadus, Robert Scummer, Hot Dog Hymers, Dayton Hobbs, Curtis Hutson, John Rice, Fred Afman, James Price, Arthur Farstad, John MacArthur, and Dave Hunt—must be *dishonest men*. You can “con” ’em!

If the man is trying to get “something for nothing” (see IV), you can con him. The law (the warden) and the outlaw (the gangster) are the two witnesses that will sink the faculties and staffs of BJU, PCC, Liberty University, BBC, Tennessee Temple, Wheaton, Moody, Fuller, Baylor, Howard, Judson, Stetson, Furman, and the Seminaries in Denver, Dallas, Fort Worth, New Orleans, and Louisville. **“In the mouth of two ...witnesses”** (2 Cor. 13:1).

## VI. THE LAWYER

He was sixty-five years old and had been “before the bar” for thirty-five years. We were sitting on his front porch in Panama City, Florida. I asked, “In your lifetime of dealing with lawsuits, would you tell me, if you could, in a word or two, what has impressed you the most; that is, the most shocking thing you encountered in that time?”

He thought for a moment and then said slowly, “The thing that has, to this day, impressed me the most deeply is that I am still amazed at the capacity there is in the human heart for vengeance.”

That was an expert speaking. That was a “thoroughbred” with a lifetime of experience as a lawyer. I learned that great negative truth from him.

## VII. THE RESCUE MISSION SUPERINTENDENT

We were eating lunch with the “transients”—they used to call them “bums” back before the Justice Department (Janet Reno and the BATF) began to censor speech (1994).

About forty were sipping their canned soup and drinking rescue mission coffee (known far and wide—you pour a can of coffee grounds in to a pot and boil it fifteen minutes). I asked the Memphis superintendent, “How long have you worked as a superintendent of a rescue mission?”

He said, “Twenty-five years.”

I asked him, “Could you tell me the most valuable or the most important lesson you have learned in those twenty-five years?” He hesitated a minute and then gazed around at the tables where the “transients” were eating.

Then he said, “Preacher, you see all those men sittin’ there?”

“Yessir.”

“Well, every one of them has *one thing in common.*”

“And what is that?” I asked.

“Ya see those fellas?” he repeated. “Not a man there has ever *won a battle in life.*” He told the truth. One man had quit because his wife had left him. Another quit because he couldn’t whip the liquor habit. Another one quit because he couldn’t conquer self-pity. Another quit because the doctor had said “cancer.” Another had quit because God had taken his little boy or girl. Another had quit because of a prison record, and another had quit because of.... **“I looked upon it, and received instruction”** (Prov. 24:32).

I said to myself, “Peter, old boy, if you are going to survive in this life, dealing with the Christian characters in the ministry and education, that you are going to have to deal with, you are going to have to learn how to FIGHT!” I had 2 Samuel 10:12, in three-inch letters, hanging over the entrance to my dining room. It was the first thing you would have seen upon entering my house at 5420 Rawson Lane, Pensacola, Florida.

## VIII. THE FIREMAN

He had been putting out fires for twenty years. I asked him the same question I had asked the lawyer, described above. He thought for a moment and said, “Well, the thing that I found to be the most peculiar was that eight out of ten fires we put out were started by cigarettes. The other two were grease fires, electrical short circuits, or somethin’ else.”

## IX. THE GASOLINE STATION OPERATOR

For many years I have had two convictions about *politics* which I have never heard discussed, or even mentioned, during any national election. I was born when Harding was president; and I saw the “regimes” of Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, J.F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Slick Willie, and George W. Bush. After watching fourteen attempts to bring in a Police State operating a Welfare Soviet, I came to two conclusions:

1. No man or woman should be eligible for any office (as President, Vice-President, Cabinet, Supreme Court, Senator, or Congressman) if he or she was making twice as much

as the average American was making the year before the election.

2. No man or woman, could take any of the offices above unless he or she had, at one time, operated a small *farm, grocery store, church, school, restaurant, or gas station.*

These two requirements would get rid of eighty percent of the politicians in America at one whack and replace them with respectable, red-blooded AMERICANS (not international UN-EU Socialists) who knew what was going on and how to remedy real problems. It would get rid of the money hogs and the publicity hogs and the big business corporation combines and monopolies. It would restore genuine capitalism to a republic.

The gas pumper—they waited on you in those days (1930–1960)—said, “Ah been operatin’ small gas stations since ah was twenty years old. Ah’m fifty now.” I then asked the inevitable question.

“If you were going to tell me, in one sentence, what is the most important thing you learned about operating small gas stations, what would you say?”

He replied immediately, “That’s easy. *Never open one!*”

## X. THE SCHOOL TEACHER

I was at a banquet in Rochester, New York, sitting across from a man who had just retired after teaching for twenty-five years and serving five years as a principal. The entire thirty years had been spent in “Middle Schools” (formerly called “Junior High Schools”). Now how would anyone have time to experience what he had experienced? No way on earth. Even people who live as fast and furious as I have lived can only live three or four lifetimes at “one sittin’,” but you cannot be Ulysses. I have known the life of a writer, a teacher, a minister, an army officer, an artist, a musician, and a radio announcer; but that is a long way from “knowing the ropes” as a doctor, sailor, engineer, banker, lawyer, physicist, electrician, construction worker, airline pilot, mason, advertising executive, gas station operator, barber, farmer, etc.

I looked across the table at the teacher-principle and said, “Just for my own edification, could you tell me the greatest thing that you learned in the years you handled Middle School children?”

He said, “Well, you learn all along; you learn more teaching than you do studying.”

“I realize that,” I said, “but I mean the thing that perhaps startled you as a revelation, or shocked you, if that is the proper word.”

He folded his arms and leaning on the table, looking me “right smack in the eyeballs,” he slowly said, “Dr. Ruckman, the thing that impressed me as I retired was the fact that I had lived to see the total destruction of every moral standard I have ever heard of, in less than twenty years.”

Those years were 1965 to 1985.

That is what the *Civil Rights Act* did for Middle School children in the United States of America. The Bible went out, God went out, Christ went out, the Ten Commandments went out, and then *all moral standards* went out. They were replaced with condoms, boom

boxes, drugs, abortion, lawsuits, bulletproof vests, security checks, illiteracy, and venereal disease. (Darwin's evolution at work: *Progress!!*)

## XI. THE SHRINK

Many years ago I used to lifeguard and clean out bath houses at Gage Park in Topeka, Kansas. Both myself and another lifeguard were acquainted with an anonymous character who used to come up to the wire fence around the pool—it was the largest outdoor pool in America at that time (1932–1942: 300 feet by 100 feet)—and hang on the wire fence, talking to himself; sometimes for as long as thirty minutes. He would come up to the lifeguard's stand and act like he was talking to the lifeguard, but I don't remember any conversation taking place. It was really just a monologue, from start to finish, and you couldn't understand half the terms he used. He was always well-dressed and sometimes wore something that looked like a doctor's white "top coat." He didn't drink or smoke. I found out his name after I had gone to College (KSAC, 1940). It was *Karl Menninger*, of the "Menninger Clinic."

To this day I don't know whether Dr. Menninger was trying to teach us something or was just practicing a little psychotherapy on himself. Shrinks have the highest rate of *suicide* of any group of professionals. Menninger's life work was with Abnormal Psychiatry. He became an internationally famous "shrink." I read several of his works later. One was called *Love or Die*, and one was *Man Against Himself*. Before he died, he was working on one called *What Ever Became of Sin?* (Easy: in America it was done away with in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.)

I remember one thing that Karl said, after spending more than forty years dealing with boobies, looneys, fruitloops, screwballs, and ding-a-lings. He said, "If you feel a nervous breakdown coming on, go across the tracks and find someone in REAL trouble and do something to help them out."

The above expression is lost to this generation. "Across the tracks" meant "the other class of people." The railroad track used to go through a town and separated the classes. The doctors, lawyers, bankers, church-folk, businessmen, philanthropists, politicians, and "town fathers" lived on one side; and the beggars, prostitutes, drunks, atheists, criminals, down-and-outers, and the illiterates lived on the other side "of the tracks."

What Karl meant was: "You go crazy thinking about yourself. Think about someone else who has more problems than YOU have, *and you won't crack up.*" I have tested that theorem on more than a dozen occasions: it hasn't failed to prove to be true one time yet.

## XII. THE FISHERMAN

He was a commercial fisherman who sailed out of Panama City. When I met him, he was sixty-five years old, and he had been saved about five years. He had run away from home when he was fifteen and gone out with "the fleet." That is, he had been an "old salt" for nearly forty-five years *before* his conversion. He had been out in the Gulf of Mexico for so long he looked like a red snapper. His name was *Coy Rafield*, a buddy to the well-known "Captain Anderson," who did commercial fishing and handled a dozen "snapper"

boats that rented out to “snow birds.” (“Snow birds” are Yankees who come down to Florida between November and March. For further details, see Porta Gunda, Fort Myers, St. Pete, Orlando, and Tampa.)

