

Dear Friends,

A study of the priorities set out in Scripture is most valuable and essential for believers. As those redeemed by the precious blood of the Son of God, we do well constantly to bear in mind that our priorities are to be set neither by our personal feelings and desires, nor by the dictates and enticements of a godless society which is dead in trespasses and sins, but by the will of our God as it is revealed in Scripture.

Some of the godly priorities in Scripture are set out in explicit and succinct fashion. Thus, in the Sermon on the Mount, we are told to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness with the assurance that thereafter all common necessities of life will be added to us (Mt. 6:33). There are other priorities no less vital, which are expressed in less explicit ways. One of the most instructive studies of Scriptural priorities is that which considers the volume of verses devoted to certain subjects. For example, if modern secular man were writing about his ideal for a wife, there would be much said about how she looked, her sense of humor, and the tolerance she would have for his hobbies. None of this is so much as touched on in Scripture's description of the excellent wife found in Proverbs 31. There, it is her virtuous character, her devotion to the Lord and to her family, her diligence and industry which are extolled.

Perhaps the most striking concentration of Scripture, as seen by the number of verses devoted to the subject, is upon suffering, affliction, and death. Scripture gives us but a cursory summation of Job's years of peace and prosperity both before and after his trial. The vast bulk of the Book of Job is concerned with that godly man's living death. We know hardly anything about Saul of Tarsus, except that he was a prominent Pharisee intent on persecuting the Church. Scripture focuses not on his considerable natural endowments and attainments, but rather upon how much he suffered for the name of the Lord (Acts 9:16).

The supreme example, of course, is Jesus Himself as His life is recorded in the Gospels. In each of the four Gospels an approximate proportion of reporting on the various stages of the life of Jesus prevails. There are brief, but significant accounts in some of the Gospels regarding the birth and infant life of Jesus. Luke records for us a telling incident when Jesus was twelve years old. But for the thirty years of the earthly life of our Lord prior to His public ministry, Scripture is almost silent. Even so, the suffering and humiliation of the Redeemer are evident, even in these brief notices of His early life. The Gospels concentrate almost entirely upon the last three years of Jesus' life. Furthermore, there is about a third of each Gospel devoted to recording events of the last week of His life, leading up to His death on the cross.

Why this focus on suffering and death in Scripture? Is there an inherent morbidity in the Word of God? When we consider the ones who are suffering and dying, and the results of those deaths, we find the answer to these and similar questions regarding this priority in Scripture.

Let us first recognize that in this life, and in the account of redemptive history recorded in the Word of God, there are three main types of suffering. First, there is the penal suffering meted out by God's justice against the wicked. Then, there is corrective, or disciplinary suffering administered to believers for their sanctification. Finally, there are the unique redemptive sufferings of Jesus. Scripture warns against the first class of sufferings, but treats in depth and detail the latter two classes. By our study of the detailed treatment of the sufferings of the righteous, we find the phenomenon which at first seems strangely perplexing to us, namely, that those who are most godly suffer most, not least. Daniel and his friends, Job, Paul and many others—all suffered because of their devotion to the Lord. Yet, far from such suffering destroying them, it purified and strengthened them. The supreme sufferer was, of course, the perfect and holy Son of Man. Yet what glorious and extensive fruit resulted from His redemptive afflictions! The sufferings of the redeemed serve for their sanctification; the sufferings of the Redeemer served for the salvation of His people.

When we consider the results of the sufferings of the believers, we find that benefits always result from the deaths they endure. Those who have been led into furnaces of affliction by the Lord, who have had communion with the Lord in those furnaces, and have been delivered from them by the Lord, will be forever changed for the good. No longer will they fear anything or anyone, except for their reverent fearing

of the Lord. No longer will they be so self-regarding, knowing that they have been regarded and counted precious by their potently protecting God. No longer will they be fascinated by the enticements of the world, or intimidated by the threats of the world. For those who have tasted the strength and sweetness of the love of God in Christ Jesus have done so most deeply and lastingly not in their being spared from suffering and death, but by their being thrust into such tribulations by the Lord, so that therein they might discover themselves to be more than conquerors in Christ.

The death focus in Scripture is really a concentration upon the only way that those already dead in sin may be called to life eternal and abundant. It is the world which is morbid and moribund, not the Word of God. We do well to remember that cross bearing is the essential requirement for true discipleship. Thus, when afflictions and crosses entailing deaths to our fortunes, our hopes, even our lives, come upon us, let us not fear and seek to flee them as though they would destroy anything essential to us. Let us instead embrace them with the faithful expectation that they will lift us progressively out of our deadly slumber, and quicken us spiritually. Through such sanctifying deaths, we are raised to new heights of life in, service for, and love of our good Shepherd, who leads us through such valleys of death's shadow precisely so that we may know that our last and most dreaded enemy has been reduced to a shadow by our Shepherd's death for us.

Faithfully yours,

William Harrell

Dear Friends,

I find that increasingly I hear or read of the need for theology to be incarnational. If by this, those urging the need for an incarnational theology mean that the Word must become flesh in our lives, that our doctrine must be actualized in deeds, then I agree with them. Such an emphasis is precisely that which we find in the letter of James, where we are told that a profession of faith without the practice of good deeds is a dead profession.

However, from some of the advocates of incarnational theology I perceive an erroneous emphasis. For it is true neither to the incarnation nor to theology when men assert that the Word merely should become flesh, but only when it becomes godly, sanctified flesh. A theology which merely affirms sinners and confirms them in their sin, without transforming them, is no true theology.

The phrase, incarnational theology, is taken from the truth that God in Christ assumed our humanity. But do all advocates of this theology, as it is propounded in our day, grasp by faith the true Christ? I fear that for many, except in terms of bare designation, the Christ they know and proclaim bears little, if any, resemblance to the Christ of Scripture. It is not unusual for us to encounter, for example, people whose theology becomes incarnated in and through them in a fashion foreign to the Christ of the Scriptures. Hence, we find advocates for the indulgent Christ, who came not to save sinners from their sin, but to indulge them in it, confirming them in sin by perpetual and uncritical affirmation. For such advocates of the indulgent Christ, nothing matters except the knowledge that God loves them. Little or no heed is paid to the terms of loving discipleship, wherein Jesus Himself tells us that if we love Him we will keep His commandments.

