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*"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2)*

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## AGAINST THE CURRENT

One of the most remarkable spectacles in nature is the return of salmon to their birthplace to spawn. These fish battle swift currents, leap waterfalls, dodge hungry bears, etc. all to return to the exact location where they were hatched. Depending on the species, young salmon may spend anywhere from a few weeks up to two years in freshwater streams and lakes before heading out to sea. Once reaching the ocean, it will be between one and eight years before they are instinctively drawn back to the place of their birth.

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THE HARVESTER

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



Salmon hatch in the relatively safety of shallow upstream creeks and rivers throughout the Pacific Northwest. As they grow, they move to locations where they can find food to feed their growing bodies. Each time they move to find a better food source they are also exposing themselves to more danger from predators. Eventually they reach the open ocean where they face danger in all shapes and sizes.

In many ways our development as humans shares things in common with the salmon. We are born into a relatively safe world where our parents protect us from danger. As we grow older we are exposed to not just physical dangers, but things that are dangerous to us emotionally and spiritually as well. And just as the salmon must eventually leave the safety of the stream where it hatched and enter the ocean, so too we must leave the safety and protection of our parent's home and venture out into the world on our own.

We know that God has given the salmon an instinct to return home at the appropriate time in order to breed and begin the cycle over again. I think He has done something similar for us as well. I believe He has given us an instinct, a nature, to seek Him. It is this not what Paul was referring to when he said,

*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. (Rom. 1:20)*

Even without God's Word, we can still know He exists just by looking at His creation. I believe this is why throughout history even the remotest, most primitive peoples ever found have

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all had some sort of religion. It is in our nature to seek God, even if we lack direct knowledge of Him. Notice what Paul also said in the next chapter of Romans.

*For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts. (Rom. 2:14-15a)*

How did the law become written in their hearts if they did not have the law, unless God Himself put it there?

God warned Israel about the consequences of disobedience before they ever inherited the Promised Land.

*And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you. And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. (Deu. 4:27-29)*

Is this not reminiscent of the salmon scattering throughout the oceans until God calls them back home? The key is that Israel was to seek God with all of their heart and soul. In other words they are to be as committed to seeking God as the salmon is to returning home.

Our service to God needs to have the same type of singular focus that the salmon exhibit as they make their final voyage. No obstacle, no danger will deter them. Is this not what God expects of us? Trials, tribulation, persecution, none of it should matter to us or get in our way. Paul said,

*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God,*

*which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Rom. 8:38-39)

We must maintain our focus and not let anything get in our way or distract us.

The salmon move with a singular purpose towards their end goal motivated only by instinct. We, through knowledge, move with an even greater sense of purpose toward an even greater and more noble end. As Paul said, “*I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*” (Php. 3:14)

Instinct draws the salmon home to spawn just as God intended. We were given a similar instinct to draw us home to our God and Creator, in whose image we are made. He has sent us forth into the world, but it is His intent that we return to Him and inherit the home He has prepared for us. The salmon could just ignore the call to go home and remain in the open ocean. It has survived there for years where food is abundant and where it has learned how to avoid danger. Instead it chooses to leave what is familiar and comfortable. It chooses to travel to strange places of which it has no waking memory, only instinct to guide it. It is willing to face a variety of unknown dangers. To swim hundreds or thousands of miles. To endure hunger, fatigue, and so many other challenges.

Abraham was called to leave his home and family in Ur when God told him to pack up and leave. He did so willingly, even though he had no idea where he was going. (Heb. 11:8)

*Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;* (Heb. 11:24-25)

Why were both of these men willing to leave the familiar? Why were they willing to leave comfort and safety? Because they recognized that the place they called home, really wasn't. In fact they realized that their home was not of this world.

Twice in the New Testament we as God's people are referred to as "*strangers and pilgrims.*" (Heb. 11:13 & 1 Pe. 2:11) We do not belong here. In a short time "*shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.*" (Ecc. 12:7) We can ignore the call of God if we choose, but we cannot deny it is there. We are the children of God created in His image. We belong at home in His presence.

Paul said to the church in Rome,

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.* (Rom. 12:1-2)

As children of God, our way of life goes against the flow of society. It is very much like the salmon swimming against the current. We present our bodies as a living sacrifice, which means we live in a way that honors God not serves self. It's not a matter of doing what feels good, it's a matter of doing what is right. As Paul says, that is our reasonable service. We cannot conform ourselves to the lifestyles and sinful ways of those about us. We must transform ourselves into men and women who are truly in the image of our Creator in our thoughts, words, and actions.

