

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



**Two Memorials from the
First Century A.D.**

**Which One Lives
Today?**



Let Go and Let God

Cliff Holmes

***When you can't find your direction
And your heart won't guide you home
Let Go and Let God lead you!***

***When your dreams are broken in the dust
And you've lost the will to trust
Let Go and Let God support you!***

***When the fire of faith is dying
And there's no spark to feed the flame
Let Go and Let God rekindle you!***

***When your courage fails you
And the well of hope runs dry
Let Go and Let God revive you!***



**GOD OFFERS
GRACE TO
ALL MEN.
TITUS 2:11**

**TO ASK FOR
HIS GRACE
(SALVATION)...**

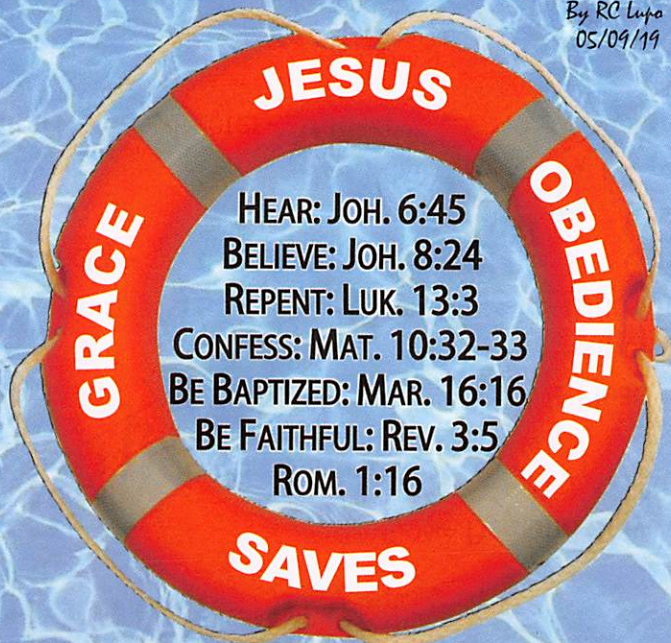
**NOTE: GRACE
IS THE FREE
GIFT OF GOD.**

**GOD IS UNDER
NO OBLIGATION
TO GRANT IT,
BUT MAN IS
OBLIGATED TO
OBEY GOD TO
RECEIVE IT.**

A GREAT TRAGEDY

THE GREATEST QUESTION – ACTS 16:30

*By RC Lupo
05/09/19*



THE GREATEST ANSWER – HEBREWS 5:8-9

**MAN RECEIVES
GRACE BY
OBEYING GOD.
TITUS 2:12**

**...THEN TO
REJECT HIS
GRACE**

**NOTE: TO TAKE
A GIFT IS NOT
TO EARN IT.**

**YOU ARE
UNDER NO
OBLIGATION
TO TAKE IT
(OBEY) UNLESS
YOU WANT TO
BE SAVED.**

SOME REASONS THE

1. We **Take the Bible Alone** –

Matthew 4:4;
Acts 20:32; Revelation
22:18-19.

2. We **Use the Bible Correctly** –
2 Timothy 2:5,15.

3. We **Wear A Scriptural Name** – 1 Peter 4:16;
Acts 4:12.

4. We **Believe and Teach That Divisions Are Wrong** –
John 17:20-21; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 12:25.

5. We **Demand Only What the Apostles Did** –
Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 14:37.

6. We **Plead For Scriptural Baptism** –
Upon **Belief** – Mark 16:15-16.
Upon **Repentance** – Acts 2:38.
Upon **Confession** – Acts 8:36-39.
It is a **Burial** – Romans 6:4.
It is **Into Christ** –
Galatians 3:27.

CHURCH OF CHRIST

IS RIGHT!

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Costs: \$4.00 for single issues; \$15.00 for four issues; \$25.00 for eight issues. Bundle rates available. Please make checks payable to World Evangelism.

Submit articles to Louis Rushmore at editor@gospelgazette.com.

Please send subscriptions and address changes to World Evangelism at the address below. Please include both old and new addresses for address changes.

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL is published by churches of Christ as a non-profit effort. Write to us at **World Evangelism, P.O. Box 72, Winona, Mississippi, 38967, USA. Phone: 662-283-1192; Email address: Choate@WorldEvangelism.org.**

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



Cotton Candy Preaching

Louis Rushmore

Empty oratory, cotton candy and meringue are each sweet tasting, and yet, none of them have any nutritional value. They simply are not healthy! In fact, a diet of such is toxic!

I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have 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. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Timothy 4:1-5 NKJV)

This first century exhortation is no less needed today in the twenty-first century. Next to false teaching (1 John 4:1), hollow homilies, fluffy with *“smooth words and flattering speech”* (Romans 16:18), which are undergirded by philosophy and endless personal analysis, immeasurably harm the collective of the church and Christians individually.

Alas, however, rare is the preacher or teacher these days who will in a straightforward manner undertake the pronouncement of a portion of *“the whole counsel of God”* (Acts 20:27). Book, chapter and verse preaching is neither any longer promulgated nor tolerated by the majority of pres-

ent-day preachers or teachers and their auditors. Gone are the days when the pulpit and the lectern concentrated chiefly on conveying God's message. The churches of Christ need more of the kind



of preaching for which Ezra and his assistants were noted. ***“So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading”*** (Nehemiah 8:8). No finer model of preaching and of teaching exists than what one can discern from Nehemiah 8:1-8.

Our babies in Christ (1 Corinthians 3:1; Hebrews 5:13) **are starving!** They go hungry at the feet of the very ones who have been designated to feed them the Word of God — preachers (Romans 10:14). Furthermore, where are the elders who, ultimately, are responsible for feeding the flock of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-2 KJV)?

We wonder in complete amazement that our brethren believe a little bit of everything and not much of anything. Often, they do not know from where we came, who we are, where we are going or how to get there. It is no wonder, then, that few demonstrate in their lives a distinction from the ungodly world ruled by Satan (John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4). Instead, Christians are supposed to be ***“a peculiar people”*** (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9 KJV), unlike those all around us with ***“filthy language”*** (Colossians 3:8), who conduct themselves immorally, lack true purpose in life and have no genuine heavenly aspirations.

Statistically, the Lord's church is disappearing! It is evaporating! The churches of Christ — Christians who compose it — are being dissolved by the ungodly world. Sin is the solvent that eats away at one's

Christianity, and on a large scale, sin is consuming the Lord's church.

Rather than idly observe what appears to be the inevitable demise of true Christianity in many communities, faithful Christians — armed with God's Word and strong conviction derived therefrom — must preach plainly and unapologetically the Gospel of Jesus Christ — without appealing to empty oratory, cotton candy and meringue. Sweet fluff and puff sermons and Bible classes that **do not** *“convince, rebuke [and] exhort”* are a large part of how we arrived in the despicable circumstances confronting the Lord's church in our day. The apostle Paul said, *“For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God”* (Acts 20:27 NKJV). The apostle Peter wrote, *“as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby”* (1 Peter 2:2).



The solution we need begins with a desire by the church to adopt a diet of God's Word, beginning with the *“milk”* and graduating to the *“meat”* (Hebrews 5:12-6:2). Equally important, preachers,

teachers and elders need to make sure that the milk and the meat of God's Word are amply provided — without admixture of man's ideas (Colossians 2:23), other gospels (Galatians 1:6-10) or amusements. *“For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing”* (Acts 17:21). *“And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified”* (1 Corinthians 2:1-2). †



Baptism Is the Work of God

Jerry Bates

Baptism is one of the most discussed religious doctrines in the world, and virtually every ‘Christian’ group practices some form of baptism. Most people would agree that the New Testament teaches baptism and that a Christian should be baptized at some point. However, there is a great deal of disagreement over how and why. In this

short article, I want to look at the question of **why** a person should be baptized. We could look at several verses, but we cannot mention them all in this one article. In Peter’s sermon at Pentecost, we find these words: ***“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”*** (Acts 2:38). We see that Peter commanded these people to do two things: repent and be baptized.

First, we find the command to repent. Repentance means to change one’s mind. It is a complete change of a person’s mind, his will and his emotions. It is a complete surrender to Jesus. Of course, this command presupposes faith, because without faith there is no motivation for a person to change his life. This is a difficult requirement to fulfill, yet without a full commitment to God, nothing will suffice to save us. In our modern world, we do not hear much about repentance. Much is said about Christ’s love, His saving death on the cross and the need for simple faith on our part, but little is said about repentance.

Secondly, we are told to be baptized. The Greek word from which we derive baptism means “to dip, to plunge, to immerse.” We are told to be baptized “for” (in order to achieve the result of) the forgiveness of sins.

The preposition “and” connects both repentance and baptism. Thus, they are both for the same purpose. Many claim that we should be baptized **because** our sins have already been forgiven. That is a misinterpretation of the word “for” or “eis” in the Greek. This little Greek word never looks backward. Furthermore, if we are to be baptized because our sins have been forgiven, then we should repent for the same reason. This would mean that salvation occurs before we ever change our lives in the least. Yet, Jesus Himself declared, “...*unless you repent, you will all likewise perish*” (Luke 13:3, 5). There are other verses that present a similar teaching.

In the light of seemingly clear teaching regarding baptism, why is there such a reluctance to accept such teaching? One major reason is a misunderstanding of the role of faith. We find these words in Ephesians 2:8-9: “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*” The argument is made that we are saved by faith and not by works; thus, that rules out anything that we should do, such as repentance and baptism. Many view baptism as a work that we do and is incompatible with being saved by faith. Likewise, some



people claim believing that baptism is essential to salvation means that one is trying to save himself, which obviously one cannot do.

There are a couple of points we need to quickly consider. First, the New Testament nowhere declares baptism to be a work of man. It is always spoken of in the passive tense, which means something that is done to a person, not something he does. It is not in any way a work of merit or an effort to achieve something on one's own. According to Colossians 2:12, God is the One working in baptism. ***“Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him though faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”*** Notice, we are buried in baptism and raised with Christ. This includes faith in what God is doing at that time, not faith in what He had already done. Also notice that nothing is said about man working in baptism. In baptism, we demonstrate our faith in what God is doing. God is the One who is working. God is doing the saving; man is not saving himself.

The second point is that in baptism, we are in no way trying to save ourselves. We find in John 9 Jesus healing a man who was born blind. Jesus made clay, anointed his eyes and told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. All would agree that if this man had not done what Jesus told him to do, he would have remained blind. He went and washed, according to the words of Jesus, and he came back seeing (9:7). Immediately following this miracle, as one would expect, there was an uproar among the people and the religious leaders over how he was now able to see. The religious leaders were especially unwilling to accept the obvious conclusion concerning Jesus, and so they asked the blind man more than once how he was able to see. He simply told everyone the truth (9:11). We need to realize that no one there that day ever said the pool of Siloam healed the man or that he somehow healed himself, even though he was required to wash in the pool of Siloam. Everyone realized that it was only by the power of Jesus the man was able to see. Likewise, when we are baptized, according to the commands of God, we are no more saving ourselves than the blind man healed himself by doing what Jesus commanded him to do. Our sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus (Revelation 1:5), but this occurs only when we do what God commands (i.e., repent and be baptized). **God is the power, and God is working in our baptism!** ✝



PARADOXES OF CHRISTIANITY: ALREADY, BUT NOT YET

Shane Fisher

The dictionary defines “a paradox as a proposition or statement that seems self-contradictory or absurd yet in fact expresses a possible truth” (www.dictionary.com).

Paradoxes are used frequently throughout the Bible to help us meditate on deeper truths. The paradox to be explored is that the Bible teaches an **inaugurated phase** of the end times what would be termed **already**, but there is a **consummative** (complete) **phase** of the end times, what would be called **not yet**.

This paradox will be illustrated by five themes: (1) the resurrection, (2) the kingdom, (3) salvation, (4) the judgment and (5) the heavenly city of God.

The Inaugurated Phase (Already) and the Consummative Phase (Not Yet) of the Resurrection

When Adam and Eve sinned against God (Genesis 3:1-6), they brought upon themselves and their descendants the consequence of physical death (Genesis 2:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:22). There was the **certainty** from the command they would die physically, and it happened (Genesis 5:5). Every descendant of Adam and Eve makes the choice to sin (often termed *spiritual death* because there is a separation from God, Isaiah 59:1-2) when they come to an age of accountability (Romans 7:7-12; Ephesians 2:1-2).

Jesus came to undo both types of death. He died physically on the cross for our sins as a sin-sacrifice so that we could be reconciled spiritually back

to God (2 Corinthians 5:20-21). He died physically also to undo the grappling power of physical death by being the first person to rise from the dead to physically die no more. He arose from the dead in an immortal, glorious, incorruptible body (Acts 26:23; 1 Corinthians 15; Hebrews 2:14-15).

If a sinner trusts and obeys the conditions God set forth on how to be saved, he can be resurrected spiritually (Romans 6:1-4). He is brought back into a right relationship with God, which is spiritual life (John 10:10; Ephesians 2:5-6). He enters into **the inaugurated phase (already) of the resurrection**. John 5:24-27 states:

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.

