

## Problems (side 1)

In the lineage of Abraham is found in the city of Heran, so it does appear that this is indeed the area from which the family of Abraham, in one way or another, sprang and dwelt. Anyway, because of the change last year, the Ambassador to the International Cultural Foundation was the sole financial sponsor in terms of monies as distinct from staff, because we were the only ones who didn't have the kind of bureaucracy that would prevent a quick decision, a change. The Crest Foundation necessarily is a larger institution with bureaucratic red tape as most have, and they were not approached. Dr. Buchelotti felt it was inadvisable to approach them, so we bore the entire cost of the expedition. This year they have agreed to support it as a part of the broader perspective of Mesopotamian archaeology, and therefore happily at least they will bear half of the cost, which doesn't necessarily minimize hours. It only means that the further on you go, often the larger the expenditure is. I am happy to say that this is possible. I hope that our budget will at least enable us to do the minimum committed I'm mentioning it because if you were to look at a map you probably have seen, as some of you brethren even showed me a copy of, the story of the excavations at Ebla, where such names as Abraham, Sodom, and Gomorrah, and many of the other biblical personalities, in this case probably the names, not the individual, but there's no reason to assume that only the Bible characters had these names, that they were invented only for Bible people, that they are in fact the names of people of that language group and that period. These names have been discovered, geographic terms, beyond what I've mentioned, in the area of Ebla. Now, Ebla and Terca are related as the northern and the southern cities that you would go through normally if you were leaving Mesopotamia and coming into Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. It is possible that some interesting finds will also occur at the excavation where we are involved. The Italians are involved in the northern one at Ebla, and the University of Turin is working closely with UCLA and with us at the excavations at Terca. Initially, the excavations didn't have to go anywhere, but what you would see tablets on the surface of Terca, and very probably next year, that is this present year, this next period of excavation, we will find tablets pertaining to some period, probably not later than the patriarchal on the basis of the evidence that we know. Now, what may come of it? People ask, well, what will you find? And the answer, of course, is since we are digging, we don't know yet what we'll find. There would be no use paying for what we already knew would be there. We could merely publish it in advance and never have to turn a spade. God has reasons why, perhaps, we are involved in the one science in particular that lends itself to information in terms of the validity and the historicity of the biblical record. And I think it would be very important that the right kind of contacts are made. Now, we didn't ask, we didn't decide on this. We thought, well, the other came to us, we'll dig there in Mesopotamia to have an even balance between the Israeli and the Arab world, but the doors closed. And yet, within a matter of weeks, the doors opened in Syria, which is far more important to us than Iraq would be, because Iraq doesn't play a major role. I hope that sometime this year, that some, perhaps myself, I would rather not be the one to do it, I would rather have Mr. Rader and Mr. Armstrong be able to be there, because the American ambassador, as well as the Syrian government at Damascus, is very interested in this expedition. And therefore, it is possible to make this kind of contact, you see, in this part of the world. Now, how much we can do to bear witness to prevent political explosions remains to be seen, but at least we have to recognize that it's one thing to pay money to get on television and radio and a newsstand in some countries, but in others, if we had not involved ourselves in archaeology, we would not be in Israel. That's just the fact.

Now, in some cases, if we had not involved ourselves in putting money for educational purposes, as in the Hill Country of Thailand, into the King's project, we wouldn't really have any reason to maintain contact with the King of Thailand. So these things vary. I received a call yesterday, indirectly through one of our staff here who first received it.

One of our brethren on some assignment will be going to Thailand, and he wanted to know if he could visit the area where the Ambassador International Cultural Foundation supports the schools for the Hill people. I tried to relay the message that there are only two ways of getting there. One is by military helicopter, and the other is on horseback.

You don't just take a taxi. The Hill Country is totally cut off from the rest of Thailand purposefully. I will repeat this, although some of you do know, but it illustrates through whom we work and how the men who are responsible, such as the King, works.

The Thais in the lowland, that's the bulk of the population, own land and have the sense of ownership, as also do the Chinese communities in the large cities. However, the people who came from Yunnan and China into the Hill Country of Thailand over the last three centuries, or more, are nomads. The peoples of the Hills of Southwest China are nomadic, and they move into these other areas. They speak languages related to Chinese, but nearer Thai, and they don't have a sense of ownership. They move from area to area with the slash and burn method of agriculture. What the King would like to do, and what his purpose is, and what our role is, and is this, to educate them to the point that they have a sense of ownership of land, because this is the way that a people can take root and not be uprooted.