There are other variations of conceptions of Christ that curiously resemble modern western man with all of his worldly fascinations and stylish neuroses. We may encounter advocates of the casual Christ, whose supreme concern is that men always be comfortable; or the cool Christ, whose aim is to sense and set popular trends; or the celebratory Christ, who is proclaimed in sketchy, impressionistic preaching, and praised in emotive and sentimental songs. These variations of incarnational theology reflect man, more than they do the true God/Man of Scripture. The common feature of these erroneous conceptions and misguided ministrations is how much like man—how greatly appealing and easily understandable to man—such a Christ is. It is far different with the true Christ of the gospel.

One of the most striking features we find in the genuine Jesus, who was God in flesh, is how incomprehensibly strange He is to us and to our world, at least initially. A fair and honest reading of the Gospels and their accounts of His words and deeds will ever show Him to speak and act in ways entirely unexpected, not only by twenty-first century readers, but also by the men of His day, including His own closest disciples. When, in all of the gospels, do we ever find Jesus saying or doing what anyone would have then expected or now expect?

The profound strangeness, which characterizes the true incarnation, is unavoidable for two very good and necessary reasons. The first reason is that Jesus was not simply a man like us; He was and is the God/Man. He is exceedingly sympathetic, loving, warm, and approachable, so that, for example, the beloved disciple could lean on His breast, hearing with his ears and touching with his hands the very Word of life. But Jesus Christ is at the same time God, whom the disciple, Thomas, could rightly fall down and worship. True incarnational theology precludes a casual and giddy approach to this Christ. Casual and merely sentimental presentations of this Christ do not truly represent Him. Secondly, as the Son of Man, Jesus was sinless. Thus, while He was in every respect one of us and like us, in this most essential respect He was not at all like us. Never did He or does He entertain a sinful thought, utter a sinful word, or commit a sinful act. The true Christ, because He is both fully divine and truly human, and because He is without sin, is truly the unique man, the prototype of a new creation, not a pal to the old creation.

Here some may object that such a Christ is too high, too otherworldly, too heavenly-minded, too inaccessible for sinful man. In answer I say that a Christ we sinful men can reach and think we understand

and master is useless to us. The truth is that Christ is infinitely beyond our comprehension and reach. But He also condescends to us. His condescension, however, is perhaps what makes Him most strange to our sinful apprehensions. For we would never expect that our need was so great that it necessitated God becoming a Man, living a perfect life, and dying an excruciating death for us. Yet, He did all of that, and did it so perfectly that we are compelled to conclude that it is, after all, not Christ and His ways that are strange, but we sinners who are the strange ones, made blind, perverse, hard hearted, darkened in understanding—all by our sin. The true Christ has come into the world, not to confirm us in our fallen estate, not to make us more comfortable and competent in this cursed world, but to lift us out of this world made a wilderness by divine curse. He came to transform us from sinners, estranged from God, to beloved sons of the Father's household. Only a theology which proclaims this Christ can truly be called incarnational. Let it be and remain our theology.

Yours in reverent rejoicing,

William Harrell

Dear Friends,

You will appreciate that much of my time is devoted to the endeavor of applying the Word of God to individuals, as well as to the gathered congregation. The public ministry of the Word is accomplished through preaching. The private application of the Word to individuals, or couples, or families is done through counseling. I have a single tool and sole power source at my disposal in such ministry, whether public or private. The Word is my tool and the Holy Spirit my power source. There are connections between preaching and counseling. One such connection is that the more faithfully, deeply, and vitally I preach, and the more faithfully, deeply, and vitally you attend to such preaching, the less need there is for counseling. However, preaching, even when it is perfect (and there have been perfect sermons preached—just not by me!) does not do away with all need for counseling. The public ministry of the Word can so penetrate the hearts of people and reveal such deep need to them that they must apply to the preacher for personal attention and counsel. Thus, for example, we find Nicodemus going to Jesus in private, after the Pharisee had been duly unsettled by the public preaching of our Lord (Jn. 3).

With counseling, there is not only more personal attention sought and given, but there is a give and take format not found in preaching. This personal give and take affords me more detailed understanding of the individual's situation, and I am enabled to help make more precise application of the Word to him in that situation.

It is not only the individual who benefits from this private give and take. As individuals, couples, and families have come to see me over the years, I am enabled increasingly to detect common patterns in their problems. This enables me to make more quick and accurate diagnoses of needs and prescribe more effective solutions not only in future counseling situations, but also in the preaching of the Word. For, without disclosing persons or details, I find that my accumulating experience of close and personal application of the Word fits me with more penetrating and sympathetic understanding of the needs, fears, and failures of the whole congregation. Thus, I believe that whether the Word is being ministered publicly through preaching, or privately through counseling, we all eventually profit from the connection and interactions between these two modes of ministry.

I have said all of this to come to this point: If there is any single, recurring, and most bitterly experienced theme which has emerged through my nearly two decades of counseling it is that of people failing to seek true healing and that from the right source. By this I mean that it is quite common for folk to come to me with some deep and serious hurts. It is also common that many of them merely want relief from the pain of their hurt, not deep, lasting, total healing. Indeed, I often find that some of these hurt souls have played the physician with themselves, thinking that they have understood their hurt and know best how to relieve it, and they come to me simply seeking validation for an agenda they have already adopted.

It is never surprising for me to learn that people hurt people. But it seems to surprise most wounded souls who seek only relief, that someone would hurt them. We should expect to be hurt by others, given that they are sinners, not inclined to be perfectly considerate of us. We, too, are sinners, inclined to view our inconsiderations toward others as tolerable specks, while we regard others' words and deeds which hurt us as monstrous logs. From such a wrong perspective, it is easy for us to fall to the temptation to think that our wounds are incurable, and that the only remedy available is our seeking compensation from those who hurt us. Wounded souls are thus tempted to seek their relief in the form of their exacting painful payment from those who have hurt them. This determination leads those who seek counsel to try and pervert the counselor into the instrument through which they will extract their revenge. It's all wrong. The diagnosis is wrong. The contemplated course of treatment is wrong.

It may seem just, and, to a degree, a relief, that those who hurt us should themselves repair the damage. The problem is that they cannot repair what they have broken. Sin is so terrible that it pierces through those against whom we sin until it finds its true target, namely, the living God. That is why David confesses that

his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah were ultimately against God alone (Ps. 51:4). Our sin makes us experts at hurting each other to devastating degree. Our sin also makes us incapable to repair the damage we cause. Thus, when wounded ones look for those who have injured them to repair the damage, they set an impossible task for the offender, and, at the same time, confirm themselves in their hurt and consequent anger, for their expectations will never be met.

