

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



**Work for the Master
and great fellowship
on delivery days!**

Our God

Scientists speak of stars, galaxies, even our sun as being so many “light years” away from us; that is, *the number of miles light travels in a second (186,000) multiplied by the number of seconds in a year of time* — millions and millions of miles. After traveling literally *10 billion light years*, the enormity of the universe would be laid out as a tapestry before our eyes, with billions of galaxies made up of hundreds of billions of stars! The *infinite* size of the universe, its complexities, and even its secrets are too great for the minds of humans to comprehend.

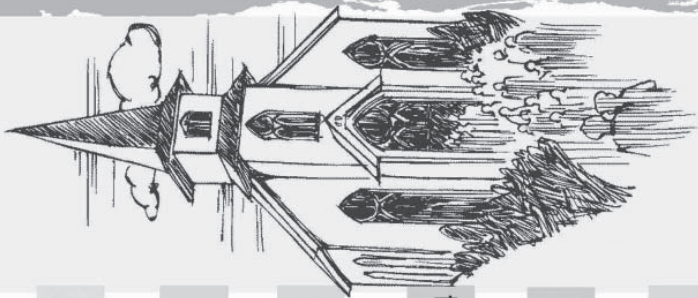
Yet, the Creator, the Eternal Being, the holy and most supreme Spirit, the God who formed all of this by the power of His word has taken the trouble to reveal *Himself* and *His mind* to us through the wonders of His Book, life, nature, and the universe, itself. Truly, the more we think on the greatness and the incomprehensibility of God, the more we sink into silent awe in His presence.

Except for some of us. Some speak of “the Old Man in the sky”. Others demand, “HEAL, Jesus!”. Others make endless jokes about God, and then laugh at the ridicule they have heaped on this holy Entity of limitless power. Today I saw a book with the slap-in-the-face title: “Sit Down, GOD! I’m Angry.” Just who do we humans think we are?

— BBC

An Acrostic on the Church

C	— Christ is its Founder and Head	• Matthew 16:18
H	— Hope is Present	• 1 Peter 1:3
U	— Universally available	• Matthew 28:19-20
R	— Redeemed are its members	• Colossians 1:12-14
C	— Christian is the name worn	• Acts 11:26
H	— Heaven is its destiny	• 1 Cor. 15:24



Does the Church of Christ Exist Today?

John 3:16-17



“... I will build My Church and the gates of hades will not prevail against it.” Matthew 16:18

ORIGIN

FOUNDER: JESUS CHRIST
 ■ Matthew 16:18
DATE: 30 A.D., PENTECOST
PLACE: JERUSALEM
 ■ Acts 2
NAME: CHURCH OF CHRIST
 ■ Romans 16:16

ORGANIZATION

HEAD: JESUS CHRIST
 ■ Matthew 16:18
CONGREGATIONS:
 AUTONOMOUS WITH EACH
 HAVING ELDERS & DEACONS
 ■ 1 Timothy 3

REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTRANCE

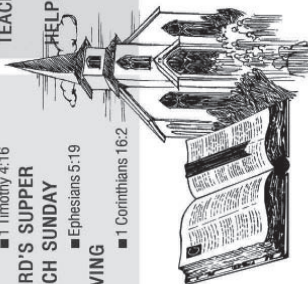
HEAR THE GOSPEL
 ■ Romans 10:14
BELIEVE THE GOSPEL
 ■ Mark 16:16
REPENT OF SINS
 ■ Luke 13:3, 5
CONFESS CHRIST
 ■ Romans 10:14
BAPTIZED (IMMERSION)
 INTO CHRIST FOR THE
 REMISSION OF SINS
 ■ Romans 6:3-4
 ■ Acts 2:38
 ■ Mark 16:16
 ■ Acts 22:16; 9:18
 ■ Acts 2:38
 ■ 1 Peter 3:21

WORSHIP

MUSIC: SING ONLY
 ■ Ephesians 5:19
PRAYER
 ■ 1 Thessalonians 5:17
STUDY GOD'S WORD
 ■ 1 Timothy 4:16
**LORD'S SUPPER
EACH SUNDAY**
 ■ Ephesians 5:19
GIVING
 ■ 1 Corinthians 16:2

WORK

LIVE GODLY LIVES
 ■ 1 Corinthians 11:1
 ■ John 14:15
PREACH THE GOSPEL
 ■ Matthew 28:18-21
TEACH THE CHURCH
 ■ 2 Timothy 4:2
HELPING OTHERS
 ■ Galatians 6:10
 ■ Galatians 2:10
 ■ James 1:27



Does the Church of Which You are a Member Match these Identification Marks?

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU
(ROMANS 16:16).



The Judgment

Byron Nichols

It appears that many people's concept of Judgment Day is different from what is revealed to us in the Scriptures. Let's give some attention to at least part of what God's Word tells us about that day of final Judgment.

Who Will Be the Judge?

Most people who believe there will be a Judgment Day think and speak in terms of God the Father being the one before whom all mankind will appear on that last great day. It is not difficult to see why that is a somewhat natural assumption. Romans 2:16 clearly refers to God as that one who will do the judging, but it is important that we read the entire verse — *"...in the day when GOD WILL JUDGE the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."* Paul stated, in Acts 17:30,31, *"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which HE WILL JUDGE the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."* Notice in both of these references that the actual judging will be done by Jesus the Son, but in correlation with God the Father. In Acts 10 we read about Peter's encounter with Cornelius, a Gentile. In verse 42 the apostle speaks of Jesus and says, *"And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead."*

All of the above serves to explain why Paul said what he did in 2 Corinthians 5:10: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."*

Some of What Is Known About the Judgment

The Bible does not tell us everything that we might like to know ahead of time about the Judgment, but we do know some things that are of the utmost importance.

(1) Every person who has ever lived or ever will live before the return of Jesus will be present before the Judgment Seat of Christ. No one will be absent. This is made clear in 2 Corinthians 5:10 (*“we must all appear...”*). Hebrews 9:27 tells us, *“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”*

(2) Along with numerous other references, 2 Corinthians 5:10 also teaches that the basis for our judgment will be ***“the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”*** Paul also warned, *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life”* (Galatians 6:7,8). We read in Romans 2:6 that each one will be judged ***“according to his deeds.”***

(3) In the majestic Book of Revelation the apostle John was given some glimpses of what the Judgment will be like and what will follow. His observation recorded in Revelation 20:12-15 should make an indelible impression on every person who reads it: *“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”*

(4) Judgment will be strictly on an individual basis. Hopefully we have already been impressed by the words of the Scriptures quoted thus far that we *“will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ”* **individually**, and **not as part of a group**. There will be no judging on the basis of membership in a nationality, a social/economic class, a particular race, a family, or even membership in a specific congregation of the Lord’s church — none of these will have any relevance whatsoever.

(5) There will not be “one last sermon” preached in an effort to convert the lost; there will not be “one last invitation song” sung in hopes of persuading the lost to obey the Gospel. We will have already had our lifetime in which to make our eternal choices.

What if the end would come RIGHT NOW? Are you really ready to hear your everlasting fate declared by Christ? †



God has always demanded repentance. The command to repent was at the heart of the message of every prophet. For example, in Ezekiel 14:6, Ezekiel commanded the people of Israel to “*Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations.*” We find no written command for Nineveh to repent; nevertheless, the city repented at the preaching of Jonah, which implies Jonah preached repentance.

The message of Jesus as well as John the Baptist was “*repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matthew 4:17). Jesus emphasized the importance of every person repenting when he said, “*I tell you*

Is Pride Preventing You From Repenting?

Jerry Bates

no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). In other words, Christ placed a choice before the people, repent or perish. The apostles also preached repentance. For instance, Peter wrote, “*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9).

I have read that the hardest command in the Bible is the command to repent. J.W. McGarvey wrote, “The greatest obstacle to the salvation of men is the obstinacy of the human will.” Indeed, repentance is a hard command to obey, because repentance demands a complete change, a change of the will, intellect, and emotions. It is difficult for man to make such a complete transformation. Since it is so hard, that may be one reason why many are hesitant to preach repentance.

Why is it so hard for man to make such a change? There may be several reasons. Repentance calls for total surrender, a total commitment to God and His will. It is demanding to commit to someone; thus, it is difficult to totally surren-

der to anyone else. People often say they are committed, but they are committed only until a better option comes along. That is not a true commitment at all, certainly not a total commitment.

Repentance is hard because it calls for a complete change immediately. Repentance is not a gradual process in which a person progressively stops one sin, then another, etc. Repentance from sin demands a complete cessation immediately. That doesn't mean that one will never sin or have a relapse into former sins. Certainly he will; however, his attitude towards sin has completely changed. No longer is he satisfied to be involved in a particular sin. Often people will say they accept Christ but continue to cling to one or more particular sins to which they are especially attached. That is not repentance, nor is it being pleasing to Christ. When the people in Ephesus who were involved in witchcraft and sorcery heard and accepted the Gospel, they immediately burned their books (Acts 19:19). Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new."

Related to repentance is a confession of sins, as public a confession as the sin is. We read in James 5:16, "*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another; that you may be healed...*" Notice we are encouraged to confess our sins to one another, not just to elders, preachers, or priests, and all are told to pray for each other. How can anyone know that we have repented of our public sins unless we confess them?

Confession is a very challenging task to most people. Possibly the greatest hindrance to true repentance is pride, because pride prevents us from admitting that we have sinned. Even if we are willing to admit we were wrong, we often utter excuses at the same time. While not totally excusing the sin, the excuses are an effort to justify in some way why we did what we did. In other words, we want others to think that if they were in the same situation, they would do the same thing.

A public confession of sins is seldom done in the church in especially some cultures. The reason is that a person would "lose face" if he publicly confessed some sin in his life. Pride frequently prevents man from doing what God desires. In other words, what other people think is more important than God's opinion. In actuality, confession of sins will not cause one to "lose face" to true Christians; rather, the reverse is true. Others are moved at the courage of one to confess wrong, and they are often encouraged to do the same because all of us struggle with sin, whether we admit it or not. We need the help and encouragement of other Christians.

Since all Christians have sinned and continue to struggle with sin, we should not be afraid or ashamed of confessing sin in our lives. Not only will this bring to our aid the support of other Christians, it also is pleasing to God, who can and will provide the greatest aid. Don't let pride hinder you from doing what God demands. †



No One Has to Live that Way

Louis Rushmore

A person cannot always materially change his living conditions when it comes to economic circumstances that are beyond one's capacity to alter them. Yet, there are a number of opportunities to make positive changes in one's lifestyle, in most cases, irrespective of economic limitations. Certainly, a person can leave behind morally bad behavior with its attendant maladies, and anyone can

opt to become and to remain an obedient child of God (Mark 16:16), regardless of inconveniences or even personal peril (2 Timothy 3:12; Revelation 2:10).

Popular music lyrics typify broken homes and the sin-sick world that appears in every direction to which we might cast our view. Shootings are epidemic; murders are widespread from urban metroplexes to small towns and rural areas. The world is awash in alcohol and drugs. The whole planet is crazy about sex; sexy commercials sell cookies and burgers to everything else imaginable. Such a list could be lengthened indefinitely, but you get the idea. It would be difficult to conceive of Noah's pre-flood world being anymore depraved than what we experience in the 21st century (Genesis 6:5). However, **mankind does not have to live that way!**

More specifically, neither men nor women, for instance, have to troll bars, streets and the Internet for lovers and one-night stands, over which they experience regret – if any part of one's conscience remains unseared (1 Timothy 4:2) – just to do it again and again, night after night, week after week, month after month and year after year. **No one has to live that way!**

No one has to wake in the morning, wondering where he or she is and pondering what he or she did or allowed to be done to him or her while in a drunken or drug induced stupor the night before (Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:5-8). No one has to accept this sort of thing as “normal” and the predictable, near daily scenario throughout the balance of one's life. **No one has to live that way!**

No one has to be ravaged by the guilt of an illegitimate pregnancy or for

bringing a baby into this world that is unplanned, unwanted, fatherless and for which one cannot provide even the necessities of life. Abortion would only compound a bad decision already made – for the fleshly passion of a fleeting moment (Hebrews 11:25; 1 John 2:16). **No one has to live that way!**

No one has to live his or her life in the shadows of ill-fated counterculture derivations from what in any century has been universally revered as virtuous (Romans 13:3; 1 Peter 2:13-14; 3:13). No one has to live in such a paranoid way as to fear from whom, where and when will come the inevitable, violent reprisal from those we have wronged – “did unto them before they did unto me” (Matthew 7:12). **No one has to live that way!**

No one has to live a solely, self-serving life tied directly and only to one’s physical existence on this big mud ball of woe. **No one has to live that way!** Instead, our destinies are larger than the saga of daily survival sprinkled with a little amusement along life’s pothole highway to nowhere, because within each of us is a soul (Romans 7:22; Ephesians 3:16) in a temporary fleshly, bodily home, which soul will ultimately return to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7), who then will make an eternal disposition of it (Matthew 25:46). Spiritually speaking, none of us are homesteaders, but each of us is a pilgrim (Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11) – either traveling heaven’s interstate or the Devil’s detour to hell (Matthew 7:13-14). Regrettably, most of this world’s population is traveling heaven’s bypass – a thoroughfare constructed by Satan himself, which will speedily and certainly bring its wayfarers to him forever in the fiery furnace (Matthew 13:41-42). **No one has to live that way!**

Anyone can choose (Joshua 24:15) for himself or herself to set aside the carnality of this world, and rather to willfully (Revelation 22:17) opt for righteousness, which has the promise of blessings in this life and in the eternal life to come (Acts 14:17; 2 Peter 1:3). Furthermore, even “morally good people” need to abide in Jesus Christ with all that means, beginning with becoming true Christians (Romans 10:17; John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32-33; Mark 16:16) – not denominationalists – but Christians only (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). Even Christians need encouragement to do better. *“Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life...”* (Philippians 2:14-16 NKJV). The sin-sick and dying world is all around every one of us, but **no one has to live that way!** †

**No one has to live a solely, self-serving
life tied directly and only to one’s physical
existence on this big mud ball of woe.**

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GOD FORGETS

Danny Boggs

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds ...I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more” (Hebrews 10:16,17).

He has never entered a spelling bee, participated in a knowledge bowl, or appeared on a trivia game show, but God knows everything. *“Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite” (Psalm 147:5). “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!” (Romans 11:33).*

God knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:9,10). He numbers the stars and knows the plight of every bird (Psalm 147:4; Matthew 10:29). No human ever escapes His attention (Psalm 33:13,14; Proverbs 15:3). He knows the number of hairs on our heads (Matthew 10:30). He knows more about us than we know about ourselves. *“For God is greater than our heart and knows all things” (1 John 3:20).*

God never forgets a single good thing that we do. *“For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints” (Hebrews 6:10).*

Then how fantastic is it to hear Him say of Christians, *“Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more”*? That truth is so incredible that the Holy Spirit put it in the book of Hebrews *twice* for emphasis (cf. 8:12). Only a sheer act of merciful, divine will could erase the marks of our guilt from His memory.

Since God is omniscient, “forgetting” is not an intellectual matter with Him. It is a functional issue. Of course He knows what we did, but when we repent He can act just like it never happened. What comfort!

If we accept the comfort, then we must accept the challenge, too: *“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32).* †

Danny Boggs preaches for the Hillcrest church of Christ in Neosho, Missouri, USA.

**ONLY A SHEER ACT OF MERCIFUL, DIVINE WILL COULD
ERASE THE MARKS OF OUR GUILT FROM HIS MEMORY.**

What is a True Friend?

Mike Benson

What makes for a true friend? According to the Bible:

He always loves you. *“A friend loves at all times...”* (Proverbs 17:17a). A friend is one who knows all about you and loves you just the same.

He sticks by you. *“A man who has friends must himself be friendly, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother”* (Proverbs 18:24; cf. Galatians 6:2). A true friend is like ivy that adheres to the tree in its decay.

Sam Davis was a Confederate spy executed at Pulaski, Tennessee for his crime. When captured by the Union army, he had in his possession some papers of vital importance. After examining the case closely, the officers in charge knew he must have had an accomplice in securing the papers. He was court-martialed, led out before the firing squad and blindfolded. Then the officer in charge put forward a proposition: “If you will give us the name of the man who furnished you this information, you may go free.” Davis did not hesitate in his reply, “If I had a thousand lives I would give them all before I would betray a friend.”

He tells you what you need to hear. *“Faithful are the wounds of a friend...”* (Proverbs 27:6a; cf. 28:23; Ephesians 4:25). A friend is one who stands up for you in public and sits down with you in private.

He helps you by offering his insight. *“Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one’s friend springs from his earnest counsel”* (Proverbs 27:9).

He brings out the best in you. *“As iron sharpens iron, a friend sharpens a friend”* (Proverbs 27:17; cf. 12:26; 1 Samuel 23:16).

He is there when you need him. *“Do not forsake your own friend...for better is a neighbor nearby than a brother far away”* (Proverbs 27:10). A friend is the one who comes in when the whole world has gone out.

Horror gripped the heart of the WWI soldier as he saw his lifelong friend fall in battle. Caught in a trench with continuous gunfire whizzing over his head, the soldier asked his lieutenant if he might go out into the “No Man’s Land” between the trenches to bring his fallen comrade back. “You can go,” said the lieutenant, “but I don’t think it will be worth it. Your friend is probably dead and you may throw your own life away.” The

GOD

lieutenant's words didn't matter, and the soldier went anyway. Somehow he managed to reach his friend, hoist him onto his shoulder, and bring him back to their company's trench. As the two of them tumbled in together to the bottom of the trench, the officer checked the wounded soldier, then looked kindly at his friend. "I told you it wouldn't be worth it," he said. "Your friend is dead, and you are mortally wounded." "It was worth it, though, Sir," the soldier said. "How do you mean, 'worth it?'" responded the Lieutenant. "Your friend is dead!" "Yes, Sir," the private answered. "But it was worth it because when I got to him, he was still alive, and I had the satisfaction of hearing him say, 'Jim, I knew you'd come.'"

It occurs to me that Jesus possesses these very same characteristics. He is a true friend.

He always loves you. *"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are my friends..."* (John 15:13,14a; cf. Romans 5:6-10).

He sticks by you. *"...I will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Hebrews 13:5b; cf. Luke 7:34).

He tells you what you need to hear. *"...I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you"* (John 15:15b; cf. John 8:32; 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Exodus 33:11).

He helps you by offering His insight. *"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him"* (James 1:5).

He brings out the best in you. *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:13; cf. John 15:5).

He is there when you need Him. *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30; cf. Luke 15:4).

If a good friend came knocking at your door, what would you do? Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart (Revelation 3:20) at this very moment. Will you answer and let Him in? Will you be His friend in return (John 14:15)? ☩

Mike Benson is a Gospel preacher living in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, USA.

Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart (Revelation 3:20) at this very moment. Will you answer and let Him in?

GOD

The Fool, CE

Paul Holland

You are most familiar with the practice of designating the year as A.D. 2014. “A.D.” is an abbreviation for the Latin phrase *Anno Domini*. This phrase is “the year of the Lord”. A Catholic monk named Dionysius Exiguus came up with the AD (and corresponding BC, or Before Christ) designation early in the 6th century, so it is quite old.

On this side of the cross, some Christians also used the expression “common era” to refer to this, the Christian age. But, CE as a academic designation was introduced by some Jews in the 1800s. It has been within the last few decades (especially since about 1980) that CE and BCE (before Common Era) has come to be used more frequently.

Many, if not the majority, of people who use the CE/BCE designation do so in order to emphasize the secular nature of life or to appease non-Christian religions. They do not want to use the “title” of Christ or to give credence to the idea that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ.

In the *Living Oracles*, 4th edition (1835), Alexander Campbell uses “vulgar era” (Latin for “common era”) as a synonym for Anno Domini. The Jehovah’s Witnesses have been using CE and BCE since 1964.

It is ironic that theologians, scientists, and “scholars” think that by using CE, they somehow can deny the existence of Jesus or, at a minimum, ignore His Messiahship and Savior-hood. ***The fact is that one cannot even call this year “2014” without implicitly acknowledging the existence of Jesus and His profound influence over western civilization!***

We do not date our events from the founding of our country (although legal documents, I understand, do). We do not date events from the first year of service of our country’s leader (although this is my fifth year of studying economics!). We do not date events from major events in our history or from catastrophes.

Regardless of how you look at it, “2014” argues for the Christian religion. One can deny it all he wants, but every time an atheist or a non-Christian writes “2014” or just “14” on his checks, he is acknowledging our Savior! Maybe one day those people will confess that Savior with their mouths and in their hearts, and not just with their pens. †

Paul Holland serves the church of Christ in Paris, Kentucky, USA.

GOD

WHY GOD WOULD NOT WANT YOU

Author Unknown

There are many reasons why God would not want you. But don't worry. You're in good company.

- Moses stuttered.
- David's armor didn't fit.
- John Mark was rejected by Paul.
- Hosea's wife was a prostitute.
- Amos' only training was in the school of fig-tree pruning.
- Jacob was a liar.
- David had an affair.
- Solomon was too rich.
- Abraham was too old.
- David was too young.
- Timothy had health issues.
- Peter was afraid of death.
- Lazarus was dead.
- Jesus was too poor.
- Naomi was a widow.
- Paul was a murderer. So was Moses.
- Jonah ran from God.
- Miriam was a gossip.
- Gideon and Thomas both doubted.
- Jeremiah was depressed and suicidal.
- Elijah was burned out.
- Samson had long hair.
- Noah got drunk.
- Did I mention that Moses had a short fuse?
- So did Peter, Paul — well, lots of folks did.