Now, it will take some time to educate them, to give them a sense of ownership of land, then you can open the roadways, build highways, and have communication between these people and the lowland Thais. But if we did it otherwise, or if the King decided well the way to educate them is to have all kinds of communication. What would happen is that the Thais would move in, settle on the property, and soon the other people would all be dispossessed because they have no sense of ownership. They only move from place to place, and the Thais would occupy and own all the unoccupied land, and when the other people want to move back, because theirs temporarily must rest, they have no place to go. And so the King decided that the area must not be open and can only be reached by military helicopter through the air, can't be reached by bus or train, if you've seen the roads, the only way to get there is by animal back.

But on the other hand, it is a similar area, as Mr. Ames will tell you, in the hills, the chin hills of Burma, where the work of God has gone so far that we have dozens of people without really ever turning a finger, other than somebody receives a piece of literature and shares it with others.

The God has a reason why we happen to be involved not in some areas of the world, but in others.

He takes the weak of the world to confound the mighty. He hasn't called the main Burmese, he hasn't called certainly the Thais as a people, but we are working interestingly with the hill people in these areas, either through the King of Thailand or just through our literature.

We have the church only in Burma, we have no, there's no such influence in Thailand, this is an unusual situation. But our impact in this area is certainly going to be known, and God is laying foundations not just for today, but for the world tomorrow.

Anyway, it is very nice to know that there are individuals who respect in this sense what we are doing, and it's a contrast, of course, to some things that are published in this country about the work. But Jesus mentioned, of course, that a prophet is often without honor in his own country, where we

might not be known by contrast in other areas of the world, such as this, we really are, and there is no objection. There has recently appeared an article, I presume somewhat derogatory, as articles like to be, about the work or some aspect or personality of the work in a magazine called Penthouse. Now, I would like to say a word, not about Penthouse, but about just the practice of reading derogatory statements.

I think that we do have individuals who like to know what other people are saying about us, to the point that they would like to know the gossip that they haven't yet heard.

It is probably wiser to recognize that there are some magazines where we have had very positive contacts with, and I believe that the two installments in the month of April in Christianity today, which is somewhat different from Penthouse, there will be two articles which I can recommend, because the man himself was allowed, that is, he asked and we granted him permission. I talked with him, Dr. Meredith talked with him, Raymond McNair talked with him, and most certainly he spent a great deal of time with Dr. Kuhn, Mr. Ted Armstrong, and others in the Hall of Administration.

And there are articles that I think I could, at this moment in advance of seeing it, recommend on the basis that at least you have a solid idea of what writers who are acknowledged, professional writers in the world of theology, think of us as distinct from scandal sheets that are not worthy of our interest and indulgence.

I hope we take note of some thoughts like that when these things come out.

Much of the work that we do in the office throughout the day and off campus, Mr. Tkach and myself in particular, Mr. Ames handles other matters on behalf of the local church administration also. All right, Mr. Rice has his business hours mostly, is dealing with what we call people problems rather than administration.

And I would like to address today a question to all of us as to why we have the problems we have with ourselves as individuals. What is the nature and what is the cause and what is the solution of what we call personal and interpersonal relationships? And this is important because we are approaching the Passover season and it is very difficult to perceive people being in the kind of attitude they should with all the problems that there are. Now, I do know that some of you apparently have no personal problems with yourself, only with other people, right? Happily, some of you don't have the latter and are working on your own and the only reason I want you to stay here so you can help the others who haven't reached that point.

But without any question, we have a great many difficulties that we need to look at with greater care. Now, if what I say happens to reflect on you, it is absolutely unintentional, except as I have learned about it, or I don't know about it, but it happens to be your problem too.

There's no intention to indicate who's who. I certainly have no reason to even mention names, but it's probable that if you were to read the book of Proverbs on the one hand, that you would think Solomon were writing about you on occasion.

So if there is any similarity between the living and the sinner, it is unintentional.

But it's just a reality. We just have to bear these things in mind.