Now I never “went fishin’” till I was thirty-eight years old. I came across “angling” when I contacted a pro in Tupelo, Mississippi, who made his own lures—mainly “bucktail streamers.” His name was *Bill Sharpe*, and he told me that if I would teach him the Bible he would teach me how to fish. So for three years he would pop up at my meetings all across the country and bring a list of Bible questions with him. We would study in motels, and then we would go out in his microbus and fish the area, wherever it was. This wound up with fishing for *striped bass* in the backwaters of Mobile Bay, *speckled trout* in Fish River near Foley, Alabama, *fly fishing* on the Warrior River and “Nigger Lake” (near Bay Minette), fishing the spillways of Pickwick Dam (Tennessee), the Jim Woodruff Dam (Florida), and Granada and Sardis Dams (Mississippi). Before it was over (1970–1990), I had fished for *pickerel* in Ontario (Canada), *walleyed pike* in Lake Eire, *salmon* in the Pacific Ocean near Washington, *blues*, *reds*, *mackerel*, *snapper*, and *grouper* (near Fort Walton, Destin, Panama City, Pensacola, and Mobile), and *mullet*, *sheep-head*, *spades*, *croakers*, and “*spots*” with cast nets and gill nets (anywhere!).

I’ll never forget the day—I was thirty-nine years old—that I walked innocently into a bait and tackle shop in Florida and asked for a rod and reel and some lures. The proprietor said, “You want the rest of it now?” I was mystified.

“The rest of it? What do you mean ‘the REST of it’?”

“Well, the tackle box, the bait cans, the net, the gaff hook, the rubber boots, stringer, etc.”

I laughed and told him, “No thanks.” That was in 1960. By 1980, I had purchased bait-casting rods, open-faced reels, closed-faced reels, poppin’ bugs, top water runners, shallow water runners, artificial flies, fly rods, lure-casting rods, hand nets, gill nets, cigar minnows, artificial worms, real worms, live and dead shrimp, treble hooks, lead weights, floaters, bait “rigs,” rubber boots, rainproof parkas, and tackle boxes. I had topped it off with an *eighteen-foot cabin cruiser*, with “runnin’ lights,” hydraulic “lift” for an 80-HP Mercury motor, bilge pump, extra gas cans, and a trailer.

**“Let your moderation be known unto all men” (Phil 4:5).**

But when I was in the presence of Coy Rafield, I was in the presence of a “pro”—an expert. I had only been “at it” about five years when I met him. And before I tell you the great lesson that he passed on to me, I want to make a statement about fishermen, at least those that fish in the ocean. I learned this myself, from being raised on the ocean three summer months every year, from about 1927 to 1939.

Once you get the ocean in your blood, *you never get it out*. This is because that is where *life* on earth began (Gen. 1:20).

The greatest garden fertilizer in the world is *seaweed*. It has phosphorus in it. Phosphorus is a “light” that does not come from sunlight. The ocean is “crawling” with life (see *The Bible Believer’s Commentary on the Psalms*, Vol. II, 1994, pp. 848, 849).

There are three things that fascinate ANY human being anywhere on earth: *mountains*,

*fire*, and *oceans* (or lakes and ponds). No member of any faculty of any Christian school, in America, can tell you *why* this is. Poor, naive, inexperienced children like James R. White, David Cloud, Doug Kutilek, Robert Sumner, Hot Dog Hymers, Gary Hudson, Stewart Custer, Bob Jones III, James Price, and Zane Hodges are no more equipped to discuss these *Biblical* matters (Gen. 1:20; Heb. 12:22, 29; Isa. 14:12–16, 34:8–10; Exod. 29; Lev. 6:12; Matt. 25:41; Psa. 107) than they are able to exegete Hebrews, Acts, Matthew, Ecclesiastes, or the Psalms.

*Oceans* are always *restless*; their waves move without ceasing. They can be painted as blue, blue green, orange, orange brown, reddish, black, gray, or white, depending upon the time of day and weather conditions. They are never still. *Mountains* remain exactly *the same*, morning, noon, and night, and not one rock in them changes places. At a distance they all appear bluish or purple, and up close they may vary in color from red and brown and a grayish brown to gray, dark green, or black. The Ozarks and Appalachians are color extravaganzas in the fall, but that is not due to them; it is due to their foliage. Mountains can be white if they are covered with snow. Fire is the same *everywhere*; it consumes whatever it is connected with.

Now, human nature wants to look at (or into) a fire. Fireplaces are places where you sit and look. Ditto with campfires. Ditto with *bonfires*. In the Book, FIRE pictures two things, and both are connected: 1. The *holiness of God* (Heb. 12:29) and *Hell* (Lev. 6:12; Isa. 34:8). Those are the things that fascinate the curious stares of saved and lost men alike. Religious counterfeits called “the eternal flame,” have been invented by man and used since 3,000 B.C.

Mountains remain stationary, but they make you *restless*. They make anyone restless. The Deutsche say, “Die Bergen rufen mich” (“The mountains are calling to me.”). You top one range, and the next one appears as a challenge. It says, “Come over here!” You climb one mountain, you want to climb another one. This emotional “implant” is as fixed and as permanent, in all human beings, as feelings about *racial* differences. No one can obliterate them permanently with any device or any political setup (see *Discrimination, the Key to Sanity*, 1994).

And whether you are seaside, pond-side, or lake-side, slowly moving water tends to put you to sleep. Men have recorded surf lapping on a beach and installed it in “sleeping machines” to help those suffering from insomnia. I know of nothing on earth that will put a man to sleep quicker than lying on a beach on a sunny day and listening to the surf, unless it would be lying on the deck of a small fishing boat while it is making about ten knots across a smooth, rolling ocean.

1. *The Mountain* is the third heaven with New Jerusalem on it. That is why it “calls” you. Every compass needle on earth points straight to it. It is man’s call to life with God in eternity. Not one Christian celebrity in this age (1920–2007) could give you any light on the subject at all. All institutions of higher Christian education have their *affections* (Col. 3:1–3) set on things down here, not up there. (Note how these pious apostates handled Col. 3:1–3 in the *NKJV*—Curtis Hutson, Elmer Towns, Jerry Falwell, Criswell, etc.—and the *NIV*. They altered “**affection**” to “mind.” More of Riplinger’s *New Age Bible Versions* stuff.)

2. *The Fire* is Hell, the ultimate destiny of the people who sit by the hour, gazing into it, without the New Birth. They are looking at their future home. It is fascinating. It hypnotizes them. It is a red hot prophesy in their own living rooms (or back yard or “sanitary landfill” or blast furnace, etc.). No germ or microbe can survive where the blue flame burns: *sin is going to be destroyed*.

3. *The Ocean* is death. Death is a “sleep” for the body (Matt. 27:52); even the body of the Christian “sleeps” (Acts 7:60; 1 Thess. 4:13–14). You have to cross WATER to get to Mt. Zion (see *The Bible Believer’s Commentary on Genesis*, 1970, Chap. 1). There isn’t one faculty member of one Christian institution of higher education (Furman, Wheaton, BJU, Fuller, Moody, Tennessee Temple, Stetson, Judson, Howard, BBC, Princeton, Cambridge, Oxford, PCC, etc.) who knows anything about these Biblical matters at all. This is absolute, total, complete *ignorance* of the Scriptures.

Coy Rafield was raised on the ocean. He no sooner got saved than those dumb Southern Baptists sent him “inland” to pastor a church up in Georgia: 200 miles from the ocean. It never worked. In less than a year he was back and pastoring a church that was within one mile of the docks at Panama City.

Do you know why I stayed here in Pensacola, conducting a Bible Institute for thirty-one years? Ever think about it? Pensacola is not “centrally located.” I have to pay plane fare an extra 800 miles (400 out and 400 back) anytime I take a trip anywhere. Pensacola has been a disaster area, financially, for fifty years, if you compare it to other cities in the northeast, central, and eastern United States. We have a joke down here that if a real depression came, no one here in Pensacola would know about it. That is not a good “work” atmosphere for students who are trying to work their way through a school. Someone said: “If a thermonuclear bomb went off over Pensacola it would do \$10,000 worth of damage.” But Pensacola is *on the water*—the Gulf of Mexico.

So I asked the fisherman: “Brother Rafield, in the years you have been engaged in catching fish, what is the most outstanding thing you learned during that time?”

He grinned and said quickly, “That’s easy. Nobody ever catches any fish.” That is all he said.

I waited a few seconds and asked, “What do you mean by that?”

