



"STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT"

by Jim Stauffer

One of my greatest shortcomings is recognizing when the iron is hot. We say strike while the iron is hot. Apparently the phrase comes from the craft of the blacksmith who heats the metal and then must bend and mold it to the desired shape while it is hot and pliable.

As children of the God in heaven, as gospel preachers and as elders and leaders in the church we need to develop a recognition of when the iron is hot.

The Bible provides us examples that specifically describe men who through prayer and study became "pliable" or ready to hear God's word. Two that come to mind are the Ethiopian of Acts 8 and Cornelius in chapter 10. They had been brought by prayer, study and meditation on the scriptures to a point of readiness for the gospel. On those occasions, Philip and Peter preached to them the word of God and they were baptized into Christ for the remission of sins.

How many times have each of us failed to recognize such an opportunity? Don't expect guidance in the form of angels or visions today. The revealed word of God is complete and able to accomplish the task. (**1 Cor. 13:8-10; 2 Tim. 3:16,17**)

It then becomes your responsibility and mine to put that revelation to work as we encounter people who are as the "hot iron", ready to be molded.

There seem to be many reasons we fail in this regard. First, we must prepare ourselves for the task. A blacksmith can shape a piece of iron into a horseshoe by striking while the iron is hot. I cannot. I have had no training and would be very inefficient if I were to try. The scriptures, however, will train me and prepare me to accomplish the spiritual task of striking while the iron is hot. (**2 Tim. 2:15 Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth.** As a result of such diligence, I will then be able to teach what needs to be heard by the one who is ready.

But preparation is but one of the obstacles faced in such matters. Many times we do not even recognize the iron is hot. Some time later when reflecting on the day's activities the light bulb goes off and we realize we missed an opportunity to teach one in need. Why does this happen? Could it be we are too tangled in the affairs of the world and as a result spend far too much time thinking of temporal things? Paul offers the proper perspective for such. **Col. 3:1 If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth.**

Probably one of our greatest failures is in pre-determining who we think would be receptive to the word of God. Rather than sowing the seed throughout the entire field, we attempt to determine the good soil from the bad. In the parable of the sower (**Luke 8**) the seed was sown in all soil. The good soil became apparent as it nurtured the seed (word) and allowed it to take root. **Luke 8:15 And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience.** We must resist the temptation to become soil inspectors rather than sowers of the seed. Our task is to spread the seed wherever opportunity affords.

Sowing the seed indiscriminately to all soils is a reflection of our trust in the power of God and His word. **1 Cor. 1:18 For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God.**

So, let us commit ourselves to first, prepare by a study of His word to sharpen our skills and efficiency. Second, we must make sure we are focused on spiritual matters foremost in our lives in order to recognize the opportunities. And finally let us refrain from determining in advance who is an appropriate subject for the gospel.

Then let us "strike while the iron is hot".

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

Warren E. Berkley

A regular reader of this column asked me to say something about the providence of God. What a vast subject, and what a small grasp I have of the whole!

Our word "providence" conveys the idea of providing; the quality or state of being provident. The providence of God generally means, the divine care, guidance and sustaining power of God over the universe and the affairs of men. I find it helpful to think of God's providence in terms of five realms where Scripture specifically has something to say: PERMISSION, PERFORMANCE, PREFERENCE, PROVIDENCE AND PROHIBITION.

There is that which God PERMITS. Paul said, "...I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits," (**1 Cor. 16:7; Jas. 4:15**). God "allowed all nations to walk in their own ways," and the Hebrew writer said, "and this we will do if God permits," (**Acts 14:16; Heb. 6:3**). This is clear. In the exercise of His wise providence, there are things God allows or permits.

Also, there is that which God PERFORMS; He makes certain things happen, performing certain actions. He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust (**Matt. 5:45**). God gives to all life, and breath and all things (**Acts 17:25**). We can affirm, therefore, that God performs certain actions: He makes, He sends, He gives.

God PREFERS certain things. He desires or prefers that all men come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved (**1 Tim. 2:4**). Many are not interested in His truth, and He does not force them to obey it. But He certainly prefers that all men listen to and give favorable response to His truth. He desires that all men repent, and He prefers that there be no offenses among us (**2 Pet. 3:9; Matt. 18:14**).

There is that which God PROVIDES, in response to our petitions. If we believe what is written in passages like **1 Jno. 5:14,15**, we know God responds to pray. He says He does, and we can regard those provisions of God as part of His providential dealings (**see also Jas. 1:5,17**).

Then, there are things God PROHIBITS. Certain things are not allowed by God, and this affirmation assumes His activity in the affairs of men. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will NOT ALLOW you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it," (**1 Cor. 10:13**). God, for instance, did not allow the devil to do certain things to Job. Likewise, God does not allow temptation to come into our lives which is beyond our ability to resist! (God not only prohibits irresistible temptation; he "makes" the way of escape.)