There is, however, a Great Physician. When others hurt us, we must turn to Him alone for our healing. Jesus will not give us mere relief, but He will effect deep, thorough, and lasting healing. Then, instead of our seeking revenge, we will be gracious to and forgiving of those who have offended us. Of course, Satan—the liar and murderer—tempts us not to seek our healing from Jesus. With infernal reasoning, the devil tells us that once our hurts are healed, the fires of our anger will be quenched, and our offenders will be let off free. When that temptation comes, we must rightly reckon how suicidal it is, and choose life over death, for ourselves and for those who have offended us. No one who has made that right choice has ever yet told a single counselor that he regretted it.

Yours in the healing grace of our Savior,

William Harrell

Dear Friends,

It is easy for us to be spoiled in this day of machines and medicines. We can, by driving in our cars, cover distances in an hour that took people a century ago a day of planning and plodding. Many of our aches and pains and even disturbed emotional states can be relieved by pills. How can these blessings spoil us? They can do so when we wrongly assume that all of our needs can be met by mechanical or medicinal intervention. Consider, for example, how we moderns are inclined to understand the Apostle Paul's prayer that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened so that we might better know the riches we have in Christ (Eph. 1:18). We are mightily tempted to read such a prayer through the grid of our modern conveniences, and thus conclude that the apostle's prayer is like a pill, uttered once, then taking immediate and automatic effect in our lives.

What should we understand by the phrase, *the eyes of your heart*, and the process involved in our having them opened? Obviously, the apostle refers to our capacity for perception. But do not the eyes of our head see better than an inward organ with no physical capacity to react to visible energy emissions? Why does Paul ask God to create within us such an absurd and redundant capacity? The answer, of course, is that he is not referring to physical perception only, which apprehends how things appear outwardly. Rather, he is asking God to enable us to perceive things essentially. We do this by our living according to an inward process of reckoning upon certain truths unseen by our eyes, but revealed to us by God's Word. Such is the perception of faith.

But then, we may wonder, why does Paul associate this spiritual capacity with the heart? Is it not by our minds that we grasp, understand, and live out the truths of God's Word? Here our apostle simply follows the direction of one of our Lord's beatitudes: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Mt. 5:8). Our minds may tell us what we apprehend of God's Word and world, but our hearts prompt our minds either to put on blinders or to focus more fully upon the world in the light of the Word.

It has been said rightly (by whom I cannot determine) that to Him who is everywhere men come not by travelling, but by loving. We see this truth manifested in Mary's sitting at the feet of Jesus, humbly and gratefully taking in His words of truth and love, while Martha was distracted by lesser things which she deemed to be priorities (Lk. 10:38-42). Later, Mary anointed the feet of Jesus, doing service to Him which so profoundly and accurately portrayed the essence of the gospel that Jesus commanded the commemoration of her deed wherever the gospel would be preached (Mt. 26:6-13; Jn. 12:1-8). Mary came to understand Jesus and His mission so accurately, not by her travelling to be near him physically (the twelve were with Him in that sense more than was Mary), but by her loving Him.

It is that faith, working itself out in love, that Paul prays for believers to have. But here is where our being spoiled by our comforts and conveniences plays its ruinous part. We are inclined to think that Paul's prayer is a pill we swallow and, due to its fast-acting and inevitable power, we soon find ourselves profoundly loving and knowing and serving our Lord. It does not happen that way.

How were Paul's eyes of his heart opened? It was by the things he suffered (Acts 9:15,16; 2 Cor. 12:7-10). Indeed, the inner three disciples all suffered greatly for Jesus. Peter and James were executed, while John was banished to Patmos. Is our suffering somehow essential to our seeing rightly? Consider John on Patmos. He may well have envied Peter and James their being thrust by death into the nearer presence of Christ. But John, the beloved disciple, was called to endure such a protracted course of trials not because he did not love Jesus, but precisely because he did love his Savior. Those who love the most are called to bear most cost in following the Redeemer, whose love prompted Him to give His all for us. In the course of such sufferings, our love does not diminish but grows.

John was on Patmos, but he also was in the Spirit there (Rev. 1:9,10). Patmos was a place of extreme affliction. It must have been to John's sensitive spirit like a scorching summer heat, drying his soul and draining it of vitality; or like a freezing winter blast, causing fruit, leaves—all signs of life to be stripped from him. But although in the extreme heat or cold the tree appears dead, it lives. The hidden roots are

forced to deeper levels, there to draw vital nourishment. The roots of John's soul were forced on Patmos into the Spirit in a way far deeper and more vital than when he served as the esteemed pastor in his charge at Ephesus.

It comes to this: when we pray for our own spiritual insight, or when others pray for our insight, we are not giving or taking an easy pill. We are rather committing others and being ourselves committed to a process of suffering. The commitment is to desert times, drying times, to furnaces of affliction in which our foliage may be blasted off, for a season, but in which we find the eyes of our hearts opened to see the Son of Man, who communes most intimately with us in the furnace of affliction. No one who has undergone this process, resulting in his forever perceiving the nearness of the Lord and the greatness of His wisdom, love and power, has ever considered the pain to outweigh the gain.

Yours seeking to see Him better,

William Harrell

Dear Friends,

We are told in Scripture to trust in the Lord with all our hearts (Prov. 3:5,6), and in all circumstances (Phil. 4:6,7). The results of such trust for us are an attitude of tranquil composure, and a course of action which is felicitous and fruitful. Such results are promised to us by God's Word, and those who do grow in their trust in the Lord testify to the validity of the divine promise. Yet, we are all mightily tempted to fret with anxiety in things great and small, rather than trust our Lord with all practical as well as pious matters. I cannot find such fretting anywhere commended in Scripture. Nor have I ever heard anyone commend the blessed and enabling potencies of anxiety or the sweet fruit issuing from fear. It is vital that we understand Scripture's call for us to trust as a call for our reliance upon our living, personal God, who is, through Christ, our loving heavenly Father. We do not trust in our own endowments, attainments, or possessions, nor do we trust in any man, men, or human agency or invention. If we are to experience the peace which passes understanding, we must commit ourselves and all pertaining to us to the One whose love for us is immeasurable and unchanging, whose wisdom is perfect, and whose power is absolute.