I would like to be able to open in a sense your life to you, to enable you to see yourself.

And some of you, of course, will immediately see other people's problems in this manner, and hopefully we'll be able to resolve many of the difficulties that we have.

In Genesis, to link up both Old and New Testaments, chapter 17, verse 1, we are told that God asked Abraham to walk before him and to be perfect. Jesus, in Matthew, chapter 5, the last verse, said, Be you perfect as your Father who is in heaven is perfect. So it is important to note that what Abraham was called to do, what Jesus called Christians to do, do not constitute separate religions, not Judaism versus Christianity. They constitute, in fact, the same truth, which is that man was put on earth to develop the character of God, to be perfect as God is.

Jesus adding the thought that our perfection is not merely walking before God as an individual, our perfection is patterned after the example of God himself whose mind is revealed in the Bible.

And so we are asked to be as the Father himself in heaven is. Now by analogy, then we should assume, without any further question, that children should imitate their parents as parents imitate Jesus Christ who set an example in the flesh of what God the Father is like in terms of how he dealt with problems, in terms of how he looked at problems.

One of the great difficulties is that we use other people as an example without comparing that example with the Bible. The important and most important thing is not that you join the church because you liked our social fellowship. We were learning in 1972, in 1973, I was amazed at the number of sermons given by those who have left the fellowship of the Church of God who said that the reason they came among us is that they saw that there was something among us that wasn't to be found anywhere else, and they liked that social fellowship so well they sat down in our midst and enjoyed it. And they misconstrued that for repentance, belief in Jesus Christ who paid the penalty for sin and submitting to him as the head of the church.

We can reflect on this. We have had many who appreciated the spirit with which the program has gone out, the openness with which we explain portions of the Bible, the example of brethren.

But we must recognize that it isn't merely the company of others that determines whether we are Christian. I have quoted to you, not from a direct reading recently at all, but when there was a publication that came out, I guess it was in 1974 after many had left, small percentage, but many in numbers, sadly, some people wrote to the editor of this publication stating what to me was the source of the problem of many.

I will quote, at least in my words, as I remember it, I think it was a woman who wrote, she said, now when I was a member of the, and then there was blank, blank, blank church, this is the, of course, Worldwide Church of God, she said, I tried, notice, I tried to do everything the church asked us and taught us, and I felt condemned. It just seemed that everything that I was asked to do seemed a burden. And now that I know the truth about the law, that we don't have to keep it, and since I've left them, I feel so free that I can now be myself.

I want you to think about this. You see the problem? Here were people who were trying to do it in their own strength, people who had no arguments initially against the truth. That is, there was no hostility in terms of arguments, and they sat down in our midst. They were among us, but they were not of us because they had not come to the place of repentance, which means examining yourself, comparing yourself with what is in the Bible, deciding that you have not measured up to it as you come to see it laid out in the Bible, asking God to forgive you through Jesus Christ of the mistakes that have been made, the sins, the oversights, the acts of commission, the areas of failure that's omitted that should have been done, to ask God to make something new of you that you're not what you were before, that you want to be something different. You want to be like God, not like you were in those areas where, indeed, you have seen yourself quite different from the way God would think and act and speak. Then you ask Him for His Spirit, which He has promised to those who obey. Now,

you see, the problem here is that there were people, apparently, who might have regretted, I didn't say repented, I said regretted some things they did, but very few. What they were really most pleased with was the nice fellowship, and they were happy, perhaps, to change a few things to conform to the fellowship of the Church of God, so they now fit in our midst.

That is, maybe they wrestled with smoking, maybe they didn't have it as a problem.

And a few things they might have worked on, and beyond that, they were sorry, they regretted a few things, but they were really happy because most of you are nice people to use this simple term.

In other words, they couldn't find as large and as interesting a group of people who aren't back-biting anywhere else, and so it was a pleasure to be here.

Now, if you think I'm talking about other people only, just keep listening.