If the Christian lives a faithful life, then he has an anticipated hope of being raised physically from the dead on the last day (John 6:39, 44, 54; 12:48) when Jesus returns, which completes the consummative phase of the resurrection (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

John 5:28-29 demonstrate **the consummative phase (not yet)**. *“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”*

The Inaugurated Phase (Already) and the Consummative Phase (Not Yet) of the Kingdom

God has always been King of the universe (Psalm 95:3). Mankind has always been accountable and amenable to God's laws since the beginning of creation because of His right to rule (Romans 4:15; 1 John 3:4). When John the Immerser and Jesus preached that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand (Matthew 3:2; 4:17), they were stating that the kingdom (reign) of God was

about to be handed over to Jesus the Messiah. During their personal ministries, the reign of God through the Messiah was already coming about because (1) Jesus was casting out demons by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:28), (2) people were attempting to make Jesus into a political king, and as it says, *“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force”* (Matthew 11:12; John 6:15) and (3) people were undergoing the baptism of John that granted them access to enter into **the inaugurated phase of the kingdom** (John 1:28, 35-42; 3:3-5; 4:1-2; Luke 7:29-30; Matthew 23:13). When Jesus ascended into Heaven, He sat down at the right hand of God to rule over the kingdom (Hebrews 1:3). He was given all authority in Heaven and on Earth (Matthew 28:18). Jesus showed a display of His power in A.D. 70 when He rendered judgment on the Jews for their rebellion and rejection of Him (Luke 21:29-33). We who obey the Gospel today can enter into that inaugurated phase of the kingdom in which Jesus reigns presently (Colossians 1:13; 4:11; Acts 8:12; Romans 14:17). The church is the present manifestation of the kingdom of God because it is the visible reality of what people ought to be doing in their daily lives by allowing God to reign in their hearts and lives.

There is also **the consummative phase (not yet) of the kingdom of God** in which Jesus will return and will give the reign back to the Father to rule over the everlasting kingdom. It is then that all the righteous will enter the eternal abode with God, while the wicked will enter into an eternal Hell (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 15:24, 50; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:5).

The Inaugurated Phase (“Already”) and the Consummative Phase (Not Yet) of Salvation

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). He came so that He could save us from our sins (Matthew 1:21; 1 Timothy 2:4). If we obey the terms of the Gospel, then, we enter into **an inaugurated phase of salvation**, being saved from our past sins (Acts 2:38). We must continue to live faithfully, and God is faithful, Who will continue to cover us by the blood of His Son if we will trust Him and repent (1 John 1:7-9; Acts 8:22-24). If we do live faithfully, Jesus will usher us into **the consummative phase of salvation — Heaven itself** — in which we will never be able to fall from grace because there will be no more sin (1 Peter 1:5; Hebrews

1:14; 5:9; 9:28). When a faithful Christian dies physically, the spirit goes and awaits in the hadean realm of Paradise until the day of Christ comes, when He will reunite both physical body and soul together (Matthew 10:28; Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; Acts 2:25-28; 2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 20:13).

The Inaugurated Phase (“Already”) and the Consummative Phase (“Not Yet”) of Judgment

We stand on trial while we live here upon this earth. **The inaugurated phase of judgment** began when Satan rebelled against God (1 Timothy 3:7). God has decreed a day in which He will render judgment on the Last Day (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). If we have broken the law of God, then, we have sinned and stand condemned as sinners before a holy and a righteous God. John 3:18 states, *“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”* We can receive justification if we obey the Gospel, and then, we are justified by the blood of Christ (Romans 3:24, 26; 5:1, 9). If we are in Christ, then, there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1). God will continue to justify us if we keep living for Him. When Jesus returns (Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 17:30-31), then **the consummative phase of judgment — the great Day of Judgment** (2 Corinthians 5:10) — will commence. Those who are righteous will receive a sentence from Jesus, the just Judge, in that they will be permitted to enter into the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34). On that day, the wicked will be issued a sentence of ultimate condemnation to an eternal lake of fire that was originally prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

The Inaugurated Phase (Already) and the Consummative Phase (Not Yet) of The City of God


If we do become Christians, then, we enter into **the inaugurated phase of the city of God — the new Jerusalem**. Hebrews 12:22-24 states:

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made

perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

Notice these blessings for the Christian are given in the perfect tense — *“have come”* — an action that occurred in the past with abiding results. However, the writer of Hebrews also discussed **the consummative state of the city of God** in Hebrews 13:14, *“For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.”* John wrote about this same city at the end of Revelation 21-22, and there we also see an inaugurated-consummative phase of the city. Christians can know they have entered into the inaugurated phase of the city of God because of the testimony of Hebrews 12:22-24, and if we should add to or take away anything out of Revelation, then, we are in danger of being cast out of the holy city (Revelation 22:18-19), which only makes sense if we are in the inaugurated phase of having entered the city but not the consummative phase in which there will be no more sin. Before the great Day of Judgment arrives (Revelation 20:11-15), we know that the forces of evil gather around the “beloved city,” surrounding it in trying their best to destroy it (Revelation 20:9). Therefore, we must put on the whole armor of God and withstand all the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:10-18), and we must stand fast to defend the walls of the New Jerusalem from the attacks!

Conclusion

Are you spiritually separated from God? Why not obey the Gospel so that you can be placed in a right relationship with Him? You will be raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). You will be justified by the blood of the Son of God (Romans 5:9). You will have entered into the inaugurated phase of His kingdom (Colossians 1:13). You will have obtained salvation through His name (Acts 4:12). You will have entered into the inaugurated phase of the city of God (Hebrews 12:22-24). Live faithfully so that when you die physically you can experience a physical resurrection unto everlasting life (John 5:28-29), of being able to enter into the consummative phase of the kingdom of God (2 Peter 1:5-11), of being able to enter into the consummative phase of the city of God (Hebrews 13:14) and of obtaining final salvation (1 Peter 1:5). 



1932—2008

The Last Days

J. C. Choate

The prophets of God spoke of the last days. Isaiah said, *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem”* (Isaiah 2:2,3). Micah makes a similar statement in Micah 4:1-2.

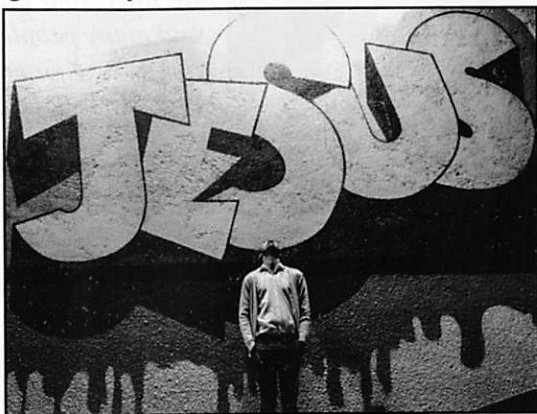
Coming over to the New Testament, as recorded in Acts 2, we have the apostles gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost as the Lord had instructed (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8). Then, the Holy Spirit was poured out on them as promised in John 14:26. As a result, they began to speak in the languages of those present from nations throughout the world. The people were amazed and thought perhaps the disciples were drunk. *“But Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh...”* (Acts 2:14-17).

The writer of Hebrews declared, *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds”* (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Also, Paul wrote to Timothy, *“This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affections, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away”* (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Now, as we can see from the several verses quoted, the various writers spoke of the *“last days”* and of the different things that would take place during those days. First of all, we might ask what *“days”* are under consideration, when they were to begin, are we living in those days now, what would take place during those days, and how long they would last?

Please note that the Old Testament writers spoke of the *“last days”* as being in the future. However, after the death of Christ, the writers of the New Testament spoke of those days as being in existence. You will note that we quoted from Peter on the day of Pentecost, who quoted from Joel, affirming what was taking place on that day fulfilled the prophecy which had said the Lord would pour out His Spirit on all flesh in *“the last days.”*



Evidently, then, the *“last days”* began with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Even though biblical history had been divided into other great periods of time, such as the Patriarchal Age and the Mosaical or Jewish Age, with the death of Christ, a new age began — the Christian Age. This was to be the last great age before the return of our Lord. Therefore, the *“last days”* refers to that period of time from the death of Christ until His return — which will bring the end of the Christian Age and all things as we know them. That also means that we are living even now in *“the last days.”*

Numerous things were prophesied to take place during these *“last*

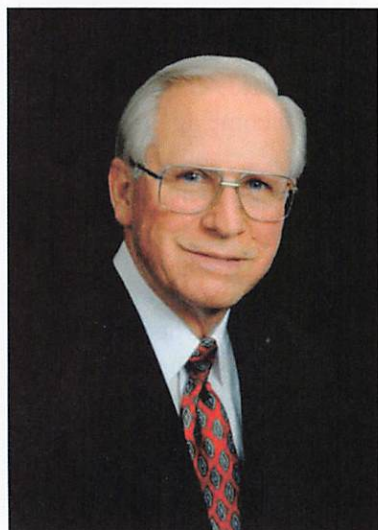
days.” God would speak through His Son, Jesus Christ; the apostles would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit; the Gospel would be preached for the first time in fact; the church would be established; the Christian Age would flourish; the New Testament would be given to man in written form; the Gospel would spread throughout the world; Christians would be persecuted; at the appointed time, Christ would come again; and many other great events were foretold.

As stated in the letter to Timothy, Paul warned that in the last days perilous times would come because of the rampant growth of blasphemous sins. It would appear from the things listed, characterizing this period of time, that man has always had to contend with these sins, but perhaps the warning was that things would deteriorate to the point where these acts would be much worse than before. Whatever the state of man during this time, it should be remembered that man has always been in sin, lost and in need of salvation. Christ is the one and only Savior the world has ever had.

Let us, therefore, respond to Him by faith and obedience so that we can be saved and be a part of His Family. In this way, we can be forgiven of our sins, spend our lives taking the Gospel to the rest of the world and have the hope of eternal life.

Some take the “*last days*” to literally mean only “a few days” before the Lord’s return, but actually, the last days have been going on for almost two thousand years! How many more days the era will include we have no way of knowing. The Lord could come today, a hundred years from now or a thousand years from now, but who knows? Only God knows (Matthew 24:36). The point is that all of these days before the Lord’s return — whatever their number — are said to be the “*last days.*” There will not be another age as in the past. Again, regardless of the number of days before the Lord’s return, they will be few in comparison to *eternity*.

We need, therefore, to prepare for His return and, with His coming, the bringing to an end of these “*last days.*” At that point, all the dead will be resurrected, the heavens and the earth as we know them will be burned up, the Judgment will take place, the wicked will be cast into eternal torment, and the righteous will be taken to that new heaven and earth — to live with the Lord forevermore. All we have, Readers, are these last days to prepare for eternity. Let us use the time wisely. There will be no second chance. ✝



What REALLY Held Christ to the Cross?

Byron Nichols

There is no doubt about it. Jesus had been suspended on the cross for six hours; the Roman soldiers had driven nails through His hands and feet. We read in John 20:24-29 that Thomas saw and felt for himself just exactly where those nails had been forced through the Lord's hands into the wooden cross.

In spite of what we read, I still must ask, "What was it that held Jesus to the cross?" Let me boldly suggest that it was **not the nails** that held Jesus on the cross. He had the power to remove those nails. He asked in Matthew 26:53, "*Do you think I cannot call on My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?*" He had the power to still the stormy sea, raise the dead and so much more. He had more power at His disposal than we can comprehend. There was indeed horrible pain caused by the nails, but I want to submit several things that did much more to hold Jesus to the cross.

1. Jesus was held to that "old, rugged cross" by His own intent as a **willing servant**. He said in John 10:17-18, "*Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.*" This greatest of all servants caused Matthew to tell us in Matthew 16:21, "... *Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed...*" He was not only anticipating an unmerciful death, but He understood that He would suffer a great deal before the cross even became involved.

Jesus tried hard to make people understand that His purpose on earth was **to promote His Father, and not Himself**. He declared to His disciples in John 6:38, *“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”* This young man stayed on the cross because He was a **willing servant**.

2. Jesus was also held to the cross by His love for His enemies. The Son of God did many things that are very strange to us. Instead of performing miracles from the cross in an effort to *get even* with His persecutors, He suffered for us, leaving an example, that we should learn to do the same (1 Peter 2:18-21). **His love for those who opposed Him** in any way was a major force in keeping Him on that cross.

3. Another factor that held Jesus to the cross was His trusting obedience toward God. Yes, the pain associated with the **nailed** hands and feet was intense, but the Lord was likely reminding Himself of many other times when He was having to contend with some great difficulties. Yet, He maintained His unwavering faith in His Father and His own confidence that God knew best and would carry Him through the struggles. **His obedience** was assisted by His **desire** and **determination** to do the will of His Father.

4. Jesus was the one and only Savior. There were numerous other godly men and women mentioned in the Scriptures, but **Jesus of Nazareth** was **the only being** who was qualified and capable to bring about **the forgiveness of men’s sins**. He knew this and had committed Himself to completing His assignment. He knew that the only thing that would bring about the forgiveness of sins was the shedding of His blood. His commitment to being **the Savior of mankind** exceeded the pain caused by **those nails**.

5. Jesus knew that being on that cross was how He was to purchase His church. In Acts 20, Paul met with the elders of the church in Ephesus. Among other important things, in verse 28 he said to them, *“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”* **Question:** Which do you believe had a greater effect on Jesus while He was on the cross – freeing His hands and feet from **the nails** or providing the purchase price of His church?