“Nobody ever catches fish,” he repeated, “*they catch themselves!*”

I lived to see the day where I and a “buddy” were catching as many “specks” on a *bare hook* as the other boats around were catching with live shrimp. I lived to see the day where you could catch bass by tying a piece of your belt to a “leader” and hanging two treble hooks on it. I lived to see the day that you could pick up a piece of wooden shingle and convert it into a \$10.00 top-water plug by using a penknife and two pieces of string. Fish get caught by their gills when they run into the net. They run into it. You just set it. The pikes, bass, specs, and king mackerel strike the bait. You just troll it or cast it. “Nobody ketches fish; *they ketch they’selves.*”

I held a revival for Brother Rafield. Every night after the service we were sitting around in someone’s house shooting the bull and eating “junk food.” I noticed that every night around 10 o’clock, Coy Rafield would get as nervous as a clam at low tide. He paced

the floor like a caged bear. One night I asked a guest, “How come Brother Rafield is always gettin’ like that ‘round this time a-night?”

They said, “Don’t you know?”

I said, “No.”

They said, “Well, Brother Ruckman, every night after he takes you back to the motel, he is going out fishin’ all night on the boat!”

Well! Wasn’t *that* a fine “howdoyoudo”? I decided to fix him.

The next night when he came up to me and said, “Well, Brother Ruckman, it’s about time to go back to the motel.”

I replied, “Aw, no hurry. Take yer time.”

At 10:05 he came by my chair again and said, “Gittin’ late, Brother Ruckman; hadn’t we better call it a day?”

“No hurry,” I said, “we got plenty a time.”

At 10:10 he came up to me and stood still, right in front of me, without saying a word. I looked up. He began to laugh. Then he said, “Well, we might as well go back to the motel or else go down and git on the boat!”

“The boat!” I said, “The boat! Let’s go down and git on the boat!”

Once you get the ocean in your blood, you never get it out.

Down we went. Out we sailed to the net, which was rolled up and drying on a rack about 300 yards offshore, and then, my, my! We were idling along, parallel to the beach, about three miles out! There was no moon, but a million stars were studded in the vault of heaven. They looked like the glittering band of some Oriental sultan’s belt with which he clasped the robes of his glory. Some character up on the front deck was playing “Red River Valley” on a harmonica.

Ah, the ocean (Psa. 104:25)!

Suddenly the whole surface of the water lit up. You could nearly see print on a newspaper. Immediately Coy sounded some kind of a bell, or gong, and revved that motor up to thirty-five knots—zoooww! arrgruummm! We took off somewhere in the darkness. “What’s cookin’?” I asked, “What was all the phosphorus about?”

Coy said, “They’s firin’.” He had been out there for so long he knew the “tracks” of the sea like a possum hunter knows the trails in a forest. The bow of his boat had crossed the rear end of a school of mackerel about one hundred yards wide and over four hundred yards long. When this happens, they each leap forward; it creates a “domino” effect. The phosphorus lights up the water.

Now I will not bore you with a long thing. But the next scene is men (aged fifteen to fifty) setting a 300-yard net in the dark, and they do it spring, summer, winter, and fall. Out come the shotguns to shoot the sharks. Fishermen are trying to keep some fishes from “drowning,” because their gills get caught and they breath through their gills. The “old man” (the captain) is shouting, the men are shouting, and some of the unsaved men are

cursing. After two to four hours of work in anywhere from eight to forty feet of water, the crew falls down flat on the deck, puffing like they had finished a marathon. I laid back on a pile of dead fish and went to sleep (Matt. 8:24). I think I laughed in my sleep; I was dreaming about John Rice, Bob Jones, Jr., Eddie Martin, Billy Graham, and my Greek teachers at BJU!

I awoke around 5:30 a.m. It was light. Gulls were following our boat. We were coasting down towards Apalachicola at about ten knots. The white beaches of Panama City-Port St. Joe lay on our port. The thing that woke me up was the smell of fried ham, homemade biscuits, and cheese grits. The cook, up in the galley, had the whole thing going, including “red-eye gravy.” I sat up and looked around. No highways, no cars, no gas stations, no highway patrol, no radios, no TV, no smoke stacks, no women, no telephone, and no buildings. No sound but the soft chush, chush, chush of the bow going through *God’s water*.

I laughed and said to myself, “What fool on God’s earth would think they could get a man to go inland after forty-five years of THIS?!”

We are still located in Pensacola, Florida. It is fifteen miles from the Gulf of Mexico. My house is eleven miles from Pensacola Bay.

# The Unsaved Amateur

I lived out in the world for twenty-seven years (see *The Full Cup*, 1994, Chapters One to Five). You ask, “Did you learn anything during that time?” Well, very little. I have never been very original; nearly everything I learned, I learned from someone else. However, I do claim credit for learning *three things* without anyone else’s assistance. These three “nuggets” may sound more like “*Murphy’s Laws*” than deep, philosophical truths, but that’s all right with me. I think quite highly of “Murphy.” Since ninety percent of his laws are *negative*, they are much closer to the truth than any material you could pick up in three University educations or on three TV networks.

I believe that “a Smith and Wesson beats four aces.” I really believe that. It is a “fundamental” with me. I also believe that “you can get more with a kind word and a gun than you can with a kind word alone.” I also believe “if it jams, force it; if it breaks, it needed replacing anyway.” I subscribe to the following theorems: “Never play leap frog with a unicorn,” “If you look like your passport picture you are too sick to travel,” “Leakproof seals aren’t,” “You can’t cross a large puddle in small jumps,” “The other line always moves faster,” “The nearest tool is the hammer,” “Live every day like it was your last one and pretty soon it will be,” and “The light at the end of the tunnel is an oncoming freight train.”

Among several “fundamentals of the faith” are: “No good deed shall go unpunished,” “It always takes longer than you think it will,” “If you’re lying flat on your face, you can’t fall down,” “Automatic windows aren’t,” “Nature always sides with the hidden flaw,” “An ounce of image is worth a pound of performance,” “Only God can make a random selection,” “In case of doubt, make it sound convincing,” “When in doubt, mumble; when in trouble, delegate; when in charge, ponder,” “You can never find an article till you replace it,” “Anything that begins well ends badly; anything that begins badly gets worse,” “No man’s life, liberty, or property are safe while the legislature is in session,” and “It may be a sin to think evil of the Catholic Church, but it is never a mistake.” There are several others, the best of which are: “What we call progress is the exchange of one nuisance for another,” “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you mad,” “Experience is gained in proportion to the amount of equipment ruined,” “Inside every large problem are several small ones struggling to get out,” “Once a job is fouled up, anything done to improve it just makes it worse,” and “You can’t win; you can’t break even; you can’t even get out of the game.”

*I believe in “Murphy.”*

Before I was converted to Christ, I uncovered three great truths:

1. “Eighty percent of the time, anything is exactly the OPPOSITE of the way it appears.”
2. “The *tough guy* is always the guy who has the ‘edge’.”
3. “If it don’t make sense, there’s a *buck* in it.”

Those are profound truths. Go on and test them out and see if they are. Sheep act like wolves to compensate for their docility. Wolves dress up in sheep's clothing to cover up their ferocity. Politicians smile and shake hands to cover up embezzlement and fraud. The Mafia will "protect you" from people who might "harm" your business. The Peace Keepers are hired killers. The pious prayers over the dead children in Oklahoma City (1995) had nothing to do with concern about anybody's children or parents; the weepers had just murdered eighty-three people, including seventeen unarmed children (Waco, Texas), and then bragged about it. "*Kingdom builders are bloody killers.*" You get the sugar before the pill and the gas before the operation, and so forth.

The second proposition states that Cassias Clay will not act tough sitting down to a game of chess. He has lost the "edge."

No man plays the "tough guy" unless he is either sure he has the intellectual, physical, mental, or financial advantage, or else THINKS that he does. Where he knows he does NOT, he "behaves himself." Slick Willie (Clinton) called the killer at Oklahoma City (1995) a "coward." Slick himself was too yellow to obey the draft laws. He got "tough" when he had the edge. I do not talk to highway patrolmen when I am "pulled over" like I talk to a congregation while preaching on repentance. I have lost "the edge." By the same token, there are five hundred highway patrolmen in America—grown men—who would not dare sit on the front row of any building in which I preached for fifteen minutes; they would be in a psychotic sweat for forty-five minutes. A patrol car is not a church pew.

On *paper*, I look tough. People who read my books and see me for the first time, are amazed to see a little, old, 5-foot 8-inch man with glasses. They are expecting to see a 6-foot 4-inch Kung Fu expert with filed teeth, breathing fire. I act tough on paper because I have the "edge" there. I have read a book a day since I was ten years old and can still read five hundred words a minute at the age of seventy-four. On paper I have the advantage. I do not talk to an automobile mechanic about car problems like I talk to Christian "Biblical" scholars about the King James Bible. In the "shop" I lose the "edge."

Think about that for a few years.