- But God doesn't require a job interview.
- He doesn't hire and fire like most bosses.
- He doesn't look at financial gain or loss.
- He's not prejudiced or partial,
- Not sassy, or brassy,
- Not deaf to our cry,
- Not blind to our need.

The Foolishness of the Cross

Brad Choate

Each Lord's Day, Christians assemble to remember the cross and Jesus crucified. Many outside our doors would look at this ceremony and think it foolish. What a waste of a Sunday morning! But to those being saved by it... well, we recognize the cross for what it is: the power of God to save man from his sin. God's love was shown that day as Jesus was sacrificed so that we may live.

The so-called "wisdom" that humanity attained through disobeying God has been made foolish by the cross! Let's read from 1 Corinthians 1:27-31:

"But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: 'Let him who boasts boast in The Lord.'"

That word, "despised", calls to mind another relevant passage that prophesied about Jesus and His suffering for us. From Isaiah 53:

"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."

Does this sound like an all-powerful Savior? The wisdom of the world would say no...the onlookers mocked Him on the cross saying, "He saved others but He cannot save Himself!"

But to the faithful, Jesus' power was made manifest in **what** He did on the cross. Little did they know it but those that mocked him were right: He *did* save others, but He could not save Himself because He had already submitted to God's plan! His goal was to *save us* by refusing to *save Himself* from the death on the cross. †

Brad Choate worships with the Lord's church in Livermore, California, USA.

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“He Shall Baptize You with the Holy Ghost, and with Fire”

J.C. Choate (Deceased)

The Scriptures tell us that John the Baptist came to prepare the way for the Lord. In other words, he went forth preaching repentance and baptism in water. Although Christ was perfect before God, He also came to John for baptism in order to fulfill all righteousness. Later, He would send His apostles out to preach **“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”** (Mark 16:16).

Explaining the difference between himself and Christ, John said, **“I indeed baptize you *with water* unto repentance; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; He shall baptize you *with the Holy Ghost and with fire*: whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire”** (Matthew 3:11,12). Now, what was John saying here? Let’s take a closer look and see if we can’t understand these matters. Surely God wanted us to know, and surely we can know.

To begin with, John showed that Christ would be much greater than himself. He said that while he baptized with water unto repentance, Christ would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

There is a lot said in the denominational world about the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire. Both are said to be practiced today. “Holy Ghost baptism” is preached as being for believers in this current age, and it is claimed that those who have received this baptism have the power to perform miraculous deeds. “Fire baptism” is said to be a cleansing process or a trying experience that a person endures at some stage in life. This would prepare that one, it is said, to be of greater service to the Lord. The question is, does the Bible teach this or does it teach something else?

To understand the baptisms of the Holy Ghost and of fire, we must look at the context in which the statement was made. John pictured a farmer threshing his wheat, fanning the chaff away, and gathering up the good grain to save, but taking the chaff to burn. Then he said that Christ would deal with people in that way. He would have the power to baptize some with the Holy Ghost, but the chaff, or those who are evil, will be taken out and burned up. In other words, they will be baptized with fire. John,

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then, was talking about *two* baptisms, one for the righteous and one for the wicked.

As we go through the Scriptures, we see that Jesus promised to send the Comforter, or the Holy Spirit, to the apostles on His departure. Reading closely the 14th chapter of John, we see that only Christ had the power to administer this baptism and only the apostles were promised to receive it. With that baptism, they would have the power to remember the things that Jesus had taught, to tell of things to come, to speak in other languages, and to perform miracles. Through this power they could convince people that God had sent them to proclaim His will.

We are told that after they received that power, **“They went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following”** (Mark 16:20). But how long did this continue? As long as the apostles lived, since they were the only ones that had been promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit. By that time the New Testament had been given in written form and there was no longer any need for signs and wonders to confirm the Word: it had already been confirmed in its completeness.

There are many who claim to have the baptism of the Holy Ghost today, but they contradict each other, they teach doctrines that are contrary to the Scriptures, they are members of churches that are not mentioned in the Scriptures, and they practice things that are in clear opposition to God’s Word. How, then, can they say that they have been baptized with the Holy Spirit, just as the apostles were, and that they are speaking by His guidance? The fact is, they haven’t been baptized with the Holy Spirit. Such people are deceived and they deceive the hearts of many.

It was through the power of Christ that the apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Then, later, when Peter followed instructions to go to the household of Cornelius and to preach the Gospel to them, he was shocked when **“...As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning”** (Acts 10:44-46; 11:15).

You will notice that it was not through Peter’s power that these first Gentile converts received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but as a *direct working of God*. Let this be a warning to us today when preachers *command* the Holy Spirit to fall on their “converts”. **Humans don’t command the Spirit of God!**

Notice, also, that even though this was several years after the Gospel was first preached on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, from Peter’s statement in Acts 11 we can be assured that not another person had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit during that interval of time. What was Peter’s statement? That **“... the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning.”** Obviously, God used this outpouring as testimony that He would accept Gentile converts

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into the church, to prove that He was no respecter of persons (Acts 10,11), and to fulfill the prophecy of Joel that “all flesh” — both Jews and Gentiles — would be blessed with salvation through Christ.

These are the only two instances recorded in Scripture of any humans receiving **the baptism of the Holy Spirit**. The use for this special baptism, and the time for it, have passed. It is not the “one baptism” of Ephesians 4:5. Still, all souls, even today, have been blessed through that baptism since the apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit in the preaching of the truth and in giving the written Word.

But what about the other baptism, **the baptism of fire**? Christ would have the power to administer this one also, not to the righteous, but to the wicked. The Bible teaches that in the last day Christ will cast all of the disobedient into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20; 20:10). We read, **“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death”** (Revelation 21:8). That, then, is the baptism of fire that John had said Christ would administer. Let us pray — and strive to be obedient — so that we will not experience that baptism.

Baptism is a burial. In the case of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles, or they were immersed in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). When the wicked shall be baptized with fire in the last day, they will be immersed or buried in the lake of fire. Someone has said that we are too late for Holy Spirit baptism, too early for fire baptism, but we are just in time for water baptism, which is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

In Ephesians 4:1-4, Paul says, **“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

“There is one body [church] and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

How many baptisms are there today? According to God’s Word, there are as many baptisms as there are Gods — only one!

I know, according to the Scriptures, that you have not been baptized with the Holy Ghost — and I know also that you have not received fire baptism since that baptism has not come yet, but is to be administered to the wicked in the last day — but the question is, **have you been scripturally baptized in water for the remission of your sins?** †

J.C. Choate began publication of *The Voice of Truth International* in 1993.

God Is!

Gary C. Hampton

“No one has seen God at any time” (John 1:18). Neither has anyone tasted, touched, or smelled Him. Some in the Old Testament heard Him, but none of us has. We cannot isolate God in a test tube or examine Him under a microscope. We must use some other means to show God is.

- **The greatest evidence of God’s existence is found in His creation.** *“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork”* (Psalm 19:1). Creation exhibits a design that must be the work of a designer, *“for every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God”* (Hebrews 3:4). The form and function of all the things God created teaches us there is a God (Job 12:7-10).

- **The cosmological argument seems to go hand in hand with the argument from design.** This argument says the cosmos, including the world in which we live, obviously exists. It goes further to say that *nothing comes from nothing*. Therefore, there is a prime cause, or God, behind the cosmos. **The Second Law of Thermodynamics**, also known as entropy, says there is an ongoing flow from heat to cold, or what we might describe as a winding down process. Such an obvious process lets us know the universe is not eternal. Something had to be behind its existence.

- Man’s moral nature tells us there must be a Moral Governor. People the world over condemned Adolph Hitler’s attempt to destroy the Jews. Why? Because man’s innate “sense of right” told them it was wrong. The animals do not display such a sense. Anyone who has ever seen a documentary on any of a number of animals has likely been impressed with their total lack of conscience. They can kill and eat another innocent creature without any pangs of conscience. For that reason, an ox that gores a man is not charged with murder. Instead, we place the ox in a fence and post warnings of the danger. In contrast, a man who kills is considered a criminal and will be tried for murder, because he ought to know better.

Even in our age of skepticism and doubt, man seems to seek something to worship. Thus we have what has been termed the “new age” movement. Individuals pursuing this concept believe in “karma” and “soulmates.” Ancient Indians worshiped the “Great Spirit”. The men of Athens erected altars to all types of gods, including one inscribed, *“To the Unknown God”* (Acts 17:22,23). Augustine believed *this universal desire of man to worship*, which he called “intuition”, **was clear evidence there is a God**. Batsell Barrett Baxter, in his book, *I Believe Because*. . ., explained

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this argument for God's existence by describing a first-time visitor to Washington, D.C. seeing the 550 feet tall Washington Monument. He said when they stood before the monument, they would instinctively look up all the way to its top. The same type of instinct causes man to look up to heaven for the Almighty God.

● Baxter also explained **Anselm's ontological argument** by first telling his readers that ontology is the branch of philosophy devoted to the nature or existence of God. "Anselm began with a definition, 'God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived!' Then he argued that man is able to conceive in his mind of the idea that than which there is no greater. He then went on to say he could think of something even greater than 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived.' What was it? The existence of that being greater than anything which man could conceive'". Baxter went on to point to Psalm 14:1, which says, "*The fool has said in his heart, 'there is no God'*". Then, Baxter wrote, "In order for the fool to say, 'God', he had to have a concept of God in his mind. **To start out to deny God is a kind of implication that God exists.**" †

Gary C. Hampton preaches for the Siwell Rd. congregation in Jackson, Mississippi, USA.

Common Sense

Donald R. Fox

Common sense means that a person has sound practical judgment with synonyms such as good sense and horse sense. It's sad that so many people have found their way into very important leadership positions, politically or otherwise, without a lick of sound practical judgment. A higher educational achievement does not mean one has common sense. A good education coupled with sound practical common sense is a great asset. "Common sense is the knack of seeing things as they are, and doing things as they ought to be done" (C.E. Stowe).

On our currency here in the USA, the motto still is, "In God We Trust". Now that makes sense! It makes sense to believe in God. The Bible is a book of common sense. No other so called sacred book can stand with the Bible. Common sense calls for and requires the one true God, our Creator. The New Testament Book of Hebrews applies common sense to prove that God exists. "*For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God*" (Hebrews 3:4). "Now that makes sense. No house can build itself. Neither could the world accidentally have happened. To say that either could have created itself is **monstrously unscientific** and **grossly nonsensical**. Any created thing requires a creator. Every effect must have a cause. So science and sanity are on the side of God – the Creator, the First Cause." (Leroy Brownlow) †

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After Their Kind

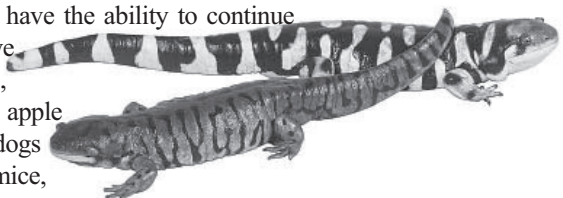
David Everson

In verse 11 of the first chapter of Genesis, after separating the dry land from the water, God now set about to create the first living thing. The plants — herbs, trees and grass — are created by God. With the plants, God creates the first of His many successful living things, and in each case they are given a command that they have obeyed to this day. That command was for the “*earth to bring forth abundantly... after his kind.*” The truthfulness of this command in the world today is **absolutely absolute**. Every living thing obeys it. Let’s look at the science behind God’s design.

When God designed all things, they were given a blueprint that carries the instructions for their makeup, from the structure of a single cell to the tissues, organs, and organ systems that make up the organism. This blueprint we now know is carried in a very unique and powerful chemical called DNA, deoxyribonucleic acid. All living things have the same chemical structure to their DNA; they simply have a different arrangement of the parts that make it up. This powerful chemical gives the instructions for the plants, from the mightiest oak tree to the smallest algae, and the instructions for the majestic whales down to the smallest worm, and also for man.

In order to give a concept for how powerful this chemical is, think about this: If all the instructions carried in a single human DNA cell were encoded and typed into print this size, it would take 1,000 books each containing 500 pages to show all of the instructions. And yet, this powerful structure can be folded and condensed into a small enough package that it will fit into the nucleus of a cell that is not visible to the naked eye. It is a self-replicating, self-checking, and self-correcting structure. When it operates as God designed it, it will faithfully make exact copies of itself every time; and in each living thing that must be done billions of times. Indeed, marvelous is our God!

But let’s get back to “*after his kind*”. With these spoken words, God guaranteed that each living thing would have the ability to continue its existence. When we look at the world around us, that is exactly what we see; apple trees producing apple seeds, dogs giving birth to dogs, mice to mice,



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and humans to human offspring. This fact of biology is the basis for the science of Genetics. We do not see fish giving birth to salamanders, or lizards giving birth to birds, or monkey-like creatures giving birth to human babies. It just does not happen. Yet, the atheistic, scientific community holds devoutly to the concept of organic evolution, believing that somehow living things which they observed in God's creation have never been able to make it occur with any reliability. The DNA of living things is just too powerful to allow this type of error to occur. If a mistake does occur in the copying process, the correction mechanism finds it and fixes it. If something happens to this correction mechanism, and it can, it is called a mutation. These mutations many times cause death, sometimes by cancer, or organ failure, and they are certainly not helpful. Yet, this is the best mechanism that the atheist has for getting the billions and billions of changes that are needed in his scheme of how life got here.

When we see in the creation around us, the evidence of the commands God has given, we should be humbled to acknowledge that God is the Creator. Indeed, we should praise the Lord for *“marvelous are thy works and that my soul knoweth right well”* (Psalm 139:14). †

David Everson is an elder in the church of Christ in Belington, West Virginia, USA, and he has many years of education in biology.

DESIGN OR ACCIDENT

Thomas Baxley

When it comes down to it, this universe was either planned by intelligence, or it is completely accidental. As you contemplate the choices, here are few things to consider. The earth is on average approximately 93 million miles from the Sun: design or accident? The earth is tilted on its axis 23 degrees: design or accident? The moon is on average approximately 238,000 miles from the earth: design or accident? Gravity on earth's surface has a force of 9.8 meters per second: design or accident? Think about all the laws of science (e.g., biogenesis, thermodynamics, etc.): design or accident? How did life originate on the planet: design or accident? How did the planet originate: design or accident? Why does mankind have the ability to use logic and reason, and animal kind does not: design or accident? Why does mankind rule the planet over plants and animals: design or accident? One last question: how many “accidents” will you admit to until you realize that these are no accidents at all, but designed? †

[Editorial Note: The created universe is evidence of something (Romans 1:20). Is it evidence for design or accident? The Designer also provided written revelation – the Bible, especially the New Testament for all people living today. ~ Louis Rushmore, Associate Editor]

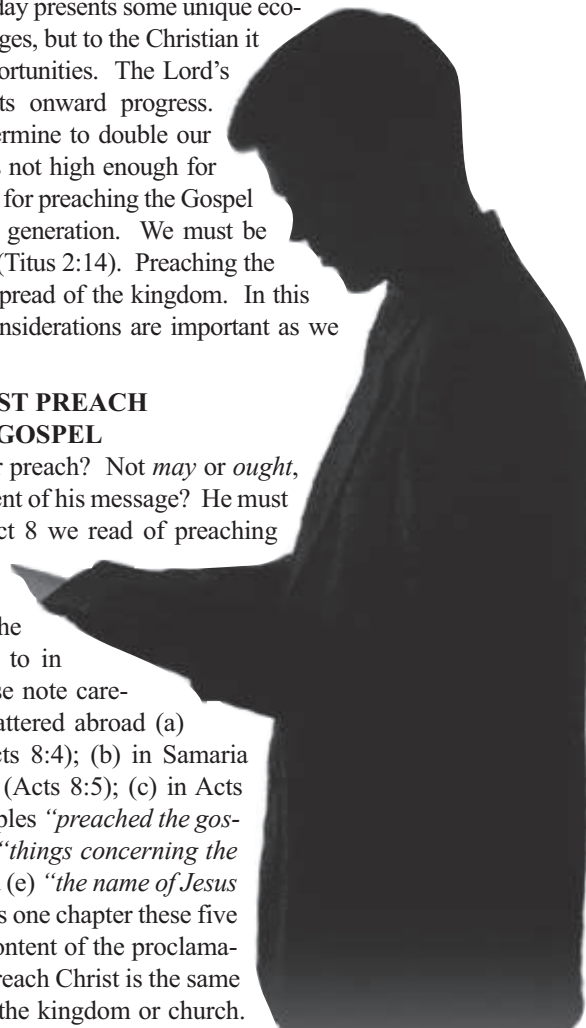
Preaching the Gospel

E. Claude Gardner

To the statesman, our day presents some unique economic and political challenges, but to the Christian it affords many spiritual opportunities. The Lord's church should continue its onward progress. In this day we should determine to double our strength. Even this goal is not high enough for those who are really on fire for preaching the Gospel to the whole world in our generation. We must be "*zealous for good works*" (Titus 2:14). Preaching the Gospel is essential to the spread of the kingdom. In this modern age what basic considerations are important as we preach?

WE MUST PREACH THE GOSPEL

What must a preacher preach? Not *may* or *ought*, but what **must** be the content of his message? He must preach the Gospel! In Act 8 we read of preaching to the Samaritans and to the eunuch by Philip and others. The preaching of the same message is referred to in five different ways. Please note carefully that the disciples scattered abroad (a) preached "*the word*" (Acts 8:4); (b) in Samaria Philip "*preached Christ*" (Acts 8:5); (c) in Acts 8:25 it is said that the disciples "*preached the gospel*"; (d) Philip preached "*things concerning the kingdom*" (Acts 8:12); and (e) "*the name of Jesus Christ*" (Acts 8:12). In this one chapter these five expressions connote the content of the proclamation. We observe that to preach Christ is the same as preaching the Word of the kingdom or church.



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Uninformed men ask us to preach Jesus and “leave off” preaching the church, the commands of Christ (such as baptism) and the essentiality of the name of Christ. One cannot preach Christ apart from His words. When one preaches Jesus, he must stress the obedience to the Gospel. When one preaches accurately any portion of the Word, he is preaching the Gospel of Christ.

WE MUST PREACH A FULL GOSPEL

Since we know what to preach we should realize that it is our fearful responsibility to preach a *full* Gospel. We must not place a strained interpretation on a passage. It is dangerous to our souls to mutilate the Gospel. Paul charges us not to preach any other Gospel. *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:8,9). We must not add, subtract, substitute, modify, or de-emphasize any part of the Gospel. We should look upon the Bible as *“the word of God”* and not as *“the word of men”* (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

We should not preach only our “favorite” verses or subjects. All topics should receive proper treatment. Sectarianism is the result of one’s being eclectic with the Scriptures because such an approach to the Bible builds a system of denominational doctrine on it.

Paul told the Ephesian elders that he had preached a full Gospel during his tenure of three years. He said, *“Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you **all the counsel of God**”* (Acts 20:26,27). Our deep resolve and fervent prayer should be that we will teach the truth and no error whatsoever.

WE MUST PREACH WHAT IS NEEDED

All of the Gospel is important. Any portion of it is a blessing to those who hear it proclaimed. By reason of circumstances some parts may be needed at a given place at a specific time. Certain lessons may prove quite timely.

Paul preached to Felix what he needed to hear. On this occasion, since he had a civil ruler before him, he could have chosen to speak on the duty of citizens to the civil government. Had he followed this course, Felix might have praised him and said, “Paul, that was a wonderful sermon, and I wish that all men could see the emphasis you gave.” However, Paul chose matters that the governor needed to hear. With him he *“reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to*

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come” (Acts 24:25). The result was that “Felix trembled”.

Jehovah called on Isaiah to prophesy against the sins of His people and “*spare not*”. Transgression must be rebuked. He was instructed to cry aloud “*like a trumpet*” — in clear, plain, and forceful manner. We will do well to appropriate in our preaching this charge: “*Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins*” (Isaiah 58:1).

It is not always pleasant to the speaker or to the hearers to preach on some themes, but it is nevertheless needful and essential. By preaching what is needed, one may lose friends. Paul understood this when he raised the question, “*Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*” (Galatians 4:16).

“A CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”

After we have discharged our duty in preaching and serving the Lord, we have assurance of sharing in the same great reward with the beloved Paul. Said he, “*For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing*” (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

ARE WE “READY”?

We have so many “open doors” for enlarging the influence of the church and for saving souls in our day. We should pray that our heart may be prepared to accept the weighty responsibilities that befall us as Christians to preach the Gospel. We should imitate Paul who said, “*So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel...*” (Romans 1:15). Are we “ready”? †

E. Claude Gardner is President-Emeritus of Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, USA.

We have so many “open doors” for enlarging the influence of the church and for saving souls in our day. We should pray that our heart may be prepared to accept the weighty responsibilities that befall us as Christians to preach the Gospel.

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Jesus' Bible

John Gipson

Jesus' Bible was the Old Testament. This was the foundation of all Jewish education, and like all Jewish children, Jesus would be trained from early childhood in the atmosphere of these thirty-nine books. It is evident that He must have spent many hours with the Sacred Page, because He quoted so frequently from the law, the prophets, and the psalms. His soul was steeped in the great old Scriptures of His people.

It is unfortunate that many of us have only a nodding acquaintance with the book Jesus knew so well. It is true that we are now living under a new and better covenant, but our lack of knowledge of the old deprives us of many valuable insights in the new.

The apostle Paul insists that *"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope"* (Romans 15:4). Jesus tells us that these Scriptures *"bear witness of me"* (John 5:39). And again, *"All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me"* (Luke 24:44). The fulfilling of the many prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Christ clearly proves the inspiration of the writers and the Deity of Jesus.