6. Jesus was on the cross as our Mediator. Let’s notice these great words in John 14:6, 13-16. (6) *“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the*

truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (13) “And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (14) If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. (15) If you love Me, keep My commandments. (16) And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever.” Had Jesus freed Himself from **those nails**, He would have failed to fulfill His responsibility as **our Mediator**.

7. The Joy set before Christ held Him on the cross. Hebrews 12:2 tells us, *“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

Let’s remind ourselves that Jesus could have miraculously freed Himself from **those nails** and disappeared into the crowd to freedom, but that would have destroyed *“the joy that was set before Him,”* the joy of going home to be right next to the throne of His Father. His mission in this world would have been incomplete and not what the Father had in mind at all.

Let’s summarize. Those ugly Roman nails (spikes) held the weight of the body of Jesus on that cross on Calvary, but the total holding power was spread among several factors, most of them being unseen.

Many of us likely have one or more songs that are our favorites, songs that convey very meaningful things to us. I want to share with you my favorite. It may be a favorite of yours, too. It has to do with that cross where Jesus died for you and me. In 1707, Englishman Isaac Watts published what to me is the greatest, most meaningful, most touching hymn ever written.

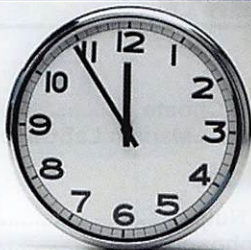
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ, my Lord;
All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. ✝



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Righteousness

Paula Bates

1. And you shall swear, The Lord lives, in _____, in _____, in _____; the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and Him they shall glory. Jeremiah 4:2
2. Blessed are those who _____ and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be _____. Matthew 5:6
3. Thus says the Lord: "Let not the wise man glory in his _____, let not the mighty man glory in his _____, nor let the rich man glory in his _____; but let him that glories glory in this, that he _____ and knows Me, that I am the _____, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and _____ in the earth. For in these I delight," Jeremiah 9:23-24
4. Treasures of _____ profit nothing, but righteousness delivers from _____. Proverbs 10:2
5. For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and _____ and joy in the Holy Spirit. For He who serves _____ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may _____ another. Romans 14:17-19



Answers:

1. Truth, judgment, righteous-
2. Hunger, filled
3. Wisdom, might, riches, un-
4. Wickedness, death
5. Peace, Christ, edify

derstands, Lord, righteous-

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What Did My Salvation Cost?

Betty Burton Choate

When I consider the total sacrifice necessary for my eternal salvation, I fall to my knees in tears. Why? Because of the overwhelming enormity of it and of the love behind it.

When asked about the sacrifice, our minds go first to the cross, and that is natural because death seems to be the thing humans fear most. Yet, the sacrifice began long before that.

In Revelation 13:8, we read of “...*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,*” but what was the *reality* before the sacrifice began? We read in Genesis 1:1, “*In the beginning God...*” The word for “God” in the original is “**Elohim,**” the plural form of the singular word for “God,” which is “**El.**” We have this plurality of the Godhead identified in Scripture: **The Lord of Hosts** (1 Samuel 17:45), **the Word** (John 1:1-4) and **the Spirit** (Genesis 1:2) — three Persons, but one omniscient, omnipresent, all-powerful, life-possessing eternal Entity. **The Three are One, equal in every way.**

As the creation was envisioned, **the Godhead** — in His ability to see all time — knew that the man He would create in His own image, giving him a **consciousness of “right” and “wrong”** and an **immortal soul**, would sin and would be forever banned from His presence. What could be done?

The plan was made. Throughout most of the Old Testament, One of the Godhead is called “**The Lord of Hosts**”; almost never is He designated as “**Father.**”

The second One of the Godhead in Exodus 3 identified Himself as “**I AM,**” and often when He talked with humans, He spoke with the authority of God, but was called “**The Angel [Messenger] of the Lord**” (go back to Exodus 3:2). This One was most often **the Mediator** between the Lord of Hosts and humans throughout the Old Testament and was the One with the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings (1 Corinthians 10:4). Often,

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the Scriptures record that **the Word** spoke to someone, saying, **“Thus says The Lord of Hosts...”** (Zechariah 1:3) or **“The Angel of the Lord...”** said **“Thus says The Lord of Hosts...”** (Zechariah 3:6-7).

The **Holy Spirit**, the third Person of the Godhead, was given to specific humans in the Old Testament period for the purpose of guiding their decisions and strengthening them in times of challenge, as in Numbers 11:17.

So, in anticipation of man’s sin, changes were made in the relationship in the Godhead. Those changes became even more evident when the Word was **“made flesh”** (John 1:14). It was at that time when He became **“the Son of God,”** and through His relationship as the **“Firstborn Son,”** He made it possible for obedient humans to become the sons and the daughters of our Father. Have you noticed that it is in the New Testament that God is most often designated as **“Father”** — **after the Firstborn** came into the world?

Hebrews 10:5-7 says that a body was prepared for the Word. He was born as a helpless human baby, and, as a human, He was able to so limit Himself that the Scriptures record He **“grew in wisdom,”** just as He grew in physical stature (Luke 2:52)! Also, He subjected Himself to His human parents, as all children are to do. There is no record of any inspired teaching or miracle during those first 30 years when the eternal Word was [in effect] imprisoned in the limiting confines of a human body!

Even after He began the work He was born to do, He declared plainly that **the words He spoke were not His own, but were the message God gave Him, and the miracles He did were not done by His own power but by the power of the Holy Spirit!** Still, He was functioning as a human, dependent on God and endowed with the needed spiritual gifts that were much like those given to the Apostles in order to do their work.

Does this mean that He was no longer **“God”**? Of course not! Just as humans cannot cease being what we are, no matter how we may choose to limit ourselves, He **was and is and always will be “The Word,” One of the Godhead.** However, He chose to lay aside **the Rights and the Powers** that were His, in order to be **“made in all things like His brethren”** (Hebrews 2:17; Philippians 2:5-8).

Yes, if you have read a medical analysis of a crucifixion, you know that the suffering He endured for us on the cross could not be measured. Most

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people, reading of His agony in the Garden, conclude that it was the horror of the crucifixion that He was dreading and for which He was begging to be spared — if that could be God's will. Yet, have you noticed that from that time of surrender forward, through the trial, the flogging and the agony of the crucifixion, He was calm and was the One in complete control?

What was death to Him? As the sinless Word, He had completed the work He was born in the flesh to do. Now, He was free! No more limitations of being in the confines of a human body. No more temptations. No more hunger, pain and rejection. He was free!

However, was He free? Had He really finished the work He was born to do, or had He in actuality come to the pinnacle of the payment for His brothers and sisters? Ask yourself why had He dreaded the cross so much? What happened on the cross? It was there that He died for the sins of humanity — not for His own but for ours! It was on the cross that He cried out, ***“My God! My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”*** (Matthew 27:46). It was then that the weight of our sins became His. It was from that time that He could not call for legions of angels to deliver Him from the consequences of His commitment to humanity, as He had told Peter in the Garden that He could have chosen to do (Matthew 26:53). It was then that the price for my sins was paid by our Lord Jesus Christ!

Yet many people believe that when He returned to Heaven, everything went back as it had been from before the creation. That, though, is not what the Scriptures tell us.

First Corinthians 15:20 shows a **continuation of His bonding with humanity**. He rose from the dead and ***“...has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive”*** (1 Corinthians 15:20-22). Philippians 2:8-11 says that because of our Lord's obedience to God, even to the point of the death on the cross, He has been highly exalted and given a name above every name. He now sits at God's right hand, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, but how is He described?


“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). He returned to Heaven as **the son of**

GOD

God and the Son of man, as our Brother! His triumph over the death of His physical body guarantees also our triumph in the resurrection!

First Corinthians 15:28 says that when death itself has been conquered, *“...then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all”* (1 Corinthians 15:28). Romans 8:16-17 further describe the eternal relationship. *“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”* Revelation 3:21 says, *“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”*

What do all of these passages tell us about the eternal relationship in the Godhead? That in order for us to be the sons and the daughters of God for eternity, the Firstborn must continue as our Brother for eternity! Back before the creation of humans, this enormous cost was realized, and the Word committed Himself to paying it, in order that our souls might not be separated from God forever! That was over what He agonized in the Garden: was He — *the sinless Word* — willing to take the full burden of our sins on Himself and be forever One with man, subject to the Father as humans are subject?

This was **the sacrifice** that my Lord made so that I can have eternal life. **What am I willing to sacrifice so that I may live with Him as a child of God for eternity?** 

Betty Burton Choate is the wife of J.C. Choate (deceased and with God). A deeper study of this subject has been printed in her book, *Jesus Christ the Eternal Sacrifice*, which may be ordered from World Evangelism, PO Box 72, Winona, MS 38967; 662-283-1192.

Kennedy's Pennies

“Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24 NKJV). The stripes were because of and for us.



GOD

GOD IS IN CONTROL, THE CONTROL AND IN FULL CONTROL

Marilyn LaStrape

We have probably never heard so many people utter, “God is in control,” as we have in the past several months. This article is dedicated to the proclamation of that irrevocable truth. Our part is to just watch God work His redemptive plan since it all belongs to Him, and He is running it! He was in control before any of us were here, and He will be in control after we are all dead and gone.

- **Psalm 33:10-11** – *“The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the people of no effect. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations.”*
- **Psalm 46:10** – *“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”*
- **Psalm 74:16-17** – *“The day is Yours; the night also is Yours; You have prepared the light and the sun. You have set all the borders of the earth; You have made summer and winter.”*
- **Psalm 86: 9-10** – *“All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O LORD, and glorify Your name. For You are great and do wondrous things; You alone are God.”*
- **Psalm 115:1** – *“Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but to Your name give glory, because of Your mercy, because of Your truth.”*
- **Isaiah 5:26** – *“He will lift up a banner to the nations from afar, and will whistle to them from the end of the earth; Surely they shall come with speed, swiftly.”*
- **Isaiah 40:21-22** – *“Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has*

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it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. He brings the princes to nothing He makes the judges of the earth useless.”

- **Isaiah 46:9-11** – *“Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me; Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.’ Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.”*
- **Isaiah 48:13** – *“Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has stretched out the heavens; When I call to them, they stand up together.”*
- **Isaiah 57:15** – *“For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: ‘I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.’”*
- **Jeremiah 9:23-24** – *“Thus says the LORD: ‘Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,’ says the LORD.”*

God has sovereign control over all the earth and the universe. He has forthrightly declared that immutable, eternal truth of truths. In Job 41:11, God speaking to Job stated, *“Who has first given to Me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine.”* **Now that is control!** †

Marilyn LaStrape is a Christian writer and author who resides in Hewitt, Texas, USA.

The Enduring Word

Rodney Nulph

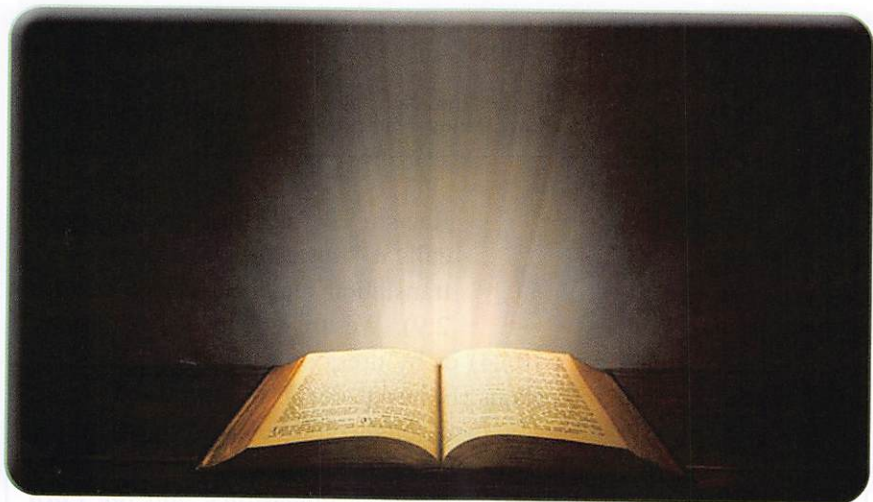
Things just don't last! Most items we purchase today are simply disposable, and usually we dispose of them more quickly than we hoped. From children's toys to automobiles, things do not last and endure. However, one of the great evidences that the Bible is from God is the lasting nature of it. God's Word has gone *face to face* with numerous obstacles, and yet, the Word of God remains! The Bible is truly the enduring Word. Consider the following.

The Bible has endured **time**. The apostle Peter referred to the Bible as "*the living and abiding Word of God*" (1 Peter 1:23). God's wonderful Book has endured century after century without fail. The original writings of Scripture were penned upon parchments, papyrus and other very fragile materials. While those materials were transient, the message was not! The Scriptures that we lovingly hold today were meticulously hand copied by scribes for generation after generation, and yet, these sacred writings remain without flaw or error. Early man was somewhat limited in his resources, but in spite of those limitations, the power of God shines through as His Word has remained intact. Of all the writings of antiquity, no other book has as much textual evidence as does the Bible. Only a few copies of Julius Caesar's works remain, but thousands of manuscripts of the Scriptures endure. Mankind has only one or two copies of Aristotle, Plato, Tacitus and other ancient authors, but the Bible is extensively documented and remains a complete whole. Interestingly, we have more reliable ancient texts of God's Word than we do of the works of Shakespeare! "Compared to other ancient books (and modern books too) the text of the New Testament has incredible attestation" (Burluson 66). While time has depleted and destroyed the works of man, God's Masterpiece — the Bible — endures!