"Iffen hit don't make no sense, they's a buck in hit." That is the Koine original autograph. Check it out. Check it on decisions made in a church and decisions made by government officials (especially bureaucrats); check it out on the conduct of the CIA and the decisions made by the CFR, Bilderbergers, and the Club of Rome; check it out on the news media's constant promotion of queers, manly women, blacks, children, street bums, welfare mothers, etc.

You come to a four-way intersection. There are forty-eight lights. (I have seen *sixty* if you count the lights for the pedestrians.) What is this all about? At any four-street intersection you shouldn't have anymore than a *maximum* of sixteen lights. Four each way: stop, go, slow, and turn. Four times four is sixteen. What are forty-eight lights doing at an intersection? You say, "One for each lane." Why one for each lane? The first car in ANY lane can see a light in the center of the intersection. Who could move till he did? If he stopped, who wouldn't have to stop? How could you miss the turn signal if you were in the turn lane? Where else would you be if you intended to turn across the traffic? \$\$\$ "If it don't make sense, there's a buck in it." The *Almanac* for the years between 1970 and 1980

showed more than \$5,000,000 worth of gasoline being burned up DAILY, trying to enforce race-mixing by bussing children. In the same decade, all America was warned TWICE about “conserving energy,” especially *gasoline*. It “don’t make no sense.” Yes it do. \$\$\$\$ Out around Odessa, Texas, I saw them cementing up the oil shafts so they couldn’t be used again; they did that while hollering about the “oil shortage.” \$\$\$\$ Boats came through Pensacola, in 1995, carrying Chinese who had come to get rice from the USA to sell to Iran! Slick Willie said trade was banned with Iran. What on earth? \$\$\$\$ Slick Willie then took \$40,000,000,000 of the taxpayers’ money and gave it to Mexico without one Congressman saying “yea” or “nay.” Another \$20,000,000,000 went to Russia, which still owed us \$234,000,000,000 from World War II. \$\$\$ “If it don’t make sense...!”

What are black helicopters, carrying Russian troops, doing in America? What are Russian tanks and trucks doing at military bases, waiting to “cooperate with the National Guard in the private sector?” What are UN flags doing flying over American military bases, and what are national forests doing bearing titles like “International Park”? Someone owes somebody some money. They can’t get it. So they are going to have to steal it from their own people in the form of real estate and “assets.” The USSA (United Soviet Seizure of Assets). \$\$\$\$

# The Christian Veteran

When I got saved (March 14, 1949), I found myself facing a new life which would require new friends, new habits, new thought patterns, new conduct, new books, new foes, new speech, new music, and new attitudes. I was just a babe in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1). Where could I learn what I needed to learn? Well, the Scriptures said, **“Ask for the old paths”** (Jer. 6:16). I had better get to a man in his forties or fifties if I was going to get the “hang” of this new life (2 Cor. 5:17). Maybe the younger preachers knew “a thing or two,” but what I needed was a *veteran*. I found one. He was sixty-seven years old. I sat under his tutelage until he was seventy-one years old (1949-1953). He had been raised as a peanut farmer in southeast Alabama. His mother and father had never read any Bible but a King James Bible a day in their lives. He had been saved before he was five years old and was preaching at the age of ten.

In his late sixties he had over a half a million dollars in the bank, low blood pressure, and a school worth about \$170,000,000. In addition to this, he had led probably over two hundred thousand souls to Christ during his evangelistic ministry. (You should do as well!) I had several talks with him in private, and I remember five of his “sayings.” The first one was this: “The greatest words in the English language are ‘Do right’.” The second one was: “The best preparation for tomorrow is to do what you ought to do today.” The third one was: “Never sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate.” The fourth one was: “Finish the job.” And the fifth one was: “It is a sin to do less than your best.”

And there, couched in common language on a fourth-grade level, sit five of the most profound truths any human being could learn while on this planet.

If everyone “did right,” what problems would be left for mankind to deal with? Why, in the first place, everyone of the globe’s six billion human beings would be saved. Look at 1 John 3:23 and Acts 17:30. In the second place, no one would be stealing or lying or committing adultery. There would be no sex perverts, murderers, rapists, embezzlers, extortionists, atheists; nor loafing on the job or complaining about being “discriminated” against.

I got rather upset one time with a character who was belly-aching about Baptist, Bible-believing preachers running off with their secretaries, stealing church bonds, falsifying Sunday School reports, etc. (which some of them do). He was giving me the impression that my own conduct, as a minister, could never be recommended to mankind in general. Typical line of bull used by all apostate Fundamentalists. I told that jerk, “Listen, fella, if every man on this earth lived like I and my friends live (Don Mangus, Hugh Pyle, Harley Keck, Bob Mitchell, Kevin Fredd, Kyle Stevens, Wally Trim, Glen Schunk, Weldon Jones, Fred Bonam, Herb Noe, Bob Neidlinger, Daryl Coats, Brian Donovan, et al.), America could save \$500,000,000,000 a year. Any man could park his car anywhere and leave it unlocked, with the keys in the ignition, and it would be there when he got back. No one would need a security guard to guard a store or a bank. No woman would be attacked on or off the street. No man would ‘put his wife away’ for anything, including fornication. No man would have to lock his doors or windows at night, and no man would have to lock up

his house if he went on a vacation. No man would have to worry about someone stealing his wife or his Bible from him, and no doctor or lawyer would overcharge *anyone* for rendering them a service.”

Let's see some of you stupid “Humanists” match *that*.

No “New Ager” could get in the “playoffs.”

Men don't “do right.” That is what creates the “modern world”: sin—*wrong doing*.

The best preparation for tomorrow is not *planning*. It is not even *praying*. It is not hoarding money or storing goods or going after an education. The best preparation is doing what you ought to be doing today. If you do what you should be doing today, you will be where you should be tomorrow. One day at a time (Matt. 6:34). “*The right road always leads out at the right place.*” You get off the track when you get behind in your duties and obligations.

Esau sacrificed the permanent (Heb. 12:16–17) on the altar of the immediate (Gen. 25:29–34). God said, “**Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated**” (Rom. 1:13). Judas did the same thing (Matt. 27:3–6). So did Achan (Josh. 7) and Gehazi (2 Kings 5). So did Demas (2 Tim. 4). Paul didn't (2 Tim. 4). It is the “existential NOW” (the “happening”) that destroys lifetimes. You can mess up your life in less than an hour. It has been done. You can waste a lifetime in the wrong calling or profession by one or two hasty, rash, irrevocable decisions. It has been done.

Heaven and New Jerusalem are forever; this earth is not (2 Pet. 3:10–13). A glorified, sinless body (2 Cor. 5:1–4) is forever (Rom. 8:29); the body of this flesh is not; it is worm food (Gen. 3:19).

Bob Jones Sr. said, “*Finish the job.*” My what a shallow, trite statement! How would that match up with M. L. King's “Dream” or JFK's “Camelot” or Lyndon Johnson's “War on Poverty” or Slick Willie's “War on Crime.” How could “finish the job” compete with the political rhetoric of American presidents? (And Communists!)

Well, America didn't finish the job in *Korea*. We lost our shirt. We didn't finish the job in *Vietnam*; we lost our shirt. We didn't fight to win. We had no intention of “finishing.” We didn't finish World War II. We let the Russians beat us to *Berlin* and then keep two hundred million Europeans under a police state for fifty years, and they are still under it.

We didn't finish with *Saddam Hussein*. We didn't finish off the liquor traffic (1933), and we aren't going to finish off the drug traffic. “*Finish the job.*”

I was raised in a German home. The Germans say, “Fire till the last shot and then throw rocks.” Southern Krauts say, “Fight till you're dead and then get up and give it to 'em one more time.” You never *start to quit*; you *start to finish*. Christians begin to read their Bibles through and stop somewhere between Exodus 34 and Exodus 40, or earlier than that (Exod. 22–31). If they make it to 1 Chronicles 4, they quit before Ezra 2. If every Bible-believing Baptist church in America still had all of the people in it who began to attend and then quit when they got “up the miff tree,” churches that now run sixty to two hundred in attendance would be holding two to three thousand people. “**A doubleminded man is unstable in ALL his ways**” (James 1:8). Paul finished his course (2 Tim. 4:7). Christ said, “**It is finished**” (John 19:30). Finish the job.

For years I had, in my home, a large, colored picture of a High School football player sitting on the bench by a water bucket. He is bent over, resting his elbows on his knees; his helmet is hanging from his hands by a strap. The caption on the picture says, in large letters, “*I QUIT!*” You have to look twice at the picture to see the silhouette of Calvary at the foot of the picture, just under the bench. By it are two words: “*I DIDN’T.*”

I was raising Pete, Mike, and David at that time (1964–1970) without a mother for them. Since then (1990–1996), I raised three more sons: Mike, Bryan, and Jeremy. They were taught to “finish the job.”

