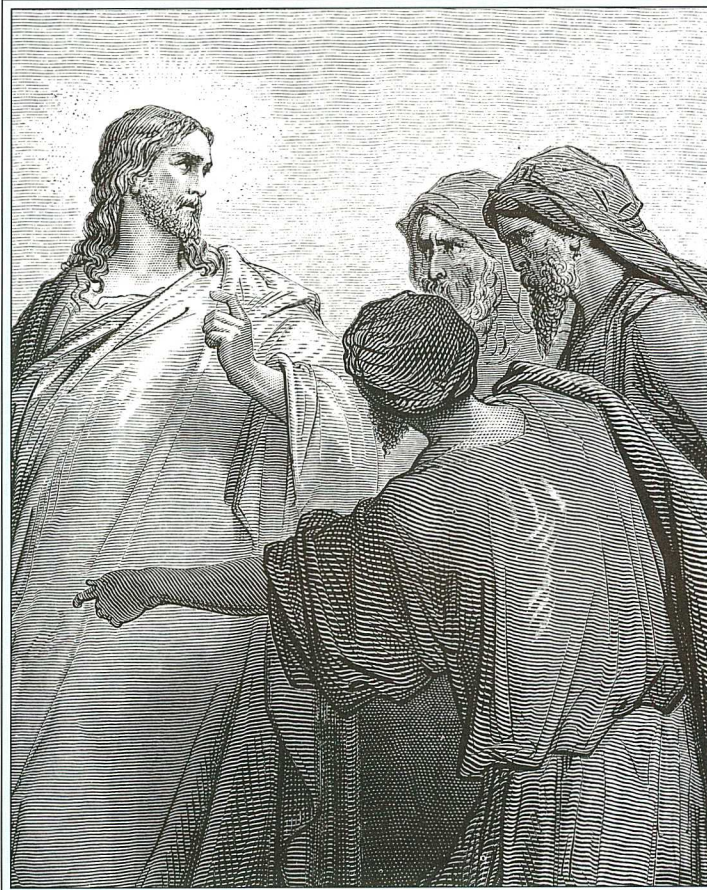


God with Us

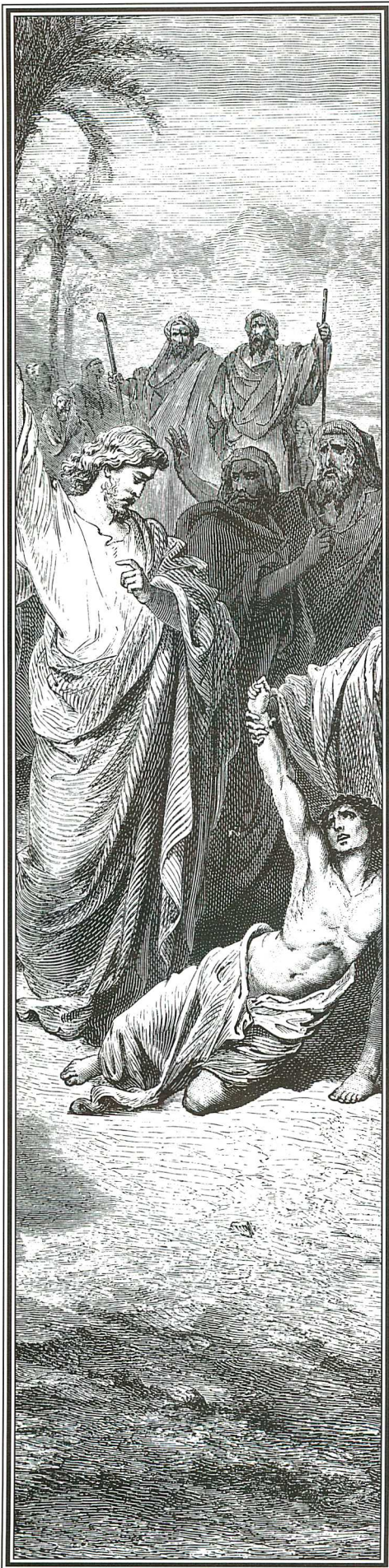
CHRIST IN ALL THE GOSPELS-3

“Luke Tells Us About Jesus”