Many of the important truths of the New Testament are based upon events of the past. The admonition to remember Lot's wife, the story of Moses lifting up the serpent, the selling of Esau's birthright, the praying of Elijah, and countless other examples all tell us that we cannot readily understand these New Testament passages without a knowledge of the Old Testament.

Persons, events, and institutions find their antitypes in the New Testament. The priesthood, the tabernacle, the deliverance from Egypt, the salvation of Noah, etc. all have a part in helping us to understand what Christianity is all about.

And who has not been inspired by the thrilling stories of men and women *"who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight"* (Hebrews 11:33,34)?

Read the Old Testament. Jesus did!



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THE WORD OF GOD

Man Missing the Mark

Samuel O. Young

In Proverbs 16:25 the Bible plainly states that *“There is a way which seemeth right unto man but the end thereof are ways of death.”* God has explicitly conveyed the idea in His precepts to man not to **transgress** His **truth** or make His command without effect (Mark 7:9).

Man, created by God, persists in trying to reach the level of his Creator’s own thinking. The Scriptures say in Deuteronomy 29:29, however, that *“the secret things belong to the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may obey all of His law.”*

With his God-given intelligence, man, in spite of new developments in science and technical know-how, can never attain the degree of understanding belonging to the *“Ancient of Days”* (Daniel 7:13,14).

Source

God is the source of all things. Since God remains the Sovereign of the whole universe, all need to accept His infallible, unlimited, and infinite nature. His being is incomparable to man’s fallible, limited, and finite nature.

Examples

Scriptural thoughts have always been missed (misunderstood) by human wisdom, according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 2:13). In John 2:19-21, when Jesus spoke of His body as the temple, the Jews missed the mark by supposing He was referring to the Temple in Jerusalem. Another Jewish leader, Nicodemus, missed the mark when he thought that Jesus’ reference to being born again meant re-entering the womb of his



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mother (John 3:3-5). What Jesus really meant was baptism in water for forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 1:23).

The woman of Samaria missed the mark when she said “...Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. From whence then hast thou that living water?” (John 4:11). She thought Jacob was greater than Jesus Christ. In John 4:12 Jesus proved that He was greater than Jacob. John 6:52 says, “*The Jews therefore strove among themselves saying, ‘How can this man give us His flesh to eat?’*” This resulted in many disciples turning from Jesus, all because they misunderstood; they missed the mark.

**If we adopt an attitude of honest inquiry,
we can come nearer to the truth
and avoid missing the mark as so many do.**

Application

Thousands of people in all walks of life are missing the mark when it comes to the plan of salvation God has given to men to be respected and obeyed. Let's give God the due honor for His thoughts and ways, which are far superior to ours (Isaiah 55:8,9).

God's plan of salvation should be carefully followed as His divine order holds (1 Peter 4:11). **Hear the Gospel** (1 Corinthians 15:1-4); **Believe** (John 8:24), “*If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall perish in your sins*”; **Repent** (Acts 17:30); **Confess Christ** as the Son of the living God (Acts 8:37); **Be Baptized** (Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:3-5) for Christ to add you to the Church (Acts 2:47).

There is **one** church with many congregations everywhere. People accept the Word of God and are baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27). The apostles and other Christians were in the church of God which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). All prophecies about denominations were made by people who were in the church of Christ (Romans 16:16). The Holy Spirit used Peter, Paul, and other apostles to warn that men were going to stray away from the truth (1 Timothy 4:1-4; 2 Timothy 4:3,4; Acts 20:27-29; 2 Peter 2:1-3).

Putting on different names was sinful and condemned by Paul (1 Corinthians 1:10-12) in the church of God at Corinth. Since Christ prayed for unity for His followers (John 17:20-24), all need to obey in order to please Him (John 8:29; Romans 8:8).

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The authority to build the church belonged only to Christ. He established the church. The way the Lord built His church is the way we should let it be (Matthew 16:18). The word “build” means to put together. Hence the phrase, “*I will build My church*” means He, Christ Jesus, was to die to reconcile both Jews and Gentiles (Galatians 3:28) according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 2:1). “*And He is the propitiation for our sins. And not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world*” (1 John 2:2).

My dear reader, the Bible teaches that God has given us all things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). The way to behave ourselves properly is outlined for all to follow in His Word. The following are some points of concern if one would like to please God through Christ:

- the church and its organization and worship;
- teachings to strengthen brethren; what to preach to the world;
- and how to enter into Christ through the pattern that He has set by His chosen apostles (Matthew 28:18-20; John 20:24; Luke 24:46,47).

If we respect the Lord’s teachings, it is possible for all of us to be united (Matthew 19:26). But missing the mark will be the result if we fail to abide by the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). Peter once asked Jesus, “*declare unto us the meaning*” of a certain parable (Matthew 15:14,15). Jesus took His time to explain. If we adopt such an attitude of honest inquiry, we can come nearer to the truth and avoid missing the mark as so many do.

Let’s begin to have an investigative spirit and search the Scriptures like the hearers in Berea (Acts 17:11). Jesus made it plain to the ignorant Sadducees, “*that ye do err because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God*” (Mark 12:24). Let’s do our best to please Him by providing what is honest (1 Thessalonians 5:21). †

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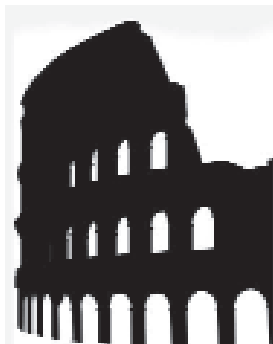
**The noun, “sin” in the New Testament
is derived from the Greek word,
“hamartia”,
which literally means,
“a missing of the mark”.**





Romans 15:14-33

Jerry Bates



1. Of what two things was Paul confident that the Roman Christians were full? (v. 14)
2. Paul pictures himself as a priest offering a sacrifice to God? What was his sacrifice? (v. 16)
3. Of what was Paul unwilling to glory? (v. 18)
4. Where had Paul fully preached the gospel? (v. 19)
5. Where did Paul desire to preach the gospel? (v. 20)
6. What verse did Paul quote in 16:21?
7. Why did Paul say he had never traveled to Rome? (v. 22)
8. Where did Paul plan to travel before coming to Rome? (v. 25)
9. Who had made a contribution for the saints in Jerusalem? (v. 26)
10. Since the Gentiles had been partakers with the Jews in _____ things it was their duty to minister to them in _____ things. (v. 27)
11. Once he had delivered the contribution to the church in Jerusalem, Paul would journey to _____ and then on to _____? (v. 28)
12. Of what did Paul earnestly desire of the Roman Christians? (v. 30)
13. Of what three things was Paul praying to God and desired that the Roman Christians pray as well? (v. 31-32)
14. Paul desired to come to Rome so that he might be _____ with them (v. 32)
(see the back cover for answer)

14 Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. 15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, 16 that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. 17 Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. 18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient, 19 in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. 20 And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, 21 but as it is written: "To whom he was not announced, they shall see: and those who have not heard shall understand."

22 For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. 23 But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, 24 whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while. 25 But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. 26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. 27



It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. 28 Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. 29 But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

30 Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, 31 that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, 32 that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. 33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

True Repentance

Bonnie Rushmore

According to *Easton's Bible Dictionary*:

There are three Greek words used in the New Testament to denote repentance. (1) The verb *metamelomai* is used of a change of mind, such as to produce regret or even remorse on account of sin, but not necessarily a change of heart. This word is used with reference to the repentance of Judas (Matthew 27:3). (2) *Metanoeo*, meaning to change one's mind and purpose, as the result of after knowledge. This verb, with (3) the cognate noun *metanoia*, is used of true repentance, a change of mind and purpose and life, to which remission of sin is promised.

Jesus said in Luke 13:3,5, "...unless you repent [*metanoeo*] you will all likewise perish." In Acts 2:38, Peter told those in Jerusalem, "Repent [*metanoeo*], and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." In the next chapter, Peter instructed the people to, "Repent [*metanoeo*] therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). Here Peter joined repentance with being converted — to revert, to come again, to turnabout. Judas repented (was remorseful) for betraying Jesus, but he did not truly repent of his actions (Matthew 27:3). The early Christians in Acts 2:38-41 and Acts 3:1-4:4 changed their lives to conform to the will of God. They no longer walked away from God toward unrighteousness, but they turned around and walked toward God and away from their former, sinful lives. Christians today must truly repent — no longer walk toward sin, turn around and walk toward God — to have the hope of salvation and an eternal home in heaven!

There is a wonderful example in the Old Testament of an individual who truly repented. After King David's sin with Bathsheba and the subsequent sins trying to hide the first sin (2 Samuel 11:1-26), Nathan, a prophet of God, told King David a parable about the injustice of a rich man toward a poor man. The king was angered and vowed that the rich man must be punished for his deeds. Nathan told the king, "You are the man!..." David responded, "I have sinned against the Lord." Even though King David repented [comparable to *metanoeo* in the New Testament] of his sinful behavior, he still suffered from the consequences of his actions (2 Samuel

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12:1-15). Psalm 51 is evidence of David's heartfelt repentance.

The New Testament also has examples of true repentance. The Book of Philemon shows Christians the behavior of a truly penitent individual and how Christians should treat such a one. Paul wrote this personal letter to Philemon to encourage him as a friend and fellow laborer (v. 1) to acknowledge Paul's love for Philemon and Philemon's love for Christians, and his faith in Jesus (vvs. 4-7), and to beg Philemon to take back Onesimus, a runaway slave, as his slave and as a brother in Christ (vvs. 8-21).

Onesimus was a slave to Philemon who had run away, possibly stealing from his master before his departure (v. 18). At some point in time, Onesimus found his way to Rome and met Paul, a prisoner in Rome. Paul taught Onesimus the Gospel of Christ, and he obeyed God's commands. Paul and Onesimus became close friends, and Onesimus was a great help to Paul in his work for the Lord (v. 11). Paul wanted to keep Onesimus with him, but there was a problem. Onesimus was a runaway slave. In order to truly repent, Onesimus could not continue to live in sin. Baptism washed away the past sins in the life of Onesimus, but as long as he lived as a runaway slave, he was living in sin. He had to make things right to the best of his ability and suffer whatever consequences his master would exact upon him.

The life of a slave was in the hands of his owner. Moses Finley made the following observation about slavery during the Roman Empire:

Fugitive slaves are almost an obsession in the sources. Rome forbade the harbouring of fugitive slaves, and professional slave-catchers were hired to hunt down run-aways. Advertisements were posted with precise descriptions of escaped slaves, and offered re-wards. If caught, fugitives could be punished by being whipped, burnt with iron, or killed. Those who lived were branded on the forehead with the letters FUG, for fugitivus. Sometimes slaves had a metal collar riveted around the neck. One such collar is preserved at Rome and states in Latin, "I have run away. Catch me. If you take me back to my master Zoninus, you'll be rewarded." (Wikipedia)



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Philemon had every right under Roman law to kill Onesimus for running away. Thus, Paul wrote begging him to accept Onesimus back and treat him as a brother in Christ and as his slave.

I can only imagine the heavy heart of Onesimus as he traveled the 1,000 miles from Rome to Philemon's home in Ephesus. However, he knew that if he had any hope of an eternal home in heaven he must return and face the possible wrath of his master for his sins.

Although this epistle was written as a personal letter to an individual, this short book has lessons for Christians today. True repentance requires one to remove sinful behavior from one's life — one cannot continue to live in sin after obedience to the Gospel. For example, one cannot continue an adulterous relationship, a thief cannot keep stolen items.

Obedience to the Gospel does not take away the consequences of sin. If one has committed a crime, one must turn himself in to the authorities and accept the legal ramifications of one's actions even if it means going to prison. One living in adultery must leave that relationship; however, the husband or father still has a biblical and moral responsibility to provide and care for the family. One cannot just walk away as if there never was a family relationship.

We also have instructions on how Christians should treat those who repent of sins in their lives. A repentant sinner is now our brother or sister in Christ and should be treated as such. God has forgiven his or her sins, and we must remember them no more. The new or restored Christian has a clean slate in God's eyes, and we must look at him or her as a new creature in Christ — treating him or her with love and concern.

The Book of Philemon is a short book containing just twenty-five verses. It is filled with truths applicable to Philemon, Onesimus and to all Christians living since that time and into the future. **The most meaningful to me is the picture of true repentance — not a sorrowful attitude because I got caught, but a sorrowful attitude that encourages me to turn my life around and live as God commands.** †

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Raised With Christ, the Elect of God

Wayne Barrier

A simple summary of several essential and practical characteristics of one who is raised with Christ and is among the elect of God is provided in Colossians 3:1-17. This passage reads:

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

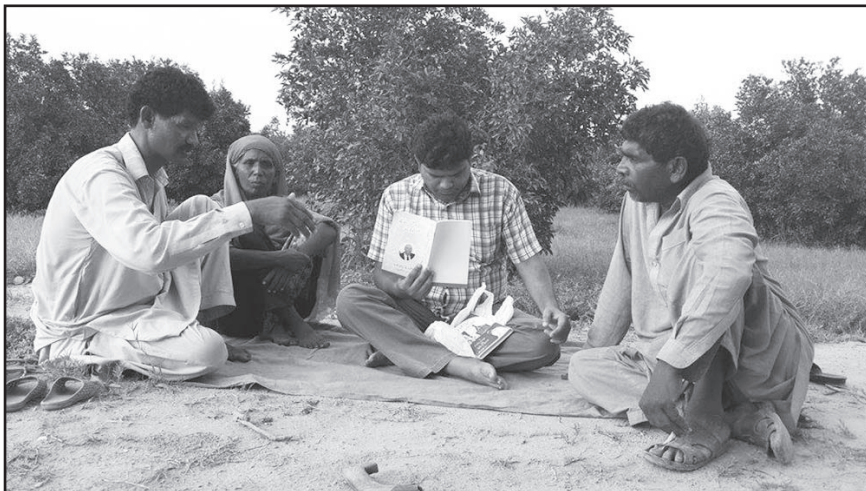
Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

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These verses are not all that address the way a Christian must live, but they very directly touch on many things that are especially relevant to life as a Christian in today's world. Modern society in most of the world does not follow the demands of this passage from God's Word. Christians are called out of the world and into a new way of life. Drastic change is usually required. One can be considered a Christian according to *human standards of acceptable behavior* and yet violate most of the teaching of this passage. We must be diligent to use only God's Word to define the way to live as one who is raised with Christ and to be accepted by God as a Christian. †



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📖 **Our behavior as Christians involves not only our personal lives — purity of speech, thought, and activities, motivated by love and compassion for others — but the sharing of the message of salvation in Christ through obedience to the Gospel.**

📖 **The circumstances for the sharing will vary greatly throughout the world, but the Gospel is the same. BBC**

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Why Do People Live as If They Will Live Forever Knowing They Will Not?

Roger Leonard

In James 4:13-17, I believe we find a partial answer to our question:

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit; 'whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.'" But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

Man has this tendency to disregard and forget what he considers as unimportant. Those who believe in the existence of God at least have Him somewhere in the back of their minds. The trouble is moving Him into the front, if you will. It's strange how quickly we do that when disaster strikes or when we become deathly ill. It's the day-to-day remembrance of God with which we have trouble.

There are several things James points out that we need to remember:

First, we do not know what tomorrow holds. We dream, plan, organize, get busy. We often live as if we have forever, even though we know deep down that we don't. James reminds us of this fact.

Second, we have only a short time on earth. Life is indeed like the vapor from a boiling pot of water which quickly vanishes. Job said, "*Oh, remember that my life is a breath!*" (Job 7:7). The psalmist wrote, "*The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away*" (Psalm 90:10).

Third, James reminds us not only to remember God, but to keep His will in mind at all times. It is doubtful that many of us make business decisions or decisions to move to another place without several considerations. Can I afford it? Will it be worth my time and effort? Do I think I'll like 'this or that' about making these changes? James reminds us to consider the Lord in all our decisions. If we look at this squarely, we see James saying that our very lives depend on God! James is not saying, as some might believe, that God is like some marionette,

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controlling our every move, for the very text itself teaches man to make decisions with God in mind. The point is that people tend to arrogantly boast about what *they* are going to do (verse 16), and James implies that their decisions might be “evil” versus “good.”

Our time on earth, in reality, is in God’s hands, but the decisions on how to use that time is in our hands. James implies that we can know what God wants, and that we must do what He wants in order to avoid sinful choices.

Because they leave God out, people often go through life as if they will live forever. But, we will die, whether today or at a ripe old age, and when we do, all that will matter are the choices we have made. Dear friends, choose wisely. Choose God’s will, for regardless of when we die or when the Lord may come, we need to be ready to meet the Him. Are you ready? If not, the time to be ready is *now*. †

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PREPARE TO MEET GOD - NOW!

Tim Childs

Religious teachers have come and gone but, hands down, Jesus is the greatest teacher ever to walk upon the face of the earth. Unlike the scribes of His day, Jesus spoke with the highest authority because His message was directly from the Father (John 7:16-18). No divine spokesman ever spoke with higher authority than God’s Son.

When the Judgment Day comes, and it shall, every accountable person will be judged. Jesus said, “*He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*” (John 12:48; cf. vs. 49-50).

Any doctrine that teaches or implies that accountable, saved people may habitually practice unrighteousness, and yet maintain God’s favor, is a doctrine that has not proceeded from the throne of God. Any doctrine that suggests there will be additional opportunities to prepare for heaven after death or upon Jesus’ return is a doctrine whose source is not from heaven. Any doctrine that proposes that all that is necessary to go to heaven is to be born into the world, or simply agree with God that Jesus is His only begotten Son, is a doctrine whose origin is not the Father. “*...prepare to meet your God...*” (Amos 4:12). †

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Working Without a Net

David Deffenbaugh

The world famous Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus suffered a recent tragedy as it performed in St. Paul, Minnesota. A circus performer fell 30 feet to her death in an accident during her routine. She was wearing no safety harness, and there were no safety nets. For a circus performer to work without a net certainly heightens the excitement of the act. The very fact that daring acts are being carried out in such a dangerous way is titillating. Advertising promotions for the circus boasted, “Tempting Fate Daily!” The threat of danger is of great entertainment value. Let’s face it — if the man or woman walking the tightrope did precisely the same routine one foot off the ground instead of 30 feet off the ground, what would be so exciting about that? But, alas, there is a definite downside to working without a net. The danger is very real. The consequences of even a small mistake can be deadly.

Unfortunately, mistakes are part of life. Some mistakes are big, some are small. No matter their size, they are going to happen, and we are going to fall. What will happen when we do? Is there anything there to catch us? Is there anything to prevent us from being destroyed? Will we survive?

God knows the danger we face and has provided well for our survival. His grace is our safety net. It is by His grace that my fall in sin does not have to spell my certain doom. *“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men”* (Titus 2:11). Everyone is going to fall in sin. No one will survive that fall on his/her own. God’s “net” of grace is available, but it requires a deliberate choice on our part to avail ourselves of that net. Acts 2 is a classic example of a group of people being made to realize their sin and its consequences. They wanted to know what they must do. Peter’s well-known response was, *“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:38).

Sometimes, though, even those who recognize the necessity of salvation in Christ inadvertently choose to work without a net. For some reason it is hard to overcome the idea of having to work to earn forgiveness of sins. This is often seen in people wondering if they have been “good enough” to be saved. The answer to that question is always the same for everyone: “No.” It cannot be done. If it could, there would be no need for Jesus. Even as Christians, we have the net of God’s grace. For the one *“walking in the light as He Himself is in the light,”* the blood of

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Jesus “*cleanses us from all sin*” (1 John 1:7). This cleansing is “present and continuous” (M.R. Vincent). Jesus’ blood, not our goodness, is what saves.

Life is too treacherous to be working without a net. God does not intend for us to do so. There is no reason to tempt fate daily. Instead, why not walk in the sunshine and security of His love and His grace? †

David Deffenbaugh preaches for the Southwest congregation in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA.

A NEW LIFE

Brent Smith

Those who have known the greatest darkness and self-destruction of sin appreciate the most the blessings of new life in Christ Jesus. Jesus said, “*but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little*” (Luke 7:47) Whether a prostitute, a drunkard, an adulterer, or an arrogant troublemaking gossip, no sinner is beyond the reaches of God’s amazing grace, unless he or she refuses to turn to God. Writing to the Ephesians, Paul notes that before Christ, they were “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (Ephesians 2:1) There are those who feel worthless, that they have traveled the road of sin so long that they can never be saved. Listen, if the murderous mob that cried out for Jesus’ crucifixion could be saved (Acts 2:37ff), so can I, and so can you!

It is possible to start all over. Aren’t you tired of the darkness and despair the life of sin has provided? You can be made alive (Ephesians 2:1)! God will take you and raise you up to heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). When you turn from your sins and to God in obedience by being immersed for the remission of sins, the old man of sin is put to death, and you are raised from that watery grave to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:1-4). God will free you from the shackles of sin that you might live with Christ (Romans 6:7,8). People can change for the better. I can, and you can. It isn’t easy, but it can be done. It isn’t easy, but neither is living a life of sin. And when we make the decision and turn in God’s direction, He will help us through the process.

“Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts ye double minded. Be afflicted and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up” (James 4:8-10). †

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SALVATION

TO RESCUE THE DEAD

Danny Boggs

A tugboat chugged through a fierce winter storm 25 miles off the coast of Maine. The air temperature was four degrees Fahrenheit, the wind was blowing at 40 knots, and fifteen-foot waves were sweeping over the ice-covered vessel. When the boat made a turn, two giant tow ropes washed overboard, wrapped around the propellers and killed the engines.