Some choice fruits issue from our trusting the Lord. I have mentioned peace, which is not mere freedom from anxiety, but is full and positive in its substance. Such peace is drawn from the assurance that whatever our state or circumstance, we have the very best our heavenly Father knows will serve—because He causes it to serve—for our good (Rom. 8:28; Phil. 4:11-13). How blessedly pacifying it is to our troubled minds and hearts to know that if our God withholds what we desire, we are better off without it; and if He gives us some affliction to bear, we are not cursed, but blessed and enriched by that painful gift.

The peace resulting from our trusting God is a fruit sustained by many roots. Besides our confidence in the divine wisdom, love, and power, we derive composure from our knowing that when we trust our Lord in all things and at all times, He is honored by our vital reliance upon Him. What an incomparable blessing it is to us when we know that we are doing that which is good, right, and glorifying to our God. Driving instructors, on the road with novices behind the wheel, frequently must issue verbal instructions and may have to apply the brakes themselves, because the novices cannot be trusted rightly to react to all situations they encounter in traffic. We can be like nervous driving instructors with our Lord, trusting Him to a point, but always reserving for ourselves an override power. That is not honoring to our Savior, and men of the world take note of it and feel justified in their despising of our Lord, whom we treat, by our mistrust, as though He were inept.

Another root of peace resulting from our trust in the Lord is our knowing that our Lord is pleased when we place our total reliance irretrievably upon Him. Our knowing that our confidence in the Lord pleases Him should fill us with fortifying delight, for if we love the Lord, and we should, we will take our pleasure in our pleasing Him.

In addition to this manifold peace, gratitude grows in us as a result of our trusting our God. We become thankful because we know that at any time what we have or what is withheld from us results from our God's perfect giving to us. Though we often fail to keep God in all of our thoughts, He never fails to keep us in all of His thoughts (Ps. 40:5; 92:5; 139:17). If He is not pouring out his wonderful blessing upon us, He is storing it up for us, and planning when best to rain it down upon us (Ps. 31:19; Jn. 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 2:9).

Perhaps the culminating fruit of our trust in the Lord is joy. The Lord gives us joy not by His pandering to our fallen, misguided, and inadequate desires. Instead, He showers us with heavenly treasures and treatment designed to expand our capacity rightly to appreciate and lastingly to enjoy His priceless, celestial gifts. Thus, our desires become conformed to His doings in our lives, and we find ourselves increasingly marveling at how He ever treats us and gives to us far above what we could ever ask or think.

The peace that results from our knowing that we are secure in the wisdom, power, and love of our God, the gratitude, and the joy which are inexpressible, come only from our trusting our God. Such sweet and precious fruits never come from our fretting. Let us, then, determine to deepen and expand our trust in the Lord. Let us, if we find anxiety to be our predominant disposition, ask, seek, and knock until we learn how

to see and rely upon the absolute trustworthiness of our Lord. Then we shall have tranquility worth enjoying and sharing with others.

Faithfully yours,

William Harrell

Dear Friends,

As the twentieth anniversary of Immanuel Presbyterian Church approaches (and, coincidentally, my twentieth anniversary as your pastor), I have been asked by several to consider writing some reflections on the two decades of ministry which we have shared in our church. I do not intend so much reviewing the past in this letter, though it would be ungrateful of me not to write something about what lies behind us and what has brought us to where we now are as a people of God. What I do want to concentrate upon, however, is a sort of taking stock of where we are as a fellowship of believers, and where I am as a pastor. This concentration will be with a view to our future, so that, Lord willing, when we arrive ten, twenty, or more years hence, we shall have as little cause as possible to regret how we have spent the years to that point.

Regarding the past two decades, I join the ranks of all who have reached such milestones in remarking on how quickly the time has passed. This realization that our days fly swifter than a weaver's shuttle (Job 7:6), is serving to sober me, while, I trust, not making me morbid. I find myself more determined than ever to pray for you all consistently and with loving sympathy, to preach more faithfully, to serve more diligently, and to speak and act more with an eye to our mutual edification.

So much water has flowed under the bridge of Immanuel in twenty years. We have endured trials. For some, they have been inconceivably more excruciating than could have been imagined when we set out to serve the Lord as an assembly of His people. I dare say that for those of us who were here at the beginning, our church, personal, and family lives have not turned out as we expected. We have come through many tribulations. But we have come through our trials far better than we were before we entered them. There have been triumphs, too. We have rejoiced to see Immanuel grow, as children of the covenant have been born and have grown up amongst us. We have grown by the addition of fine believers who have transferred into our membership. We have also been privileged to see some come to us dead in sin and stay with us having been made new creatures in Christ. When we experience the soreness of members transferring from us, we have tasted the sweetness of their doing spiritual exploits in their new churches. These things are the Lord's doing, and they are wonderful in our sight.

By God's grace we have determined, and so far succeeded, to maintain our focus on the ministry of the Word and prayer. We have served together as a people long enough to see fads and fashions rise and fall in the wider Church. While many others have multiplied programs, we have concentrated on the one thing the Word charges us to do, namely, preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:1-5) and thereby feed the lambs of God. This has resulted in the production of singularly high quality Christian character in our people. This focus on the ministry of the whole counsel of God saturated by prayer remains our determination now and for the future. We find the eternal truths of the Word to be more contemporary, more relevant, and more vital than all of the novel movements which claim supremacy over the old paths. Our Lord has been causing us to mature spiritually, so that we are not like babes tossed about by waves whipped up by changeable winds of faulty doctrine.

For myself, I confess that the more I mature as a pastor, the more selfish, in a way, I have become. What I mean is that in my early years as a minister, I thought my failings were few, my faults slight, my sins small and relatively under control. It was everyone else who had the big sins and failures! In that delusion, it was largely others' sins which were my concern. Now I find myself conscious of the excellencies of Christ's sanctifying work in the members of Immanuel, while my own sins seem to me enormous. What a log I have come to see is in my own eye! What a speck in yours!