by Desmond Ford



*Because Jesus is the center of true religion,
we need as many views of Jesus as possible.
The New Testament's four Gospels give us four
essential views. Luke tells us much about the human Jesus,
the Son of Man. Luke assures us the salvation Jesus has
worked out is available to all humanity.*



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he order of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is very significant.

First, it is the order of the way we get to know Jesus.

Gospel Order in Knowing Jesus

If you were brought up in a religious home, you were often told, "You can do this, but can't do that—because Jesus says so!" You are introduced to Christ as a king giving commands! That's how Matthew portrays Jesus—as king.

When you grow a little older, you learn that Jesus is not just a king giving commands. He came as a lowly servant. This is Mark's portrait of Jesus.

Jesus is a loving, compassionate servant who obeyed. "I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love" (Jn 15:10 NIV).

Obedience is tremendously important. The gospel is not "cheap grace."

We need to understand the difference between **root** and **fruit**. People who try to make their obedience the root of salvation distort the metaphor. They're barking up the wrong tree!

Obedience is always the fruit, never the root.

Our Lord obeyed. "I have obeyed my Father's commands." While we first see him, in Matthew, as a king giving commandments, in Mark he is a lowly servant who is himself obedient.

As we get to know Jesus better, we suddenly find he's not only king and servant, but our brother. He's the Son of Man, filled with compassion, sympathy, empathy and understanding. That's how Luke presents Jesus.

Finally, when we get to know Jesus best of all—when we lean on his breast as did John—we find that he is God! (That's for our study after this.)

Order in Spreading Gospel

Second, the order of the four Gospels is the order of the spread of the gospel.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John give us the same order as the Acts of the Apostles.

In Matthew, the gospel goes to the Jews. (See Acts 2-7.)

In Mark, the gospel goes to the Romans. (See Acts 10 and Cornelius the centurion.)

In Luke, the gospel goes to the ends of the earth. (See Acts 13 onwards.)

In John, the gospel goes to the Greek, cosmopolitan, philosophical

world. (See Acts 17:16-34).

Gospel of Prayer

Open your Bibles please to Luke's Gospel.

This is the Gospel of the Son of Man. All the special human things about our Lord are here emphasized.

For example, if you are a human being, you have need of prayer. If you understand prayer, you will do most of your praying as you walk and as you work. You will not just pray on your knees.

If you really understand the meaning of prayer, you will find your prayers to be short, brief, staccato calls to the Lord. Prayer is not necessarily long and lengthy. You don't have to have long sessions praying for grandma and grandpa, aunts and uncles, nieces, nephews, and brothers and sisters to be blessed.

Real prayer is when the Holy Spirit brings something to your mind and you pray about it there and then. Many of our prayers are simply, "Lord, forgive!" or "Lord, direct!" or "Lord enable!" or "Lord guide!" Two-word prayers.

Time and again in Luke we find a crisis in our Lord's life the other Gospels don't mention. But Jesus is praying!

He prays at his baptism, he prays before he calls the Twelve, he prays at his transfiguration.

Praying is one of the special human things Jesus does.

Luke is the Gospel of prayer.

Gospel of Women and Children

It is in Luke we see Jesus' love for the cast-downs.

Someone has said there were no women and children until Jesus came. What that means is that women and children did not have their rightful place. Only after Mary gave birth at Bethlehem did womanhood become sacred. Only after Jesus was born as a baby, did childhood become sacred. There were no women and children until Jesus. Since then, both groups are sacred.

What a nasty world this can be. Today, the brunt of modern warfare falls chiefly on innocent women and children. How great is the need for the Christian gospel.