As the boat began to sink, a wave swept the captain and the two men with him into the sea. Sticking together, each grasped an eight-foot ladder that had freed itself from the boat. Help was on the way, but they knew the darkness precluded any chance of being found. They were as good as dead.

The captain of the crew coming to the rescue also felt the hopelessness of the effort. They were risking their lives for what were likely to be dead men, for survival time in the harsh January waters was usually measured in minutes.

When it seemed all hope was gone, the rescuers spotted a small light in the water. Without his knowledge, a flashlight had frozen to the glove of one of the crew members. They were saved!

Many of us live with grateful memories of deliverance from accidents or illnesses in which we nearly met death. But do we remember what it was like to be not only near death, but dead in sin? And wonder of wonders, One was able to save us!

Like the prodigal son, we wandered away from the Father and were “dead” (Luke 15:24,32). We “*were dead through our trespasses and sins*” (Ephesians 2:1). We were hopeless. Through our own reckless abandon, we were doomed to eternal death, permanent separation from God (Romans 6:23).

Then a Savior stepped forward, not only to risk His life, but to surrender it. Was it for people who were dying or who were likely dead? Much more, He knew we were already dead. “*But God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*” (Ephesians 2:4-6).

“*Truly, truly, I assure you, He that hears My word, and believes Him that sent Me, has eternal life, and comes not into judgment, but has passed out of death into life*” (John 5:24).

We were dead. Jesus saved us. Can a thankful heart help but praise Him? Can we fail to tell others still dead in sin about the One who rescues? †

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Marks of a Growing Church

Ian McPherson

On the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, when the church began, we see about three thousand people being baptized and added by the Lord to the church. From that day forward we see remarkable growth taking place. Two chapters later we read how it grew to about five thousand men (Acts 4:4). On four different occasions after this we see that the church at Jerusalem multiplied (Acts 6:1,7; 7:17; 9:31).



Although the culture and mind-set of people today may not be as conducive to church growth, the characteristics that caused Jerusalem to grow and multiply apply to all time. Below are some of the characteristics. They are taken from Acts 2:42-47.

STEADFAST: *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42). This shows that the church had many different assemblies which provided opportunity for Christians to grow in knowledge of God’s Word, and strengthen the relationship with each other and with the Lord. The members were present every time the church assembled, whether it was for teaching, fellowship gatherings, taking the Lord’s Supper, or prayer meetings.

Can we imagine how poorly a football club would perform if its players only turned up for the game and never attended practice sessions or other communal activities of the club? In the same way, how could we ever expect a church to grow whose members only turn up for morning worship and never, or rarely, for Bible class and other assemblies? The assembly is the “heart throb” of the church. Enthusiastic assemblies are the main springboard of evangelism.

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FEARFUL: *“And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles”* (Acts 2:43). The church cannot grow without each member having a healthy fear of God. *“For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge **His people**. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”* (Hebrews 10:30,31). We often think of only the people of the world being judged, but these verses concern the judgement of “His people”. God’s wrath was a powerful motivator to Paul in his evangelism. He said, *“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...”* (2 Corinthians 5:11). Churches will only grow when members have a healthy fear of God.

CARING: *“And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need”* (Acts 2:44-45). The church is more than an institution: it is a family. The Jerusalem church had an acute interest in the welfare of its members. Benevolence alone will not convert souls, but without it a church is dead (1 John 3:17; Revelation 2:4; James 1:27; Galatians 6:10).

UNITED: *“And they, continuing daily with **one accord** in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart”* (Acts 2:46). David said long ago, *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity”* (Psalm 133:1). There is nothing that stifles church growth more quickly than disunity.

INFLUENTIAL: *“Praising God, and having favour with all the people”* (Acts 2:47a). The church cannot grow in isolation; its light must be seen by the community (Matthew 5:13,14). The Jerusalem church was living as “peculiar” people in the community (1 Peter 2:9), showing Christ to the lost world.

EVANGELISTIC: *“And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”* (Acts 2:47b). The members were busily preaching the Gospel. Even after being scattered by persecution, the members of the church were still soul-conscious, planting churches, and preaching and teaching God’s Word (Acts 8:4).

If the church wants to grow today, these same things that motivated the Jerusalem church must motivate us. Millions are dying each day without the Gospel. ✠

Ian McPherson works for the Lord in Australia.

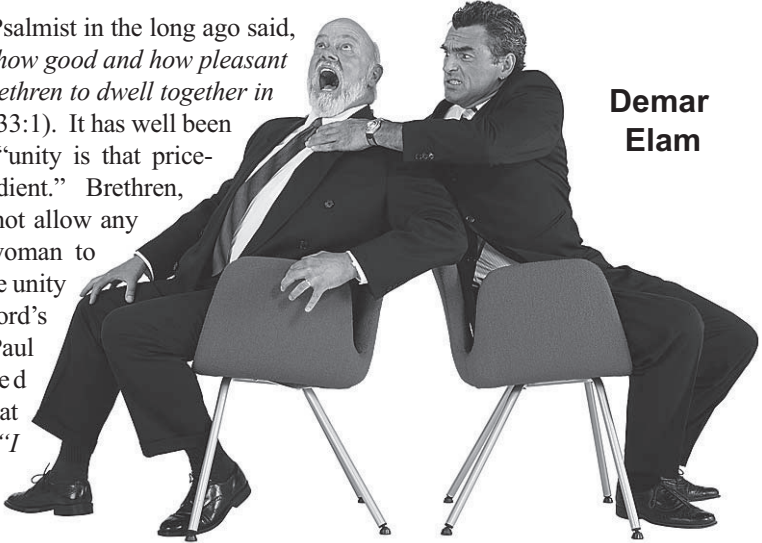
Although the culture and mind-set of people today may not be as conducive to church growth, the characteristics that caused Jerusalem to grow and multiply apply to all time.

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Behold How Pleasant to Dwell Together in Unity

The Psalmist in the long ago said, *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”* (133:1). It has well been said that “unity is that price-less ingredient.” Brethren, we must not allow any man or woman to destroy the unity of the Lord’s people. Paul instructed the saints at Ephesus, *“I therefore, t h e prisoner*

**Demar
Elam**



of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1-3). “Endeavoring” demands a positive effort on the part of each Christian. Division in the religious world at large or division in the local congregation is condemned as contrary to the spirit and will of God. Division is destructive to the church and the souls of men. Unity needs to be the prayer and effort of every individual who wears the name of Christ. Endeavoring demands action, not just talk. Are you working in behalf of unity? Christians must put forth strenuous efforts to promote and maintain peace, harmony, and true unity among the members of the family of God.

Division within the church is a sin. God hates it (Proverbs 6:19)! To sow discord is to trouble the peace of a family or church by lies, misrepresentations, to strive to poison men’s minds about the truths of God or about the brethren. There is a need for peace today if we are to win the lost for Christ. Peace is a requisite of unity. *“So the church throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace,*

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being edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord and comfort of the Holy Spirit was multiplied" (Acts 9:31). The result of the peace that prevailed was that the church was "edified" and "multiplied." In Acts 4:32 we read, "*And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.*" In order to have such today we must, "*...follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another*" (Romans 14:19).

One who "*soweth discord among brethren*" creates the soil that produces division from whence springs infidelity and unbelief in the world. Division is carnal (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). Division is a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:19,20). Please envision yourself standing before God in judgment, having been a sower of discord amongst the family of God, having caused a division within the church that Jesus shed His blood and died to unite. Surely, the thoughts of such should be horrifying to anyone wanting to follow after righteousness and be eternally saved.

Jesus said,
"Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). All Christians should spend their time promoting unity. Are you a peacemaker, or a divisive element within the church? Let each true child of God endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Be careful to never allow yourself to become a part of any element that



sows discord. God HATES "*...he that soweth discord among brethren*" (Proverbs 6:19). Yes, it is even an ABOMINATION TO Him! †

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THE CHURCH

Not For Sale

Raymond Elliott

To be perfectly honest with you, the sign was so small that I did not even notice it at the corner of Madison Avenue and Maryland Street. That is, until a friend informed me that our church building was for sale.

It was then that I made an effort to check and see if there was a sign at the location of the Capitol Heights church building. And there was. But at the bottom of the small sign was an arrow pointing down Maryland Street to the area where a house had been placed on the market for sale.

During this period of time I heard from various sources that the word had been spreading that, yes, our building was for sale. It is amazing how a rumor gets started; in so many cases the person who began it really never took the time to investigate as to the possibility that the fact of the matter had not really been proven.

And that is the way that it goes sometimes. I even see a sense of humor in some rumors, while other tales can be very damaging to someone's reputation, and that is bad. I hope the homeowner has success in selling the house and that the buyer will obtain it at a reasonable price. Buying and selling of a commodity/product really helps our economy, and we all know that we need some assistance in that area.



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In the spiritual realm of things, the church (not the building) should be in the buying (obtaining) but not in the selling (discarding) business regarding one commodity, and that is ‘truth’. In Proverbs 23:23 we read the following: *“Buy the truth, and do not sell it, Also wisdom and instruction and understanding.”*

What is the “truth” that we are to purchase? Jesus answers that question in His prayer as recorded in John 17:17, when He was praying to His Father: *“Sanctify them by your truth, Your word is truth.”* Jesus Christ is the very essence of truth because He is the Eternal Word (John 1:1,2). The Lord taught in John 8:31,32: *“...If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”* And in verse 36 Jesus said, *“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”* In John 14:6, *“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”*

To believe in and accept Jesus as the Son of God is also to accept His Word as Truth. They are inseparable. The Hebrews writer declares that God presently speaks to us *“by His Son”* (1:1). Jesus Christ informed His apostles that when He left them to return to His Father, the Holy Spirit would guide them into *“all truth”* (John 16:13). Today we have *“the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints,”* that is, the inspired Word of God (Jude 3; 2 Timothy 3:16,17). Our sentiment should be the same as the apostle John, who wrote, *“For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth”* (3 John 1:3,4).

How sad to realize and to know that even among the body of Christ some are fulfilling the words of Paul as found in 2 Timothy 4:3,4: *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine but according to their own desires, because they had itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”* That is the very reason why we should continue to *“Preach the word!”* The apostle Peter stated that the truth should always be taught: *“For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you”* (2 Peter 1:12,13). We should all be seekers of Truth and obtain it at any cost; but we should never “sell” it in the sense of rejecting or disobeying it. †

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THE CHURCH

The Beginning

Perry N. Hall



In the second chapter of Acts, the fifth book of the New Testament, we have the glorious beginning of Christ's church or kingdom (cf. Matthew 16:18,19). This was in fulfillment of divine promise and prophecy, as the Gospel was preached for the first time on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah, Daniel, and Joel had foretold of this day. Jesus had promised to build His church (or

kingdom) and had told His apostles that the kingdom would come *"with power"* during their lifetime (Mark 9:1). Power would come upon them when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:5,8). The Spirit would teach and bring all things to the apostles' remembrance and would guide them into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13). The Spirit did come, enabling the apostles to preach in different languages, that people of all nations might understand and be saved (Acts 2:1-21). They proclaimed the divinity of Christ and showed that Christ had ascended to the spiritual throne of David and was now reigning over His kingdom (Acts 2:29-33).

Using the *"keys of the kingdom"*, Peter declared the terms of forgiveness and admission into the kingdom. Three thousand obeyed the Spirit's declaration, *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..."* (Acts 2:38-41). Peter later called these events *"the beginning"* (Acts 11:15). †

Perry N. Hall is a Gospel preacher living in Tyler, Texas, USA.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

Then He said to me, “Have you seen this, O son of man? Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these.” So He brought me into the inner court of the Lord’s house; and there, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east.

And He said to me, “Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose. Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them” (Ezekiel 8:15-18).

For thus says the Lord God: “How much more it shall be when I send My **four** severe judgments on Jerusalem — the **sword** and **famine** and **wild beasts** and **pestilence** — to cut off man and beast from it? (14:21).

So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one (22:30).

Ezekiel 8:15-18; 14:21; 22:30

If God were speaking directly today, as He looks at the digression of our secular government, and as He looks at the apathy and spiralling apostasy in the church, would He not say again, “O son of man, have you seen this?”

Power, wealth, possessions, entertainment, immoral behavior, and countless other evils reign in the world.

In the church, some are holding to the truth, some are compromising, and the majority count themselves as “faithful” if they only attend worship each week. ***Have we forgotten that our purpose in the world is to carry the Gospel to every soul?***

We can learn from God’s corrective measures in the past. Will it be necessary for Him to bring the threat of death in order to wake us up?

*Where
is the man [men]
who will rise up with
fervor and zeal, speaking out
with a loud voice to awaken the
church, to stand in the gap so
that we don’t have to face
God’s wrath?*

THE VALUE OF TRUTH

Charles E. Burch

Solomon wrote: *“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding”* (Proverbs 23:23). Truth must be of such value that none shall ever turn from it! Solomon also wrote: *“Let not mercy and truth forsake thee...”* (Proverbs 3:3). He knew the real value of truth. He stated: *“By mercy and truth iniquity is purged...”* (Proverbs 16:6). This is the true value of truth and mercy.

Jesus taught: *“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32). The freedom from sin comes from knowing and obeying the truth. The apostle Peter wrote: *“Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth...”* (1 Peter 1:22). Therefore, only those who know and obey the truth will be saved. The great apostle Paul made this clear to the Thessalonians: *“... the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord...”* (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Notice what Paul said, *“them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”*; to fail or refuse to obey the Gospel is to fail or to refuse to obey truth.

One of the great blessings we received from Christ’s coming was stated by John. *“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”* (John 1:17). Jesus stated, *“...I am truth...”* (John 14:6). And He gave us the saving truth of the Gospel. He prayed to the Father for His disciples by saying: *“Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth”* (John 17:17).

It is so sad that through the years God’s truth has been contaminated by the doctrines of men. Many today place greater value upon what man has said than what God had said. Jesus emphasized the value of truth when He said, *“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matthew 15:9). Jesus is saying that if we deviate from the truth to follow the doctrines or teachings of men, our worship is vain. That is, our worship is empty or ineffective in trying to glorify the Father.

The sad thing about NOT accepting the value of truth is that God’s truth will judge all people on the great Judgment Day. Jesus said, *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day”* (John 12:48 NKJV). This reveals that we will be judged by the truth that Jesus has given, contained in the Bible today.

Since truth is of such value, for truth alone can save, let us learn it, believe it, obey it, and share it that we all may be saved. Remember — God’s Word is truth. ✚

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DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

We Must Remain Loyal to the Truth

Nat Evans

It is imperative that we study the question of how men are made believers. Emphasis needs to be given to the fact that men are brought to a saving obedient faith by believing and obeying the Gospel of Christ, and not by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:16-17; 1 Peter 1:22; Acts 2:37-38). Especially in this article, I want to call our attention to several passages of Scripture that call us to always walk in and remain faithful to the truth of God's Word (3 John 4).

There are three passages of Scripture, one located near the beginning of the Bible, another located about the middle of the Bible and the final one found at the end of the Bible that set forth various warnings about tampering with God's Word. We will notice these first, and then, we will look at some of similar import. (1) Deuteronomy 4:2 reads, *"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."* Deuteronomy 12:32 says, *"What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."* (2) Proverbs 30:6 records, *"Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."* (3) Revelation 22:18-19 warns, *"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."*

Man is to walk as God His Creator wants him to walk, but how is a person to know how he is to live? In 2 Corinthians 5:7 Paul says, *"for we walk by faith, not by sight."* Man is to walk by the directions of divine revelation and not by mere human wisdom. We can turn to Hebrews 11:6 and learn, *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."* Yet, how does faith come? Paul penned for us in Romans 10:17, *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* Faith is taking God at His Word. Man has no right to strike out on his own, make his own way and make his own laws in religion. Jesus said about this situation in Matthew 15:9, *"But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."* Men are to learn to live according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 4:6). One translation of this passage urges us that we *"learn not to go beyond the things which are written."* Second John 9-11 gives a serious warning about any failure to abide in the doctrine of Christ or the danger of fellowshiping those who do. *"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not unto your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."* We are going to be judged by the Word (John 12:48), and therefore, we had better live by it and *"earnestly contend"* for it (Jude 3). †

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

FOUNDATIONS

Greg Tidwell

“Let your foundational principles be brief and basic,” advised Marcus Aurelius, “of the sort which can focus your mind and effectively engage your current tasks” (*Reflections IV*, 3). The Lord’s church needs clarity of thought for the tasks at hand; we should follow the Stoic’s advice and take inventory of our guiding principles.

Principles of Faith

Four basic principles, scaffolding and integrating every belief and conviction, provide the framework of authentic Christian faith. Most fundamental is belief in one God, almighty and eternal, existing as three persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Secondly, authentic Christianity centers on Jesus Christ as the Son of God; salvation is in Christ and in Christ alone.

The third core belief is that Scripture is the Word of God and, therefore, completely true and authoritative. **Faith in the God revealed by Scripture is absurd without faith in the Scripture revealed by God.**

Scripture may be included in Christian faith and practice. By command and by example the Lord speaks through Scripture to His church in each generation. God’s written revelation is sufficient, complete, and final.

Unity and Exclusion

These basic principles support unity in Christian faith and practice for all who embrace their guidance. Conversely, they also provide a template excluding doctrine or action inconsistent with this system of faith.

Rather than debating particular issues, we should first set the basis for discussion. Do we agree concerning the nature of God, salvation in Christ, the authority and the sufficiency of Scripture? Without agreement on these basic points, further dialogue is useless; **there can be no unity of faith without a shared understanding of divine authority.** †

Greg Tidwell preaches in Columbus, Ohio, USA, as well as serves as the Editor of the *Gospel Advocate*.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Make It as Sure as You Can

Vance Hutton



At evening on the day of the crucifixion, Joseph had taken the body of Jesus and laid it in his own new tomb. He had rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher. On the next day, the chief priests and Pharisees came to Pilate, governor of Judea, and asked him to command that the sepulcher be made sure (secure) until the third day, lest His disciples come and steal the body of Jesus. Pilate told them to take a watch, go, and make the sepulcher as sure as they could. They went, making the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch (Matthew 27:57-66). Let us glean three thoughts from this conversation of Pilate and the priests and Pharisees.

Make Sure as It Relates to the Church of Which You Are a Member. There is but one church, just as there is one God (Ephesians 4). Jesus promised to build it (Matthew 16:18). He purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28). He

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

gave Himself for it and is the Savior of it (Ephesians 5:23-25). One day He will return for it (1 Corinthians 15:24). Other churches are not like the one the Lord built. The seed of His kingdom is His Word (Luke 8:11). You can make it sure and be a part of that precious kingdom. We had better be sure because every plant not planted by the heavenly Father will be rooted up (Matthew 15:13). You can examine the church you are a part of by the Scriptures. Is it organized the way the New Testament church was organized? Does it worship the way the early church did? Does it teach the plan of salvation taught by the church of the Bible? Make it as sure as you can. Your soul and the souls of others hang in the balance.

Make Sure as It Relates to the Command You Have Obeyed. Our Lord said to be aware of false prophets (Matthew 7:15). *“Try the spirits;”* said John (1 John 4:1). *“Whoso transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God”* (2 John 9,10). We are charged to not go beyond that which is written (1 Corinthians 4:6). No man has the right to add to or delete from the Word of God (Revelation 22:18,19). A curse is promised on any who would preach any other “Gospel” (Galatians 1:6-9). Those who know not or obey not the Gospel will be lost (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Only those who do the will of the Lord will enter heaven (Matthew 7:21). Be sure you are doing the will of God. The twelve in Acts 19 made sure what they had done was what the Lord wanted. This calls for study, and then putting such to practice. A great day of judgment is coming. The Bible will be the standard. Let us resolve to obey it.

Make Sure as It Relates to the Country to Which You Are Going. Peter wrote to Christians to make their calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:5-11). Make your destiny as sure as you can. You will live eternally in one of two worlds — one is heaven; one is hell. The choice is yours. Heaven itself offers motivation to put forth diligent efforts to make it our eternal home. Hell, as described in the Bible is motivation to put forth diligent efforts to avoid that place. You will be there for a long time (Ecclesiastes 12:5). There will be no second chance beyond this world to alter our destiny.

Friend, make these three precious things as sure as you can.



Vance Hutton is the preacher for the church of Christ in Double Springs, Alabama, USA.

**Make your destiny as sure as you can. You
will live eternally in one of two worlds
one is heaven; one is hell. The choice is yours.**

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Guardian Angels (?)

Hollis Miller

When walking in the presence of the unknown and the unknowable, it is always wise for mortals to proceed with great caution. But, angels are neither unknown nor unknowable. They are frequently mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments. This short article does not permit even a summary of the various activities attributed to angels in the Sacred Volume. However, let it be here noted that the Hebrews writer affirms that angels are in some way involved in ministering to the heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14).

In context with little children, Jesus mentioned that their angels in heaven are always beholding the face of His father (Matthew 18:10). Luke records that when Rhoda saw Peter standing at the door, following his release from prison by an angel, the brethren thought it was his angel (Acts 12:15). The value of the text is found in the fact that they did not think it strange to so believe.

Although there is no certain knowledge available to us concerning the exact nature of angelic ministry on behalf of Christians, the biblical evidence does indicate that such ministry is real. Specificity in contemplating angelic ministries needs to be avoided, but such avoidance should not be permitted to annul their ministry.

What a grand truth that the great hosts of heaven have an intense interest in the affairs and in the salvation of God's people. Jesus taught that joy exists in the presence of the angels in heaven over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:10). Peter declared that angels desire to look into the things of the Gospel (1 Peter 1:12).