Even if we have spent most of our life living in the world and behaving as the world, it is never too late to come home. The salmon only spends the last few weeks or months of its life on its final mission. If it achieves that mission, there will be a new generation of salmon to continue the process. If we are successful in our mission we have hopefully inspired and been an example to others who will continue the legacy of God's people here on this earth. But just as importantly, we have reserved for ourselves a home with the Father in heaven.

When the salmon returns home, that long arduous journey will be its last. When it fulfills the final purpose in its life it

spawns and dies. For us it is a little different. If we are serving God's purposes while we live, then we only among all of God's creatures have hope. For the Father will welcome home all the faithful and then we will truly begin to live.

TONY WHIDDON  
(Roanoke, AL)

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## ALL OR NOTHING

When Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment, He answered, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*" (Mat. 22:37) This illustrates a most important principle found in the Scriptures: God demands our very best effort in ALL we do!

God does not want half-hearted people or part-time Christians. The Lord wrote to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans to this effect:

*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.* (Rev. 3:15-16)

God demands our ALL; otherwise, let it be nothing!

This principle is evidenced in our SERVICE to God. Christ said.

*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.* (Mat. 6:24 )

Our service must be directed to God first of all and completely! One of the hardest things to do, yet one of the most essential of Christianity is to put Jesus Christ number one on our list. The Lord must be top priority in our lives, even above our family, friends, work, money, hobbies, etc. (Mat. 10:37; Luke 14:26). God is our only master!

The thoughts of our MINDS must also be ALL the way for God or it may as well be nothing. “*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways*” (Jas. 1:8). When a man is thinking in two different directions, he cannot be trusted because he will not know which way to go. Similarly, we cannot afford to be wishy-washy or indecisive or torn between two differing opinions like the people in Elijah’s day (1 Kings 18:21). We need to keep our minds totally on spiritual matters and virtuous things (Php. 4:8). It’s ALL or nothing!

What we SAY should likewise follow the ALL or nothing principle. The tongue is a small and powerful part of our body but it must be used wisely -- to bless God ALL of the time instead of cursing (Jas. 3:5). We should not be guilty of saying nice things on Sunday, then using foul language the rest of the week. As disciples of Christ, we must use the proper speech every single day. “*Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.*” (Col. 4:6) Remember: it has got to be ALL or nothing!

Finally, we must USE God's Word in one of two ways: ALL or nothing. We cannot be Pharisaical (hypocritical) in our approach to the Word of God and accept the part of the scriptures that we like and omit the “*weightier matters of the law*” (Mat. 23:23). We cannot preach faith in Christ and leave out the works of baptism for the remission of sins (Jas. 2:17; Acts 2:38). The Bible needs to be proclaimed properly and in its entirety. If it is not, then we may as well be preaching from a book of children's fairy tales! It’s ALL or nothing

The Lord God demands our very best: in our service to him, in our everyday thoughts and speech, and in our use of his Word. “*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might*” (Ecc. 9:10a). Friends, there is no other way around it. It has to be ALL or nothing!

RAY MCMANUS (Deceased)  
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## GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	TIME	PLACE	SPEAKER
May 1 - 3	7 pm Fri.(Bulger) & Sat. (Vinson), 10 am Sun. (Bulger)	Van Lear Van Lear, KY	Hunter Bulger & Kyle Vinson (Prattville, AL)
May 10-12	10:30 am & 6 pm Sun., 7 pm Mon.-Tue.	Napoleon Woodland, AL	Bill Prince, Jr. (Oxford, AL)

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Where did Absalom flee to after he killed Amnon?
2. What happened to the swine that Jesus cast Legion's devils into?
3. Where was Paul from?
4. What numerical day of the week is the sabbath day?
5. What were Jesus' feet washed with?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month's questions?

1. Who gave Adam the forbidden fruit to eat? EVE (Gen. 3:6-20)
2. What body of water did Moses and the Israelites cross? THE RED SEA (Exo. 14:21-15:4)
3. Who was the father of the fishermen brothers James and John? ZEBEDEE (Mat. 4:21)
4. What did John the Baptist eat? LOCUSTS AND WILD HONEY (Mat. 3:4)
5. What happened to anyone whose name was not written in the Book of Life? CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE (Rev. 20:15)