Luke is the Gospel that says much about women. It begins with songs from Elizabeth (Lk 1:42-45) and Mary (1:46-55). When baby Jesus is presented at the Temple, Simeon is present (2:25-32). But

not only Simeon. Anna is there, too (2:36-38).

Begins with a Friend

Please look at Luke's introduction:

Many people have tried to tell the story of what God has done among us. They wrote what we had been told by the ones who were there in the beginning and saw what happened. So I made a careful study of everything and then decided to write and tell you exactly what took place. Honorable Theophilus, I have done this to let you know if what you have heard is true. (Lk 1:1-4 CEV)

Who is Theophilus?

We know he is a friend of Luke's, and that his name is Greek.

Let me remind you, Luke was a friend of Paul's (Col 4:14; 2 Ti 4:11). We can say then that Luke's Gospel is Paul's Gospel.

Mark, you'll remember, was a friend of Peter's (Acts 12:11-12). So, Mark is, in a sense, Peter's Gospel.

The Gospel that is hardest on Peter is Mark. Mark is full of personal anecdotes, often not found in Luke. That's because Mark was Peter's helper.

Peter was one of the twelve apostles. Luke was not. Luke was a gentile. But Luke was Paul's physician (Col 4:14). It's fascinating that some of the people God has used the most had poor health. Paul, when he preached at Galatia, had poor health (Gal 4:13-14).

And Luke's Gospel begins with Luke writing about a friend, Theophilus. From the very beginning of this Gospel we have a touch of friendship and humanity. From humanity, Luke goes on to write about prayer.

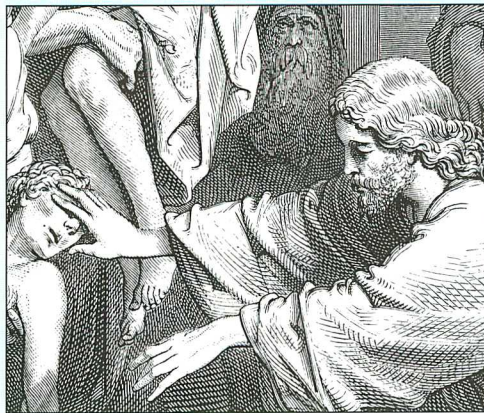
Jesus Is Humanity's Brother

Let's go, if you will, to the genealogy of Jesus in Luke's Gospel, chapter three (Lk 3:23-38).

Unlike Matthew (Mt 1:2) it doesn't go back to Abraham. Rather, Luke goes back to Adam. "... the son of Cainan, the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God" (Lk 3:37-38 NIV).

Appropriately, Luke's genealogy of Christ goes back to the first man. This is because Luke's Gospel presents Jesus, not as a Jew, but as humanity's brother.

Jesus is not just the son of Abraham. Luke goes all the way back to the beginning of the human race and says Jesus is Adam's son. Whether we are American, Australian, German, or Japanese, Jesus is our brother. Jesus is your brother and



mine.

In harmony with this, consider the songs and prophecies that come just before the genealogy.

"And **all of mankind** shall see God's salvation," quotes Luke at the end of a passage from Isaiah (Lk 3:6 emphasis supplied). You don't find that in Matthew's account of John the Baptist's preaching.

That's because Luke's Gospel is about Christ's gospel going to all the world—to the gentiles and Greek cosmopolitan society. That's why when Luke quotes the prophet Isaiah, he is sure to include, "All of mankind shall see God's salvation."

Luke records Simeon's prayer in the temple. Luke carefully records:

"For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all people,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel." (Lk 2:31-32)

When Luke thinks of salvation in Christ, he thinks of everyone, including the gentiles.

Jesus' Growing Up

Luke's Gospel is a book that emphasizes Jesus' humanity. Therefore, it's the only

Gospel that tells us anything about the period between Jesus' birth and the beginning of his ministry.