While angels are not to be worshipped, Christians can rejoice that they share with them in the worship of God, and that they have a long history of activity in the things of God that pertain to His purpose in this world. †

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Here Am I Send Me

Colin McKee

Our God is a loving God who has always wanted to communicate His love to the people of the world whom He created. In Old Testament times He spoke directly to family leaders and prophets to tell them of His love and concerns. In our time He speaks to us through His written Word and asks us to tell others of His love and law.

During the days of Isaiah the prophet, God had a special message for the people of Israel. He needed someone to tell that message to the people, so He asked, *“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”* Isaiah answered, *“Here am I, send me”* (Isaiah 6:7,8). He was ready to do his part in telling others what God wanted them to hear and do.

Today His message of salvation still needs to be told, and His servants should say, *“Here am I, send me.”* When Saul of Tarsus heard God’s call, he was told, *“I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to who I now **send** you, to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God”* (Acts 26:17,18). Saul responded by saying in his actions, *“Here am I, send me”*, and he spent the rest of his life telling others the message of Christ’s Gospel plan. When God spoke to the young boy Samuel, he answered, *“Here I am, for You called me”*, and finally, *“Speak, for your servant hears.”* (1 Samuel 3:10). He was really saying, *“Here am I, send me to do your work for Israel.”*

Why should we say, *“Here am I, send me”*?

1. First, because we want to do our part in sharing God’s good news with others. We take His commission seriously when He said, *“Go make disciples of all nations”* (Matthew 28:18).
2. Because God is pleased when we go to do His will, wherever we are. Paul prayed that the brethren at Colosse would *“have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully **pleasing** Him, being fruitful in every good work”* (Colossians 1:10).
3. Because others must know His message of truth to live with Him eternally. *“... you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation...”* (Ephesians 1:13).
4. Because His name will be exalted, *“that the Gentiles might **glorify** God for His mercy, as it is written: ‘For this reason I will confess You among the Gen-*

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

tiles, and sing to Your name.” and again He says, *“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people!”* and again, *“Praise the Lord all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!”* (Romans 15:9-11).

5. Because His church will grow. After the persecuted Christians went *“everywhere preaching the word”* (Acts 8:4), and after the conversion of Saul, the churches were edified, *“And walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied”* (Acts 9:31).

Christ is the supreme example of one who said, *“Here am I, send me”*. He left heaven to do the will of the Father. *“For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me”* (John 6:38), and *“...He who sent me is with Me. The Father has not left me alone, for I always do those things that please Him”* (John 8:29). Let us also go that we may please the Father in those things that He has committed into our hands. †

Colin McKee has been involved in mission work in Indonesia for many years,

ARE YOU A VOLUNTEER?

Jerry Bates

In Isaiah 6 we find that Isaiah volunteered to go and speak for God. Why did Isaiah volunteer? It was not because his task was pleasant, because his message was one of judgment. It was not because he wanted money, glory or honor, because he received none of those. It was not because he was assured of success, because God guaranteed him that the people would not listen. This must have been extremely difficult for him to begin a task, knowing beforehand that he would not be successful. However, God assured him that a remnant would listen and be saved (Isaiah 6:12,13). That would make all his efforts worthwhile.

Most of us would be glad to teach, if we knew the vast majority would listen and obey. Regrettably, we know that is not the case; therefore, we often become tired and discouraged or refuse to even begin. Isaiah can become a source of encouragement for us to volunteer to become God's great servants. God has already asked all of us to volunteer in His service; therefore, don't wait for someone to ask you to do something. Isaiah volunteered to speak for God, and he was told to keep preaching until God's predictions of destruction had been fulfilled (Isaiah 6:10,11). In like manner, we must keep preaching the good news of salvation, or doing whatever it is that we can do in the service of our Lord, as long as there is a man in his house or people in the cities. No, the majority may not listen, but there will be a small number, “a remnant,” which will respond and make all our efforts eternally worthwhile. †

The Heart of a Soul-Winner

Randall Caselman

Most of us have been taught a hermeneutic which says that we practice religious concepts because of direct command, New Testament example, and necessary inference. If this is a correct hermeneutic, then each Christian must become evangelistic, have a soul-consciousness. We are to be sowers of the Seed, teachers of the Word, proclaimers of God's Good News...Soul-Winners.

I am convinced that soul-winning, evangelism, in our churches is a priority to the extent that we care. Until we have a deep personal concern for the lost, we will make little effort to serve them, win them, or keep them. Too many of us are not soul winners simply because we are selfish. We spend so much time, energy, and effort on self that we have little of life left for communicating Jesus to others.

Paul was soul-conscious. Let's look into his heart and see what we can learn from his first letter to the Thessalonians, in chapters two and three.

First, a soul winner must have a father's heart. Just how much do we care? *"For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God who calls you into His kingdom and glory"* (1 Thessalonians 2:11). Church, if we loved the lost with the love of a father, we would be an evangelistic fellowship, wouldn't we?

A father's love never stops. Paul spoke of those he led to Christ as his children, sons in the Gospel. He felt an ongoing responsibility to keep them in Christ, faithful to the Word. Some in the church object to the phrase "soul-winner." They say it indicates that we did the winning. No, No. God gives the increase through the Word.

We have three children, but it was not Randall and Georgia who gave them life. It was God. Others don't like the words "soul-winner" because they say if you can win a soul you can lose one. This is correct. Church, we need to feel the responsibility for souls kept as well as souls saved. I wonder how many I have allowed to slip out of the kingdom because of my lack of fatherly love, care, concern, teaching, and discipline. Soul-winners come with a father's love. Soul-winners have a father's heart.

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A soul-winner has an enlarged heart. A soul-winner gives his best, sparing no expense. Becoming soul-conscious will cost us. *“So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy who is our brother and God’s fellow worker in spreading the Gospel, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith”* (1 Thessalonians 3:1,2).

Even the casual Bible student knows that Paul needed Timothy with him in Athens. The mission effort in Europe had not been easy. It had taken its toll on Paul, but he was willing to give up Timothy’s companionship for the saving of others.

Note the phrase *“to be left by ourselves in Athens.”* The Greek word translated *“to be left”* is strong. It is sometimes used to describe those left behind due to the death of a companion. Sending Timothy back to Thessalonica was not easy for Paul. It was like losing a loved one.

Then there is the matter of traveling expense. This was tough, but sacrifices were made to keep the saved of Thessalonica saved. A soul-winner has an enlarged heart, a sacrificial heart.

A soul-winner has a heart of faith. *“You know quite well that we are destined for trials. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you know”* (1 Thessalonians 3:3,4).

It takes faith and understanding to know that trials will come and yet still not let the troubles of life blow you away. Soul-winners need to tell converts that God never promised to remove troubles and problems from our life, but He does promise to give us strength to overcome. We are family. We need to share our faith. Faith is contagious. Faith is what causes us to be evangelistic in the first place. Share your faith. A soul-winner has a heart of faith.

A soul-winner has a heart of joy. *“How can we thank God enough for you, all the joy we have in the presence of God because of you”* (1 Thessalonians 3:9)?

We have some in the church who have a problem with joy and rejoicing. Not Paul. Seriousness and long faces are not a sign of piety. *“Rejoice and I say again, rejoice. Put a smile on your face... A song in your heart”* (Philippians 4:4; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).

We need to learn to celebrate when we win over Satan. A soul-winner has a heart of joy.

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Souls won, souls saved, souls rescued — this calls for joy and rejoicing in our churches. Heaven rejoices, so should we. We need to learn to celebrate when we win over Satan. A soul-winner has a heart of joy.

A soul-winner has a praying heart. *“Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May He give you inner strength that you may be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all His holy ones”* (1 Thessalonians 3:11-13).

In this prayer we see that, as a soul-winner, we must be genuinely concerned about our converts. We must love them, teach them to love one another, teach them to pray for inner strength, so that they be found blameless and holy as they look forward to the coming of Jesus.

How are we doing? Do we have the heart of a soul-winner?

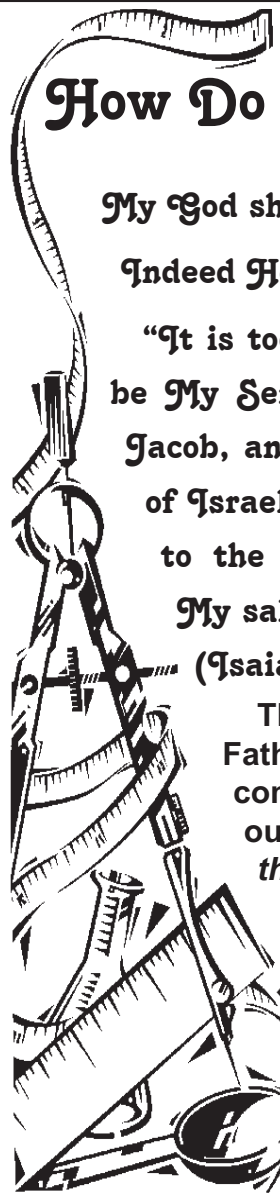
*Lead me to some soul today,
Teach me, Lord, just what to say;
Friends of mine are lost in sin
And cannot find their way.*

*Few there are who seem to care,
And few there are who pray,
Melt my heart and fill my life,
Give me one soul today.*

Will H. Houghton ✠

Randall Caselman preaches for the church in Bella Vista, Arkansas, USA.

In this prayer we see that, as a soul-winner, we must be genuinely concerned about our converts. We must love them, teach them to love one another, teach them to pray for inner strength, so that they be found blameless and holy as they look forward to the coming of Jesus.



How Do You Measure Up?

My God shall be My strength:

Indeed He says,

“It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth”
(Isaiah 49:5,6)

These words were spoken by the Father to Christ. Christians are the completion of the trust committed to our Lord. He has said, *“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel....”*

Are we being that light to the Gentiles....?



The Call of Isaiah and Worship

Cecil May Jr.

In the year that King Uzziah died (about 742 B.C.), Isaiah received a call from God to be a prophet, an inspired spokesman for God to the people of Israel. He saw a vision of the Lord sitting on His throne surrounded by seraphim proclaiming God's holiness and glory. Confronted by such power and majesty, Isaiah cried, *"Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"* (Isaiah 6:1-4).

Seeing the Lord changed Isaiah's life. Faced with the holiness of God, he was made to realize both his own sinfulness and unworthiness (*"I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips"*) and also to see the plight of his nation (*"I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips"*). God's people have the same problem as Isaiah, but he realizes it and they do not. He is qualified to deal with their sins because he has recognized the necessity of dealing with his own. And that, in turn, is because *"my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"*

David, made aware earlier of the gravity of his sins when confronted by Nathan the prophet, pled with God, *"Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!...Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."* Having acknowledged his sin, he can now promise, *"Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you"* (Psalm 51:2,7,13).

Isaiah says, *"Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: 'Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for'"* (Isaiah 6:6,7). Fire from the altar resulted in cleansing, forgiveness, atonement.

Then Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord saying, *"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"* Isaiah responded in faith, *"Here am I! Send me."* He is now ready to accept God's commission to go to God's people with God's message. He

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now knows God and that his sins are taken away.

Here, therefore, in this incident we learn the essence and the result of true worship:

1. By faith we see God.
2. Understanding His holiness, we recognize and acknowledge our own unworthiness.
3. God cleanses us.
4. God gives us a task.
5. We accept God's task and go out to serve.

Because God is worthy of our worship, He is worthy also of our obedience. ✠

Cecil May Jr. is Dean-Emeritus of the Bible Department at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

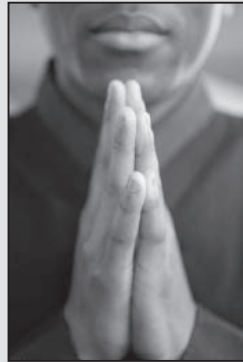
Have You Prayed?

Chad Ezelle

Our Lord made it very clear to the people who first followed Him that they were to ask God to meet their needs. Shouldn't we? Genuine, heartfelt prayer can produce powerful changes in our lives and world. When we lift up our hearts to God, asking for His wisdom, we open ourselves up to a great source of wisdom and love.

Do you have questions about today? Questions about your future that you can't answer? Questions about

choices or decisions you'll soon have to make? Needs that you can't satisfy by yourself? Have you sought God's wisdom? Have you asked for direction? Protection? Strength? Courage? If you have, do you consistently ask for His wisdom? Our God is perfectly capable of answering your



prayers, but first, you have to ask. Find some time today to read James 1:5. Think about it. Put it into practice. ✠

Musical Praise in the New Testament

Kevin L. Moore

All New Testament references to musical instruments (e.g. Luke 7:32; 1 Corinthians 14:7; Revelation 14:2) are used for illustrative purposes or to symbolize things other than Christian worship. However, every passage in the New Testament that addresses music in Christian worship always specifies vocal praise or heart-based singing (Romans 15:9; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; James 5:13; etc.).

While instrumental music in ancient times was common among infidels (Genesis 4:21; Job 21:12; Daniel 3:5-15), it was adopted in Jewish celebrations only after the Israelites had spent over two centuries with the Egyptians (Exodus 15:20; Judges 11:34). It was David who introduced musical instruments into Israel's corporate worship (1 Chronicles 15:16; Ezra 3:10), but whether or not this ever had divine sanction is a matter of dispute (cf. Amos 6:1-5). Notwithstanding, the old covenant of the Jews has now been superseded by the better covenant of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 8:6-13).

Singing from the heart is the only kind of worship music sanctioned in the New Testament, and church history attests to a cappella singing as the only form of musical praise in Christian worship for several hundred years after the time of Christ. It was not until the mid-seventh century A.D. that the organ was first introduced into Roman Catholic worship, although it did not become commonplace until after the eighth century. Early Reformation leaders strongly opposed mechanical instruments in worship as a Roman Catholic innovation, but by the 1800's most Protestant denominations had adopted the practice any way. Nevertheless, everyone committed to the restoration of New Testament Christianity has rejected all unauthorized additions or alterations to the simple New Testament pattern.

"What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding" (1 Corinthians 14:15). †

Kevin L. Moore, former missionary to New Zealand, teaches Bible and Missions at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee USA.

WORSHIP

A Plea to Those Who Lead Worship

Neal Pollard

From the man who gives the announcements before worship to the man who closes the worship in prayer or song, each has a serious responsibility and a stewardship entrusted to him. The worshippers each have a personal accountability for worshipping in spirit and truth, but by the very nature and definition of leadership, those who lead have even greater accountability. We expect the preacher to have prepared his sermon; should we expect less from the others who lead in the worship?

To those who lead us, please pray, use forethought and planning, and maintain an appropriate level of zeal and reverence in carrying us through the various acts of worship. Please consider the following suggestions, humbly submitted to those men who lead us in worship.

- Be equipped, prepared, and ready to lead whatever part of the worship is your task.
- Be enthusiastic, and hopefully your “face will really show it” (Psalm 122:1).
- Be encouraging, remembering to focus on those who are there, and not those who are not (Hebrews 10:24).
- Be energetic, not frivolous or “over the top”, but alive with passion for praising God (Philippians 3:3).
- Be engaged, knowing not only what you are doing, but what you are doing next (1 Corinthians 14:15).
- Be an earnest, sincere, heartfelt worship leader whose main objective is to worship God himself (John 4:24).
- Be empathetic, having a fellow-feeling with your fellow-worshippers that causes you to be attuned to them as well as attuned to the joy of worshipping God (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- Be edifying in your words, your tone, and your every effort in leading (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:15).
- Be educational, knowing that you teach and admonish, too (Colossians 3:16).
- Be emotional, not sappy or pseudo-pious, but one whose heart is clearly into leading us in worship (cf. Psalm 42:4).

Each opportunity is precious and God-given. Each time is an appearance in the very throne room of heaven. Each moment is directed to the Divine. Let us lead, reflecting that we understand that! ✠

Neal Pollard is the preacher for the Bear Valley church in Denver, Colorado, USA.

PROVERBS 17:22



Little Johnny's mother was having difficulty gulping down the birthday cake he had made for her as a surprise.

When she was finished, Johnny happily exclaimed, "I'm so glad you like it, Mommy." He then sadly added, "I'm sorry...there should have been 32 candles on the cake, but they were all gone when I took it out of the oven."



We had a power outage at our house this morning and my PC, laptop, TV, DVD, iPad, and my new surround sound music system were all shut down.

Then I discovered that my phone battery was flat, and to top it all off, it was raining outside, so I couldn't play golf.

I went into the kitchen to make coffee, and then I remembered that this also needs power, so I sat and talked with my wife for a few hours.

She seems like a pretty nice person.

One night at the dinner table the wife commented, "When we were first married, you took the small piece of steak and gave me the larger piece. Now you take the large one and leave me the smaller one. You don't love me anymore."

"Nonsense, darling," replied the husband. "You just cook better now."



While I was working at a men's clothing store a customer asked my co-worker to help her pick out a tie that would make her husband's blue eyes stand out.

"Ma'am," he explained, "any tie will make blue eyes stand out if you tie it tight enough."



As little Susie was drinking some juice she got the hiccups. "Mommy, please don't give me this juice any more. It makes my teeth cough."



The graduate with a science degree asks, "Why does it work?"

The graduate with an engineering degree asks, "How does it work?"

The graduate with an accounting degree asks, "How much will it cost?"

The graduate with an arts degree asks, "Do you want fries with that?"

PROVERBS 17:22

An elderly woman was driving along in her VW Beetle when the motor sputtered. She pulled to the side of the road, got out, and looked under the hood.

Several minutes later another woman stopped her car (also a VW Beetle) and asked if she could be of help. The perplexed owner looked out from under the hood and said, "It seems as though I don't have a motor."

The second woman politely answered, "Don't you worry at all. I've got an extra one in the trunk you can have."



Two patients limp into two different medical clinics with the same complaint. Both have trouble walking and appear to require a hip replacement.

The first patient is examined within the hour, is x-rayed the same day, and has a time booked for surgery the following week.

The second patient sees his family doctor after waiting three weeks for an appointment, then waits eight weeks to see a specialist, then gets an x-ray, which isn't reviewed for another week, and finally has his surgery scheduled for a month from then.

Why the different treatment for the two patients?

The first is a Golden Retriever.

The second is a Senior Citizen.

It all depends on your point of view:

To the optimist,
the glass is half-full.

To the pessimist,
the glass is half-empty.

To the engineer,
the glass is twice as big as it needs to be.



A young fellow visiting a dude ranch wanted to be macho, so he went out walking with one of the hired hands.

As they were walking through the barnyard, the visitor tried to begin a conversation by saying, "Say, look at that big bunch of cows."

The hired hand replied, "Not 'bunch,' but 'herd.'"

"Heard what?"

"Herd of cows."

"Sure, I've heard of cows...there's a big bunch of 'em right over there."



Q: When did God create Adam?

A: A little before Eve.

Q: What did Adam and Eve do after they were cast out of the Garden of Eden?

A: They raised Cain.

Q: How long did Cain hate his brother?

A: As long as he was Able.

Sodom and Gomorrah

Betty Burton Choate

One of the sickest stories in the Bible is the account of Lot and his family with the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah. As had been said of the people before Noah's flood, every thought and imagination of their hearts was only evil continually. The people of Sodom were so consumed with their appetite for evil that when they were literally, physically blinded, the natural fear that should have shocked them back to rightness was totally overwhelmed by the unbridled lust that drove them to heap evil upon evil.

It is the responsibility of those who know truth to live righteously and teach righteously, to bring the light of God to those around them. Lot knew God, and the evil of Sodom "vexed his righteous soul". He was the "best" that God had in that place, and he was good enough that the angels saved him from the fire and brimstone.

But Lot's ensuing story is pathetic and shameful. During his years in Sodom, there is no record that anyone learned of God through him. Though the evil of the city hurt him, when the Sodomites stormed his door he suggested a cowardly compromise to their demands, offering to give his own young daughters into their evil hands. Where was the godly courage that should have made him prefer death himself to the ruination of his children?

Living among heathens, Lot's daughters were pledged in marriage to local men who did not believe in God — another compromise with the world. Lot had no influence over these men; he seemed to them "*as one who was joking*". So they, and his wife, were lost. And later, as Lot and his daughters hid in the mountains, we see the extent of the influence of Sodom's depraved sensual environment. Lot submitted to his daughter's encouragement to drink himself into such a stupor that he was totally unaware of her incestuous behavior during the night. And where was his "morning after" shame about his drunkenness? That evening he allowed his second daughter to lead him into another night of drunken evil. The two sons that resulted from these sins grew into the nations of the Ammonites and the Moabites, thorns in the flesh of Israel.

But what is the point?

There is a grim parallel between Lot and the world surrounding him, and the church and the world surrounding us.

◆ Our world? Sodomites are not being struck blind; they are being struck

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dead by AIDS, and yet they are not frightened into a change of life by their plight; they only “weary themselves to find the door” as did their predecessors. And they, in their crazed lust, are symbolic of so many Americans.

◆ Homosexuality is being promoted as an “alternate” lifestyle and a growing percentage of the population, especially among the younger brain-washed generation, approves it. There is also the beginning conversation about bestiality, pedophilia, incest, necrophilia, sadism, transgenderism and exhibitionism as “sexual orientations” — only variants in preferences — and discrimination against anyone in these areas should be called “hate crimes”.

◆ Without shame, many “couples” now engage in “live in” relationships, without the legal ties of a marriage ceremony. Same-sex “marriage” is being sanctioned in an increasing number of states. The next step of acceptance will of necessity be polygamy.

◆ We are a nation of sexual exploitation and gross immorality where even children are taught not only of explicit adult sex but of perverted sex, in sick school programs called “sex education”. Most entertainment and even most advertisements are sex-based.