The Bible has endured **torture**. The nature of mankind does not change. Throughout the centuries, mankind has attempted to torture the Word of God so vehemently that it would cease to exist. Jehoiakim, king of Judah, used his

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penknife to cut the scroll of God's Word and burned it in the fire (Jeremiah 36:20-26). However, Jeremiah was guided to rewrite the prophecy. Amazingly, the king is dead and buried, but the Word of God remains (Jeremiah 22:18-19)! In the 3rd century after Christ walked this earth, Diocletian, the Roman emperor, persecuted the church and claimed to have eradicated the name of Jesus. Some 30 years later, another emperor was printing the Word of God and distributing it throughout the Roman empire, while, amazingly, using Roman funds to do so! Voltaire, a French philosopher, boasted a prediction that within 100 years of his lifetime, the Bible would be forgotten. Within just a few years of Voltaire's death, the Geneva Bible society used Voltaire's printing press and his house to print the Word of God. Where is Voltaire today? Today, the Bible fills our world! Communism tried to extinguish God's Word and failed as well. While the Bible has been tortured on numerous fronts, the truth still remains as the Psalmist of old predicted, "*Forever, oh Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven*" (Psalm 119:89).



The Bible has endured **tests**. The Bible has been scrutinized and analyzed in many futile attempts to disprove it. Some dishonest folks will ignorantly label the Bible as unreliable and undependable without

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evidence to prove those accusations. In fact, some have claimed that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because there was no written alphabet at that time. Yet, through the shovel of archaeologists, it has been discovered that such alphabets did exist. Others have tried to discredit the Bible because of some historical truths it mentions, which were not known outside of Inspiration's pages. Such examples would include the Hittite nation, the kingship of David and the governorship of Pontius Pilate. However, as the years passed, these truths have been found during archaeological excavations, and once again, God's Word has been proved to be true. It can stand under any test given by mortal man!

We can rely upon the trustworthiness of the Sacred Text. Things come and go, and they just do not last. However, God's Word endures and remains! ***"...The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the Word of the Lord endureth forever"*** (1 Peter 1:24b-25a). 

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Cecil's

COMMENTS

Racism is a terrible sin. The KJV calls it ***"respect of persons."*** Every translation calls it ***"sin"*** (James 2:9). We are not to distinguish by race or nationality (Acts 10:24) or by dress or wealth (James 2:1-9) or by social or economic status (Ephesians 6:9). Martin Luther King, Jr. dreamed of a time when associations would be determined, not by the color of a person's skin, but by the content of one's character. The Bible says, ***"Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."*** We, too, are told, ***"Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment"*** (John 7:24).

ALL OF SCRIPTURE

Robert Johnson

There are all sorts of ways to think about the Bible. It is its own library, containing 66 books, which offers us God's wisdom regarding life and eternity. It's like a large mansion, with each room having different items in it, but considered together, one can get a clear picture of the One Who built it and gave it the order it possesses. It has been considered being like a quilt, each piece its own unique design and offering its own perspective but providing a rich tapestry when all the pieces are joined together.

Another analogy of Scripture is it being like a jigsaw puzzle. Most pieces cannot be identified alone, apart from the others pieces they join. When they are all put together, you have a clear picture of what it's all about. Viewed as separate pieces, without any connection, it can be hard to see the whole picture. Taking verses and passages of the Bible out of context, viewing them in isolation from the whole, one can draw wrong conclusions and misinterpret what God communicates to us through His Word. By patient study, putting it all together, we not only understand what each section of Scripture says, but we have a better understanding of what God's overall plan is for all of humanity, as well as how that fits into our lives individually.

Like a jigsaw puzzle, some people begin a study of Scripture, only to just connect a few pieces here and there. They don't stay with Bible study to gain an understanding of the complete theme of God's Word to see how it all fits together for their lives. Such an approach can be discouraging, causing them to give up, never seeing the beautiful picture for life God offers us. Others study the pieces that interest them but never try to connect them to the whole. They can draw wrong conclusions about not only each piece but what they infer the whole emphasizes. **Many errors and false teachings have come about from not connecting the whole teaching of Scripture together, focusing on just isolated parts here and there.**

The view that Scripture presents of itself is found in Paul's statement to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. *"All Scripture is breathed out by God*

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and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” Paul spoke of Scripture as a whole, not a group of individual books or letters that are disjointed and have no continuity to the whole. The Bible is not a loose collection of books, each applying only to itself and not to be related to the rest. The sixty-six books in the Bible are those inspired by God, those that God wanted us to have as His Word. We recognize they were written under various circumstances and times to various groups and individuals. However, by also considering them together as a unit, as God’s Word for us, we have a complete picture of Him and His will. By examining Scripture this way, we can have a complete understanding of what we must do to be saved, of how we can live the Christian life and of the promise of eternity. **All Scripture is inspired of God, and all Scripture reveals God and His will to us.**

We need to take the time to look at each part of Scripture and connect it together to see the marvelous unity it possesses and the purpose it serves, offering us eternal life and leading us in the way that guides us there. We’ll never get there reading it haphazardly, bits and pieces here and there, or even worse, taking a pair of theological scissors to it, trimming the pieces to fit how we want it to look. Instead, put it together for our lives as God desires. Can we read it from cover to cover? Yes. Can we read it a book at a time? Of course. Can we choose themes to examine? Definitely. All of this can help enrich our view of the complete picture it offers and of what it reveals about how we should live. Never forget, however, that the theme of God’s love in Christ touches it all and how that love affects how we respond.

Determine to spend time each day in this book of life, the Bible. Look at each piece, but connect them together. See how all of Scripture fits together in all of life to bring us to eternity. Don’t miss the point God seeks to make for your life through all of Scripture! Don’t misunderstand what it says by only focusing on one piece! Find the blessings it can offer you when you’re willing to connect it all together in the picture of your life. *“The entirety of your word is truth, each of your righteous judgments endures forever”* (Psalm 119:160).✝

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THE WORD OF GOD

***Some Practical!
Instruction
Concerning Scripture***



Wayne Barrier

The apostle Paul's instruction to Timothy and to us concerning Scripture is short and practical. With all of the division in the beliefs of the "Christian" community today, biblical guidance is needed.

First, from 2 Timothy 2:14-17, we read:


Remind them of these things and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene...

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These instructions are direct and easy to understand. The problem is that they are not easy to follow because much study is required to “rightly handle” the Word of God. Believers often are unwilling to take time and make the effort to achieve this competence in knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures.

Next, Paul made a straightforward statement concerning the comprehensive quality and authority of Scripture. In 2 Timothy 3:12-16, we read:

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and imposters will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

This passage is simple yet powerful. We can put our trust in the Scriptures to provide the information needed to obey and to please God. Nothing is more important, and nothing other than Scripture is dependable. Are you familiar with the content of all 66 books of the Bible and understand how they fit together to become a single, comprehensive, harmonious message for guiding our lives of faith in God and His son Jesus Christ? 

Wayne Barrier lives in Florence, Alabama, USA and does mission work in several countries.

Kenney's Pennies “*knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*” (1 Peter 1:18-19 NKJV). Ever thought about what God could give that would be of true value to Him so that you knew He really cared for you? He created every material thing, so that would not exactly be of value to Him. What would He give to show you His care, really? Here's the answer.

I'm Not the Man I Used to Be

Raymond Elliott

There is a religious song that is often sung by different quartets, groups and individuals, emphasizing how one's life has been changed by Calvary, noting the death of Jesus Christ Who died on the cross for the sins of the world. Regardless of how a person lived previously, when he or she believes in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, is penitent of sins and obeys the Gospel of Christ, his or her sins are forgiven and forgotten (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Hebrews 8:12).




Mankind is not so merciful and forgiving. Recently, I read about “Boeing’s communications chief who was forced to resign because of an article he wrote criticizing women in combat in 1987 – more than 30 years ago – when he was a Navy fighter pilot.” The gentleman explained he no longer held the same views about women serving in the armed services as he did when he was a young man. Nevertheless, he was forced to resign his position with the company. This is a prime example of the extremes we now witness in our nation.

What if God treated mankind in like fashion as those responsible for pressuring this person to resign from his work with Boeing? Consider the following men who said or did something that was not in harmony with the will of God, and yet the Lord forgave them and used them in His kingdom.

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Abraham, the ‘father of the faithful,’ was not perfect. In two incidents, he intended to deceive rulers in order to protect his life. When Abram “*went to Egypt,*” because of the beauty of Sarai his wife, he said to her, “*Please say you are my sister that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.*” Thus, Pharaoh and others believed that Sarai was only a sister to Abram and not his wife (Genesis 12:10-20). While this statement was partially true, it was not the whole truth. Then, there was the time when Abraham and Sarah went to Gerar. While there, he told others, “*She is my sister.*” King Abimelech took Sarah. God intervened, and the king did not touch her (Genesis 20). David, after much time and many obstacles, became King of Israel. God richly blessed him abundantly with power and material things. Yet, he lusted after a woman, committed adultery with her and had her husband killed (2 Samuel 11). Peter denied his Lord three times (Matthew 26:69-75). The apostle Paul, prior to his conversion, persecuted the church of the Lord (Acts 9). He referred to himself as being the “*chief*” of sinners (1 Timothy 1:12-15).

Abraham matured his faith in God and his belief “*was accounted to him for righteousness*” (Romans 4:3, 5). King David was truly penitent of his sins (Psalm 32; 51). The apostle Peter was genuinely sorry for his denial of Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:75). Saul (Paul) believed in Jesus, repented and was baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 9:9-11; Acts 22:16).

These individuals were not the men they used to be. God did not hold their past mistakes, faults and sins against them. Have we not all thought, said or written something that displeased God and then sought His forgiveness? We should be thankful for the infinite mercy of our Heavenly Father. God has given His children this blessed assurance: “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (1 John 1:9). “*As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us*” (Psalm 103:12). “*I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins*” (Isaiah 43:25). 

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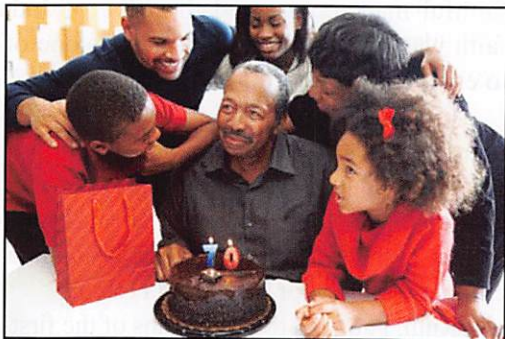
SALVATION

No Grandchildren in Heaven

Rebecca Rushmore

There will be no grandchildren in Heaven. At first glance, this statement seems ridiculous and contrary to the Bible. In a way it is. As we are all born of parents who had parents of their own, each of us is a grandchild to someone. Physically speaking, if we live faithfully so that we are allowed to enter Heaven, we may be there as someone's grandchild. However, the same cannot be said in the spiritual sense.

Romans 8:16 and Galatians 3:26 tell us Christians are "*children of God.*" Galatians 3:27 goes on to say, "*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*" We become God's children when we are baptized and live faithfully for Him. As each individual



becomes a Christian, he becomes a spiritual child of God. In the eyes of God, the individual is no longer someone's grandchild; he is God's child. This leaves no room for grandchildren in Heaven. In fact, the Bible does not anywhere refer to Christians as God's grandchildren, only as His children.

So why does it matter that there are no spiritual grandchildren?

The Romans passage continues and says, "*And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*" (8:17). As God's children, we will inherit Heaven when the time comes. Our inheritance is based on the fact that we are adopted children (Galatians 4:5-7). To receive our inheritance, we must be God's children. It won't matter if our parents are God's children. That is not on what our inheritance is based. God will judge each individual's life to see if he meets the qualifications of an adopted son or daughter (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 John 3:10). To receive

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our inheritance, we must be adopted children, not grandchildren.

Our faith in God must be our own. We cannot depend on the faith of our parents to get us to Heaven. There are many examples in the Bible of men and women who turned from the faith of their parents to follow the true God. Consider Caleb and Rahab. When Moses sent twelve spies into Canaan to bring back a report, only two returned ready to go in and to conquer the land. One of these men was Caleb (Numbers 13). A closer reading of the references to Caleb reveals that he was not a descendent of Jacob. His ancestry traced back to Esau (Bright). He apparently left the religion of his parents and became associated with the Israelites. This faithful man represented the tribe of Judah among the spies. His great faith was rewarded by God; he was one of two in his generation allowed to enter the Promised Land (Joshua 14).

In Joshua 2, we read of a courageous woman named Rahab. She hid Israelite spies in her home and was rewarded. When Israel marched on Jericho, Rahab and her household were spared. This courageous woman acknowledged the greatness of God and left her parents' faith behind to live with the children of Israel (Joshua 6:25). The writer of Hebrews commended her for her faith (11:31).