Every year, for thirty years, we have had at least one graduate (in his late twenties or thirties) stand up at the pulpit, when he received his diploma or degree, and say, “I know this paper doesn’t mean a lot to most people....” (Which is true. We are not “accredited” and, thank God, never intend to be [Luke 16:15].) “But it means a lot to me. You see....” (And here they begin to choke up and sometimes actually cry.) “You see, this is the first thing I ever finished that I started!”

That confession always leaves me confounded. I cannot imagine *anyone* living fifteen years on this earth without finishing something he started. At twenty-one, he should have a list as long as his arm, and at thirty, he should have a list long enough to write on a bedsheet. But I have heard them say the above when they were thirty-eight years old, and I am sure they *meant* it.

The last two generations of Americans (1940–1960 and 1960–1980) weren’t taught to finish anything if it cost them a sacrifice or even made them feel uncomfortable. The *fruit* of ignoring those three fourth-grade words (“Finish the job”) is a divorce rate of one out of two. One party (or both) doesn’t even think of what they are saying when they vow “for better or for WORSE.” When it gets “worse,” they contact a lawyer immediately.

“Old man Bob,” the peanut farmer, was not as dumb as he sounded.

Up until 1985 somewhere, I had to wear a built-up brace in my left shoe. I wore it from 1956 until 1983. After a train wreck in 1983, I never had to wear it again. This is what happened.

Way back in June, July, and August of 1944, I was earning my Shavetail bars at the Infantry School in Ft. Benning, Georgia. It was usually a balmy 90 to 98 degrees “in the shade,” and the famous red clay of Georgia was in everything you wore, including your fingernails, toenails, and hair. We used live ammunition in most of the exercises because we meant business back in those days—you’d better mean business if you tangle with Japs or Germans. They allowed us two percent casualties in combat training.

Our project, in August (two weeks from graduation), was to stage a “rifle platoon in the attack” for a bunch of big brass. To get to the “battle site,” we were trucked out ten miles to bivouac. Then we had to march five miles out to it and five miles back to the bivouac. The battle site was a two thousand yard run down a heavily wooded hill, through a swamp ground, across a field of dry grass and bushes, and up another series of hills. The lister bags didn’t show up before we went out to go through the exercise, so about fifteen to forty-eight men went out “dry” and came back dry, unless they were able to borrow or steal some water. Some of them stole it.

The exercise called for two runs, with live ammo *as a practice* before performing the “real thing” for the brass. That meant two thousand yards up, two thousand yards back, two thousand yards up, two thousand yards back, and then the final two thousand yards up and two thousand yards back. Then we would have to march five miles back to the bivouac area. A nice day of “aerobics”: about eighteen miles. *Eighteen miles*, with full field pack (forty-eight pounds). Instead of letting us stack our packs before the attack, we had to leave them on. That much of it was not real combat “simulation.” I guess they did it to toughen us up. On the second run, we lit up the stubble on the field with tracers, and the wind got the fire going, so it took us an hour to put it out. On the “real thing,” I was going through the swamp for the third time, and while jumping a bad place (for the third time), I landed the wrong way on a log and broke my ankle. I went on in the “attack.”

That night, I had to march five miles back on that ankle. It had swollen to the size of a croquet ball and had turned red and black. I could not strap my combat boot. I limped along behind the column. In a moment the “bird dog” showed up: Tactical Officer Eddie Copeland. He grinned at me, and through gritted teeth, hissed, “Having a little trouble there, are ya, Ruckman?”

“No, sir.”

“*Den catch up with the column!*”

“Yessir.”

Thirty minutes later I was limping back behind the column again; the thing was killin’ me. Up shows the bird dog: “Ankle givin’ ya a little problem there, Ruckman?”

“No sir.”

“*Den catch up with the column!*”

“Yessir.”

I was within two weeks of graduation. I hadn’t come to *quit*; I came to *finish*. I finished, but in so doing I messed up my left leg and ankle. For the next ten years I unconsciously put all of my weight on my right leg when standing, walking, or running. I wound up with a crooked spinal column, a weak left knee, and finally, a left arm and left leg that would go to sleep on me, a left shoulder that would ache, and back muscles that would cramp and stay cramped.

After more than a year of chiropractors, clinics, vitamin B complex, eating bushels of oranges, taking X-rays, and being examined by shrinks, I found a temporary solution. I would cut inserts out of foam rubber and hard rubber and glue them together and stick them into the left heel of my shoes. (Eventually this led to wearing boots, because the inserts had to be nearly two inches high; this caused my heels to “run down” all the shoes I wore.) I wore this “lift” for twenty-seven years.

No one in my family was taught to “quit” anything. I have often felt like quitting, and in the ministry, on three occasions, I officially “resigned” to please the brethren. But the Lord ignored the “brethren.” His pastoral qualifications were something different from theirs, even though they THOUGHT they could read 1 Timothy 3. Evidently, none of them could (see *The Full Cup*, 1992).

I told a G.I. one time (1995), “If you can’t run, walk.” He was running the obstacle course. A little later, I found him sitting on a stump. He was “beat.” Between heaving pants he said, “Lieutenant. I can’t go a step further. I cannot walk a step.”

I said, “Good. Crawl.” (If he had failed to finish by crawling, I would have told him to roll.) “Finish the job.”

They have a joke about a Marine D.I. who came across a hapless “maggot” lying by an obstacle; he had broken both legs. “Sir, I can’t stand up, sir!”

“Okay,” said the D.I. “Don’t waste time. Do push ups!”

The veteran Methodist evangelist had said, “It’s a sin to do less than your best.” (That is found in another form in James 4:17 and Col. 3:23.) Solomon spoke of it centuries ago (Eccl. 9:10).

At the Pensacola Bible Institute, for thirty-two years, we have made ATTITUDE a basis for one-third of any student’s grade in any subject. Daily tests (averaged out) come to one-third, and the final exam counts one-third. One-third is based on a student’s EFFORT: the student’s response to hard tests, long hours, privation, self-denial, lack of income, family problems, and Satanic attacks. Completely ignoring the educational and academic standards set up by every Christian College and Seminary and University in the country, we will pass a student who has made a 64 on his final and averaged 63 on his daily exams. If his attitude through the semester has been a cheerful, cooperative one, accompanied by total concentration and intensive effort, he gets a 90; that is one-third of his grade. If he shows signs of conceit, self-pity, egotism, laziness, or carelessness, he gets an 80. If he is a troublemaker and a show-off and indifferent to reproof and correction, he gets a 70.

I have always thought, somewhere since I was eighteen years old, that EFFORT is the greatest thing by which to evaluate a man or a woman in any activity. When I got saved I didn’t “convert” that conviction. I still place spirituality, dress codes, soulwinning, academic standards, prayer life, enrollment and attendance records, income, station in life, intellectuality, Biblical knowledge and preaching ability SECOND or THIRD to EFFORT. In my own peculiar way of thinking, a man’s EFFORT to overcome sin or fear, conquer a bad habit, meet the requirements for a job or course, follow instructions, keep his family together, get along with other people, please God, and obey the Book are the weightiest matters on earth.

I know you will not find one word about such things in ANY school catalog that comes from PCC, BJU, BBC, Tennessee Temple, or Liberty University; but I attribute this to the lack of experience of their faculties and staffs. They know nothing about LIFE. (See *Memoirs of a Twentieth-Century, Circuit-Riding Preacher*, 1993.) Their lives have been eaten up with running an institution, filling out reports, raising funds, making business investments, strutting their scholarship, trying to increase church attendance, get people to tithe, putting on theatricals, and maintaining “historic positions.” “LIFE” is outside of their domain. They are confused children.

I like to see a teenager playing ping pong in a basement, dive for a ball he cannot possibly return and smack his head on a water pipe (or gas pipe) trying to return it. My idea of “effort” is a young outfielder trying to field a fly that goes four feet over a six-foot

fence. He runs up to the fence, runs UP the fence, and throws himself as high as he can. He misses the ball by three inches, falls, and sprains an ankle. Nice try! Good effort. Give him a hand; forget the batter.

I saw a woman one time who was finishing a marathon race. I do not recall the date of the event or her name. I only saw this woman coming down the “home stretch” and placing fourth or fifth due to the fact that she was completely “out of her skull” and was running on “automation.” I forget whether it was “dehydration” or “hyperventilation” or what, but she was, practically speaking, unconscious. She couldn’t even see the track on which she was running. She wandered all over six lanes and then out into the middle of the stadium, but she finished the job. I would have given her a medal. She had more to overcome than any of her competitors.

My favorite runner was a Cuban postman named “Felix the Fourth.” He wanted to run the marathon in the Olympics, which were being held that year in St. Louis. To get there, he had to work his way over to New Orleans on a banana boat and then JOG to St. Louis. He arrived there about two hours before the marathon started. He arrived wearing his postman’s shoes, which he had put on in Havana. He ran the race. He placed fourth: “Felix the Fourth.” (It’s a good thing they hadn’t chosen me to judge that race. I would have given Felix “the gold,” without a doubt.)