These are things I firmly believe about the providence of God. He permits certain things; He performs certain acts; He prefers certain things, provides for us in reply to our prayers, and He prohibits certain things. I entertain no difficulty and no hesitation in regard to the fact of God's providence.

NOW, if you demand that I interpret the details of God's providence from day to day and event to event, I WILL NOT ACCEPT THAT CHALLENGE! A storm occurs and wipes out a whole community, killing several citizens, and the questions follow: Did God cause it, or just permit it? If God caused it directly, why? What did He have in mind? Was this just an indirect consequence of living in a world corrupted by sin? I cannot answer these questions. And, the fact that I function as a gospel preacher does not afford me any depth of insight into the mysteries of providence. The fact that I firmly believe in divine providence does not qualify me to interpret the details!

I know God answers prayer, even though I may not know exactly how He does it. I believe God has the ability to use various influences, circumstances and people for my good. There isn't any doubt in my mind, He has the ability to work among nations. He can use weather, illness and even wicked behavior for His own purposes. But when it comes to exactly and specifically what God causes, controls, permits or provides, I am not capable of knowing all about that. And, I don't need to know all about that. What I need to know

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is my God and my duty to Him; my Savior and how to respond to and honor Him.

Let us not be ashamed to proclaim the fact of God's providence. But let us be exceedingly careful what we impulsively affirm, claim or attribute to God. There is the very real danger of "words without knowledge" (**Job 38:2; Eccl. 5:2**).

Warren E. Berkley

IF YOU WERE TO DIE TODAY, WOULD YOU GO TO HEAVEN?

If you were to die today do you know for certain, without a doubt, that you would go to heaven and be with the Lord forever? Jesus says, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (**Matt. 6:33**). Our number one priority in this life must be to go to heaven. Nothing is as important as this. We cannot afford to miss heaven.

Our Lord tells us in **Matt. 7:13,14** that only a few people will go to Heaven, but the vast majority will be eternally lost in the burning fires of Hell. This is not a pleasant thought. But all of us will make the choice as to where we will spend eternity. The only way, to even grasp how long eternity will be, is to think that after we have been in Heaven or Hell a billion years, eternity will have just begun.

Our soul is the most precious thing we possess. "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (**Matt. 16:26**). Our soul is worth more than the whole world put together. If we lose our soul, we lose all.

Jesus wants us to pay attention to what He is trying to tell us. He says in **Matt. 13:41-43**, "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom (the church, that's us) all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Our Lord is trying to warn us if we will only listen. He has already paid the awful price for our salvation and He doesn't want to see it wasted.

For a child of God, sin in our life will keep us out of Heaven. Because of unrepented sins, our name will be taken out of God's Book of Life. "God

shall take away his part from the Book of Life and from the holy city" (**Rev. 22:19**). Has your name been taken out of the Book of Life? If it has then this is a very serious matter. "And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (**Rev. 20:15**). God wants to forgive us. As a Christian, how do we get our name put back into the Book of Life? "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (**1 Jno. 1:9**). Jesus has promised, "Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life" (**Rev. 2:10**).

If you are not a Christian, how do you get your name into God's Book of Life, so you can be saved and go to heaven? Our Lord says in **Lk. 13:3**, "Except you repent you will likewise perish." Jesus also says, "Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will confess before My Father who is in Heaven" (**Matt. 10:32**). Our Lord then tells us, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved" (**Mk. 16:16**). If a person misses Heaven, he will only have himself to blame.

By - Ron Boatwright

The Missing Link

The "missing link" so much sought is some brute creature to connect man with some still lower animal. But it is not just one "link" missing, but a score or more "links" entirely "missing" from their chain. In fact their "chain" is a score or more separate "links". Not even any two of their "links" are connected. They list more than 20 species or forms of animals through which they suppose man has passed in his development from a single cell life form into man. Among many other supposed ancestors of man they list fishes, reptiles, birds and various mammals until man is produced. They as greatly need "links" to connect the different species of animals all the way down to reptiles and below, as a "link" to join man to some animal that is supposed to be his immediate parent. What a task to find these "missing links" either among the living or among the fossils! And what a skillful artist is needed to connect these undiscovered "links" and form a "chain" that will bear the light of reason!

***The above paragraph is taken from Chapter IX
of CREATION OR EVOLUTION, written by***

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And to think those "missing links" are the same sticky problem for the evolutionist today as then.

Eph. 2:19 So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;

1Pet. 2:9 But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

We conduct in home Bible Studies

We offer Correspondence Courses

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LILLIE KEECH, ALMA
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GOSPEL MEETING WITH
RANDY HARSHBARGER WILL
BE APRIL 20-23. IT DOESN'T
HURT TO PLAN EARLY AND
SET THOSE DATES ASIDE.

OUR BIBLE CLASS ON SUNDAY
AND WEDNESDAY IS
CURRENTLY IN ZECHARIAH AS
WE TAKE THE MINOR
PROPHETS IN ORDER.



What Must I Do To Be Saved?
Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17
Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6
Repent of sins - Acts 17:30
Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10
Be Baptized for remission of sins
Acts 2:38
Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10