Ruth, Paul and the Christians of the first century also forsook the religion of their fathers to follow the will of God. Ruth left her home in Moab to live with her mother-in-law in Israel. The line of King David and Christ can be traced back to this woman. The apostle Paul gave up all he had been taught in the Jewish religion to become a great missionary for Christ. Paul had achieved the highest place possible for him in Judaism; he gave it all up for Christ (Philippians 3:4-8). In Acts 2, we read of the first converts to the church. All of them were Jews observing the Passover. They gave up a lifetime of religious teachings to follow the new law of Christ. They left the faith of their parents and became God's adopted children so they could one day inherit Heaven. [Paul and other first century Jews surrendered the humanly devised amendments to Judaism and otherwise realized that Christianity was the fulfillment of Judaism, which was replaced with the Gospel. ~ Editor]


Many today must do the same thing. Each individual should carefully

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compare the religious beliefs of his parents to the New Testament. When the beliefs of a parent do not match the Bible, it is imperative that an individual leave behind his parents' religion and follow Christ. Only as an adopted child of God can one enter Heaven.

Some children have the privilege of growing up in a home where their parents' faith is based on God's Word. This does not mean they do not have any work to do to make their inheritance sure. Children of Christian parents must still examine their faith and make it their own. It is not enough for anyone to accept something just because a parent does. Christian parents also have a responsibility to help their children make their own choices about God. There are a number of ways parents can do this.

One important way parents must help involves teaching God's Word. It is not sufficient for the children to know Mom and Dad believe in God. Parents need to teach their children about the Bible and God's Word. Teaching must be done in the home and by taking the children to Bible class and worship. A child who does not see a faithful parent will most likely not be faithful himself. Just teaching the facts is not enough. Parents must not only teach Christian living, they must practice it as well. You cannot teach and live what you do not know. Parents need to show their children that their faith and obedience makes them happy and that it is important.

Only God's adopted children will receive the promised inheritance. With this in mind, we all need to strive to teach others about God's family plan. Our friends and coworkers need to know that just because it was good enough for Mom and Dad, that doesn't mean it was right. **Christians must take responsibility to show others that Christianity is more than just a set of facts. It is a way of life that will determine our inheritance.** There will be no grandchildren in Heaven. 

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Verse Search



1 CORINTHIANS 15:50-16:4

Jerry Bates

1. What cannot inherit the kingdom of God? (v. 50)
2. When will all men be changed? (v. 52)
3. “For the _____ will sound, and the dead will be raised _____.” (v. 52)
4. What will be different about our new bodies? (v. 53)
5. “O _____, where is your “_____”? O _____, where is your _____?” (v. 55)
6. What is the sting of death? (v. 56)
7. What is the strength of sin? (v. 56)
8. How do we gain the victory over death and sin? (v. 56)
9. Knowing that we can be victorious, what should that motivate us to do? (v. 58)
10. What does Paul say we should do on the first day of the week? (v. 16:2)
11. By what measure should we give? (v. 2)
12. What was going to be done with this contribution? (v. 3)
13. How was the gift going to be taken to Jerusalem? (v. 4)
14. What other area did Paul say he had commanded to take up a collection for the saints? (v. 1)

(See the back cover for answers.)

VERSE SEARCH

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed — 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

55 “O Death, where is your sting?

O Hades, where is your victory?”

56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

57 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper that there be no collections when I come. 3 And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. 4 But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.

NOTES: Chapter 16 is the conclusion of the book. The first few verses discuss a collection that Paul wanted to be taken for the poor in Jerusalem. Paul wanted the collection to be done by the time he arrived, so that he would not have to pressure them to give. This also furnishes an example for us today. The church in Corinth was commanded to give on the first day of the week, which was the regular meeting day of the early church. The phrase also means the first day of every week. They were told to give as they prospered. The New Testament does not prescribe that a tenth be given as does the Old Testament. Considering all their giving, the Jews actually gave much more than that (some suggest 25% or more). Since the blessings of the New Covenant are so much better than the Old, should we give less? If we truly love God and each other, we will be generous in our giving.

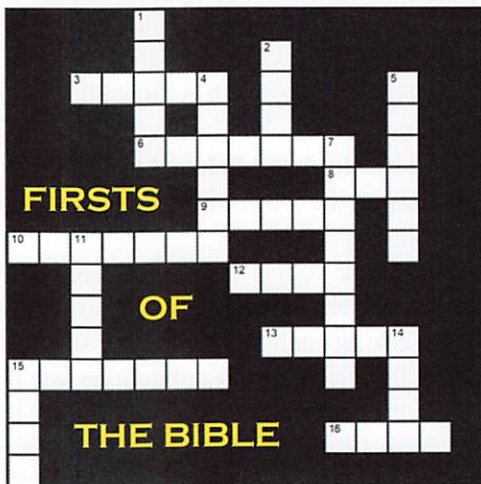


Bible Find

Martha Rushmore

Across

3. He said of Himself He was the Alpha, Revelation 22:13
6. First martyr in the church, Acts 7:59
8. First woman, Genesis 3:20
9. First city mentioned in the Bible, Genesis 4:17
10. First son of Abraham, Genesis 16:15
12. First man, Genesis 2:19
13. First person to be tied up, Genesis 22:9
15. First to sin in the Bible, Genesis 3:4-5
16. First miracle of Jesus was performed there, John 2:1-11



Down

1. First leader of the Israelites, Exodus 3:1-22
2. First person to get drunk in the Bible, Genesis 9:20-21
4. First weight used, Exodus 30:23
5. First man to have two wives, Genesis 4:19
7. First to use the pulpit, Nehemiah 8:4
11. This is the first commandment with promise, Ephesians 6:2
14. First murderer, Genesis 4:8
15. First king of united Israel, 1 Samuel 9:1-2; 10:24

THE CHURCH

The Divine Origin of the Church

Ed Melott

The church originated in the mind of the infinitely wise God. Man could not have created such an institution. Jeremiah proclaimed, ***“O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps”*** (Jeremiah 10:23). After sitting at the Lord’s feet for perhaps three and one-half years, His chosen apostles still did not understand the idea of the establishment of the church. In ignorance they asked, ***“Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”*** (Acts 1:6). He answered, ***“It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”*** (Acts 1:7-8). When the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 2:1-4), they with one accord began preaching the Gospel and baptized the multitudes, and the ***“Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved”*** (Acts 2:47).

The establishment of the church was not dependent upon the wisdom of men. The apostles preached only what was given to them by the Holy Spirit. The church was established on the first Pentecost after the death of Christ. Churches such as Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, etc. have much later dates of establishment. What conclusion must be reached in light of this information? These churches and all others with like dates of establishment cannot be the true church of Christ about which one reads in the New Testament.

Furthermore, the church was designed and built by that great Architect, Jesus the Christ. He stated, ***“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock [Peter’s bed rock confession of faith — “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Matthew 16:16] I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it”*** (Matthew 16:18). The wise man wrote, ***“Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it”*** (Psalm 127:1). Just as it is the case with the establishment date, so also with its builder. If a church was built or established by man,

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it cannot be the true church of Christ!

Additionally, the church must have been established in Jerusalem. Isaiah the Prophet wrote, “...*For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem*” (Isaiah 2:3b). Acts 2, that great hub of the Bible, records the place of establishment to indeed be Jerusalem. Present day denominational churches have been established in a multitude of places, including the United States. What, then, are we to conclude about these churches? They cannot be the true church of Christ, about which one reads in the New Testament!

The original church, established by authority from God (Matthew 28:18), on the first Pentecost after the Lord’s death, built by the Son of God (Matthew 16:18) in Jerusalem, was given everything necessary for its existence and perpetuation. Peter wrote, “*as His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge [Bible] of Him who called us by glory and virtue*” (2 Peter 1:3). The church is “*complete in Him*” (Colossians 2:10). **The church is indeed divine in origin!** †

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Robison's Rubies

The great claims for the Bible’s divine inspiration are summed up in 2 Timothy 3:16-17. “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” The claim is that the Scriptures are all one needs to be fully pleasing to God. Since that is true, then, no other written works or verbal or visual revelations are needed. Furthermore, they couldn’t even be valid. God has already given us “*all things that pertain to life and godliness*” (2 Peter 1:3). His Word was completed and confirmed in the first century A.D., and it has been sufficient ever since.

THE CHURCH

The Church Can Still Grow

Steve Snider

One cannot read the Book of Acts without being impressed with the rapid growth of the church after her establishment in Acts 2 (cf., Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 11:21; 13:49; 16:5). These passages show the church growing spiritually and numerically. Both are important! Numerous passages make it clear God wants His church to grow in faith (Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12), for numbers represent precious souls, and we certainly know that God *“is not willing that any should perish but all to come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:3-4). The purpose of this article is not to promote a particular method but to suggest a couple of areas on which we must focus if we want to see the church grow.

Let me suggest first that **we must develop a mind to grow**. I am afraid Satan has really done his work well and has convinced us that growth isn't going to happen. I believe we have allowed ourselves to be convinced that people aren't interested and there is little or nothing we can do to change that. If the church is going to grow, we must develop the mindset that we truly believe it can grow. **We must believe that God is still able to do amazing things through His church**. Do we still believe Romans 1:16? Do we still believe Matthew 11:28-30? Do we believe that Jesus is the answer to the problems of life? Do we really believe people are lost without the Gospel (Romans 3:23; 6:23; John 14:6)? **We need to strive to develop the passion that Christ, the apostles and the early church had for the lost** (Luke 19:10; John 4:34; 9:4; Acts 5:18-20).

Secondly, **we must have the proper message**. Looking at the message of the early church, we can learn these things: **It was a message that included the whole counsel of God**. Paul made that statement to the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20:27. The message of the early church was Christ-centered, convicted men of sin, called them to repentance and then provided the solution for sin. Furthermore, it challenged false religions. Christianity confronted people with making sacrifices for the cause of Christ (Acts 2; 17; 19)

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It was an uncompromising message. It did not reach out and embrace every religious view and lifestyle. There was an exclusiveness about the message that made it appear narrow minded to many who heard it (Acts 4:12).

It was a message of good news centering on Christ and especially the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:26; 3:14; 4:10; 5:29-31). People need the good news. They need to know that Jesus loves us, left the glories of Heaven, died a horrible death on the cross and conquered death so that we might have the good life now and eternal life in the end.

Finally, **it was a proclaimed message.** Early Christians went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:4). They had good news, and they wanted the world to hear it! They felt compelled to proclaim it (Acts 4:19-20; 8:4).

We live in difficult times, and reaching people with the Gospel is not easy. Yet, if we will develop the mind to grow, taking the message of Christ to all who will listen, **the church can still grow!** May God help us to not allow Satan to discourage us and convince us not to grow. Instead, let's put into practice these biblical principles and allow God to work through us and His Word. ✚

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[Editor's Note: If no one were interested in or willing to investigate the Word of God, still, it would be the Christian's responsibility to publish it – make it available to everyone. Two notable examples come to mind where very few were interested in God's Word, and yet, some hearkened to it. Where would we be, or would we be, if it were not for the tireless and mostly fruitless efforts of Noah to proclaim God's Word over 120 years (Genesis 6:3; 2 Peter 2:5)? Only eight souls were spared from the universal deluge, from which the world was repopulated. Then, the apostle Paul's preaching in Athens was not well received, but some believed the Word of God (Acts 17:15-34). We're looking for the some who will entertain the Word of God and believe it. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Kenney's Pennies

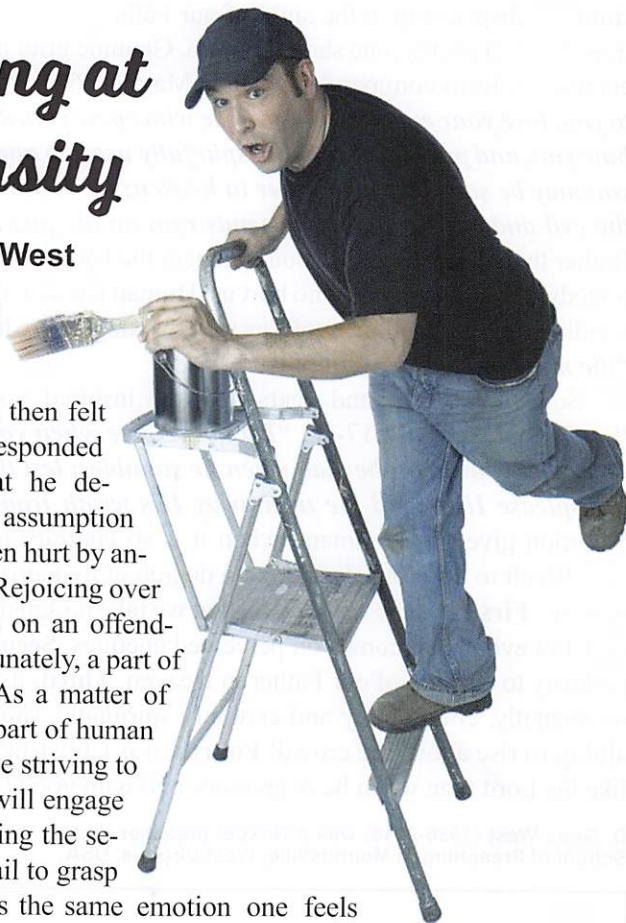
“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20 NKJV). The expression *“so that they are without excuse”* really concerns me for those who refuse to become Christians – Christians in the sense of baptized believers (Mark 16:16).

Rejoicing at Adversity

D. Gene West

Have you ever heard of some trouble or hard times falling on one's foe, then felt a sense of glee and responded with, "He got what he deserves"? It is a safe assumption that all who have been hurt by another have done so. Rejoicing over hardship that comes on an offending person is, unfortunately, a part of our *human nature*. As a matter of fact, it is so much a part of human nature that even those striving to live righteous lives will engage in such, never realizing the seriousness of it. We fail to grasp that such rejoicing is the same emotion one feels when he is finally able to take forbidden vengeance on an old enemy (Romans 12:19-20). Revenge has been accomplished, though it is just that someone or something else has acted in our stead.