◆ A greater portion of our population is confined to prison than in any other nation of the world, and yet our streets are filled with criminals who are suffering no punishment for their crimes.

◆ We are a hotbed of child-, husband-, wife-, parent-abuse of the vilest and most atrocious kind, where mothers and fathers can kill their own children and be excused on the basis of “insanity”. But what else would we expect of a people where more than a million unborn babies are mercilessly killed each year by professionally trained doctors and nurses, at the instigation of the parents who should be willing to die to protect their young, even by the instinct of nature?

◆ We are a nation of growing wildness among young people. Interviews and videos of “Spring Break” participants showed that many, many have no training in morality, no sense of shame, no concern about obedience to the laws of the land or the laws of God. What will be the fate of our nation when this generation is in control?

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” George Santayana.



Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, the originator of the magazine, *The Voice of Truth International*.

He Can't Keep His Eyes Off You!

Rod Kyle

The mother of the Arab nations, Hagar, accurately described our God as, "...a God who sees" (Genesis 16:13). The omnipresence of God is well-testified to in the Bible (Jeremiah 23:23). You might remember King David's statement in Psalm 139:7,8, *"Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, Thou are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, Thou are there."* In Athens around 50 A.D., the apostle Paul declared, *"...He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist..."* (Acts 17:27,28). Every word we utter, everything we do, every thought we have — the God of the Bible knows it.

What does this mean? Is He "checking up" on you to catch you in wrong doing? Or does He watch because He loves you and cares for you?

The Bible tells us it's the latter. First John 4:11 states *"God so loved us..."* As love is the "core" of His being (1 John 4:8), it follows that this is the case. He simply cannot keep His eyes off us!

So how do we know God loves us? Does the good earth

He has created (Genesis 1:1) provide well for us? Acts 14:17 teaches that. When we falter in life, has He provided a way for us to be forgiven? First John 4:10 answers this vital question. *"He loved us and sent His Son to be the price paid for our sins."*

But to have the God of love look upon you with a love that forgives, what type of person must you be?

Do you need to love and obey Him (1 John 5:3)? Do you need to live a life of love (Ephesians 5:2)?

It is true...God cannot keep His eyes off you. But what type of person does He see? One who is responding in love, or one who is living in rebellion?

It's your choice!



Rod Kyle preaches the Gospel in New Zealand.



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On Sonship

Rex Banks

John records that as an awestruck Mary clung to her risen Lord, Jesus instructed her, “...Go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My father and My God and your God’” (John 20:17). Now why didn’t Jesus simply say: “**Our** Father... **our** God?” Likely Augustine was correct when he commented: “He saith not ‘Our Father,’ in one sense therefore is He mine, in another sense yours; by nature mine, by grace yours...my God, under whom I also am as a man; your God, between whom and you I am mediator.” In fact, nowhere in the Gospel accounts did Jesus address God as “our Father.” True, in Matthew 6:9-13 (cf. Luke 11:2-4) when Jesus gives the model prayer, He teaches the disciples to petition God as “*Our Father*”, but this was an example for them to follow. Clearly being sinless, Jesus need never Himself make the request: “*forgive us our debts*” (Matthew 6:12). In fact, some commentators on the text point out that when Jesus speaks of the disciples asking in prayer, He uses a term which is proper upon the lip of an inferior asking a favor of a superior, but with respect to His own requests He employs a term which suggests His equality with the Father. Possessing the very nature of God, Jesus is properly described as “*the only begotten from the Father*” (John 1:14) (i.e., God’s Son in a unique way); possessing no such nature, sonship in our case is a matter of adoption (Romans 8:15,23; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5).

But not withstanding the distinction which the Lord makes in John 20:17, the fact is that Jesus refers to the disciples (who just days before had “*left Him and fled!*”) as “brethren.” Amazingly, “*He is not ashamed to call them brethren*” (Hebrew 2:11). Astonishingly, the Lord of the universe is not simply “My Father” but also “your Father.” Later on Paul will remind his brethren at Rome (and us): “*For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’*” (Romans 8:15). (“Abba” was very much a “family” word, speaking of familiarity and intimacy.)

What’s more, “*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God*” (Romans 8:16). And just how does the Holy Spirit “bear witness” to this fact? Well, the same way that He “bears witness” concerning the new covenant in Christ — by means of the Word (cf. Hebrews 10:15,16).

It gets even better still. As “*children of God*” we are “*heirs also, heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ*” (Romans 8:17). We are heirs because we are sons, and we are sons because of union with Christ. God’s favor is ours while

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on earth, and our Brother has prepared a place for us with our Father in heaven (John 14:2).

There is, of course, that other aspect of sonship which is strongly brought out by the Hebrews writer, namely: *“Whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives”* (Hebrews 12:7). These words remind those who would be truly wise that when hardship is their lot they should accept it as God’s method of training and disciplining them, and as a token that they are really His beloved sons and daughters, and yes, heirs of God, *“...He disciplines us for our good that we may share His holiness”* (verse 10). As the beloved children of God, let’s strive to remember always that *“...to those who have been trained by it (i.e., discipline), afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness”* (verse 11). Yes, Sonship is a costly business — look at Calvary. †

Rex Banks works with the church in Hamilton, New Zealand.

Jesus’ Deity Was Confirmed by the Father

Gary C. Hampton

On two separate occasions, the Father testified to Jesus’ Sonship. After Jesus’ baptism, *“a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”* On the mount of transfiguration, after Peter suggested making tabernacles for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, *“a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’”* (Matthew 3:13-17; 17:1-5). The Jews clearly understood that Jesus being the Son of God made him partake of God’s very nature; in other words, the Father was saying Jesus is God!

The writer of Hebrews also shows us the Father thought of Jesus as God. *“Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”* (Hebrews 1:3). Vine indicates this means that Jesus was the shining forth of God’s glory and the very image of His substance. In verse 8, the Hebrews writer quotes Psalm 45:6-7, and says that God, **the Father**, called Jesus **God**. †

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

WRONG REASONS FOR FOLLOWING CHRIST

Bill Becker



Does it seem unlikely there could be a wrong reason to follow Christ? Wouldn't following Christ for any reason be a good thing? Not necessarily!

The day after Jesus fed a crowd of five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, He went to Capernaum. When some of the crowd from the day before asked why He had come there, Jesus said, "...

you seek Me, not because you saw the signs but because you ate of the loaves and were filled" (John 6:26). We can trust that Jesus was correct in His statement. They were following Him because He fulfilled their fleshly desire for food.

Likewise, there were some who preached Christ out of a spirit of envy and strife, thinking it would add affliction to Paul's bonds (Philippians 1:16).

And then there is the case of Diotrephes who regaled in the power he had in the church, casting out faithful brethren because it suited him to do so (3 John 9).

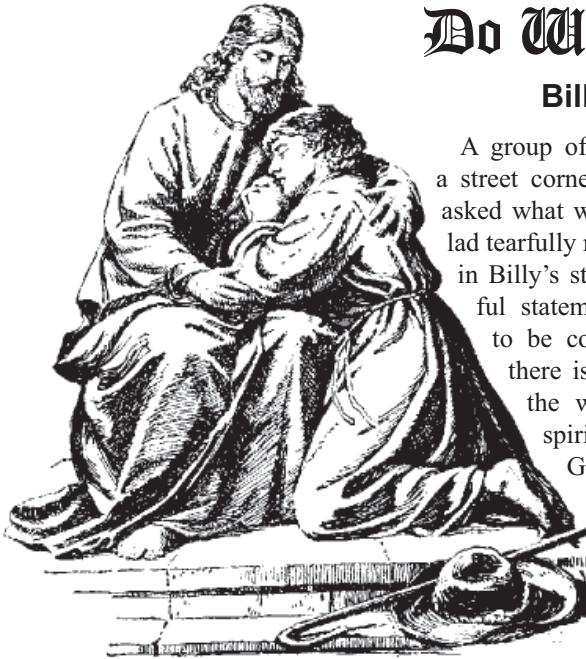
In all of these cases it is quite easy to spot the problem: there was no sincerity regarding a true surrender of self to Christ. Can it happen today as well? Yes!

In the more obvious cases, when those who say they are Christians engage in the unfruitful works of darkness (fornication, filthiness, idolatry, etc.), their sins are painfully evident to all. But the behavior is equally grievous if we claim to belong to Christ and yet harbor bitterness, envy, wrath, and covetousness in our hearts. Yes! It is all about the heart, for even if a Christian is overcome by a temptation, his heart (mind), if it is sincere, will seek Christ again in repentance ☩

Bill Becker is the preacher for the New Antioch Church of Christ in Hillsboro, Alabama, USA.

Do We Care?

Bill Dillon



A group of children were crying at a street corner. A man came by and asked what was the matter. One little lad tearfully replied, "We've got a pain in Billy's stomach!" What a beautiful statement of children's ability to be compassionate. Wherever there is sorrow and suffering in the world, wherever there is spiritual darkness and despair, God's people must extend arms of sympathy.

It was a sympathizing Jesus who beckoned, "*Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden...and I will*

give you rest" (Matthew 11:28-30). Also the Lord said, "*he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*" (John 6:37).

When one member of the body of Christ suffers, all feel the pain. Truly, Paul wrote that we "*should have the same care one for another*" (1 Corinthians 12:25). To be casual or lukewarm in our devotion to others, in particular to fellow disciples, is to be casual and lukewarm in our devotion to the Lord (Matthew 25:40).

How far out does the circle of your concern extend? To you and your family? To a few more? Should you redraw the line and include all for whom Christ died?

To the world, the most appealing quality of Jesus is His care and compassion for others. This characteristic makes the Lord loom large in the eyes of those who believe not. This same quality, prominently featured in the lives of the Lord's people will open many hearts to the truth. Do you care? †

Bill Dillon preaches for the Lord's church in Cotter, Arkansas, USA.

Freedom

Gordon Hogan

On December 7, 1941 Japanese warplanes bombed Pearl Harbour and the city state of Singapore. At that time Singapore was Crown Colony of Great Britain and was believed to be an impregnable fortress island by mother England.

On February 8, 1941, Japanese forces led by Lieutenant General Tomoyuki Yamashita invaded and overwhelmed the British army which surrendered three days later. This was the worst defeat in the history of British struggles. In the Battle of Singapore, coupled with the preceding Malayan Campaign, British Lieutenant General Arthur Percival's army suffered around 7,500 killed, 10,000 wounded, and 120,000 captured. Japanese losses in the fighting in Singapore numbered less than 2,000 killed and 3,000 wounded. The Japanese occupied Singapore for the remainder of the war, massacring many of the city's Chinese population as well as others who opposed them.

The Japanese surrendered to the allied forces in September 1945. Some years later General Yamashita wrote a book about the Singapore battle in which he said that just before the British surrendered to him, had the British counterattacked, he, Yamashita, would have surrendered to the British, which shows that the line between success and failure many times is razor thin.

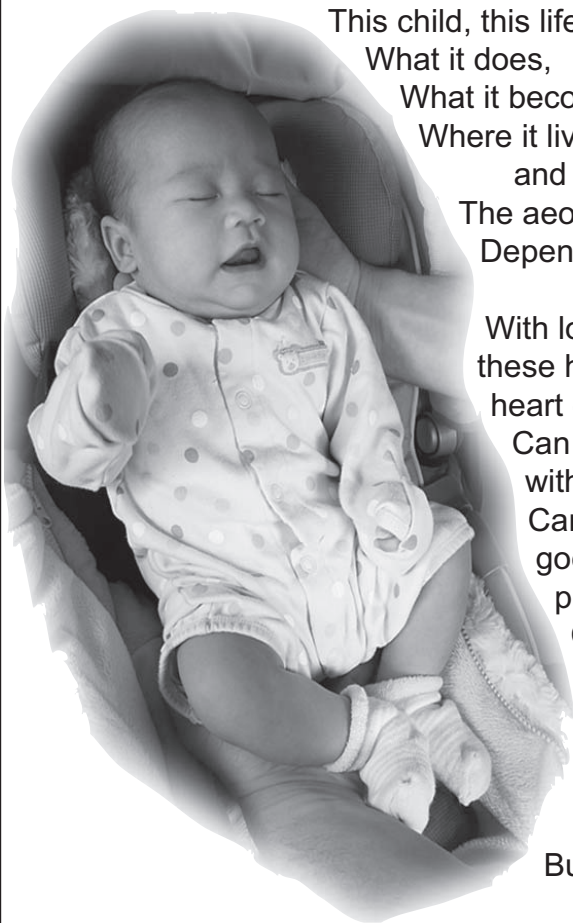
On August 9, 1965 the Republic of Singapore became a sovereign nation and every year celebrates its independence as we do ours. Our family served as missionaries for eight years in Lahore, Pakistan before moving to Singapore in August 1968. This wonderful little country progressed from third-world to first-world status in thirty years. The church of our Lord grew from five small congregations in 1968 to eighteen at present, all self supporting and reaching out to other nations.

During those 25 years that we lived and served in Singapore, we celebrated and honored the nation's independence, waved their flag, sang the national anthem, and shed tears of joy that God had allowed us to live and serve with the people of Singapore. They take their freedom seriously and we should as well. Jesus spoke a great deal about freedom, the spiritual kind that draws us close to God and His way. To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said, *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free"* (John 8:31,32). Let's celebrate and thank God for the wonderful spiritual and secular freedoms we enjoy in this United States of America, not just on the 4th of July but every day. †

Gordon Hogan, makes short-term trips to Asia, and lives in Searcy, Arkansas, USA.

A Child is mine.

God gave it to my hands,
A soft, impressionable bit of dust,
Untouched, and waiting to be formed —
A bit of dust, frailly mortal,
But radiant, too, with a living spark
Of immortality —
A gift from God that never dies.



This child, this life, is mine.
What it does,
What it becomes,
Where it lives, both now
and throughout
The aeons of eternity
Depends on me.

With love and care
these hands and
heart of mine
Can grace its form
with beauty —
Can nourish
goodness and a
pure heart,
Can make it
one to love,
one to cherish,
one to bless
mankind.

But, easier still,

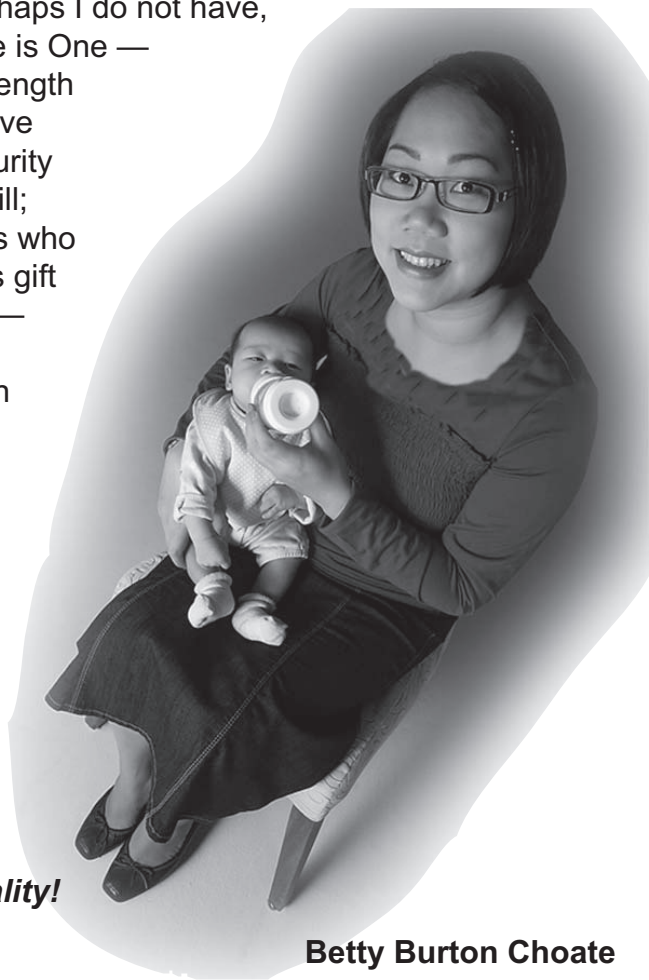
Through failure and neglect
I can make this life
A bitter cup of sorrow,
Of despair and loss and death.

It takes a strength to impart a strength to others;
It takes a will and love
That perhaps I do not have,
But there is One —

He is strength
and love
and purity
of will;

He it was who
gave this gift
to me —

And
I can turn
to Him
for all
I need
And,
with **His**
help,
These
hands
can
shape
a soul
For
immortality!



Betty Burton Choate



Put Your Own Mask On First

Jack W. Carter

I remember the first time I heard it. The stewardess was informing us about procedures in case there was an emergency. It went something like this, “In the unlikely event there is a sudden change of compartment pressure, oxygen masks will automatically drop from the chamber above you. Place the mask over your nose and mouth and breathe normally. If you have small children with you, put your own mask on first.”

One doesn’t have to be especially astute to grasp the common sense behind this kind of reasoning. It is based on a simple formula — if the parent is not secure, the child is in jeopardy.

Of course, this applies to more than just parent/child relationships. It can and does come to bear on all human relationships that are singularly or mutually dependent, and certainly includes marriage partners in reference to making the home.

Through the years, the church of our Lord has suffered terribly as the result of careless church leaders. Paul warned about this. To the elders of Ephesus he spoke these words:

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Wherefore watch ye, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears (Acts 20:28-31).

Because so many church leaders have not heeded this warning, the church has experienced many serious ailments. “Take heed unto yourselves” is just another way of saying, “put your own mask on first.”

Also, I am so saddened, knowing that one of the more serious failures is that of neglecting to teach young parents to be godly parents. As far as the church is concerned, young parents are usually on their own. Consequently, homebuilders quite often come up way short of being everything they should be. Again, it is a situation that calls for self-examination. We plead with fathers and mothers: with the challenge that lies before you, are you putting your own mask on first?

It takes a lot of courage to answer this question honestly, but we are kidding ourselves and setting ourselves up to hurt a lot of people if we do not. In all relationships, if the answer is “No, I am not what I need to be,” then, unless some changes are made, how can there be hope of success in any endeavor of helping others? This does not mean that we must be perfect in every way. An assumption like that can only result in disappointment and despair. Still, we must make every effort to correct anything in our life that needs correcting.

I have had this bit of poetry on my heart for a long time:



“The lambs will follow the sheep you know, wherever the sheep will stray.
If the sheep go wrong it won’t be long ‘til the lambs are as wrong as they.
And so with the sheep we earnestly plead, for the sake of the lambs today.
If the sheep are lost, what a terrible loss the lambs will have to pay.”

Unknown

Jack W. Carter (1930-2013) was a preacher for many years in the state of Colorado, USA.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

MARRIAGE MATTERS

Dalton Key

The church and the world have dramatically different views concerning the bond of marriage. In fact, the world no longer appears to look upon marriage as a bond at all, but views it, rather, as a loosely-drawn, easily-exited arrangement of convenience. Whereas couples once pledged faithfulness “as long as we both shall live”, too many now opt — at least in practice — for a more self-serving, “as long as we both shall love”.

And the “love” itself is all too often both fickle and short-lived. Reports have been circulating for some time now concerning the alarmingly high ratio of divorces to marriages in the United States. Many county records reveal divorces granted as actually outnumbering marriage licenses issued.

The problem is not helped by current television and movie fare. Most marriages portrayed on screens small or large are stereotyped as either painfully boring or laughably sentimental. And many of the actors and actresses themselves, both on and off screen, seem to change marriage partners (and bed partners) with as little thought as is given a routine costume change.

Yes, the world is unashamedly making a god of sex and a mockery of marriage. Jumping from partner to partner, from mate to mate, from bed to bed is becoming more the rule than the exception.

Today’s flippant attitude toward marriage is nothing new. According to Edward Gibbons, the renowned historian, the divorce problem was one of five underlying causes contributing to the fall of the Roman Empire. Seneca spoke of Roman women as married to be divorced and divorced to be married. Many citizens of Rome were said to have marked the passing of time more by the names and number of their spouses than by months or years. The apostle Peter spoke of those who “*having eyes full of adultery...cannot cease from sin*” (2 Peter 2:14).

But divine truth has not changed: “*And he answered and said unto them, Have you not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together; let not man put asunder*” (Matthew 19:4-6).

Regardless of what society may say, regardless of what media may attempt to mandate, we are not beasts, controlled by nature’s baser instincts; we are God’s handiwork, created in His image, after His likeness (Genesis 1:26). †

Dalton Key is the editor of Old Paths and preaches for the 10th and Rockford congregation in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Committed Christian Fathers

Dan R. Owen

Our community needs committed Christian fathers! Too many families in our troubled nation do not have fathers, and too many fathers who still live with their families have not shouldered their responsibilities as God has commanded. We are challenging the men to rise up and commit themselves to being the kind of fathers God is calling them to be. *Fathers should commit themselves to bless their children by giving them a secure, positive, spiritually healthy relationship with their father.* The presence of committed Christian fathers is crucial to moral, social, and spiritual progress.

Committed Christian fathers first commit themselves to God. Before God's law instructs parents to teach their children it says, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind*" (Deuteronomy 6:5). Kids need dads who genuinely love God. They can always tell if we really do, because they see us up close every day. Our children will know if we supremely love money, prestige, power, or pleasure, just as they will know if we love God. It will be obvious in our voice, in our attitude, in our habit, in our activities, in our priorities, and in our willingness to admit our wrongs. There is no way to be a powerful spiritual influence in the lives of our children apart from a sincere submission to God.



THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Committed Christian fathers train their children in the context of an ongoing, positive relationship. God's law says to teach our children diligently "*when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up*" (Deuteronomy 6:7). Our real teaching is done amid the ongoing activities of life. In order to do this kind of teaching we need to be involved with our children. We need to work with them, study with them, eat with them, and play with them. In many families, dad's fishing or golf, combined with the kids' full schedules, combined with wasted time watching the tube, make such a relationship impossible to achieve. We need to take the responsibility of building a relationship with each of our children by spending time with them in a variety of contexts so that there is a comfortable, positive relationship with them. Apart from a positive relationship, we cannot effectively lead our children to God.

Committed Christian fathers bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Just building a relationship with our kids is not enough. The responsibility lies with us to actually teach them the values and commands that come from God. It is our responsibility to pray with our children, read the Scriptures to them, and involve them in doing good. It is also our responsibility to correct them when they do wrong and lovingly place them back on the right path. God gave these responsibilities to fathers. Will you accept them? ☩

Dan R. Owen works with the Broadway congregation in Paducah, Kentucky, USA.

God's Directions to Children and to Fathers

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
"Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

What words of wisdom! The promise to children is that *if* they honor and obey their parents, things will be well with them in this life. And the instruction to parents is that they are to bring up their children in the *nurture* [the care and provision] of God and also in His *instructions*, in a loving relationship rather than one that causes friction and conflict. God's wisdom never fails, and if parents and children will follow His guidance, pitfalls will be avoided. BBC



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

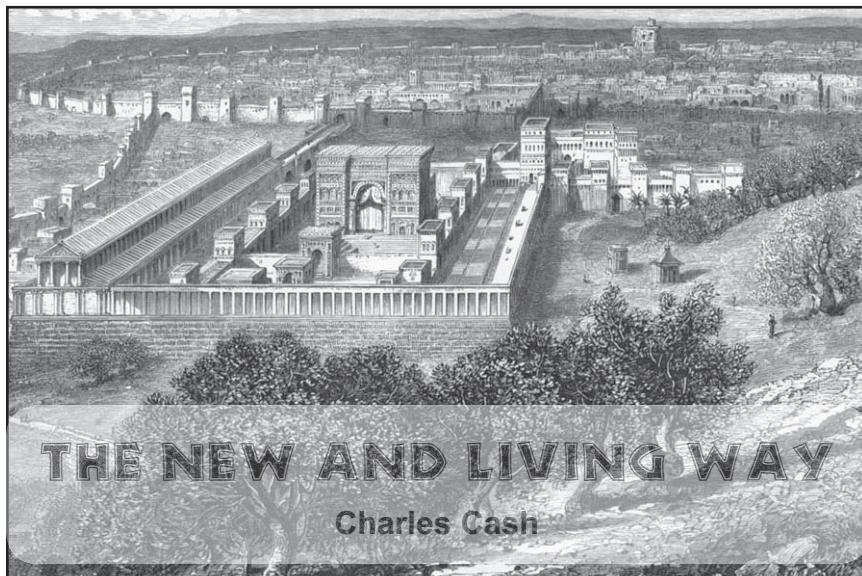
Purify & Purge

Paula Bates

1. There is a _____ that is _____ in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness. Proverbs 30:12
2. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as _____; though they are red like _____ they shall be as wool. Isaiah 1:18
3. I will turn my hand against you, and thoroughly _____ away your dross. Isaiah 1:25
4. Do not lay _____ on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins: keep yourself _____. 1 Timothy 5:22
5. Therefore if anyone purge himself from these, he will be a _____ for honor, sanctified and useful for the _____, prepared for every good work. 2 Timothy 2:21
6. Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you _____ and _____ your hearts, you double minded. James 4:8
7. And everyone who has this _____ in Him _____ himself, just as he is pure. 1 John 3:3



- | | | | |
|----|------------------|----|-----------------|
| 1. | Generation, pure | 5. | Vessel, Master |
| 2. | Snow, crimson | 6. | Sinners, purify |
| 3. | Purge | 7. | Hope, purities |
| 4. | Hands, pure | | |



“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body” (Hebrews 10:19, 20). The writer of the book of Hebrews gives a panorama of what is available to us all, a *“new and living way.”* It is all about Jesus; it is all about the blood of Jesus!

The living way is superior. The writer has already, through divine inspiration, done a masterful job of showing the superiority of Christ over the prophets (Hebrews 1:1-3), the angels (1:4-2:18), Moses (3:1-4:13), Aaron and the whole Levitical system (4:14-7:28), and particularly His superiority as our great High Priest. The writer also presents Christ as having the superior ministry and covenant (8:1-13) and being the better tabernacle as well as sacrifice (9:1-10). In Hebrews 10:19 the writer begins to give exhortations based upon these foregoing truths he had presented. We now have *“confidence”*, *“boldness”*, authority, to *“enter the Most Holy Place.”* Before Christ died, there was no such access to God as man desperately needed. Man had no offering which he could bring to God that would pardon his sins, *“Because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins”* (Hebrews 10:4). Those sacrifices served only as *“an annual reminder of sins”* (verse 3).

But now the way is open and free to all, that all may come with the utmost

TEXTUAL STUDIES

freedom by obeying the Gospel of Christ. Entrance into the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle and the Temple was forbidden to all but the High Priest. The Most Holy Place was a forerunning type of heaven. We have access and enter into heaven *“by the blood of Jesus”*, our High Priest. How is that for superiority?

The way is living. It is “living” in at least three senses:

1. It is living in its effects, spiritual life here on the earth and life eternal in the hereafter. *“Living water”* is used in the same sense of spiritual life and eternal life (found in Christ’s conversation with the Samaritan woman recorded in John 4).
2. No doubt there is an allusion here to the fact that, under the Law of Moses, the blood of sacrifices was to be offered as soon as it was shed; it was not fit for sacrificial purposes when it was cold and coagulated. The way of Christ is, however, always open and His blood fresh and ready for cleansing as if it had just been shed.
3. The word *“living”* often has the sense of being perpetual, and is applied to a fountain always running, as opposed to a pool that will dry up. This *“way”* is perpetual and constant like a fountain that always flows. In the words of William Cowper: “There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel’s veins; And sinners, plunged beneath that blood, lose all their guilty stains.” That fountain is needed, not just at conversions, but throughout our Christian walk with the Savior. As the apostle John put it, *“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7). The *“way”* is truly a *“living way”*.

The living way is through the curtain or veil. The new and living way is *“through the curtain, that is, His body.”* The Jewish High Priest entered into the Most Holy Place through a curtain or veil, which separated it from the Holy Place. The way for us to heaven is through the medium of Jesus’ body that was sacrificed on the cross in the shedding of His blood. Just as the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle was entered through a literal curtain, heaven is entered *“through the curtain, that is, His body.”* Jesus is the *“new and living way”* that furnished us access to God and His bountiful spiritual blessing, including eternal life. There is no other access! It was Jesus who said: *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (John 14:6).

The way is new; the way is living!



Charles Cash works with the Bella Vista Church of Christ in Bella Vista, Arkansas, USA.

TEXTUAL STUDIES

A TEXT THAT MEETS NEEDS

2 Peter 2:18-3:13

Ardron Hinton

Christians Need To Be Reminded:

“Beloved, I now write to...stir up your pure minds by way of reminder” (3:1).

1. Reminded of the message of the apostles and of the Israelite prophets before them who predicted the facts of their message (3:2).
2. Reminded of the promised return of Christ and the certainty of it (3:4,10).
3. Reminded of the fact that God means what He says (3:3,5).
4. Reminded of the prospect of a far better world (3:13).

Christians Need To Be Warned:

“I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31).

1. Warned that the world promises a “freedom” it does not even have (3:19).
2. Warned that the “washed” can become unclean again (2:20).
3. Warned that backsliding makes you worse than the unconverted (2:21,22).
4. Warned that there will be scoffers to face and to resist (3:3).
5. Warned that sameness in human affairs will be used to mislead (3:4).
6. Warned that the present world is already destined for demolition (3:5-7).
7. Warned that Christ’s return will be unexpected and sudden (3:10).
8. Warned that judgment is certain and its standards settled (3:7,11).
9. Warned that physical things are not eternal, not to be trusted (3:11,12).

Christians Need To Be Informed:

“Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Mark 12:24)?

1. Informed concerning the pattern and tactics of error (2:18,19; 3:3,4).
2. Informed concerning the Lord’s view of time (3:8).
3. Informed concerning the reason for delaying His return (3:9).
4. Informed concerning the nature of the end time (3:5,6,10).
5. Informed concerning the proper reaction to these facts (3:9,11,12).

(“...that all should come to repentance.” “...what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness.” “...looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God...”)

How firmly rooted in our minds are these facts? How carefully heeded are the warnings? How thoroughly understood are the instructions for living? †

Ardron Hinton is a preacher of the Gospel and lives in Blair, Oklahoma, USA.

Walking in the Light

(1 John 1:7)

Dean Fugett

“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

1. It is essential that we walk in the light. If we do not “*walk in the light*” we cannot be in fellowship with God. John said in the previous verse that if we say that we have fellowship with God and still “*walk in darkness, we lie*”. He then says that the apostles have fellowship with God and with Jesus Christ, and he states that he is writing these things to those brethren so that they might also have fellowship with the apostles in their relationship with God and the Lord. However, that fellowship is contingent upon *walking* in the light.

2. It is possible to walk in the light. John was telling “*my little children*” that the apostles were walking in the light and that they must follow their example. In fact, if they did not walk in the light, they could not maintain the fellowship that they had. If they were walking in the light — and it was essential that they walk in the light to have that fellowship — then we also can walk in the light and have that fellowship with them. This was John’s desire for them and for us.

3. Walking in the light doesn’t mean living sinlessly. In fact, John tells us in the next verses that if we say we have no sin, or that we have not sinned, we are being untruthful and are deceiving ourselves. He continues by saying that we make God a liar and that His Word and His truth are not in us. If we look carefully at the text, we see that he is telling us that while we are walking in the light, we are having fellowship with one another and also God and His Son. But, also that while “*walking in the light*” the blood of Jesus Christ is cleansing us from all sin.

4. Walking in the light does not mean “to continue in sin”. John informs us that if we confess our sins (remember now, John is writing to Christians, not to those who have never come “*into Christ*”), He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. What great assurance! John continues in the next few verses to remind us that if and when we do sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous One (1 John 2:1). If we are truly living by “*every word that proceeds from God*” (Matthew 4:4), we will remember Paul’s answer to the question, “*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*” It is “*God forbid!*”(KJV); “*Certainly Not!*”(NKJV); “*May it*

TEXTUAL STUDIES

never be!”(NASB); “*By no means!*” (ESV) (Romans 6:1).

5. What is ‘walking in the light?’ Walking in the light means to live a Christian lifestyle, a purity and commitment of purpose of mind and heart to become and be what God has made it possible for us to be, that He may continue in fellowship with us after this life is over. It is a life of intent to do to the best of our abilities and opportunities what the Lord has revealed to us as His will for our lives and our eternity. It is availing ourselves of all the promises and blessings of walking in His teaching. †

Dean Fugett is a preacher and an elder with the church of Christ in Cave City, Arkansas, USA.

WALKING WITH WISE MEN

Ernest S. Underwood

Solomon said, “*He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed*” (Proverbs 13:20). The question arises, “Who are the wise and who are the foolish?” Jesus had much to say on the subject. In Matthew 7:24-28 He said that the wise are those who hear His words and do them; He also said that the foolish are those who also hear His words, but do not do them.

In Luke 12:20,21 He said that the fool is one who lays up treasures for himself, but is not rich toward God. The Psalmist, as well

as the apostle Paul, stated that one is a fool who says there is no God. A fool will not listen to God’s Word, but a wise man not only listens, he applies what he learns to his life.

The apostle Paul also said, “*Evil companionship corrupts good morals*”. With whom are you walking? Who are your closest companions, the wise or the foolish? †

With whom are you walking? Who are your closest companions, the wise or the foolish?

Our Brothers in Royalty

Michael L. King

There is probably no one who has made a greater impression, besides Jesus, in terms of example than Joseph. There are several similarities between the two lives; many have said that Joseph is a type of Jesus. The two have numerous things in common, but the most obvious is that both men were betrayed for ulterior motives; they were both *“handed over because of envy”* (Matthew 27:18; Genesis 37:1-10). Please take note of some of the similarities between the lives of Joseph and Jesus, paying special attention to the way that both responded to their ill treatment.

Both men were sinned against and virtually despised. They were betrayed and rejected by their own people, constituting the worst kind of hurt. Both men were honest, possessing utmost integrity, compassion, and concern, yet they became the target of character assassination. It was said about Joseph that he was hated by his brothers because of jealousy (Genesis 37:4). Jesus knew no sin, but was rejected by men, having all esteem and dignity stripped while bearing the sins of all mankind (Isaiah 53:1-13). Like Joseph, Jesus came to His own people and they rejected Him, even

the religious leaders of their day (John 1:11; Matthew 27:1).

Both men were sold for a price. Joseph brought 20 shekels of silver and was hauled off to Egypt as a slave (Genesis 37:28). Jesus brought a little more, with 30 pieces of silver being used to value His life (Matthew 27:3-7). The two would eventually become deliverers for those in bondage. If you were to be sold, what value would be placed upon your life? Would it be a fair or complimentary price? This writer is familiar with a business that was broken into and robbed. In the process the clerk was shot and killed, left in the floor in her own pool of blood. From the cash register, a measly sum of \$50 was taken. To those who knew and loved her, they would have considered her life being sold far too cheaply, all because of selfishness!

Joseph was like Jesus because of his great love. Joseph forgave his brothers and made provisions available to his family, though undeserving (Genesis 42). Jesus demonstrated His great love for mankind while yet in sin and not worthy (Romans 5:8). Jesus was a man of compassion, as seen when

BIBLE CHARACTERS

He wept at the death of Lazarus (John 11:35,36). Both men showed love at its best, *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends”* (John 15:13). Compassion was shown by Jesus’ mourning over Jerusalem, desirous of treating them like a mother hen would care for her chicks (Matthew 23:37).

They were both sent to preserve life, but were rejected and hated for doing so. So many will someday come to the same conclusion of the Roman Centurion at the crucifixion of Jesus by declaring, *“Truly this was the Son of God!”* after it is too late to make a difference (Matthew 27:54). It was intended and prophesied that Jesus would save His people. (Matthew 1:21). Due to these men being chosen by God, no other means for delivering God’s people could be employed to complete the task (Acts 4:12).

Following traumatic experiences, both men were found alive. Joseph’s brothers were amazed and awe stricken by finding him alive after such a long time (Genesis 45:3). Two men in shining garments at the tomb asked those looking for Jesus, following His crucifixion and burial, *“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!”* (Luke 24:5,6). It is through His being found alive that He *“abolished death and brought life and immortality through the gospel”* (2Timothy 1:10).

They were a powerful duo for showing compassion for the needy. God recognized Joseph as a deliverer during the seven-year famine, through which he and Egypt provided for and preserved the lives of Joseph’s family and his nation back in Palestine (Genesis 45:6,7). Jesus showed His compassion by giving His life for those in sin (Romans 5:8,9). Paul also stressed to the Corinthians how that Christ was rich but became poor so He could make the poor rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). We must understand that the benevolence of Christ was the giving of a spiritual and eternal bounty, while Joseph cared for the physical needs that were necessary on this side of eternity.

A very positive comparison, as a final area in which Joseph was typical of Jesus, is that both extended pardon for those who were penitent. Joseph kissed his brothers and forgave them for having abused him (Genesis 45:15). Jesus forgives those who are willing to obey the Gospel and embrace Him as Lord. His mercy was extended on the day of Pentecost for 3,000 (Acts 2:38), as well as to Saul of Tarsus in Damascus (Acts 22:16), Cornelius and family in Caesarea (Acts 10), and the Ethiopian on the road to Gaza (Acts 8:26).

It would behoove us to mimic the traits and attributes of both of these two great men today! †

Michael L. King preaches for the New Albany congregation in New Albany, Mississippi, USA.

Dead Man Speaks

Owen D. Olbricht

Can a dead person still speak? Abel does!

The Bible tells of two brothers (Genesis 4:2-8). Cain did what was wrong and Abel did what was right. Even though Abel died long ago, he is still speaking through his act of faith. *“By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks”* (Hebrews 11:4).

Abel’s Testimony

Listen to what Abel tells us. His acts of faith tell us that by responding according to God’s way, God accepted him and his offering (Genesis 4:4) and gave testimony that he was righteous. Abel’s faith correlates with Noah’s faith that motivated Noah to make a positive response by doing *“according to all the Lord commanded Him”* (Genesis 6:22; Hebrews 11:7).

- Attitudes are important, but God also expects correct acts to be the result of true faith (James 2:24).
- In the Law God showed His attitude toward offerings, which explains the reason He approved of Abel’s offering.
- God required the offering of the firstborn animals because they were holy and belonged to Him (Exodus 18:17; Leviticus 27:26; Deuteronomy 15:19). Abel offered what belonged to God, the first born of his flock. Such offerings were not sin offerings.
- God required the fat to be burned in the sacrifices and not to be eaten (Exodus 29:13; Leviticus 3:3-17; 7:25). Abel offered the fat.
- By offering the firstborn of the flocks and of their fat, Abel’s right action is what defined him as a righteous person.

Before the Law was given, only animals are mentioned for sacrifice. This included Noah (Genesis 8:20), Abraham [Isaac asked about a lamb for sacrifice, which suggests that Abraham normally offered an animal] (Genesis 22:7-13), Moses requested flocks for sacrifice (Exodus 10:25,26), and God told Job’s friends to bring animals to be offered by Job for their forgiveness (Job 42:7-9).

BIBLE CHARACTERS

Cain's Testimony

Cain's offering was not accepted by God because it was neither the first fruits of his harvest (Genesis 4:3), as God required later by the Law (Exodus 34:26; Deuteronomy 18:4), nor an animal sacrifice which was the only offering before the Law was given. For this reason God did not have regard for Cain and his sacrifice (Genesis 4:5).

Cain killed his brother Abel, *"Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous"* (1 John 3:12). By doing what God had not required in an area where God had made a choice, Cain engaged in an evil act, which meant he was of the evil one (1 John 3:8,12). God neither regarded him nor his offering. His evil act defined him as evil. Sin and the sinner cannot be separated.

Only One Difference

Only one difference becomes apparent between the offering of Abel and Cain. Evidently they both believed God existed and that He wanted sacrifice; He did not want human sacrifice; He wanted something that belonged to them, and something of value to them. The difference was that Abel offered what God respected and Cain offered what God did not respect.

Abel's Message for Us

By his offering Abel tells us we must seriously do what God requires. Our faith is not to be placed in our own reasoning or our desires, but in God's Word (Romans 10:17). Such faith is content to limit itself in areas where God has made a choice and exercise freedom in areas where God has made no choices.

By faith Abel presented to God the offering He respected. His message to us is that we are to follow in principle what he did, and thus do what God will respect.



Owen D. Olbricht is a preacher and writer living in Sherwood, Arkansas, USA.

Why Did Demas Forsake Paul?

Maxie B. Boren

After the apostle Paul's third "missionary journey" was concluded, he made his way to Jerusalem where he was "gladly received" by the Christians living there (Acts 21:17). But shortly afterwards, antagonistic Jews stirred up opposition to him (verses 27-31), resulting in his earnest defense of himself and his activities (read Acts 21:37 through chapter 23:6).

After Paul's rescue from a plot by the Jews to kill him, the Roman authorities sent him to Caesarea to be examined by Felix, the Roman governor of the region, and later by his successor, Festus, and the puppet king Agrippa (chapter 23:12 through chapter 26).

Having then appealed to Caesar, Paul was sent to Rome, where he was placed under what might be described as "house arrest" for a period of approximately two years (Acts 27-28). During that time period (A.D. 62-63), he managed to write four epistles — Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. In two of these the apostle made mention of a number of fellow Christians who were evidently in proximity to him, and supportive of him while he was in Rome. He wrote of them in favorable light (read

Colossians 4:10-14, and Philemon 23,24). Demas was included in both lists.

After Paul's release from this first "imprisonment," about five years went by until he again was incarcerated in Rome under much harsher circumstances, probably in a dungeon cell (about A.D. 68). It was during this time that he somehow learned of his imminent demise (2 Timothy 4:6-8), and wrote to his beloved "child in the faith", Timothy, urging him to come quickly to be with him. It was in this connection that he penned, "*Demas forsook me, having loved this present world*" (2 Timothy 4:9,10). Several have understood this to mean that Demas loved the world in the sense of "*the things of the world*", referred to by another apostle in 1 John 2:15-17. I don't agree with that understanding of what Paul wrote. In my considered judgment it means that Demas was evidently afraid of what might well have happened to him also, had he stayed with Paul. The message had somehow reached Paul in the prison that he was soon to be executed, probably by beheading, and Demas most likely surmised that the same fate might well come to those near to Paul,

BIBLE CHARACTERS

so Demas “forsook” him and fled to Thessalonica. He feared martyrdom, desiring rather to cling to continuing “earth life”.

Such choices were forced on thousands of Christians during the ten successive Roman persecutions, begin-

answered, “Jesus Christ is Lord”, they were immediately condemned to die, and the options were far from pleasant: it might be by being fed to the lions, decapitated by the sword, dragged behind chariots until unrecognizable, crucified, burned alive at the stake, or some

other cruel death. This is what Demas feared, and thus he forsook Paul and fled.

While not condoning his actions, we can at least understand! The haunting question is what would **we** do if **we** faced the choice? Jesus said, “*Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life*” (Revelation 2:10). That means, be faithful even to the point of forfeiting our lives in order to



ning with the Emperor, Nero, in about A.D. 64, and lasting some three hundred more years! Before the Roman tribunals, Christians had to answer the question, “Who is Lord?” If they answered, “Caesar,” they were released and could continue to live. But if they

never deny our Lord! Read Matthew 10:28-33 and really think about it! What would **you** do? What would **I** do? †

Maxie B. Boren is a Gospel preacher and an elder in the Brown Trail congregation in Bedford, Texas, USA.