I also feel my pastoral responsibilities more keenly now than ever. This does not mean that I dread them—the reverse is rather true, as I find increasing delight and privilege in them. But those passages of Scripture warning that teachers incur a stricter judgement (Jas. 3:1), and that leaders must give an account for the souls entrusted to them (Heb. 13:17), do weight upon me with increasing gravity. Thus, I take this opportunity to ask your help. I do try to know well the condition of the flock, and to tend to those in need as I am enabled to do so by our Lord. However, if you find me henceforth making more frequent and penetrating inquiries regarding your spiritual welfare, please know that I do so out of love for you and with

an eye to that day when I must give account to our great Shepherd for my under-shepherding of His sheep. Please, also, do not hesitate to come to me with any spiritual problems or concerns you may have. The earliest possible treatment of such things usually is most successful. Let us uphold one another more in prayer, and not miss the opportunities to tell each other and show each other that we love one another in Christ. Thus far we have come by God's help. May He who keeps the best wine for last take us onward and upward much farther.

Yours still running the race,

William Harrell

Dear Friends,

The Apostle Paul writes of three cardinal virtues: faith, hope, and love

(1 Cor. 13:13). Of these, we are rightly told, the greatest is love. The critical importance of faith is also well established by Scripture and acclaimed by believers. However, hope is often the virtue undervalued and overlooked. Indeed, judging by the expectations of many Christians, as well as their counsel to others, we are tempted to believe that hope is a disappointing, if not dangerous, thing we do well to rid ourselves of, rather than one of the most precious and empowering graces we can have and exercise.

How often do we hear even sincerely believing parents telling their children, whose excitement has been aroused over some pleasing prospect, that they should not get their hopes up? At worst, such counsel is parentally self-regarding; that is to say, the parents giving it do so to control their children's excitement and maintain their own relative peace. At best, such counsel represents an endeavor to shield the child from that disappointment which can become greater when the anticipatory excitement has been fanned by hope. It is not, of course, only parents who tell their children not to get their hopes up. We tell ourselves the same thing: "I must not get my hopes up regarding an anticipated delight, for God may not allow me to have it."

This counsel, however well-meaning, is faulty and doomed to failure. It is faulty because it is not based in the least upon Scriptural revelation, but rather derives more from Stoicism and asceticism. Those determined to flatten their own and others' hopes are really very much like the one talent man in the parable. They know (i.e., they wrongly suppose) their God to be a harsh taskmaster. Thus, they do as little as possible, venture as little as possible, hope and expect as little as possible, thinking that to be the only way to survive in the world dominated by such an exacting master.

Not only is the hope flattening counsel wrong, it never achieves its own paltry aims. Hopes arise, and this counsel comes, masquerading as wisdom and true spirituality. And how do any of us respond to such counsel when we are foolish enough to accept it? We do not save ourselves or our children from the disappointment of raised and then dashed hopes. We imbibe, or have our children imbibe, the poison of hopes aborted before they ever have a chance to develop and be dashed or realized. We subject our hopes to suicide; we murder our children's hopes for them. Thus, we do not minimize bitter disappointment, but increase it, depriving ourselves or others of the enjoyment of pleasurable anticipation.

Legalism plays into this hope killing mentality. We feel that we do not deserve the thing hoped for. We treat ourselves and our children as though we were in a state worse than that of probation—that we are guilty and undeserving until we prove ourselves worthy. The truth is that we do not deserve any of the blessings of the Lord. But that is not the whole truth, which is that our God has graciously intervened in Christ. By that blessed intervention we find ourselves treated not as we deserve, but rather as Christ deserves. Accordingly, we should never tell ourselves or our children when hopes begin to form, that our realizing them will depend upon how well we or they behave. Rather, we should accept and endeavor to inculcate into our children the notion that in Christ the response to our hopes and desires is yes and amen.

Here, though, it is important that we make some vital distinctions. Many times what we call hope is really that counterfeit hope, presumption. Our presumptions we should mortify, and if that is what parents mean to say to their children, they should say so, without blackening the good name of hope through a confused use of its name. Another vital distinction we should make is this: our hope, like our faith, and like our love, never issues from lifeless things, but rather from our living God. That is why it is so wrong for us to mute or murder hope. Such action betrays a lack of trust in and love for the Lord. We suffer not because we hope too much, but because we hope too little.

Let us not fear to entertain delightful expectations of things great or small. When we know, and help our children to know, that our hope is in the Lord, we can let our hopes soar. For He often gives to us our perceived desires, and it is no small part of the blessing that we anticipate it in joyful hope. When our Lord seems to deny our desires, we should not feel that hope has betrayed us. Instead, it is when our desires are

delayed or dashed that we should most hope. For if our hope is truly in the Lord, we know that He is not a harsh taskmaster, but rather He is the only Master of bringing life out of death. Rightly exercised, hope never disappoints us (Rom. 5:5), but sustains us with the patient and sure expectation that our deepest desires will surely be satisfied in a time and way that will exceed by far what we could ask or think.

Yours in hope,

William Harrell

Dear Friends,

The mortification of sin is a duty incumbent upon every believer throughout the duration of his pilgrimage. As we grow in our sanctification, we should have a growing commitment to put to death that residue of sin which remains within us. At our conversion, when we are newly liberated from the tyrannous dominion of sin, our concern to mop up the dregs of indwelling sin probably lacked the zeal we find described by Paul in Romans 7. When we were freshly released from the fires of our lusts and the immense accumulation of guilt, corruption, and misery from our sinful actions, the change in us from our being blatant sinners to our being new creatures in Christ may have been so radical that we easily but erroneously concluded that we were sinners no more. Yet, as we grow in grace, we should grow in the humbling knowledge that there seems to be an immeasurable depth and unyielding tenacity to the remnants of our sin. This realization should lead us to be profoundly grateful to our redeeming God, who loved us and gave His Son for us, not only when we had the dregs of sin remaining within us, but when we were filled to overflowing with sin and transgressions. It should also prompt us to greater commitment and constancy in our determination, by God's grace, to put to death the remnants of sin within us.

At our conversion, we received new hearts by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. With our new hearts, we now find ourselves increasingly willing and doing God's good pleasure (Phil. 2:12,13). However, with respect to our mortification of sin, when we were babes in Christ, we tended to concentrate on the outer ramparts of sin's fortress, namely, our sinful deeds. It is good, right, and necessary that we concern ourselves with our actions and words. We are commanded by the Word of the Lord and enabled by His Spirit to change our behavior, so that we do not sin against others, but rather demonstrate righteousness and love to those around us. Yet, the heart of the citadel of sin lies deeper than our outward expressions. Thus, we must become ever more committed to examination of our thoughts, intentions, and attitudes in our quest to mortify sin. We are all tempted to think that our maintaining a good outward testimony is sufficient for God and man. After all, we are tempted to reason, it is our words and actions which offend the Lord and others, not our thoughts. Yet, our Lord Jesus says precisely the reverse, telling us that whereas it is wrong for us to commit a sin, it is also sin for us to fantasize as though we were committing the act (Mt. 5:27,28).