But they never came to the place where they listened to the advice and examined to see whether their attitude conformed to the example of Jesus, the prophets, the apostles, and the teachings of the Bible anywhere. They never came to the place where they had to wrestle with themselves, and were in a sense set into a spiritual spin. I'm using that as an analogy for a reason that I'll explain in a moment, where they suddenly discovered how much they didn't understand and how much they needed to correct. As Mr. Armstrong would have said long ago, that when you begin to look at the Bible and see yourself and begin to think about these things as distinct from merely enjoying fellowship, going to musicals and dances and sports and the Bible study and Sabbath services, inviting somebody over for dinner and going over there for dinner, when people get their minds in the Bible, their minds are suddenly spinning by contrast to the stability they had before in ignorance, because suddenly they see how much has been an error that they have taken for granted.

But in reality, most people who left never went through that experience, because the Bible wasn't that important where they had to unlearn.

And that's the beginning of being begotten of God, that is to begin to unlearn and to submit and to acknowledge that you've been an error both in practice and in thought and indeed.

I use the analogy of spinning because science has found that before an egg can be impregnated, the sperm set the egg to spinning, and each of the sperms try to enter and at some point in time, one makes it. And in reality, when we begin to wonder and doubt, well, have I taken this for granted? Have I taken that for granted? How come I came to believe this? What did my parents teach me? Well, I learned this in school and is that what's in the Bible? Until you go through a period where you think you're mixed up. You probably haven't, and I'm not necessarily talking to people reared in the congregation throughout their lives. I'm especially talking to people who come from the outside or come from church homes where Christianity has revealed in the Bible is of recent origin. Here, there are too many who have not been interested in examining the Word of God. They have just accepted fellowship. They accepted baptism. They accepted repentance and confused it with regret. Worldly sorrow works death. Repentance means you turn around and do something different that you never did before. David is an example of what repentance is.

He sinned without any query at all. But he changed. He had to acknowledge, and he gave great occasion for the enemies of the Lord to use his example against the truth of God. And God had to have that written. That's David's example. It's all there. But repentance in David's case was acknowledging that he was wrong and not doing that again. Now, unfortunately, the proof for those who don't sin like that, the proof of whether they are forgiving, really depends on whether they like

to ask more and more. Well, now, how did David do that? Who else was involved? Or have you heard? And there are many who would have wanted to know a lot more than is even in the scripture.

That's like it is today. And many who are of that nature, who are seeking to publish things against the work, are of that nature and that reflects their attitude. For those who have been reared, as some of you have, most of your lives in the church as young people, you may not have so many doctrinal problems like individuals who have been misinformed, misinstructed, mistaught, who come to the truth of God. But you will have to face up to whether your attitude, that's the heart and core of the problem, whether your attitude reflects what is in the Bible. I can say that sometimes we ask our children the simple question. Now, we notice attitudes. That's very important. Now, the scripture says, honor your parents.

It says, you shall not bear false witness. What we really have to do if you've been taught the truth doctrinally in many areas is, however, to reflect very carefully on whether you really think you're honoring or you know you're not and are only kidding yourself.

Whether you really bear true witness or whether you hide or cover up.

Now, there are a lot of people who have hidden their problems for years, and we have one explosion after another in the life of individuals or families.

Usually, the reason it comes out as an explosion is the fact that the individuals involved either are totally blind to their problem, which is rare, or in fact knew there was a problem, but were afraid to face it. And being afraid to face it, you covered up. You gave a public image that everything was fun. But privately, it's something else. Now, we have, of course, many of you who know that there are people who have problems of our congregation or other congregations doesn't matter. And interestingly, the usual thing is that as ministers, we learn about their problems from you. And as Mr. Tkach has quoted to me, the first question normally is, but did you talk to them about it? No, I'm only talking to you.

If you want to help somebody who is making a clear mistake or a sin, you go to that person and you discuss that person's problem with him in private, not to his wife or her husband or children or parents who are not directly involved. Now, that's an area in which probably many who may not have their own personal problems to any great extent fail. I don't say all because I think some of you have helped others. But very often, unfortunately, it is expected that the minister will go to the individual who has a problem and not someone else who has seen and can solve it at the level at which we are as human beings. That's where it ought to be solved.

Then if it can't be solved, maybe you and your wife ought to go. And ultimately, perhaps it belongs at the level of the ministry. But many of our difficulties come from the fact that we don't even face up to those things that are seen among ourselves. Now, when we look at people with problems, we usually find, and if I'm quoting somebody, it's because it happened to be a good expression.