This is the only Gospel that tells about Jesus' visit to Jerusalem when he was 12 years of age (Lk 2:41-50). This is the only Gospel that tells us about his childhood home. "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Lk 2:52).

Only this Gospel presents the humanity of Jesus in his childhood, his growing up, his adolescence.

Samaritans Rebuff Jesus

In the days of Jesus, the Samaritans were the most hated of peoples who lived near to Israel. The relationship between Jews and Samaritans was similar to that of Jews and Palestinians today. Rather like the Serbs and Croats in former Yugoslavia.

Samaritans were hated. What does Luke have to say about them?

Not long before it was time for Jesus to be taken up to heaven, he made up his mind to go to Jerusalem. He sent some messengers on ahead to a Samaritan village to get things ready for him. But he was on his way to Jerusalem, so the people there refused to welcome him. When the disciples James and John saw what was happening, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to destroy these people?"

But Jesus turned and corrected them for what they had said. "Don't you know what spirit you belong to? The Son of Man did not come to destroy people's lives, but to save them." Then they all went on to another village. (Lk 9:51-56 CEV)

Jesus was not in the business of burning up the enemies of his disciples..

Spiritual Fruit and Gifts

Significantly, in his next chapter, Luke records Jesus telling a story about a Samaritan. More about that later.

Notice Luke 10 verse 17: "The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!'" (Lk 10:17 NRSV). The joyful 70 were an outer ring of Jesus' disciples. It was a more comprehensive group than the inner ring of 12.

Jesus responds, "Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven" (Lk 10:20).

Dear friends, it is much better to know that you belong to God than to think that you have certain special spiritual gifts. One of the major concerns of many in the modern religious world is spiritual gifts. They put much emphasis on the gift of tongues, the gift of healing, the gift of the word of knowledge.

All these gifts have their place. But it is the **fruit** of the Spirit that's more important (Gal 5:22-23).

The fruit of the Spirit is spontaneous in all souls who know their names are written in heaven. No one ever loves God until convinced that God loves them. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost [Spirit] which is given unto us (Rom 5:5 KJV).

This statement of Paul's follows his affirmation that "Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ro 5:1 NIV). When you are right with God in Christ, the Holy Spirit is given to you and spiritual fruit springs up. **Every** Christian has **all** the fruits. (I'm talking of fruits now, not gifts.)

We may not have all the fruit in its maturity, some of it may yet be green and unripe, but every Christian has all the fruit. We have the seeds of it, the beginnings of the fruit.

Not all Christians have all the gifts. It is the fruit that is the test of the Christian, not the gifts. The gifts can be counterfeited. But try to counterfeit the fruit of love, joy, peace, gentleness, long-suffering, goodness, temperance ... it can't be done. Maybe you can fake a few of them, but you can't counterfeit all that fruit, entirely.

Jesus says, in effect, to the 70, and to you and me, "Look, don't boast about your gifts, such as demons being subject to you. Rather, rejoice in this. Your name is written in heaven! Rejoice in the things of grace that belong to all believers."

Expert in Doing

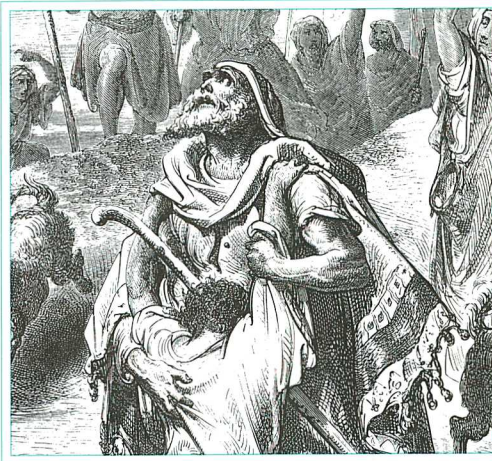
Notice, please in verse 25, "An expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'" (Lk 10:25).