Our Lord's pronouncement regarding the sins of thought does not deny that sin is aggravated when it is nurtured from contemplation to commission. David was in sin when he looked lustfully upon Bathsheba; he magnified his sin many times when he carried it from lustful desire to adulterous deed. But there are some very good reasons why the Bible teaches, and spiritually maturing saints agree, that our concentration in our campaign to mortify our sin should be on our attitude more than our action.

There is a connection between thought and action. Our thoughts are the seeds of our actions. Like seeds sown, not all thoughts come to fruition in action, but no fruit ever is borne without a seed for it having been sown. Thus, we should learn not only to beat down sin's ripened fruit, but also to trace our way back to sin's root and even to its seed—our thought life. If in our mental activity we become skilled at the early detection and resolute mortification of sin, we shall become increasingly pure in heart and hand. Those who aim at nothing more than tearing down spider webs are destined to be perpetually at that task, in a way that those who search for and kill the spider will not be.

Another reason why Scripture places a premium upon our thoughts is that they form a sanctuary accessible to no one except God. Our Lord is the discernor of our thoughts and intentions (Heb. 4:12,13). No man can fully know our thoughts, and even we, ourselves, cannot rightly know them apart from God (Jer. 17:9,10). We commit a whole world of sin, in some ways aggravated more than by our overtly carrying out sin, when we indulge sinful thoughts, being heedless of God's painful and grievous knowledge of those thoughts. It is surely quite singularly perverse of us to exercise restraint with regard to our sinning before men, due to our fearing their censure, while we indulge in sinful thoughts without a care that they offend our gracious Lord. Let us, then, learn to maintain with increasing constancy the scriptural priority of our bringing our every thought captive to Christ.

Yours in the same battle,

William Harrell

Dear Friends,

Recently I heard a report about a young man's situation which moved me deeply. I believe that his story is perhaps the most powerful testimony to Christian integrity I can recall in my experience. I have sought and received his kind permission to share his testimony with you. I trust that it will be edifying to us all.

The young man had graduated from college, and was accepted into the Uniformed Services University to train as an Air Force doctor. A week after his arrival at the medical school, he phoned his parents to confess to them that he had not been completely honest on his Air Force entrance questionnaire. Having been asked on that questionnaire whether he had ever used illegal drugs, he indicated that he had not. Yet, he his conscience disturbed him when he recalled that several years previously he had experimented once with mushrooms and once with nitrous oxide. Despite his knowing the grave ramifications of his confessing this to Air Force authorities, he was determined to do so.

This young man could have let his lie stand. He could have rationalized that he had been young and foolish, and that his experimentation was infrequent and relatively harmless. He could have said nothing to anyone regarding his misleading answers on the questionnaire, and no one would have known, including his parents. He could have reasoned that his disclosure and its consequences for his future would cause unnecessary suffering to him and to his parents. He could have pietistically reasoned that this past sin was under the blood of Jesus, and thus he was no longer answerable for it. He could have done any or all of these things, and his life, reputation, and future would have been easier and brighter...before men, though not before God.

The young man, accordingly, confessed to his parents not only his drug experimentation, but also his dishonesty, and told them of his determination to inform the appropriate Air Force authorities. When he took the later step, he was suspended from his military Combined Officer Training, and his future in the Air Force is under review. In a letter he wrote, at the request of his training commander, who gathered materials in support of this man of integrity remaining on active military duty, the young man expressed himself as follows:

I want to express my regret for the mistakes in my past that have brought me to where I'm at today. My disenrollment from the COT program is an immense disappointment. It's not disappointing in the sense of it being a surprise or in the sense of it being unfounded. It is a disappointment in the sense of me losing an opportunity that I have begun to cherish. I realized when I made the decision to admit my experimentation with mushrooms, the consequences to my Air Force career could be high. But I also realized that if I didn't admit this, the consequences to my character could be higher. I was faced with a decision of right and wrong. And I have failed at this crossroads in the past. Thankfully, my character is now that which will no longer settle for failure at this crossroads of right and wrong.

How rare, in our pragmatic day, is such integrity. This young man has rightly understood that one sin cannot be hidden by another. He has acted in accordance with that understanding, realizing that it is far more important that he maintain a clear conscience before the Lord, than that he cultivate the approval of men.

Have we all not experienced something similar to this man's plight? We sinned, perhaps in our youth or in a moment of weakness and folly, and we did so privately. But when called upon by appropriate authorities to disclose whether we have so sinned, we were tempted to evade, rationalize, obfuscate, and deny. This kind of scenario truly does test our integrity. It makes us face the hard question of whether we are willing to admit one sin in order to avoid our committing another sin. It may seem to us unduly exacting, needlessly painful and sacrificial and inconsistent with the love and forgiveness of the Lord that we should have to bear heavy temporal consequences for our undetected sins which we have confessed to the Lord. The truth is, that we greatly compound our woe when we resort to guile to hide our sin, rather than rely on the grace of the Lord.

David sinned with Bathsheba. He compounded, rather than reduced, his burden of sin when he sought to cover it with Uriah's death. I have had the sad experience of knowing believers who have sinned by their hasty and ill-advised entering into a marriage, and, when things went awry as they were certain to do, I have pleaded with them to avoid compounding their sin by their obtaining an unbiblical divorce. We can never relieve ourselves of the painful consequences of one sin by our committing another sin.

Our calling is to know and do what is right in all situations and relationships in our lives. We do not have discretionary power to cover one sin with another. The consequences of the first sin may be prolonged and painful, but if we seek to avoid those consequences through our sinning anew, we shall find to our dismay that we have compounded, not covered, our guilt and misery.