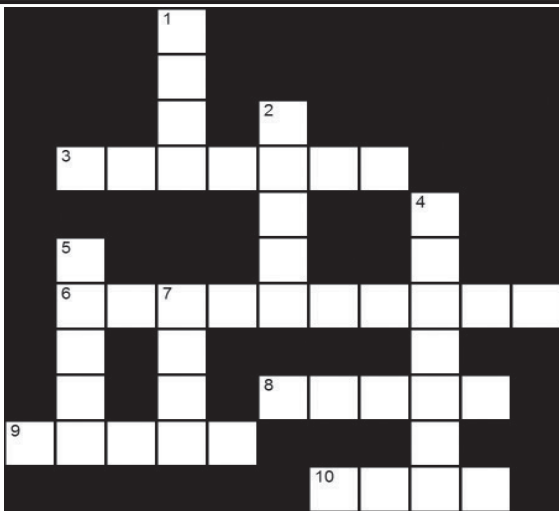


Foods in the Bible

Bonnie Rushmore

Across

3. The meal Gideon prepared for an angel included a pot of _____. (Judges 6:19)
6. The Passover meal was comprised of _____ bread. (Exodus 12:3-10)
8. What did God send the Israelites when they complained they were tired of the food He was sending them? (Numbers 11:16-34)



9. The Passover meal was comprised of bitter _____. (Exodus 12:3-10)
10. Jesus fed the multitude with _____. (John 6:9-14)

Down

1. What meat did Rebekah use in the stew for Isaac? (Genesis 27:1-10)
2. Name the food God sent from heaven to feed the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness. (Exodus 16:11-15)
4. Jacob traded a pottage of _____ to Esau for Esau's birthright. (Genesis 25:29-34)
5. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah preferred _____ rather than the king's meat. (Daniel 1:3-16)
7. The Passover meal was comprised of cooked _____. (Exodus 12:3-10)

Are You “Called” of God?

Dennis Gulledge

There was a time when God called men audibly and in person (1 Samuel 3:4-10; Hebrews 11:8). Some people still think that they hear the Lord’s voice calling them. God still speaks, but now He speaks through His Son (Hebrews 1:1,2). God still calls, but He now calls us through the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

The Greek word *kaleo* is rendered “call, called or calling” in the New Testament. Every Christian has a divine “calling” (Ephesians 4:1-6). This calling is not a direct, audible communication from God or His Holy Spirit, as some claim. All that we can know of God’s will for us today is from what is learned in the New Testament (2 Timothy 3:16,17; Hebrews 10:9). When the Bible makes known to us the Lord’s will, that is the call of God to us. Whether we hear it preached (Romans 10:17), or read it for ourselves (John 20:30,31; Ephesians 3:3,4), it is God calling men through the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14).

The word “call” has four basic ideas in Scripture. First, it’s the verb for calling a person by name or title. The Lord was called by the name “*Jesus*” (Matthew 1:21). The elitist Pharisees loved to be called “*Rabbi*” (Matthew 23:7). Second, it’s the verb for summoning a person. Paul was called to be an apostle (Romans 1:1). When my mother summoned me by “Dennis James” I knew it wasn’t good. Third, it’s the verb for inviting someone into your home for a meal (Luke 7:36-39) [Note, the word “*bidden*” in verse 39, KJV]. Fourth, it’s the verb for legal summons (Acts 4:18).

An appreciation of a few basic facts should clear up any confusion on just what is involved in God’s calling us. The call which comes to us is from God (Acts 2:39; Hebrews 3:1). Hearing voices and God’s call are not synonymous! The call which comes to us is to salvation in Christ (2 Timothy 1:9). The call which comes to us is to be separated to God’s service (Romans 1:7). The call which comes to us always comes through the Word of God (2 Thessalonians 2:14). Those who are called must be called *by* something (2 Thessalonians 2:13,14). Those who are called must be called *out of* something (1 Peter 2:9). Those who are called must be called *into* something (1 Peter 2:9). †

Dennis Gulledge preaches for the church of Christ in Mabelvale, Arkansas, USA.

BIBLE QUESTIONS

HOW DO WE QUENCH THE SPIRIT?

Jerry A. Jenkins

Bible students are very keenly aware that the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian in the same manner as the Father and the Son. In apostolic days there were those who received Holy Spirit baptism (Acts 2:1-4; Acts 11:15), or the Holy Spirit by the miraculously-imparted manner, received by the “laying on” of the apostles hands (Acts 8:17-19). Today Christians are influenced, not independently, but through the Word.

When Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica he admonished them, “*Quench not the Spirit*” (1 Thessalonians 5:19). The word “quench” (*sbennumi*) means “to extinguish.” A form of the word was employed by the foolish virgins to describe what was happening to their lamps because of insufficient oil (Matthew 25:8). One would quench a fire by throwing a wet blanket over it. It is possible to extinguish the influences of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

The context of Paul’s admonition shows it is possible to quench the Spirit in a number of ways:

(1) We quench the Spirit when we despise prophecies. Reference here is to preaching. Evidently there were those who regarded the power of working miracles, or of speaking in unknown tongues, as a much more eminent endowment than that of stating the truths of religion in language easily understood. Whenever the preaching of the Word is minimized or discounted one is quenching the Spirit.

(2) We quench the Spirit when we do not pray regularly. Paul had enjoined that prayers be without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). This does not mean constantly praying, for one must have time to eat, sleep, and work. It does not mean that we are to be in a constant attitude of prayer. It means simply that one is to pray on a regular basis. Daniel prayed without ceasing, as indicated in the statement: “*Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days*” (Daniel 6:10).

(3) We quench the Spirit by not rejoicing in every circumstance of life. Our rejoicing is not to be limited to some special occasion or when a noteworthy compliment or gift is given. A Christian constantly finds joy that his sins

BIBLE QUESTIONS

have been forgiven and that he has a Savior like Jesus. It is the privilege of a Christian to rejoice. He has more sources of joy than any other man — sources which do not fail when all others fail.

(4) A fourth manner in which one may quench the Spirit is by a failure to abstain from every form of evil. Paul stated, *“Abstain from every form of evil”* (1 Thessalonians 5:22). The King James Version states that one is to abstain even from the appearance of evil. No Christian is to frequent ungodly places, even though he may not personally be involved in the activities there. †

Jerry A. Jenkins (1936-2010) was the preacher for many years for the Roebuck Parkway Church of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama, USA.

What Attitude Should the Christian Have toward Racism?”

Mark N. Posey

Christianity was born into a world filled with racial prejudice. It occurred many times, but the most obvious was the attitude of the Jews toward the Gentiles. Godliness abhors any assumed racial superiority! The Bible provides us with an “equalization factor” found in Romans 3:9-12,23, *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”* This biblical principle is true regardless of race. The element of sin in our lives cuts across economic, racial, and intellectual boundaries.

Christ brought equality, the basis of which is obedience, not skin coloration! Christ has broken down the wall between us (Ephesians 2:14-16), drawing mankind into one body by His death on the cross (Acts 17:26). God is no *“respector of persons”*, but He examines man on the basis of his righteousness (Acts 10:34,35). God makes no distinction on the basis of race and forbids the same in us. In fact, He made a connection between every human being at creation, as proclaimed in Acts 17:26, *“And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.”* James taught, *“Hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons”* (2:1). In v. 9, he labeled discrimination as sin!

The blood of Christ is contacted in baptism, wherein all barriers are destroyed, being made one in Christ (Galatians 3:26-28). Peter violated this principle and was reprimanded by Paul (Galatians 2:11). Observe how Jesus responded to all people (Luke 10:30) and be motivated to activate the “Golden Rule” by treating others as we want to be treated (Matthew 7:12). Humility will not allow us to treat any human being as inferior (Philippians 2:3). We must assume the disposition of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21-25). The matter could cost us our eternal salvation! †

Is It a Sin for a Christian to be Depressed?

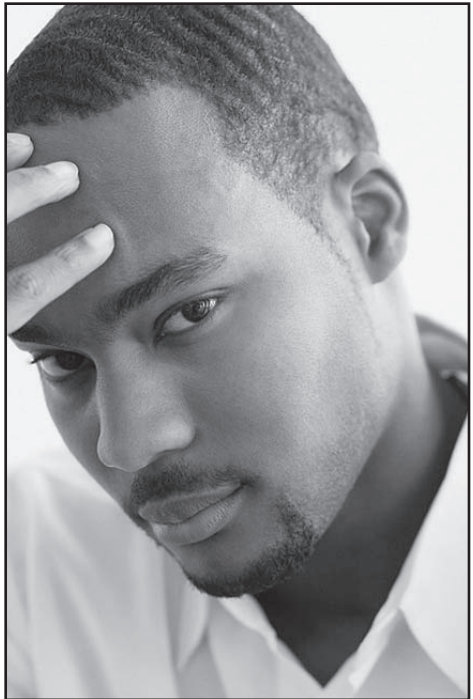
Wayne Jackson

Could anxiety be sinful? Yes, if we accept the testimony of Jesus and we respect the apostolic command of Paul. But the Bible certainly acknowledges that life's complications can be depressing (the word is used so elastically). We are even commanded to *"weep with those who weep."* This means that we sympathize with grief, rather than trying to convince them that such sorrow is sinful.

What Christians do, however, with grief may demonstrate either strong faith, or it may result in debilitating depression. Therefore, we must give serious thought to this question. There is no simple "yes" or "no" answer.

Now here are Paul's comments on the matter.

"Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6,7).



BIBLE QUESTIONS

So many things are easier said than done. The advice, “Don’t worry”, is surely in that category. That peculiarity, however does not nullify the counsel. “Don’t worry” is not only good advice, it is a biblical command.

How can we be commanded not to worry? Is anxiety not an inevitable human emotion that we have when certain things happen to us?

Let us define this state of mind.

“Anxiety is a painful or apprehensive uneasiness of mind usually over an impending or anticipated ill...an abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physiological signs (as sweating, tension, and increased pulse), by doubt concerning the reality and nature of the threat, and by self-doubt about one’s capacity to cope with it” (*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, Springfield: Merriam, 1981, p. 51).

An overwhelming sense of self-doubt about one’s ability to cope should not overcome the Christian who has been told, “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” (Romans 8:31). Let us consider the biblical counsel that helps us manage anxiety, and prevents it from overwhelming us.

The apostle Paul’s prohibition against anxiety is: “*Do not be anxious about anything*” (Philippians 4:6a). Notice that Paul’s statement is a command. It is a comprehensive command, for we are not to be anxious about anything. Like all commands, we choose to submit to it, thereby exercising a choice not to worry. It is a permanent requirement. Our lives should be characterized by confident trust in the Lord, rather than by worry and doubt.

Likewise, the Lord Jesus forbids worry (Matthew 6:25). He encourages us not to be anxious, for our Father lives, gives, clothes, and knows our needs (Matthew 6:25-31). Worry cannot create circumstances, correct problems, or change the future. It is, therefore, faithlessness, self-centeredness, distracting, and debilitating.

After stating the prohibition, Paul relates the prevention. “*But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God*” (Philippians 4:6b).

Instead of merely talking to yourself and others, talk to God. Instead of worrying about anything, talk to the Lord about everything. This is the antidote to being overly anxious, and we may not take advantage of it, because we worry that it will not help.

Paul says that this prevention for anxiety involves real communication (i.e. prayer) with the Creator, who is a personal Being, who listens, cares, and responds.

BIBLE QUESTIONS

The word “prayer” stands for this divine blessing and represents a reality for the child of God. It is not a psychological pick-me-up, nor is it a quick fix.

Paul said that in our prayers, we ought to make “supplications”. Therein, we recognize that God is the one to whom these needs ought to be addressed. There is no one else to whom we can turn for these necessities. Sadly, we may find ourselves putting more confidence in men than we do in God. Listening to sound advice is needful, and so is leaning on the everlasting arm of the Lord through prayer (Hebrews 4:15,16).

Prayer should be characterized by “*thanksgiving*”, Paul says. A poet expressed the thought in this way:

In midst of dangers, fears, and death,
Thy goodness we'll adore.
We'll praise thee for thy mercies past,
And humbly hope for more.

God has made us resilient, but we must rely upon Him for the strength. A grateful disposition allows us to make many spiritual observations about His “mercies past”, empowering us to humbly hope for more.

The prevention also includes, says Paul, “*requests*”. Amazingly, we are able to convey to God Almighty a specific request for a particular need. And so, Paul encourages us to rely on the Lord, trusting in Him, and He will enable us to withstand life’s difficulties and keep paralyzing self-doubt at bay.

The promise is given in the next verse (Philippians 4:7), which is conditioned on obeying the divine prohibition and following the preventative measure. “*And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*”

Such peace is incomprehensible to those who are not “in Christ Jesus”, the sphere wherein the promise is given. It is incapable of empirical analysis. It is immeasurably better than any human forethought could devise. It is inseparably joined to the redemptive work of Christ Jesus. It is the calm that comes from the Master of ocean, earth, and skies, for it is the Creator who says to us, “*Peace, be still*”.

Through the redemption by the blood of Christ, our most critical problem of all has been dealt with. Therefore, worry about nothing; pray about everything; thank God for anything; and have the peace that only God can provide.

“*Casting all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you*” (1 Peter 5:7). ☩

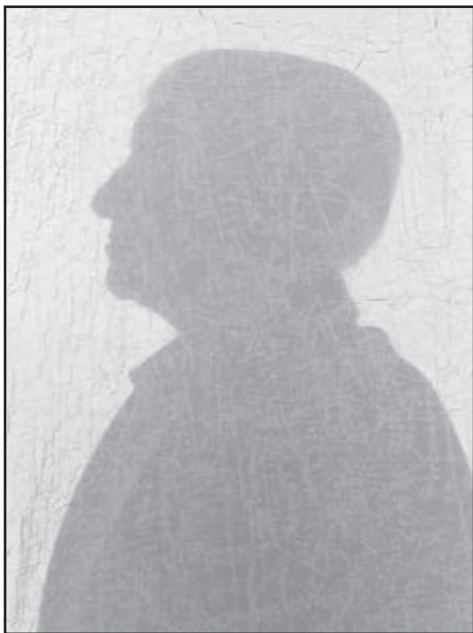
Wayne Jackson is the Editor of *Christian Courier* and lives in Stockton, California, USA.

WHO AM I IN THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM?

Rebecca Rushmore

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word. Give yourself 10 points for each one you identified correctly.

1. I am the father of Abraham (Genesis 11:27).
2. I am the wife of Abraham (Genesis 11:29; Genesis 17:15).
3. I am Abraham's nephew (Genesis 11:27-31).
4. When I was told Abraham's beautiful wife was his sister, I took her into my house until God plagued me and my house (Genesis 12:10-20).
5. I am the king of a city and a priest of God who blessed Abraham (Genesis 14:18-20).
6. I am the Egyptian maidservant of Abraham's wife who bore him a child (Genesis 16:1-16).
7. I am the son of Abraham and an Egyptian maidservant (Genesis 16:1-16).
8. I am the second king to whom Abraham claimed his wife was his sister (Genesis 20:1-2).
9. I am the son of Abraham and his wife (Genesis 21:1-3).
10. I am the second wife of Abraham (Genesis 25:1).



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

WHERE AM I IN THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM?

Rebecca Rushmore

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word. Give yourself 10 points for each one you identified correctly.

1. I was born in this place (Genesis 11:27-32).
2. My father, nephew and wife moved with me from our home to this city (Genesis 11:31).
3. I moved here when there was a famine in the land where I was living (Genesis 12:10).
4. After Lot and I separated, I moved to his city (Genesis 13:18).
5. After I returned from rescuing Lot, the king of this city blessed me and I gave him a tithe (Genesis 14:18-20).
6. God promised to give my descendants this land (Genesis 17:8).
7. The people of these cities were wicked, but I pleaded with God not to destroy them for the sake of the righteous (Genesis 18:16-33).
8. In this place, for the second time I claimed my wife was my sister (Genesis 20:1-2).
9. God told me to go to this land to offer my son as a burnt offering (Genesis 22:1-2).
10. I purchased this place to bury my wife; I was later buried here as well (Genesis 23:1-20; 25:7-10)



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

All Spiritual Blessings Are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3)

Ken Tyler

Purpose: To emphasize the necessity of every person being “in Christ”.

I. Salvation is in Christ.

- A. *“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory”* (2 Timothy 2:10). See also Acts 4:12.
 - 1. Without Christ — Without hope (Ephesians 2:12).
 - 2. Are you in Christ?

II. You are a new creature in Christ.

- A. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17). See also Romans 6:3-7.
 - 1. There is a big difference between the old and the new (Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:1-10).
 - 2. Are you a new creature in Christ?

III. Preparation for death is in Christ.

- A. *“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their words do follow them”* (Revelation 14:13). See also Philippians 1:21, 23; 2 Corinthians 5:1.
 - 1. Death is real — We must face this fact (Hebrews 9:27).
 - 2. Have you made preparation for death?

IV. A home in Heaven is in Christ.

- A. *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also”* (John 14:1-3). See also 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; 1 Corinthians 15:22-24.
 - 1. Heaven is real and so is hell (Matthew 25:46).
 - 2. Are you going to heaven?

Conclusion: If you are not in Christ your life is in a tragic state. What are you

CHARTS AND OUTLINES

going to do about it? Paul said, *“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Galatians 3:27). It would be an honor to baptize you into Christ today! †

Ken Tyler preaches for the church of Christ in Arab, Alabama, USA.

Introduction to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Louis Rushmore

- I. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, never to return thereto, is a critical aspect of Christianity.
- II. Had Jesus Christ not resurrected from the grave, there would have been absolutely no hope for sin-laden, lost humanity!
 - A. Though Jesus Christ was the Son of God, without his resurrection human hopes would have been forever dashed.
 - B. Though Jesus Christ was the long prophesied Savior or Messiah, without his resurrection he could have saved no one.
 - C. Though Jesus Christ shed his precious blood on Calvary's cross, without the resurrection its purchase price would have been ineffective.
 - D. Though Jesus Christ had fulfilled all other prophecies, without the resurrection all of that would have been meaningless.
 - E. Though multitudes of souls under Patriarchy and Judaism faithfully obeyed God, without the resurrection of Jesus Christ none of that would have gotten anyone closer to an eternity in heaven with God.
 - F. All would be vanity without the resurrection of Jesus Christ!
- III. The church could not have been established without the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- IV. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the ultimate climax of his mission to seek and save the lost, Luke 19:10.
 - A. Unlike others who had been resurrected from the dead, Jesus Christ did not die again.
 - B. Other men's works cease at death, but not so with Jesus Christ whose work included his own resurrection from the grave.
 - C. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the mortal or deathblow to Satan and the assurance that we will be resurrected from the grave someday.
- V. Failure to resurrect from the grave would have disproved Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah and the Son of God.
- VI. Simply put, without the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there would be no Christianity! †

The Second Coming of Jesus

Andy Jooste

Introduction: Titus 2:11-15

- A. Jesus will return – John 14:3
- B. Not to deal with sin but for salvation – Hebrews 9:28
- C. “Let the Bible speak” concerning rewards and punishment

I. Events at the Second Coming

- A. One resurrection of all: Daniel 12:2 — those who now sleep, John 5:28, 29 — all in the graves, Revelation 1:7 — every eye will see Him
- B. Delivering up Kingdom: Matthew 25:31-34 — end of this age, 1 Corinthians 15:24 — the end, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 — with Christ
- C. Separation of groups: Matthew 13:30; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10. No second chance for conversion

II. Destiny of the unsaved

- A. At the end of this age: Matthew 13:40-42
- B. “Gehenna” – Hinnom: Mark 9:43-48
- C. Eternal punishment: Matthew 25:41,46

III. Destiny of the saved

- A. Eternal reward: Matthew 25:31-34
- B. Heaven: 1 Peter 1:5
- C. With God, our hope: 1 John 3:1-3

Conclusion: 2 Peter 1:10,11. Make your calling and election sure



Andy Jooste preaches for the church of Christ in Mount Vernon, Ohio, USA.

- People who major in material things of this physical universe are by death yanked, against their wills, across the threshold of eternity to meet an angry God.

“Thy soul shall be required of thee” (Luke 12:15-20).

“For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?” (Revelation 6:17).

- People who major in spiritual matters prepare themselves to meet God and anxiously await the Second Coming of Christ.

“The spirit shall return to God” (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

“earnestly desiring” (2 Peter 3:12 ASV).

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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Versé Search (page 32)

1. Goodness and knowledge
2. The Gentile Christians
3. His accomplishments for Christ
4. Jerusalem and Illyricum
5. In places that had never heard the Gospel
6. Isaiah 52:15
7. He had been hindered, but we do not know what had hindered him.
8. Jerusalem
9. The saints in Macedonia and Achaia
10. Spiritual, physical or material
11. Rome, Spain
12. Their prayers.
13. Delivered from the Jews in Jerusalem, His service or contribution from the Gentiles would be accepted by the Jews, He may be able to come to Rome.
14. Refreshed together.

Bible Find (page 97)



Who Am I? (page 104)

Terah, Sarai or Sarah, Lot, Pharaoh, Hagar, Ishmael, Melchizedek, Abimelech, Isaac, Keturah

Where Am I? (page 105)

Ur of the Chaldeans, Haran, Egypt, Hebron, Salem, Canaan, Sodom and Gomorrah, Gerar, Moriah, cave of Machpelah

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