I think that EFFORT is the greatest human attribute on this earth, and without a real effort to please God, you can only counterfeit faith, hope, and charity, and humility. That is exactly what 5,000 Baptist pastors in America are doing today. They are counterfeiting the FRUIT of the Spirit without the ROOT. The root of all pleasing God and manifesting genuine love for God is your EFFORT to please Him instead of yourself or others.

I used to have a half-breed dog named “Shep” (1930). He was half collie and half German shepherd. A Kansas farmer gave him to us because he had gotten into the habit of killing sheep. He slept on top of the front porch roof, just outside the window of my small (8 by 6) bedroom in Topeka, Kansas. Shep epitomized what I have been talking about. He would chase cats up trees—literally. That is, he would run and jump up into the first crotch of the tree, crouch and leap up into the second crotch, and so on. Depending upon the anatomy of the tree, he would sometimes get 15 feet above the ground before he fell. He would fall eventually—every time. He would yelp and limp around about an hour, and go right back to the cat chasing business in a few days.

You say, “He was stupid.” You say, “He couldn’t learn from experience,” etc. That may be true. But man! What an EFFORT! Man, what persistence!

I have watched Shep chasing a speeding car by running along the parkway parallel to the car. Suddenly he would have to “navigate” a sunken driveway, about eight feet across. Without taking his eye off of the car or slacking his speed, Shep would give a mighty leap like a broad jumper; he hardly broke his stride as he hit the other side. On several occasions, however, he fell short of his goal three to six inches. In which case, his rump went over his head, his head and neck slid along the lawn like a Troy Tiller, and he got up limping and yelping. But boy, what an EFFORT!

# Let Us Park Here

## For Awhile

I do not believe that half the educated Christian leaders in America realize the effect that TV SPORTS has had on their congregations, students, and followers. Their Lord told them, **“When ye shall have done ALL THOSE THINGS which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was OUR DUTY TO DO”** (Luke 17:10).

That is what is missing in modern American Christianity at all levels of performance. Modern Christians in America think they are to be thanked, recognized, and even praised for doing what they should have done without thanks, recognition, or praise. When they don't get this, they sulk, whine, gripe, criticize, and rebel against spiritual leadership. They are carnal (1 Cor. 3:3–4). To make them feel better, people like Swindoll, David Jeremiah, Gothard, MacArthur, Narrimore, Bob Jones III, etc., take time out to “minister” to them so they will think more highly of themselves. We call this “rapping” amateur psychology: it deals with “family values,” “life styles,” “role models,” “exciting services,” “sharing,” “challenges to involvement,” “Christ-centered curriculums,” “tensions and depression,” etc.

The truth is, the country is filled with spoiled brats living in Disney World.

Mark Spitz won five gold medals in the Olympics (August 1972). He was a swimmer. He got his medals without cutting his hair. He was in love with his long, flowing, curly locks. If he had gotten a burr hair cut (or a “cue ball”), he could have taken one-half second off of every 100 yards he swam. He knew he could win without cutting the mop. Any swimmer in the AAU (I swam in the “Big Six” for two years; it is now called “The Big Ten”) knows that long hair, when it gets wet, adds weight to your body. Mark Spitz knew it. He just did less than his best because he could win without exerting a maximum EFFORT. I wouldn't hire the bum to rake up my front yard.

I have finished 220s and 440s where I was so tired I could not get out of the pool; I just had to hang onto the gutter. In a mile race (35 laps), you have to have a buddy hold up a card with the lap number on it so you can see it when you make the turn. Coming out of a mile race, you can lick SALT off your arms. I have finished second and third in breaststroke and backstroke events with pieces of bread, tomato, ketchup, and mustard floating out in my lane behind me. I was puking while “sprinting.” I didn't dive in to quit. I dove in to finish. I did my best; that was all I could do.

Now here is what has happened to America's Christian congregations in local Baptist churches. They have been raised on the NFL, the NHL, the NBA, and the “Olympics,” to the tune of something like four to six hours a day, 300 days in the year. Since 1950, a strange thing has happened to sports. With the exception of things like highdiving, skiing, auto racing, hockey, golf and tennis, the sports have been swamped with blacks. Beginning with blacks like Jesse Owens and Willie Mays, baseball, boxing, track,

football, and basketball have been saturated with blacks. With this inundation a major change occurred which evidently ALL OF THE SPORTS WRITERS MISSED.

In the days of Bronco Nagurski, Doc Blanshard, Jack Dempsey, Joe Louis, Bobbie Jones, Babe Ruth, and Lou Gehrig, when a football player made a touchdown, he walked quietly back to a referee and handed him the ball. When a linebacker got through “red dogging” a quarterback, he got up, dusted himself off, and walked back to his own team. A strange thing took place. Runners began to bow to the crowd, wave at the crowd, and do little “hootchy kootchy” dances before the crowd. Tacklers began to get up screaming and running around with their hands in the air waving at the crowd. The term for this is “grandstanding.” In the “Koine,” it is “hotdogging.” It means “Look at ME! Lookee at ME! Did you see what I did!? Ain’t I wonderful?” Now go back and read Luke 17:10 again.

Jackie Robinson would SLIDE into first base because it looked spectacular. The fact that it was slower than running meant nothing; running didn’t LOOK as good. (As a former ballgame radio announcer said during his first broadcast at a race track during a neck-to-neck, “photo finish”: “SLIDE, YOU BUM! SLLLIIDE!”)

Now think a moment. “I caught the pass! I caught the pass! Look at ME! I caught the pass!” (2 Tim. 3:2). But that is why he was sent out there: he was sent out to catch the pass (Luke 17:10)! What has happened? Why, the conceited ass thinks that because he did what he was told to do he should get a reward. He should be applauded (2 Tim. 3:2). Here is a linebacker prancing up and down and doing a belly dance before 50,000 people because he tackled a quarterback. Hey, stupid! THAT IS WHY THEY SENT YOU INTO THE BACKFIELD! TO GET THE QUARTERBACK!

Can you imagine the effect that has on Christians who are watching sports on television? You understand, this rotten stuff has been displayed four dozen times a week from September to February for more than 30 years? Do you know what it will do to your congregation? Branson doesn’t know. J. Vernon McGee never found out. David Jeremiah is in the dark. Perry Rockwood couldn’t even guess. It creates a congregation of “workers” who will not work one “lick” unless they get public credit and recognition for doing it, even where the “work” is simply obeying a Biblical command.

Baptist churches in America are packed with egomaniacs.

Woe be to the pastor who forgets to thank Mrs. Morris for bringing the napkins and letting the church use her coffee maker! Woe be to the pastor who fails to publicly commend a rich deacon for giving money to get a new piano! Woe be to the pastor who overlooks Mr. Owens, who took care of the parking lot during a revival meeting. Woe unto the pastor who fails to brag about Mrs. Harrington’s little girl being an honor student in middle school, etc., etc. I have never seen a church split—and I have seen thirty of them and have been in the middle of at least eight—where FRUSTRATED AMBITION wasn’t the prime mover of sedition. Someone always wanted to be a big shot, and they were not being recognized as a big shot.

This peculiar obsession with public recognition is also due to TV “talk shows,” “celebrity award” shows, “Miss Universe Pageants,” and so forth. Every viewer fancies himself as the star of the show (in psychiatry this is called “association” or

“identification”). Since he is the center of attraction, why should he (or she) not be praised in public? This is American Christian thinking in the 1990s.

Several years ago, the news media had an orgy over an American hockey team beating a Russian hockey team. When that performance was over, the stupid Americans did the dumbest thing they possibly could do. They hotdogged it. They screamed, they danced, they pranced, they yelled, they jumped, they hollered, they cried. They did everything but cut themselves **“with knives and lancets”** (1 Kings 18:28) and thank Dagon for victory (Judg. 16:23).

Do you know what this did? Of course not.

This let every Russian on that Russian hockey team know that the Americans had expected to lose, and they had only won by sheer luck—by “the skin of their teeth.” Every victory yell was a comfort to a Russian. It confirmed his faith in his own team. He had just about whipped the American team, and they knew it. Next time? Next time he would wipe ’em out. He did.

The proper way to handle a situation like that is smile and YAWN as you leave the rink. When you catch the forty-yard pass and run thirty yards to a touchdown the way to handle it is: bend over and touch the ground with the ball (“touchdown”), hand it back to the referee, bow to him slightly as you give it back to him, and then walk to the bench—walk slowly.

Why not? You just did what you were told to do.

What is the big deal? There isn’t any. You only did your duty.