Let us, therefore, not simply admire this young man's integrity as manifested by his action. Let us determine to follow his lead, adopting his spiritual value system wherein he has refused to take the wrong turn at a critical crossroads of his life, even though his doing right has involved him bearing great cost. If we truly learn from our past sins, we will learn above all that nothing warrants or makes it worth our hiding such past sins by means of current sin. May we each arrive at the point in our character development where this young man has arrived. May we be enabled by the Lord's grace to say what he has said before God and men: *I was faced with a decision of right and wrong. And I have failed at this crossroads in the past. Thankfully, my character is now that which will no longer settle for failure at this crossroads of right and wrong.*

Yours humbled and encouraged by his example,

William Harrell

Dear Friends,

Like countless others, I was called on 11 September and told to watch the television news, there to witness in appalled astonishment the flaming handiwork of a few demonically driven cowards. The first clear thought I recall having was absurd, inappropriate, and soon to be proven quite wrong. I remember thinking how marvelous man's ingenuity was, seeing that men could construct buildings capable of withstanding direct hits from heavily fuel laden commercial aircraft. Then, the first tower collapsed, followed shortly by the second. My mind raced from my initial stupidity to the truth of Scripture. In Revelation 18 we read of the final judgment of the whole earth, under the image of the fall of Babylon, wherein all of men's great works will be destroyed in one day (Rev. 18:8), even in one hour (Rev. 18:10,17,19). The light of that awful truth led me to contemplate something far more sobering than the fact that while sinful man may be clever at building, he is masterfully expert at destroying. I glimpsed in this dark providence of the Lord the shadow portending that day in which cities fall, nations perish, mountains and islands flee away from the presence of the sovereign God who created and sustains these things, and who reigns enthroned above heaven and earth. Who shall stand in that day? Then working people will not be fleeing from collapsing towers, but kings, mighty men, and all others will call for the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them, not from a targeted terrorist attack, but from the inescapable wrath of the Lamb of God.

Meantime, what sense is to be made of our current national nightmare? Shall we raise the war cry, wave the flag, destroy with the might of our arms those we deem our enemies? Surely it is good and right that our national leaders, in concert with many other heads of state, have now unsheathed the sword against the vile perpetrators of the massive destruction and slaughter we have suffered (Rom. 13:4). But can they bring the wicked to justice? How can they devise a just retribution against the men who have murdered more than 6,000? Thus, we should understand why vengeance belongs to the Lord, who alone can not only require the souls of the wicked, but also will righteously cast them into the unquenchable lake of fire prepared for the devils whose prompting they have heartily followed.

In Psalm 107, the providence of God is considered. The psalm concludes with these words: *Who is wise? Let him give heed to these things; and consider the lovingkindnesses of the Lord.* It is wise for us to trace the events happening around us to the wise and loving design and powerful hand of the Lord. Those who cannot see the Lord in the calamity which has touched New York and the Pentagon will fall into fearful depression, or cast themselves into patriotic excitement which, they will eventually find, will not heal the deep wound in their psyches. But we who do give heed to these things and behold in them the will and working of our God will behold manifold and increasing divine lovingkindnesses. We will with profoundly humble gratitude thank the Lord who has called us to build our lives upon the Rock which nothing can shake (Lk. 6:46-49). We will take great comfort from the fact that we are destined for the city, whose builder and architect is God (Heb. 11:10). We will find peace which passes understanding as we trust in our Lord as our refuge and shield (Ps. 18:1-3). We will treasure the great and precious promises of our saving God (2 Pet. 1:2-4). We will, in the light of the Lord, see light (Ps. 36:9), so that our priorities will not be the mindless distractions of Martha, but the good and necessary choice of Mary (Lk. 10:38-42). We will know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge (Eph. 3:19), and, in return, we will strive by God's grace, and by the direction of His Word and power of His Spirit to love Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Finally, we will love our fellows with sincerity and greater tenderness. There are manifold divine lovingkindnesses to be seen in the darkest divine providence—if we have the eyes of faith to behold them.

My mind cannot shut out the vision of those collapsing towers, and the knowledge that terrified multitudes perished within them. My heart aches when I think of those brave fire fighters rushing with resolution into the flames from which others were fleeing. I should not and do not want to forget these things. They are most vivid and potent reminders that life in this world is for us all far more short and far less sure than we imagine. Therefore, like countless others, I do not now so easily take my life or that of others for granted. Some of that carnal presumption has been demolished along with those fallen towers. I find myself more readily expressing my love to others, touching my wife, children, and friends more than ever, as though to convince myself with gratitude that they are real and still here in this pilgrimage with me. I want to speak more and show to others more of the Lord and His salvation. Now I know as never before that the time is short, and I want to be wise in redeeming it. These things I think and feel and determine with multitudes of

other believers throughout the world. This is some of the precious fruit which God alone can raise up from the awful destruction of His dark providence.

Yours in His love,

William Harrell

How singular is our salvation

Dear Friends,

How singular is our salvation. It consists of the work of a solitary Savior, applied to us by one Holy Spirit, and declared to us in a sole volume. In contrast, many are the ways of the world. Men boast in pluralistic societies. We often hear the claim that there are many ways to the good life, such as the way of career success, monetary acquisition, the gaining of high social position, intellectual and aesthetic attainment, and so forth. According to the value system of the world, one's relation to God is simply one thing among these many things. We are told that we must respect the way of the atheist and agnostic as much as we must respect the way to God. In fact, concerning the way to God, men of the world tell us that there are many such ways. Our culture pressures us to conceive of our highest good in terms of our having a multitude of choices. Yet, flying in the face of this supposed richness of life resulting from many choices is the scandal of the uniqueness of Christianity.

The singularity of our faith can at times seem even to us indicative of sparse provision from our God. Yet, when we recall—or when we are reminded from Scripture—that this unique gift comes to us from the only living God, Creator and Sustainer of heaven and earth, time and eternity, things seen and unseen, we should realize that the true emphasis falls on quality, not quantity. We should not feel that the singular nature of our salvation results from a paucity of divine provision. Rather, it issues from our God electing to provide for us the most lavish and priceless provision, by His giving His only Son to be our Redeemer. In terms of value, this one gift is immeasurably greater than the sum of all the realms of heaven, earth, men, angels, and all they have, are, can do, or ever can think.

Yet, value is not the only measure whereby we may rightly judge the singularity of our salvation. The practical power of the means of our salvation more than manifests its abundant sufficiency. Why should we desire many ways out of our sin and misery when this one thing has proven through the ages to be capable of calling people of all ages, nations, cultures, and classes out of death into abundant and glorious eternal life? This proven potency, this super-abundant sufficiency of the atoning work of the only-begotten Son of God, does more than tell us, it shows us, that this is indeed the one thing necessary.