Christians do this too often, and they soothe their consciences by saying that they did not take vengeance on the offending person, but nevertheless, "He got what he deserves." After all, everyone knows "What goes around comes around," right? The plain fact of the matter is that such an attitude is



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sinful — displeasing in the sight of our Father. Rather than rejoicing at the tragedy of an enemy, one should mourn. Genuine grief is a part of loving our enemies as Jesus commanded when in Matthew 6:44-45 He said, *“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”* Rather than delighting, we should lament the bad fortune, pain, adversity or tragedy that came on one who hurt us. Human nature tells us such an attitude is ridiculous, but godliness tells us we are rising above human nature to have *“the mind of Christ”* (Philippians 2:5-8).

Some three thousand years ago, the inspired Solomon wrote to his *“son”* in Proverbs 24:17-18, *“Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; lest the LORD see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him.”* Why would Solomon give this command when it is so contrary to human nature and so difficult to accomplish without a degree of hypocrisy? Possibly, for four reasons: **First**, it is the will of God that we take no satisfaction in any kind of evil, not even what comes on perceived enemies. **Second**, it is a part of the pathway to sonship of our Father in Heaven. **Third**, it is much healthier for us mentally, emotionally and certainly spiritually, showing the Christian’s ability to rise above the crowd! **Fourth**, it is Christ-like; one is never more like his Lord than when he overcomes evil with good (Romans 12:21)! **+**

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Did You Know?

Luke provides the genealogy of Jesus through Mary. Matthew provides the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph. Both lineages show Jesus was a descendant of King David.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

The Final Judgment

T. Pierce Brown

There is so much loose and liberal thinking today suggesting that we must never condemn anything because Jesus said ***“Judge not, that ye be not judged”*** (Matthew 7:1) that I hesitate to write anything that might be used to justify the false idea that the Bible offers hope that almost anyone can be saved eternally even without obeying the Gospel, especially if they mean well. The fact that 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 says that God will come ***“rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might”*** does not seem to mean anything to some who are connected with our brotherhood.

However, we need to understand something else that many conservative brethren do not seem to understand. That is, there is a difference in teaching what the Bible teaches about a general truth and assuming that we have either the right or the responsibility to apply that general truth to a specific person in Judgment Day. God committed that judgment to His Son, not to you or to me (Acts 17:31).

For example, all liars, thieves, fearful and various kinds of sinners will be consigned to the fires of everlasting Hell (1 Corinthians 6:10; Revelation 21:8). In



Matthew 25:25, we find a picture of a man who hid his talents and said, ***“I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, thou hast thine own.”*** His lord said in verse 30, ***“And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of***

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teeth.” We need to teach that without compromise or hesitation.

Now, suppose you have found a person in your congregation, or see his reflection in a mirror, who has not properly used his talents. He was not as actively engaged in personal evangelism as he should be because he was fearful that he did not know enough, might turn someone away or any other number of illegitimate excuses. He dies and you have his funeral service. Is it your ability, responsibility or privilege to consign him to some particular place in eternity?

Many preachers define a liar as a person who fails to tell the whole truth about anything. This is not the proper definition but is still quite popular. In your congregation there is a person with a malignant tumor of the brain that causes the doctors to predict that he has less than a month to live. You ask him how he is getting along. He replies, “I am doing fine.” He dies the next day. Where will he go? Does the fact that you may assume that he lied when he said, “I am doing fine,” when he was sick enough to die give you any right or responsibility to consign him to Hell? **Are you in the consigning or judging business?**

More than 50 years ago, a precious lady whom I presumed to be a Christian visited in our house. There was a straight pin on the sofa that she picked up and put in her lapel. She left with it. A thief may be defined as one who takes that which does not belong to him or to her. She did that. Suppose she had died on the way home. I would have probably been asked to conduct her funeral. In fact, I did conduct it several years later. Did I have the right to define what she did as a mortal or a venial sin, or a sin at all, and consign her to some destiny? Or, did I have the right or responsibility to make excuses for someone who steals a small item, but condemn one who steals one more costly? Did her motive of trying to remove an object that might injure someone give her an excuse to take something that did not belong to her? If so, does a good motive excuse some wrong actions?

I am aware that almost every preacher, whether liberal or ultra conservative, will begin to rationalize at points like this and find a way to justify whatever conclusion he reaches. I am not concerned about the possibility of being classified one way or the other. I am only concerned about teaching what the

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Bible teaches and glorifying God in all my life and teaching.

What does the Bible teach about these things? It teaches that all liars, thieves and fearful will suffer eternal punishment, and I have no right to compromise, soften or change God's decree. I also have no right or responsibility to make any sort of assumptions about how the specific individual is going to be judged in the Final Judgment. God's Final Judgment will be in terms of one's ability, opportunity, motive, words and actions as well as in terms of what God's Word actually says. **To assume that you know or have the right to pass judgment on another person's ability, opportunity or motive is to assume too much.** You may know what God's Word teaches about thieves, liars and all sorts of other persons, but you do not know how God is going to apply His Word to a specific person in terms of his ability, opportunity and motive. Since God did not give us either the ability or the responsibility to make such judgments, why bother trying? Preach the Word. You have no right to offer hope to a person who disobeys that Word, no matter what your assumptions might be about how gracious God is, or what God might or might not do for a person who fails to obey.

In the Lord's church, we have the problem on the one hand of compromising what God has said and trying to rationalize or to excuse almost anyone or anything in order not to be judgmental. On the other hand, we have the problem of some brethren assuming that because the Bible teaches some particular truth, we have the right and the responsibility to apply that truth to every specific situation that may come to our attention.

To press the point even more, in order to make it clearer or more emphatic, the Bible says that he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved and that baptism doth also now save us. To compromise that, water it down, deny its importance is unsound, unscriptural and condemned by God's Word. So, we have a person who is 12-years-old who has never been baptized. He has been at church services all his life. He is one of the sweetest, nicest children we know. On his way back from school, he gets off the bus and is hit by a car and dies. You have his funeral. Is it your right or responsibility to tell his parents where you know he will spend eternity? If so, who gave you that right? If not, is it your right or

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responsibility in any other case of which you know? Of course you might have less hope of his brother who was 18-years-old and was killed in a car wreck the next week, but the fact still remains that you are not the judge, and you can admit it without compromising the truth. **God did not ask us to pass judgment on specific persons but to preach the Word.** One reason for this is that we simply do not have all the facts in hand to make the judgment. Another one is, no matter what your conclusion is, you do not change anything. If you judge a person to be saved and God judges him to be lost, he will be lost. If you are sure that he will be lost, but you did not understand his ability, opportunity, motive or any other factor that God will use, you have changed nothing in his destiny. You may have lost your opportunity to help another see the truth, however, if you assume the right of a judge in those matters that are none of your business.

I am aware that some brethren may read this and accuse me of teaching that God says one thing but will change His mind on Judgment Day. That accusation would be wrong. When God says, *“Baptism doth also now save us,”* He will not then say, “I have changed my mind about that, and baptism really is not important.” He can say, however, “John Doe, whom you assumed was accountable and thus condemned, I pronounce saved.” When God says, “All teachers of unsound doctrine stand condemned,” He will not change that and say, “Doctrine is not really important.” He can say, however, “The person you thought was teaching unsound doctrine and was therefore lost was merely mistaken in the meaning of some passage. It was not a rejection of my Word, nor a perversion of the Gospel, and I have forgiven him, for he had a penitent, obedient attitude.” Surely every thoughtful person can see the difference in a person teaching that we will be judged in terms of what God’s Word has said, and one assuming that he is to be the final judge of how God’s Word must be applied to a specific individual. If you cannot see that, perhaps God, in His mercy, will forgive you for thinking that you can take the place of God on Judgment Day. ✚

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Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

[James 5:13-18]

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

Certainly, regarding prayers and the answers we expect from God, we must remember that the Scriptures were written during the "Apostolic Age," the age of miracles. Even though we often hear the exclamation, "A miracle!" when a wonderful thing has happened, no miracles are being performed today.

Why? Throughout biblical history, miracles were performed for two reasons: (1) to prove that the speaker was from God, as in the case of our Lord and also the Apostles and some of the prophets of the Old Testament era. (2) To prove that their messages were given by God.

Since God is sending no new messengers or messages today, there are no miracles in answer to prayers. Yet, that does not mean that God is not continually aware of the needs of His Children. He is answering our prayers. How? Through the laws of nature and His providential involvement. He "naturally" brings into our lives what is needed. We walk by faith, looking forward, but when we look back we can see the many answered prayers and the ways God has worked all things together for our good.

PERSONAL EVANGELISM TIP: HAVE A SIMPLE PLAN

Tom Baxley

John 16:12 might be one of the most important principal verses to remember when it comes to personal evangelism. Jesus told His disciples, *“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.”* In this context, Jesus explained that He was going away, and the Comforter would come in His place. However, the point is this: Jesus had much to tell the disciples about what was going to happen, but He knew they were not ready for it. Therefore, He did not burden and overwhelm them.

When it comes to evangelism, we feel like we need to teach everything all at once, and that is a huge mistake. When we teach, we need to have a plan, and we need to keep it simple. We have a lifetime to teach about the church functions, the home, gender roles, end times, church history, etc., but those are things that can wait. So, let's focus on the most important things first: Establish the principles of authority and obedience. Take a biblical account like Noah, Naaman or any number of others and show (don't tell) that to be saved we must do what God says the way He says to do it. Then, show in the New Testament what God said to do to be saved.✝

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[Editor's Note: The *“whole counsel of God”* (Acts 20:27) cannot be presented in a single occasion of Bible study. Yet, there are fundamentals of which a prospective candidate for conversion must be aware and accept (e.g., three persons in the Godhead, the one church, Christian worship, Christian living). Biblically, one who would obey the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:8; Romans 6:17) may need to be apprised of known, specific sins for which he needs to repent (Acts 2:36-38) or of sins characteristically practiced by non-Christians (Acts 21:25). For instance, aware that persons are co-habiting without marriage or that the practice is rampantly practiced and accepted in a society warrants introduction of appropriate Scripture treating the topic. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]



CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

A Mind to Work

Rebecca
Rushmore



The books of Ezra and Nehemiah depict the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple of God by the remnant returning from captivity. First, the Temple was rebuilt. Many years later, the walls around Jerusalem remained in ruin (Nehemiah 1:3; 2:3). Nehemiah gained permission from the king and returned to Jerusalem. He motivated the people to rebuild. With everyone working together, the wall was repaired around the whole city to half of its needed height. Nehemiah stated the work occurred because *“the people had a mind to work”* (4:6).

Jesus Had a Mind to Work

Like the people rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, Jesus demonstrated a mind to work. The Gospel accounts record the work of Jesus from the beginning of His ministry following His baptism (Matthew 3:13-17) until after His death, burial, resurrection and ascension (Matthew 27:35-28:20; Acts 1:3-11). Jesus spent these three years traveling around the region, teaching the need for repentance and preparing all who would listen about the coming of the church. He told His disciples, *“The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest*

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to send out laborers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38; see also Luke 10:2; John 4:35). Jesus wanted His disciples to work in the kingdom. The job He wanted them to do was the same job Christ had while on earth, *"to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10).

The Early Church Had a Mind to Work

Like Jesus and the people rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, the early church had a mind to work. After the church began, as recorded in Acts 2, the first Christians *"continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers"* (Acts 2:42). A few verses later, the text states, *"the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved"* (Acts 2:47). Since salvation comes from hearing God's Word (Romans 10:17) and obeying it in baptism (Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21), evidently the Christians in Jerusalem were working to teach others. The church continued to grow (Acts 6:1). Soon thereafter, persecution scattered the Christians. As they moved away from the persecution in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1; 11:19), they *"went everywhere preaching the word"* (Acts 8:4).

The writings of Paul show that the early church continued to work. In Philippians 2:25-30, Paul wrote of Epaphroditus who nearly died doing the *"work of Christ."* The church at Colosse was *"bringing forth fruit"* (Colossians 1:3-8), and the faith of the church at Rome was *"spoken of throughout the whole world"* (Romans 1:8). The first letter to the church at Thessalonica begins with Paul giving thanks for their *"work of faith, labor of love"* (1:2-3). The last chapter of Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 2 Timothy and the last few verses of Philemon all contain praise for individual Christians and entire congregations of the Lord's people busy working for Him.

Paul Had a Mind to Work

Paul praised many for their work in the Lord, but he also demonstrated a mind to work. The first of his journeys to preach the Word is recorded in Acts 13-14. Paul's second journey is recorded in Acts 15:36-18:22. He made a third trip to work with the churches as recorded in Acts 18:23; 19:1-21:15. Paul never gave up as he worked tirelessly to teach others. In 2

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Corinthians 11:22-28, one can read of the many things Paul suffered in his work for the Lord. Near the end of his life, he acknowledged all the trials and efforts were not in vain.