I don't mean to quote you and nobody else knows who you may be if it happens to be your words, and maybe these are words only from other congregations that I have heard.

Many people, especially in marriage, as distinct from business, child-rearing, but in marriage, I think this is a classic illustration. Well, I don't believe he could ever change, or I don't believe she will ever change. She's just like that.

Now, suppose he is, or suppose she is, what's the problem right there? It's in the attitude of the person who thinks the other can't change.

That's where part, if not half, of the problem exists. When you are convinced that the other cannot change, you have measurably shortened God's capacity to work through you in terms of your attitude that may indeed be the cause of the other person's problem. Mr. Armstrong, long ago, many others have said in the church that if two people have problems with each other, the first area that each one must work on is himself or herself and not the other person, that each one must individually seek to change himself or herself and not say that it is the other person who must change first, then I will. Now, we hear this. We say, well, that's logical.

So when is she going to change, you know, or when is he going to change? And somehow, within a second, our mind is back in the same rut. Or as someone said not long ago, well, if she will ever change, it'll take a miracle.

Yes, it probably would. But that's what God is here for. Now, the person who believes that the other individual cannot change unless it takes a miracle is probably doubting God's capacity, though probably the assumption would be it's the person who's at fault and is out of contact with God. But you really are doubting God's capacity, whether you know it or not. Therefore, the issue of faith is involved. So I would ask the question, if you think that your wife can't change unless it takes a miracle and your wife does feel that there are problems with you, what about you? Can you change? And the answer in this particular instance was, well, I'm just like that. That's probably true. There ought you to be. Now, this is a conversation we have. This is not made up.

Well, I just can't take her any longer. That's probably true. The way you are, you can't.

And the way she is, I could hardly blame you. So let's begin to solve the problem. But when you each say, well, it would take a miracle to change me, that's exactly what's required.

I think we're kidding ourselves when we just let these things ride by. You know, some people don't provide the same kind of verbal grist that I can use here. Because this particular instance was, I thought, very effectively expressed. And I think it says itself more readily than many a conversation which we have had. Because sometimes there are people who look at it this way who are not really accusing each other. And I've told you about people who are accusing and can only see the evil that other people are doing. But sometimes we don't have people who blame the other, we just have people who really are short of faith in God to change the individual.

If you live with a woman who's nagging, the fastest way to solve the problem, apart from leaving, is to ask God to give you more capacity to absorb the problem.

And ask him, in the meantime, if he wouldn't mind working elsewhere too in solving it, but at least give you the capacity to wrestle with this problem like Jacob had to wrestle.

And the other person, and usually both people do come to us about it, it's not just one, we're not dealing with outsiders. God doesn't ask you to live with an outsider who has no contact with God. You understand that? One of the teachings of the church is that you are not asked to live at war with your mate just because the mate's an unconverted person and you're married to him or her. You're asked to live at peace. And since you're likely living at war in instances like that, and God is not changing those hearts if he hasn't called them, why God asked you perhaps better just to terminate it and you are free to do so, because initially the law forbids you even to live with someone like that, but Paul allows it. But this is quite different from two people who are in the congregation who sit among us, who come to us with their problems. See, that's the majority. The majority of problems don't involve the unconverted and converted, they involve only those who should have been converted. The issue is whether we're willing to let God perform what is inevitably a miracle. And

when you decide that it's going to take that and it would take a miracle, you're really saying you don't want it to happen. That's what you're saying, whether you know it or not. Then you're going to be just like you are and it is akin to stubbornness. It's akin to saying I am not going to let God do through me what he can do. And therefore the inevitable question is, had you become begotten of God, and are you now in a state of hostility that will lead to an abortion in advance of the proper time of birth, or are you dealing with the question of a person who hasn't even seen what it means to repent and to break down and to submit to God? Could be either. Probably the majority is the last. Sometimes it is the other, and the other is a very sad and dangerous situation. It's one thing for those who were among us, but who were not of us to leave. It's a greater tragedy for those who have no one and pasted who have rebelled and left and have nothing but the smell of spiritual death around them till the third resurrection. Now we have situations that involve business, indebtedness, alcohol, wearing of children, divorce proceedings, child custody, going to courts.

These are all problems that exist in the work. In the church, I should say.