The variety of the world, upon closer inspection, proves to be but variations of sameness and vanity. Worldly people, for all of their supposed sophistication and vaunted variety, prove to be dull and one-dimensional. Yet, in the one faith we profess, there are manifold blessings, awesome facets, and fathomless depths. Believers who feed most consistently upon this one thing necessary find, in accordance with the promise and provision of the Lord, springs of living refreshment perpetually welling up within themselves. They run in this narrow way, and they do not grow weary, for the way leads to life, and each step taken in the way invigorates. They are the majestic and immensely interesting ones of the earth.

It is regrettable that we who have such a singular treasure should so often be lured from our appropriation of it by the distractions of the world. How many Marthas fill the Church, especially in our day where choices in practically every realm seem endless. And as the distracted Martha of old brought her criticisms against her more single-minded sister, so it is ever the case that when those of a deeper love, a purer faith, and a more complete devotion to Jesus endeavor quietly to pursue their more excellent way, they will be subject to the complaints, if not the contempt, of their less focused and more bothered brethren.

We do well, if we should find ourselves subjected to such criticisms, to imitate Mary. She did not lift her voice to defend herself, for she rightly sensed that He at whose feet she sat, hanging on His every word of truth and love, would be her vindicator. Still less did she rise up from the feet of her Lord, leaving the spiritual feast He was spreading, in order to busy herself with a lunch that would, within a day, have substantially passed through all who partook of it. The grace of God does not let us feed upon, or endeavor to serve to others, the husks of this cursed world. It works into us a hunger and thirst for the bread of heaven, which nothing else in all of this creation can satisfy. Who needs a string of cheaply cultured pearls, when we are given this single pearl of greatest price?

Yours in His way,

William Harrell

A deep chord was struck

My dear friends,

I am certain that a deep chord was struck in all of us who attended a recent prayer meeting at which we considered a section of the long Psalm containing a most searching verse. Psalm 119:120 reads: *My flesh trembles for fear of Thee and I am afraid of Thy judgments*. Prior to his writing this verse, the psalmist had repeatedly indicated his strong and constant commitment to the Lord, and his adamant opposition to the enemies of God and His people. Why then, should a man who was nurturing no high-handed or hidden sin be in such fear of the Lord? Nor is his a mild fear. The word translated, *trembles*, is a strong word meaning to bristle up, indicating that his flesh crawled or quivered in view of the Lord. The word occurs in the Bible only here and in Job 4:15. Is this a right attitude for a believer to have toward his redeeming God?

Fear and faith are mutually exclusive except with respect to their exercise in relation to God. If we have faith in God, we shall have no other fear...except the fear of God. We, however, are living in a day where our therapeutic society pressures and conditions us to avoid any form of fear, as though all fear, especially godly fear, were psyche-damaging. Thus, whenever we Christians encounter in Scripture the phrase, *the fear of the Lord*, we feel impelled to inform ourselves and to teach others that fear does not really mean fear, but filial reverence. But surely fear, dread, and awe form parts of true reverence.

When men as holy as Moses, or Isaiah beheld visions of the Lord, they fell before His awesome majesty. Yet, while we must grant that these Old Testament saints obviously feared the Lord, we can glibly and wrongly assume that we who live in the light and love of God in Christ need not have such fear. We read of perfect love casting out fear (1 Jn. 4:18). However, who in this vale of soul making is perfected in love? The love of God in Christ is manifested more explicitly in the New Covenant, but is our grasp of that love and our reflection of it ever perfect in this pilgrimage? And does such love, even if perfected, prelude our trembling before our Lord? See, as an answer, the reaction of John, the beloved disciple, when he beheld on Patmos the vision of the ascended Christ (Rev. 1:10-18). At the sight, John fell at the feet of Jesus as a dead man (v.17).

Surely we cannot rightly assume that Moses, Isaiah, and John manifested such fear of God because they apprehended less clearly and deeply the love, still less the holy glory, the sovereign majesty, and the awesome power of God than do we. So we return to the words of the psalmist in Ps. 119:120. Was he blinded to the grace and love of God, or did he see those blessed qualities without losing sight of the glorious and awe inspiring majesty of the Holy One of Israel? Indeed, we are left to conclude that these men beheld something essential in God of which we have largely lost sight.

Is the fear of the Lord a soul-crippling, psyche-damaging conception which our enlightened age has outgrown? The Word of God declares it to be a potent force which purifies and converts the soul from wayward and sinful thoughts and doings (Ps. 19:8,9). Let us be honest and ask ourselves: How many wicked thoughts and transgressing deeds of ours would have been nipped in the bud had we a right fear of, as well as love for our God? A right fear of the Lord is a preventative good. It prevents us from entering into sin, keeps us from nurturing sin, and drives us out of sin when we do fall into it. Positively, the fear of the Lord is the height of wisdom (Ps. 1:7), not a low and damaging superstition.

Has an absence of the fear of God had a beneficial or adverse effect upon our evangelism? Many would say that we must not scare people away from their initial consideration of Jesus with talk of holy reverence and fearful trembling before the Lamb of God. It must be admitted, also, that those churches which are seeker friendly do tend to fill up with people. But do any who are dead in sin seek to tremble before an awesome God? I have my doubts that the members of those large companies swaying to giddy music and refusing to feed on anything but glib sermons, heavily laced with humor, will stand in the day when the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the earth and its works will be burned up (2 Pet. 3:10).

Historically, when the people of God take God seriously, the result is true and enduring growth in the Church. Read in Acts 14:31 how the early Church increased as the people grew in the fear of the Lord, and as outsiders, through the believers' testimony, came rightly to see their serious plight. The pity and guilty failure of our day is that much so-called evangelism does not save men from the wrath of God to come, but rather helps treat the mere symptoms of sin, giving immediate, temporary, and relative relief from the miseries of this cursed world. We can too readily believe that we can improve on the evangelism of Jonah, by our not declaring the coming day of the Lord, but rather winsomely warning beach vacationers to beware of large, man-swallowing fish.

I, for one, am convicted by my own lack of fear for my Lord. It is a lack I intend to do something about. At this season of our asking for, giving, and receiving gifts, would we not do well to place the fear of the Lord at the head of any list of things we hope to receive?

Yours seeking to grow in reverence,

William Harrell