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

Christians Today Need a Mind to Work

Like the many examples already provided, Christians today need a mind to work. Matthew 28:18-20 reads:

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Though this command was given directly to the apostles, verses like 2 Timothy 2:2 show us that this command applies to Christians today as well. Notice that Christ instructed the apostles **and us** to teach others in a way that leads to obedience in baptism. The command does not end there. Baptism is to be followed by more instruction in the Word. Second Timothy 2:15 tells Christians to study; Paul told the Corinthian brethren he had to feed them milk instead of solid food — basic principles instead of deeper truths (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). The writer of Hebrews made a similar statement about his readers.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of

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righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14)

The first work of Christians today is to study God's Word, followed by teaching that Word to others.

There are many other ways Christians today can show they have a mind to work. Living a faithful Christian life (1 Timothy 4:12; James 1:27; Revelation 2:10) is just the beginning. How one acts and speaks (Romans 12:1-2; James 1:21-22; 3:10) when away from the church building is just as much a part of living faithfully as participating in all aspects of the worship service with the saints at every opportunity (Acts 20:7; Hebrews 10:25). **Each local congregation needs members with a mind to work.** Men qualified as elders, along with their faithful wives, are needed for a congregation to be fully organized as God intended (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Qualified deacons support the elders in seeing that needed tasks are done (1 Timothy 3:8-13). Most congregations struggle to find men willing to teach adult and teen classes as well as women willing to teach children's Bible classes. Whether it is providing meals to shut-ins, sending cards, visiting others, studying with non-Christians or a myriad of other tasks, participating in such activities shows a mind to work for the Lord.

Nehemiah and the people worked together to complete the huge task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Jesus, the early church and Paul demonstrated a mind to work. Jesus commanded us to work, and Paul explained that Christians are to follow his example as he followed the example of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1; see also 1 Peter 2:21). When Christians today have a mind to work, the Word will spread, and the church will grow (1 Corinthians 3:6). **Do you have a mind to work?** †

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Do you have a mind to work?

The Heart of Worship


Gary C. Hampton

Worship is an essential feature of the assemblies of the saints. It is a time for the family of God to join together in praising the Father. Acceptable worship must involve both spirit and truth (John 4:24). We might use the heart to describe what is meant by the word “*spirit*.”

Our hearts must be filled with purity. The Psalmist said the one who would be with God in His holy place must have clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 24:3-4). God’s instructions to Jacob to go to Bethel resulted in him telling his family, “*...Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves and change your garments*” (Genesis 35:2 NKJV). David keenly felt the guilt of his sin and asked God to create in him a clean heart (Psalm 51:10).

Our hearts should bow in humility. One singer declared, “*...I, by your great mercy, will come into your house; in reverence will I bow down toward your holy temple*” (Psalm 5:7 NIV). Peter instructed scattered Christians to humble themselves before God (1 Peter 5:6). Habakkuk reported, “*But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him*” (Habakkuk 2:20 NKJV).

We should also raise our voices in praise to God because of what is in our hearts. “*I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness, And will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High*” was proclaimed by a singer of Israel (Psalm 7:17). Another singer said, “*I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High*” (Psalm 9:2). Moses and the children of Israel sang praises to God after He drowned the Egyptian army in the Red Sea. Miriam and the women also praised the Almighty (Exodus 15:1-2, 21).

We should truly be glad when anyone says to us, “*Let us go into the house of the Lord*” (Psalm 122:1). It is a wonderful opportunity to praise God from our hearts. 

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New Testament Giving versus Old Testament Tithing

Brian R. Kenyon

A preacher was once asked why he did not preach tithing. He responded by saying he could not afford to preach it because it would cut the contribution too much. His point was that where he preached, the members gave well beyond 10% of their income. However, not many congregations would fall into that category. Some have estimated that our brotherhood's contributions represent 5-7% of our collective income, while other estimates claiming to be more accurate say our contributions only represent 2-3% of our collective income (Gambill 49). In either case, it is not too difficult to see why many congregations do not have the funds to properly do the Lord's work. Contributions would probably double or even triple if members gave 10%. This often brings up the question, "What about tithing?" Thus, a comparison of Old Testament tithing with New Testament giving is profitable.

Old Testament "Tithing"

The practice of tithing existed long before the Law was given to Moses at Sinai. Many nations in ancient history tithed property, produce and currency. Some biblical examples are Abram, who paid a tenth to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:17-20) and Jacob, who promised to give God a tenth of everything (Genesis 28:20-22). According to some sources, when considering all the requirements under the Law of Moses, the Israelites may have given closer to 30% ("Tithe"). According to the Pentateuch, there were three different tithes. First, a tithe was to be given by the people to support the Levites who had no inheritance (Numbers 18:20-32). Second, a tithe was to be given of the land that was "*holy unto the Lord*" (Leviticus 27:30-33). Third, a yearly tithe was to be given to keep appointed feasts along with a special tithe that was to be given every third year (Deuteronomy 14:22-29).

The first century Jewish historian, Josephus, wrote two relevant

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statements in *Antiquities of the Jews* concerning tithing. First, “Let there be taken out of your fruits a tenth, besides that which you have allotted to give to the priests and Levites. This you may indeed sell in the country, but it is to be used in those feasts and sacrifices that are celebrated in the holy city” (Book 4.8.8). Second, “Besides those two tithes which I have already said you are to pay every year... you are to bring every third year a third tithe to be distributed to those who are in want” (Book 4.8.22). To say Jews always only gave a tenth may not be accurate.

As we examine the writing prophets, we note that God’s people abused tithing in at least two ways. First, they “tithed,” but with no intention of showing concern for justice, righteousness or mercy (Amos 4:4). Tithing was supposed to be motivated by genuine love and joy for God and one’s brethren (Deuteronomy 14:23, 26, 28-29). However, when given from wrong motives, tithing was an abomination to the Lord. Second, God’s people withheld their tithes, thus “robbing” God (Malachi 3:8-10). This was also an abomination to God and would result in a withdrawal of God’s blessings if continued. Under the Law, tithing gave Israel the following opportunities: (1) to declare they were giving back a portion of what already belonged to God (Deuteronomy 8:18; 26:10-15); (2) to remember the blessings God gave them by imitating Him and His care for those in need (Deuteronomy 14:28-29); and (3) to serve God sacrificially, at a cost to themselves (Deuteronomy 14:22). These same opportunities are also available to us in our giving.

New Testament Giving

We are no longer under the Law of Moses (Galatians 3:24-25; Colossians 2:14), including God’s law of tithing. However, to say that we are not under the Law does not mean our responsibility to give is somehow lessened or that it does not matter (Black 39). The New Testament teaches that we are to give liberally (Romans 12:8; 2 Corinthians 8:2; 9:11-13). New Testament examples show that our giving can exceed 10%. Jesus set forth the poor widow as a good giver because “*she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood*” (Mark 12:44). Note what Jesus required of the rich young ruler before he could inherit eternal life: “*Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come,*

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follow Me” (Luke 18:22). The Lord approved of Zacchaeus because, among other things, he said, *“I give half of my goods to the poor”* (Luke 19:8). The Jerusalem church, recognizing that everything they possessed was not their own, sold their goods and *“brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet”* (Acts 4:32, 34-35). The churches of Macedonia gave liberally out of far greater affliction and poverty than any of us will likely experience in our lifetime (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). All these examples reflect great sacrifice on the part of the giver. Can we expect any less of our giving today?

Scriptural Giving Today

Let us conclude by noting some principles that must govern our giving (adapted from Brannan 22). **First**, perhaps the Lord has not set a definite percentage to our giving for the purpose of proving the sincerity of our love (2 Corinthians 8:8). How sincere does our love for God prove to be when measured by what we give? **Second**, God does not want us to give reluctantly or merely out of duty, but cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7). Do we give cheerfully or “Just because I have to”? **Third**, acceptable giving requires sacrifice on the part of the giver (2 Corinthians 8:5). David exemplified this by saying he would not *“offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God with that which costs me nothing”* (2 Samuel 24:24). Do we sacrifice or just give God the “leftovers”? **Fourth**, we are to give as God has prospered us (1 Corinthians 16:2). Do we increase our giving when our financial prosperity increases? **Fifth**, God requires us to give liberally (2 Corinthians 9:11, 13). Does God consider what we give now to be liberal or are we robbing Him? Giving is a serious matter, both for our soul’s salvation and for the well-being of the local church! Let’s give as the New Testament directs! ✝

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Bible Word Scramble

Rebecca Rushmore

Write the first letter of each word indicated in the passages below.
Then, unscramble the letters to find the theme of the verses.

1 Corinthians 6:20 **7th word** _____

1 Peter 1:18 **5th word** _____

1 Peter 1:20 **2nd word** _____

Ephesians 1:7 **16th word** _____

Galatians 3:13 **28th word** _____

Galatians 4:5 **11th word** _____

Galatians 5:1 **18th word** _____

John 10:10 **6th word** _____

Romans 6:18 **11th word** _____

Romans 8:2 **22nd word** _____

Bible text: New King James (NKJV)

(See the back cover for answer.)

PROVERBS 17:22



A seaman meets a pirate in a store, and talk turns to their adventures on the sea. The seaman notes that the pirate has a peg-leg, a hook and an eye patch.

The seaman asks, "So, how did you end up with the peg-leg?"

The pirate replies, "We were in a storm at sea, and I was swept overboard into a school of sharks. Just as my men were pulling me out, a shark bit my leg off."

"Wow!" said the seaman. "What about your hook?"

"Well," replied the pirate, "We were boarding an enemy ship and were battling the other sailors with swords. One of the enemy cut my hand off."

"Incredible!" remarked the seaman. "How did you get the eye patch?"

"A seagull dropping fell into

my eye," replied the pirate.

"You lost your eye to a seagull dropping?," the sailor asked incredulously.

"Well," said the pirate, "It was my first day with my hook."



A young man was sitting next to me in one of the two chairs provided for men outside the ladies fitting room in our local department store. After 30 minutes and 6 changes of outfits, the fellow's wife came out of the changing room one more time. He looked at her and immediately said, "That looks great on you! Get that one."

"Honey," she replied, "this is what I was wearing when we came in."



Real Estate Agent: "This house has its good points and its bad points. The disadvantages are a chemical plant one block south and a slaughterhouse a block north."

Prospective Buyer: "Yikes. What are the advantages?"

Agent: "You can always tell which way the wind is blowing."



PROVERBS 17:22

After the visiting preacher finished, a woman came up and said, "You were much better than the preacher we had last Sunday. He spoke for an hour and said nothing."

"Thank you," the visiting preacher replied.

"Yes," she continued. "You did it in fifteen minutes."



A young doctor was just setting up his first office.

His secretary told him there was a man to see him. The doctor wanted to make the man think that he was successful and very busy. So he told his secretary to show the man in and at that moment he picked up his phone and pretended to be having a conversation with a patient.

The man waited patiently until the "conversation" was completed.

Once he hung up, the doctor asked, "Can I help you?"

To which the man replied, "No, I'm just here to connect your telephone."



It was August and the Indians on a reservation asked their new Chief if the winter was going to be cold or mild. Since he was a Chief in a modern society,

he had never been taught the old secrets. When he looked at the sky, he couldn't tell what the winter was going to be like.

Nevertheless, to be on the safe side he told his tribe that the winter was indeed going to be cold and that the members of the village should collect firewood to be prepared.

But being a practical leader, after several days he got an idea. He went to the phone booth, called the National Weather Service and asked, "Is the coming winter going to be cold?"

"It looks like this winter is going to be quite cold," the meteorologist at the weather service responded.

So the Chief went back to his people and told them to collect even more firewood in order to be prepared.

A week later he called the National Weather Service again. "Does it still look like it is going to be a very cold winter?"

"Yes," the man at National Weather Service again replied, "it's going to be a very, very cold winter."

The Chief again went back to his people and ordered them to collect every scrap of firewood they could. The new chief every week or so calls the National Weather Service and receives the same answer. "How can you be so sure?" the Chief asked.

The weatherman replied, "We're sure it's going to be cold because the Indians are collecting firewood like crazy!"

How Do You Measure Up?

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write,

‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

“I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. **Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” ’

“Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Revelation 2:8-11; 20:4

Seven Desires of Every Heart (Part 1)

Wayne Burger

Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will do it. He will bring forth your righteousness as the light and your judgment as the noonday. (Psalm 37:4-6)

What a great promise God makes – ***“He will give you the desires of your heart.”*** Notice what we must do for God to fulfill that promise to us: (1) ***“Delight yourself in the Lord.”*** What delights us? Where do we find our delight? If it is not in the Lord, He will not give us the delights of our heart. (2) ***“Commit your way to the Lord.”*** To what are we really committed – self – family – career – pleasure? God will not give us the desires of our heart unless we are committed. (3) ***“Trust also in Him.”*** We are so prone to trust in ourselves – **We can do it!** It is hard to let go and trust God. Trust says, “I don’t understand how, but I know God will do it.”

Notice that when we do our part that God will bring forth our righteousness. By following His will, He will cause us to manifest righteousness in our lives as bright as light and our judgment will be as the noonday.

In this passage, God does not tell us what the desires of our heart should be. They can be evil or righteous, good or bad, but of course, God will only help us manifest our righteous desires. Study has shown that there are seven basic desires of every heart. There are just some needs that every human has. They are consistent, no matter our race or gender. We may not have given thought to what our basic needs are, but probably if we do and are honest with ourselves, we will come to the same basic needs.