The lawyer asks, "What must I **do**?" The Jews were great do-ers. Once, a crowd came to Jesus and asked, "What must we **do to do** the work of God?" (Jn 6:28 emphasis supplied). Jesus' answer

was straightforward: "Believe in the One whom God has sent" (Jn 6:29).

The spirit of Pharisaism is the spirit of human nature. We all want to earn our way into God's kingdom.

It can't be done that way. We have to come as beggars, not as do-ers. At the



cross of Christ everyone is equal. Everyone is a recipient, not an earner. We **receive** the robe of Christ's righteousness. It was taken from him by his crucifiers, and he was counted as a sinner. He gave up that righteous robe that it might clothe us. All of us. There is no other way.

"What must I do?" asks the lawyer. Jesus answers with a question, "What is written in the law?" (Lk 10:26).

The Jews were great lawyers. This man answers wisely.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind, ... and love your neighbor as yourself. (Lk 10:27)

Jesus acknowledges this. Then, in effect, Jesus says, "All right, you've answered well. Now try doing it!"

Who Is Our Neighbor?

The lawyer wanted "to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" (Lk 10:29).

This is always a conundrum for us, and for Jews, too. "Surely you don't want us to love the Samaritans," the lawyer is thinking. "Not the Samaritans, even though they are near."

Jesus then tells the parable of the good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-37).

A man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. He was a Jew, who had been to the temple to worship—at Passover, perhaps. In a lonely place he is set upon

by robbers, who strip and beat him. He's left for dead.

A priest was going down that road and sees the beaten man. Though the priest is also a Jew, he passes by on the other side. He was afraid the robbers were still nearby. He didn't want another life lost, that of a valuable clergyman!

A Levite comes along—another Jew. He too passes by on the other side. He knew the priest was ahead of him, and if the priest did not see fit to get involved, why should he? He was guided by the priest's example.

I had a grandfather I loved very much. He trusted his body to the doctors and his soul to the ministers. Now, years later, I realize his faith was misplaced on both counts. I'm not suggesting that God doesn't work though good doctors and ministers. I'm asking you to think, "Where do I first pin my faith?" The Levite placed his faith in the priest.

Good Neighbor Samaritan

It is the Samaritan who stops to help and minister to the dying man. Remember, in Luke's previous chapter, the Samaritan village would not receive Jesus. Now, in his story, Jesus is receiving the Samaritans. Jesus makes a Samaritan the hero of his parable.

All of us started out in life not wanting God. "God, don't come near me! I want to live my own life!" That's how we all started out. We had no room for God.

But God has room for us. God has room for me. There's no room at the inn for Jesus, but he has room for us. God has a heart big enough to receive us all. "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Lk 15:2 KJV). "He was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner" (Lk 19:7).

Jesus is going to make the hero of his story a Samaritan, even though he had been rejected by a Samaritan village. Jesus is going to portray this hero beautifully.

But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said, "and when I return, I will

reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.” (Lk 10:33-35 NIV)

Do you remember what Jesus was called by his opponents? Among other things, “You are a Samaritan and demon-possessed” (Jn 8:48).

Good Neighbor Jesus

We never read Scripture aright unless we find Jesus there ... and ourselves there.

The traveler was religious, but he was beaten. He was left half-dead. That’s all of us. Humanity started off well from Jerusalem, or Eden, but we were beaten up by the devil. He left us for dead.

Some things are good if fanned into life. Some things are bad. We’re spiritually half-dead. Fan us into life and we’re still bad. We are stripped. We’ve lost our righteousness.

But Jesus came near to where we are. He took our true humanity. God does not just shout from Sinai. God comes near when we are like this beaten Samaritan.

God puts his arms around us and provides for us. God brings us to the church to look after us. “When I come back, I will balance all things out aright,” Jesus says. Jesus is coming back.

What the Samaritan does is a picture of what Jesus does. He does what the priest and Levites can’t do. You see, religion is not enough unless it’s about Jesus.