So you gave above the tithe? Well, you should have. So you brought three people to church? Well, you should have. So you led someone to Christ? Well, you should have. What is the big deal? So you cleaned up the church? Shouldn’t you? So you helped out in DVBS and during the Bible Conference? Well, wasn’t that your duty? You worked in the nursery every week? My God, what a self-denying “sacrifice” that was. Boy, are YOU ever to be praised! What? You had to work four weeks in a row!? How did you ever stand it? Quick! Give her the Congressional Medal of Honor at a public banquet at Holiday Inn! What? You gave the best years of your life to supporting the local church ministry, and now they don’t appreciate you any more? Oh, you poor dear! What a “cross” you have to bear! Quick, somebody, give her a martyr’s crown and paint her picture for the Christian Hall of Fame!

THAT is what has been going on in Baptist churches in America since the advent of sports on TV, since 1950. It came with the black athletes. It is now in the white church members.

Many years ago (1964), our classes at PBI were only twelve to twenty students. This gave us time to grade papers in class; each student would call out his test grade for the roll book. I would call out, “Mr. Spinx?”

Richard Spinx would answer “84.”

“Mr. McGraw?”

“90.”

“Mr. Elmore?”

“90.”

I would stop and say, “What went wrong with you? Loafing again?” I knew Floyd Elmore. He had an IQ of 150 and had turned down a scholarship to Harvard to come to PBI. When Floyd makes 90 on a Bible test, he is loafing. He can make a 92 without studying. His grade average for three years was somewhere around 95. That included courses in Church History, Advanced Theology, Problem Texts, Manuscript Evidence, Hebrew, Greek, and so forth.

“Mr. Hollway?”

“90.”

“Mr. Perez?”

“28.”

I would look up. “28? Did you study the lesson, Mr. Perez?”

He was almost sobbing: “I studied all night. I stayed up all night.”

“Did you do your very best to get the material?”

“Yes, yes, yes, I did! I stayed up all night!”

“Well good,” I said. “The next time you call out your grade, call out ‘28!!’ That isn’t a grade to be ashamed of if you have done your best. If 28 is the best you can do, yell out ‘28!!’”

You see, it’s like I said. I don’t look at education, learning, or teaching like any of the top-heavy jackasses who brag about “high academic standards.” I figure such characters are just inexperienced jacklegs when it comes to LIFE. They are egotistical novices.

Effort! Effort! Effort!

“It’s a sin to do less than your best.”

# What Did You Yourself

## Learn as a Christian

Again, I would have to say, “Not very much.” I borrowed from people like Bob Jones Sr., and people like John Wesley, Martin Luther, J. Frank Norris, and Sam Jones. Of course, I learned a great deal by reading the Book through around 140 times, but God wrote that, and the men in it had to learn what they learned through Him. When it comes to what I actually learned myself, without the aid or assistance of any human being on earth, I believe things would narrow down to about four items. That is not much for forty-six years in the ministry, but as I said, “I have never been very original.”

For example, here is something I learned about revivals from someone else.

One day, I was eating lunch with Dallas Billington in the “mess hall” of Camp CHOF, located on what they called “Baptist Acres,” up in Ohio. The Christian campers had just left for a brief rest period before afternoon athletics. The two of us were alone, munching on something or other as a sort of “dessert.” I saw an opportunity had presented itself, so I said, “Brother Billington, you have been in the ministry a long time, over twice as long as I have been. I’m just a greenhorn. I want to ask you something.”

He said, “Well, go ahead. If I can answer it, I will.”

“Well,” I said, “you were acquainted with the ministries of men back in the 1910s and 20s that I never heard. I want to ask you something. Why aren’t we having revival now like we had back in the days of Billy Sunday, R.A. Torrey, and Gypsy Smith?”

“That’s easy,” he replied. “We got too much.”

I waited a few seconds and then asked him to explain that.

He launched out: “When I was a boy, even unsaved people would travel ten to fifteen miles to hear a good speaker. Now, everyone in America has professionally trained speakers in their homes, morning, noon and night, right in the living room. Why would anybody travel five miles to hear a great preacher? Now folks have summer camps and summer and winter homes, and many of them have Winnebagos and camp out anywhere. We have food in the ice box and in the deep freeze, and the government will carry us when we get old. We got too much. This country will never have a revival till it has a DEPRESSION.”

I have thought about that little speech many times since I first heard it, back around 1960. I hope he was wrong, but I am afraid he wasn’t.

At any rate, I did pick up four of my own things on my own trip. The first one is this: There are only two holy things on this earth; everything else has something wrong with it. I found out that the Holy Spirit (who is **“the Lord,”** 2 Cor. 3:17) is holy and the Bible is holy (“The Holy Bible”). Everything else is imperfect, fallible, or marred. There is something wrong with you; there is something wrong with your wife and your children. There is something wrong with your house and your land and your car and your job. There

is something wrong with your church, your pastor, your deacons, and your church members. There is something wrong with your food, your clothing, your school, your city, your nation, and your “background.” I only found two things above criticism: the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Bible. (Most of my compatriots, fellow laborers, mentors, and peers found fault with the Holy Bible. I never joined them.)

I found out that God is holy and **“the words of the LORD are PURE words”** (Psa. 12:6); therefore, a SERVANT should love them (Psa. 119:140). Having had a long familiarity with impurity and filth (see *The Full Cup*, 1993, Chapters 4, 5 and 6), I probably appreciated purity more than my brethren did. They thought they were pure and the Book was corrupt. I never joined them. I scratched them off as proud, stupid little children with not enough experience in LIFE to comment intelligently on “purity.”

Secondly, I found out that “you can’t do RIGHT and get away with it.” I learned that one by constant experimenting (Heb. 5:14) through four decades. If a man—any man—makes up his mind to believe the Book, read it, study it, obey it, and stand by it through thick and thin, he is going to “get it in the neck.” And whether this opposition comes from his wife, his father, his family, his pastor, his relatives, his friends, or “the powers that be” (IRS, HRS, BATF, FBI, OSHA, EPA, NEA, ACLU, the VATICAN, etc., etc.), it will come. Times haven’t changed since A.D. 33 or 3000 B.C. Human nature is no different now than it was when Moses stood before Pharaoh or Micaiah stood before Ahab (1 Kings 22) or when Jesus Christ stood before Pilate (John 18–19).

America has been led blindly astray (1901–1990) by Christian “celebrities” who have gotten by with little or no real persecution. So they have taught the “flock” that you can live for God and stand up for the Book in 1995 and still be everybody’s buddy, with a “sweet testimony” as a “nice Christian”—at least if you are saved. That is a lie. Some of the most despicable enemies of the Holy Bible in America today (and as far back as 1901) are born-again Conservatives, Evangelicals, and Fundamentalists. The reason why the Devil has let them alone is because they are his servants and his most effective TOOLS for inculcating UNBELIEF into the Body of Christ, in regards to the Book. They believe that persecution can only exist in places like Red China, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Spain, or Lebanon. But the reason why they weren’t persecuted here in America is because they sold the Book out for “Scholarship Onlyism.” They substituted Christian scholarship for the words of God. Satan had (and has) no quarrel with them.

The next thing I learned was: “If you can get God to bless a thing, it will work; and if you can’t, it won’t work.” The Germans had a saying like this that goes, “an Gottes seggen is alles gelegen,” which means, “everything depends upon God’s blessing.” I have seen the most carefully laid plans come to absolutely nothing, in spite of every effort one could make to make them work. Conversely, I have seen God produce victory, houses and land, money, souls, and joy out of a heap of rubbish. I have come to the conclusion that if any man wastes time worrying about something about which he cannot get God to worry, he is just wasting his time and God’s time.

And finally, I learned that “God is the only One who knows what He is doing.” To put it in Deutsch: “Gott weiss was er tun, und nie andere.” This will take some explaining.

For forty-two years I have been holding what pastors call “Open Bible Forums.” An

Open Bible Forum is where you stand up before a group—anywhere from 20 to 200—and let them ask questions about ANYTHING. I tell them that “cold turkey”—that is, “winging it”—I will give them a verse of Scripture to answer their question within five seconds after they ask it. Of course, to completely answer some questions, it will take five to ten verses, but I will give them the first one in five seconds. So far, I have only been stumped about ten times in forty-two years, while conducting over 400 Open Bible Forums. On those occasions, it took me more than five seconds to find the first verse.

But if anyone were to ask me why God deals with some saints the way He does specifically and why He does not deal with all other saints in the same fashion, I would have to confess ignorance. For “love nor money” I cannot explain why God took Lester Roloff and Buddy Cargill home and left us Robert Tilton and Oral Roberts. Not to save my soul could I tell you why God takes some Christians home after they have suffered from cancer less than three months, while others go through years of suffering as the hospital bills eat up their family’s houses, lands, and “assets.”