Much religion is bad religion. Bad religion precipitated the Russian Revolution. Bad religion precipitated the French Revolution. Much religion is bad. Unless it is about Jesus and the love of God and love for our fellow human beings, it’s not the genuine article. It’s counterfeit. It’s wrong.

Knowing and Doing

Jesus’ story ends (with Jesus asking the lawyer)

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?”

The expert in the law replied. “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” (Lk 10:36-37)

Here’s a problem. “Go and **do** likewise.” It’s still about doing.

What will I do? “This do, and thou shalt live.” “Go and do likewise” (Lk 10:37 KJV and NIV). The problem is, I **know** much more than I **do**.

That’s been my problem all along: knowing much more than I do. I am to keep the Lord before me all the day long.

Often God escapes me, and if I go without him for one day it may take me three days to find him again (see Lk 2:43-46). The worst man on earth knows more about duty than the best man does. Everybody knows we ought to love our neighbor as ourselves—but we’ve never done it!

We love ourselves unremittingly, even though we let ourselves down a thousand times. Let someone else let me down once and I won’t love them. We don’t love others as we love ourselves. We’ve never done it.

We have a problem. God is still talking about doing.

Mary and Martha

Let’s read Luke’s story that follows:

The Lord and his disciples were traveling along and came to a village. When they got there, a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat down in front of the Lord and was listening to what he said. Martha was worried about all that had to be done. Finally, she went to Jesus and said, “Lord, doesn’t it bother you that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!”

The Lord answered, “Martha, Martha! You are worried and upset about so many things, but only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen what is best, and it will not be taken away from her.” (Lk 10:38-42 CEV)

Our problem is we are not good do-ers.

Jesus’ story is about two women who know him. One of them is distracted. With what? With much doing!

The other woman is listening to Jesus. The moral to Jesus’ story is, “Love’s activity must grow out of love’s contemplation.”

Mary has chosen “what is best” because she is interested, first of all, in receiving. She wants, first, to look upon Jesus.

The activities that God requires will spring spontaneously out of a relationship such as that. We are not to be distracted by much doing because everything you and I do is tainted. It’s never done well enough.

I’ve never preached a sermon I

haven’t needed to repent over. Nothing we do is just right. Nothing! Nothing!

Only Christ’s Doing Good

Jesus is saying, “Look! There is something that takes precedence over doing. Be like Mary. Sit down. Be assured that you are loved. Then, out of love’s contemplation will come love’s activity.”

This is because the only doing good enough is the doing of Jesus. It is only because of the doing of Jesus that we are acceptable to God.

Martin Luther said, “Mine are Christ’s living and dying as though I’ve lived his life and died his death.” That’s the wonderful thing about the gospel. All Jesus did is put to our account.

Not one of us has kept the Ten Commandments perfectly. Or even one of them! For example, every Sabbath-keeper in the world must say, “Jesus’ Sabbath-keeping counts for me!”

No one has loved God with all his mind, all his heart, and all his soul, and his neighbor as himself—except Jesus. But what Jesus has done is put to my account when I believe. There’s the basis—and only basis—of my salvation. Then, later, when it comes to practical living, love’s activity is to grow out of love’s contemplation.

Elsewhere in his Gospel, Luke tells a story about Jesus healing ten lepers (see Lk 17:11-19). Only one of the cleansed lepers returns to thank Jesus. Which one? Was it a German, a Japanese, an Australian, or an American? No. It was a Samaritan (v. 16)!

Jesus makes heroes out of rascals! That gives me hope.

That gives you hope. ❖

*... Everything you
and I do is tainted.
It's never done
well enough.*

Dr. Ford’s articles are from his lectures at the GOD WITH US: Christ in all the Gospels Bible School. This was held at GNU in Auburn, California, May 7-9, 1993. Audio tapes of these lectures are available from GNU.