I have never met a Christian, here in America or in Germany, Mexico, Canada, Korea, Russia, Austria, or the Philippines, who did not believe that “God makes no mistakes.” The belief that He does is strictly the belief of humanists, who are, as anyone knows, nothing but Xeroxed copies of atheists. All humanists believe in killing humans in order to prove that “man is the measure of all things.” God is not a factor for “kingdom builders.” They are going to do it without Him (see *The Sure Word of Prophecy*, 1960). No humanist believes that any “God of love” would let the world run the way it has run for 6,000 years (and will continue to run till the Lord Jesus Christ returns; Acts 3:19-21). All humanists think they love humans more than God does (see *God Is Love*, 1995). That is why they all use BATF, SWAT, and DELTA teams to kill those who disagree with them and have always had prisons and mental institutions for those who don’t obey them.

All humanists think THEY are the “measure” of all Christians, Buddhists, Moslems, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, and Deists.

So here is a young man staked out near a rice paddy (Vietnam, 1966). Someone has skinned him alive, from his neck to his waist, including both arms. He had been screaming all night, but no one would have dared go out and help him under the combat conditions that night. He is 20 years old. He is now whispering for someone to kill him. No medic could restore his skin; he will be stone dead in less than three hours.

What terrible thing did this young man do to deserve a death like that? If God knows “**the hearts of the children of men**” (1 Kings 8:39) and gives to “**every man according as his work shall be**” (Rev. 22:12), what moved Him to ordain THAT kind of a death on a twenty-year-old boy? Explain it. You couldn’t unless you did one of two things: 1. Have faith to believe that God knows what He is doing AND NO ONE ELSE DOES, or 2. There is no God in charge of life and death. All UN-EU “humanists” take the second “option.”

In the Book, God is in charge of conception, birth, life, growth, punishments and rewards, chastisement and blessing, poverty and wealth, health and sickness, WAR and DEATH (Prov. 22:7; Heb. 2:3–12; Deut. 32:39).

“Heaven is the place for understanding; earth is the place for trust.”

If I were to ask you this question, how would you answer it? “Haven’t there been times in your life where if YOU had been God, you would have handled things differently than God handled them?” That is the touchstone. That is the key to show the true nature of “man.”

The answer (coming from an honest man) would be, “Yes, I certainly would have!”

Then haven’t you said, in effect, that YOU know more about what is right and what is wrong than God does? If there is a God, haven’t you compared your wisdom with His and decided that He “goofed”? (To put it in “the original verbally inspired Koine ‘autograph!’”)

There are probably more than 5,000,000,000 on this earth who don’t realize that that proposition (and the answer to it) was recorded in writing more than 1,000 years before Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle were born. It is discussed in the book of Job (1800 B.C.). Read Job 1, 2, 31–42.

Denying the existence of God doesn’t solve the problem; it just makes it worse. And accepting the existence of God, while denying his righteousness and wisdom (Job 40) accomplishes nothing; it only produces self-righteousness (Job 27:6), and Jesus Christ said that that was THE sin that damned mankind (John 16:9; Rom. 10:1–3).

I was in the home of a Christian man one time who was dying of cancer at fifty-nine years of age. He had a wife and three children. He had gone from 180 to ninety pounds in about two months. He finally died of starvation at eighty pounds. Something was wrong with his stomach, colon, and intestinal tract; he could not even drink water. He had to take liquid intravenously. He suffered (and slowly starved to death) after about three months.

Why?

Why did God forsake him (Matt. 27:46)? Why did the food give out (Num. 20:5)? Why did God put him in the mess in which He put him (Exod. 5:22)? Why didn’t God kill him instead of letting him suffer (Job 6:11–17)? “C’mon, Ruckman! Give us an answer from Scripture in five seconds or less!”

I couldn’t if my soul depended on it. I am not that smart.

Why did God take the baby? I don’t know. Why did God put you \$40,000 in debt? I cannot tell. Why did God cripple your wife in a car accident? I have no idea. Why did He let the house burn down when you had no insurance? Don’t ask me. I don’t know. Why did He let your only son get hooked on dope? I plead the Fifth Amendment. I do not know. “Gott weiss was er tun, und nie andere.” God knows what He is doing, and nobody else does.

I only know that God cannot make any mistakes (Rom. 8:28–34), for He is perfection: perfect holiness, wisdom, love, righteousness, and justice. (See *God Is Love*, 1995.) Somewhere down the line (even as a born-again child of the King), I must credit my “contrariness” to my own depravity. I simply cannot understand His dealings all the time. If I would have handled my personal problems differently than God handled them (1949–1989), I would have been WRONG, no matter how well it worked out for me, according to my own opinion. That is the crux of the matter. That is the heart of ALL “matters.” Either you are on the throne and He is on the cross, or you are on the cross and He is on

the throne. (See Rom. 6:11–14; Col. 3:1–5.) All kingdom builders (EU, UN, BATF, NEA, DEA, EPA, FEMA, CIA, ACLU, NAACP, etc.) place themselves on the “throne.” They crucify the Lord of Glory (1 Cor. 2:8)

Rest assured, if there is a God in Glory, they will get what they so richly deserve. They are entitled to it; they worked for it.

# So, What Do You

## Really Know?

Not a whole lot.

I can handle a Greek or Hebrew lexicon without any trouble. With time and a magnifying glass, I can decipher the block capital uncials in a photostat of Sinaiticus and Vaticanus in the New Testament. I can read a book a day at 500 words a minute. I know how to grow a fair garden (Lord willing!) of squash, potatoes, tomatoes, beans, cabbage, onions, peppers, cucumbers, okra, and peas. I know how to play roller blade hockey and ice hockey, and at 74, I can still play racquet ball and water polo. I know how to “split kindlin’,” haul rocks, run a tiller, hoe the row, rake leaves, trim trees, clean out a wading pool, barbecue meat, cook breakfast, drive a car, handle a motor boat, tape and record sermons and music, draw, read, write, paint portraits and landscapes, preach, teach, and raise six Christian sons who believe the Book and have never been arrested for anything. I know how to put up bamboo, wood, and wire fences, clean out a septic tank or grease trap, mend a mullet net, light a fire in the fireplace, and how to win sinners to Jesus Christ. That doesn't put me into the “genius” bracket, but it enables me to “navigate” without sinking.

In the past, I knew how to shoot craps, play five-card draw, bridge, and seven-card stud; how to throw a knife, garrote a sentry, break into a locked house or automobile, and fire “expert” on rifles, carbines, anti-tank guns, pistols, and mortars. I am not a real musician, but I know how to play a guitar, bass fiddle, and tuba well enough to play in a band if anyone gets one up.

My “hobby” is net-casting for mullet. I know how to do that. I learned how to go fishing with Noble Boyette (Pensacola, FL), a veteran of World War II.

But if the Book is right, I do know some things that are much greater and more important than anything I have listed in this book. According to the Book, I know:

1. **“Whom I have believed”** (2 Tim. 1:12).
2. The commandments given to me by Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 4:2).
3. That the Lord is coming **“as a thief in the night”** (1 Thess. 5:2).
4. What prevents Satan from showing up in the flesh as the head of the UN, USSR, USA, and EU (2 Thess. 2:6).
5. That I should follow Paul as an example (2 Thess. 3:7).
6. That the Old Testament **“law is good”** (1 Tim. 1:8).
7. God, as the Author of the Old Testament (Heb. 10:30).
8. That a carnal Christian will lose his Millennial “inheritance” (Heb. 12:17).
9. That soulwinning is the most profitable occupation on earth (James 5:20).

10. That I am redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:18–19).
11. That the present earth will be here 1,000 years AFTER the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and then it will burn up and be renovated (2 Pet. 3:7).
12. THE TRUTH (1 John 2:21).
13. That Jesus Christ is RIGHTEOUS (1 John 2:29).
14. That when Jesus Christ returns I will have a BODY just like His (1 John 3:2; Phil. 3:21; Rom. 8:29).
15. That Jesus Christ came here to take away MY SINS (1 John 3:5).
16. That I am a new creature because I **“have passed from death unto life”** (1 John 3:14).
17. That God abides inside my body, with His Holy Spirit as an evidence of it (1 John 3:24; 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; Eph. 4:4–6).
18. The difference between TRUTH and ERROR (1 John 4:6).
19. That I have ETERNAL LIFE (1 John 5:13).
20. God hears me and can answer my prayers (1 John 5:15).
21. That Jesus Christ has come and has revealed the true God to me; and although I am in Him, I am living in a world that is controlled and operated by Satan (1 John 5:19–20).

And that may not be as much as the scholars, philosophers, doctors, lawyers, kings, priests, and “think tanks” think they know; but you’ll have to admit, it hardly puts me into a classification with “agnostics.” I know at least twenty-one things that Mandela, Hillary, Gore, Clinton, Freeh, Reno, Gingrich, and the Supreme Court judges don’t know. Let them make up their own list of the things that they have learned. They never learned those twenty-one. They will never learn them till they obey Jeremiah 6:16.

**“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.”**

What I have learned in this life that was worth learning, I learned from obeying that verse.

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