Mark and Debra Laaser, who are experts in this field, have shown that there are seven basic needs every individual has. All of these basic needs are found in Christ, especially as we are part of Christ’s spiritual body. The next

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several issues, I want to discuss each of these needs. The next paragraph is a statement about the Laasers and their book, *Seven Desires of Every Heart*.

A deeper probe into relationships starts with our heart's desires. At last, a "relationship book" that looks past what separates us to examine what connects us! Dr. Mark and Debra Laaser go to the heart of the matter. Instead of focusing on how to sidestep or compensate for perceived differences, they dig deeper, to the core of our souls, to examine how the basic desires and needs of all people make us more alike than different. The *Seven Desires of Every Heart* explores the common desires God gives you — to be heard, affirmed, blessed, safe, touched, chosen, and included. Using stories, Biblical references, and sound psychological principles, the Laasers explain each desire and show us how we seek it and what it feels like to have it truly fulfilled. You also will learn healthy ways to embody these desires in your relationships. You will be given the tools you need to start repairing and rebuilding relationships and developing new skills for creating emotional and spiritual intimacy. ✝

Works Cited

Laaser, Mark & Debbie. *Seven Desires of Every Heart*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

Wayne Burger has been preaching since 1962. He is currently a teacher at Bear Valley Bible Institute and also preaches for the church in Conifer, Colorado, USA.

ROBISON'S RUBIES The Bible claims over and over to be inspired by God. Of course, claims by themselves don't make the case for inspiration. There is a lot of evidence, though — enough for a lifetime of study! Basically, just as an effect demands an adequate cause and design demands a designer, the Bible — full of beautiful design — demands an adequate explanation. Man could not have tied it together; its separate books were written too far apart in time, and yet, they have such unity! Archaeological finds routinely confirm Bible narratives! Furthermore, predictive prophecy is so specific in the Bible, particularly regarding the person of Christ. The only adequate explanation is a divine, supernatural mind behind it.

Who Made Your Mouth?

Robert Lupo

“Who made man’s mouth?” was the question that God asked Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 4:11). God had commanded Moses to be His spokesman before Pharaoh and the people (3:10-11, 13-18). Moses, however, began to make excuses why he could not do it (4:10). As is demonstrated in the verses that follow, God, being the Creator of man’s mouth, knew what Moses was capable of doing with his mouth. As biblical history bears witness, Moses became a great leader who often spoke to Pharaoh and to the people of God. I would like for us to consider some spiritual truths about the mouth that God created.

Potential to Be Used for Good

Man and his mouth were created by God with great potential for accomplishing good. That is what God desires of us. Good uses of our mouth include:

- Preaching and teaching the Gospel (2 Timothy 2:2).
- Speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).
- Speaking truth in general rather than lying (Ephesians 4:25).
- Answering any that ask about the reason of the hope of our calling with meekness and trembling (1 Peter 3:15). Similar to this is Colossians 4:6, which says, *“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one.”*
- Singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16-17).
- We can admonish the disorderly and encourage the fainthearted (1 Thessalonians 5:14). Similar is 2 Timothy 4:2, which teaches us to *“reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”* Though some of this may sound somewhat negative, these are actually positive uses of our mouths.

Speech Can also Be Used for Evil Purposes

Man has often disappointed His Creator by doing or saying things that

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he ought not do or say. When you hear what comes out of some mouths, you would think that Satan made mouths instead of God. Jesus said:

Ye offspring of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. The good man out of his good treasure bringeth forth good things: and the evil man out of his evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. And I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. (Matthew 12:34-36)

Notice the following from this important teaching.

- Our speech indicates whose child we are — a child of God or “*the offspring of vipers*” — poisonous, injurious, wicked and deadly (v. 34). Some people are of their father the devil (John 8:44). So is anyone who persists in corrupt speech. See also James 3:8.
- Our speech is an indication of a good heart or of an evil one. Therefore, the good or evil of a man can be determined by his speech (v. 35).
- Man will give account for his speech on the Day of Judgment (v. 36). Every useless thing, every insult, every profane word, each nasty joke, every lie and every tearing down criticism spoken in one’s life (if not forgiven) will be heard again on Judgment Day when each person must answer for himself.
- The words we speak will either save us or condemn us (v. 37). Our words can save us by confessing the good name of Jesus Christ as we profess Him in our daily speech and by speaking words of kindness. Our words will condemn us as illustrated above and in the following.
- Telling lies (Revelation 21:8).
- Speaking out of anger; “*but I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire*” (Matthew 5:22).
- Preaching false doctrine (Matthew 15:13; 1 Timothy 1:10). Romans 16:17-18 says:

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the

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divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent.

- Slandering, whispering, backbiting and gossiping are all condemned in God's Word (Romans 1:29-32; Galatians 5:15).
- Corrupt, filthy, shameful speech (Ephesians 4:29, 31; 5:3-4; Colossians 3:8). Clamor and railing are very interesting words that have to do with sinful speech. Clamor is loud continued or repeated speech, while railing adds insults or accusations.

Let God Teach about Speech

God said to Moses, *"Now therefore go, and I will be thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt speak"* (Exodus 4:12). We acknowledge that miraculous, verbal inspiration from God to the man, Moses, is the focus of the context and this verse (vv. 2-15). While we do not have direct, divine revelation from God to man today, He has taught us everything we need to know concerning proper speech in His written Word.

Truly, we need to let God teach us what we should say and should not say. All of the verses we have cited previously should be studied. Here are a few more.

- *"My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You, and my soul, which You have redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long"* (Psalm 71:23-24).
- *"I will remember the works of the LORD; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will also meditate on all Your work, and talk of Your deeds"* (Psalm 77:11-12).
- *"Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works!"* (Psalm 105:1-2).
- *"All Your works shall praise You, O LORD, and Your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom and talk of Your power"* (Psalm 145:10-11).
- *"A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in*

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due season, how good it is!” (Proverbs 15:23).


- *“In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise”* (Proverbs 10:19).
- *“The heart of the righteous studies how to answer”* (Proverbs 15:28a).
- *“There is gold and a multitude of rubies, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel”* (Proverbs 20:15).
- *“Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles”* (Proverbs 21:23).
- *“He who gives a right answer kisses the lips”* (Proverbs 24:26).
- *“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver”* (Proverbs 25:1).
- *“By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, and a gentle tongue breaks a bone”* (Proverbs 25:15).
- *“In all things showing thyself an ensample of good works; in thy doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us”* (Titus 2:7-8).

A Final Word of Caution

Psalm 50:16-23 says:

As for the wicked, God says, “How dare you recite my statutes or speak about my covenant with your lips! You hate instruction and toss my words behind you. When you see a thief, you befriend him, and you keep company with adulterers. You give your mouth free reign for evil, and your tongue devises deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother’s son...”

The Lord did not want His people, Israel, to speak or teach His Word, if in their lives they did not exhibit righteousness. Worse than refusing to speak for God is the Christian who speaks or lives perversely but also speaks the Word of God. We may call it hypocrisy. The Lord calls it sin and does not want to be represented by such people.

Dear Christian, Who made your mouth? Do you act accordingly? 

R.C. Lupo is the preacher for the Church of Christ in Sneedville, Tennessee, USA. He also authors charts on salvation and the church for The Voice of Truth International.




Blue Skies and Rainbows

Derek Broome

Over the past several weeks while worshipping at home with my family [due to the worldwide pandemic of 2020], I have had the opportunity to sing a lot with my kids. What I

have learned is that my children have very few songs that they love, and they want to sing them over and over again. Yet, how can I really say no? They love to sing, and they love God. So, in our devotional times and in some extra singing we do as a family, we usually sing a lot of the same songs. One of those songs that we have been singing a lot is “Blue Skies and Rainbows.” This has been one of Joshua’s favorite songs for a long time.

I know that typically this song is sung with children, but it has a powerful and an encouraging message. “Blue skies and rainbows and sunbeams from Heaven are what I can see when the Lord is living in me. I know that Jesus is well and alive today. He makes His home in my heart. Nevermore will I be all alone since He promised me that we never would part.”

As Christians, even when things are not going the way that we expected, we can know that Jesus is there and that He is alive. He is with us always, and one day He is coming to take us home. 

Derek Broome is a minister for the Siwell Road Church of Christ in Jackson, Mississippi, USA.




THE CHRISTIAN HOME

The Duties of Parents to Youths

Ronald D. Reeves



We love our kids dearly. No doubt we would go to the end of the earth to assist them in a worthy cause, despite the burdens and heartaches that sometimes come our way because of the misadventures of our children. Sometimes, we may ask, in a moment of frustration, "What are we going to do with our kids?" In response, I suggest that we be responsible parents to our children as they experience the maturation

process. Accordingly, may we generate full and balanced growth in our youths (Luke 2:52), including intellectual (Proverbs 13:1), physical (Titus 2:4), spiritual (Ephesians 6:4) and social growth and well-being (Ephesians 6:2-3). May we study a child's temperament and mold his way of life accordingly (Proverbs 22:6). May we maintain parental character that is worthy of honor (Ephesians 6:2), reverence (Romans 12:3) and piety (1 Timothy 5:4). May we practice discipline and instruction in order to provide a foundation for our children that will serve them well throughout their lives (Ephesians 6:4). May we do all things with a sense of fairness and justice that will motivate our children to receive good instruction and leadership, which we may provide from time to time (Acts 10:34-35). Yes, our dear children are most certainly worth this noble effort! 

Ronald D. Reeves is a longtime preacher who lives in Arkansas, USA.

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When Family Stands Against You

Terry Wheeler

The prophet Isaiah led a school of prophets (Isaiah 8:16-18). Two of his students were Nahum and Micah. I say this because the phrasing in these two books is very similar to Isaiah's use, and their ministry is in the appropriate time frame for Isaiah's graduates.

Micah was well-known in Judah, and his writings were used in Jeremiah's time to show the lawfulness and legitimacy of Jeremiah's work (Jeremiah 26:16-19). Micah was a champion for the poor and oppressed. He railed against the false teachers of his day. He gave further prophecy of the coming Messiah; it was Micah's writings (Micah 5:2) that indicated to Herod where Jesus was born (Matthew 2:4-6).

Yet, Micah did all this without the support of his wife. Micah was a man with a family, but his text at the end strongly indicates that, rather than support him, his wife actually worked against him in his efforts to spread God's Word (Micah 7:5-10). Jesus quoted Micah to let His disciples know that, as with Micah, so it can be with us in our service to the Father (Matthew 10:34-37). Sometimes, even as you seek to do your best, and surrounded by family, yet you may find yourself all alone in devotion to God. The Lord says that this should not discourage us. Instead, be prepared to walk alone hand-in-hand with God.

We must love our families and always seek their welfare, caring for them and being the examples they need. However, they must never be allowed to compromise our service to the Lord. Never! 

Terry Wheeler preaches for the Village Church of Christ in Lady Lake, Florida, USA.

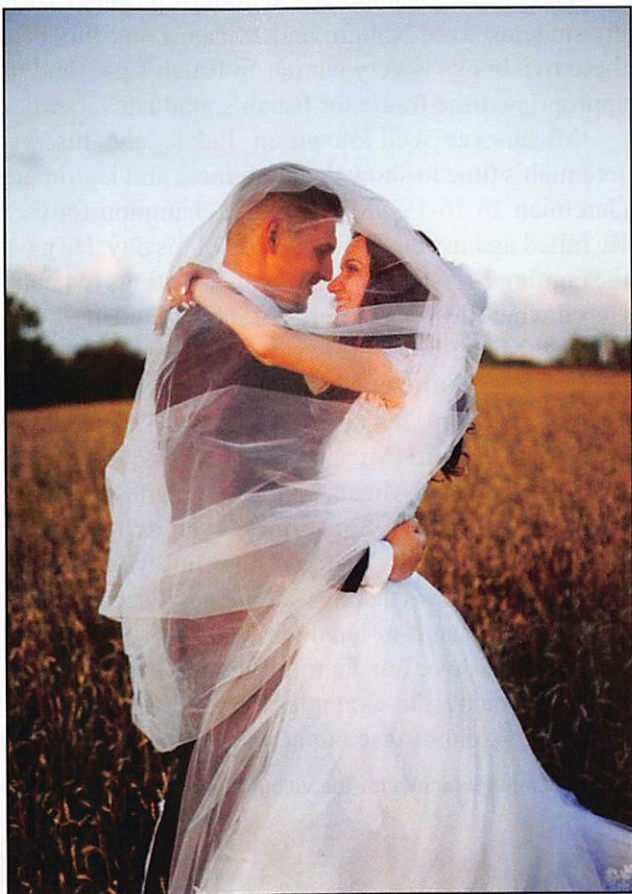


THE CHRISTIAN HOME

DEALING WITH DOUBT IN MARRIAGE

Denny Petrillo

Song of Solomon 3:1-4 provides an interesting “dream story.” The story is plainly told, but the application of it can be difficult to grasp. It seems clear that the Shulamite, just a few days before her wedding to Solomon, was concerned about his devotion to her. Several nights came and went, but there was no sign of Solomon. His absence spoke volumes to her about his commitment. She decided to find him and had to go through




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some effort to do so. Finally, she succeeded in finding him and embraced him with all her strength. There are some valuable lessons that can be learned from this short little story.

First, it is logical that both the man and the woman will have some doubts and reservations before they “tie the knot.” Marriage is a big day, and arguably the second most important day of one’s life (the first would be to put on Christ in baptism). When a couple considers the permanency of this move (God binds them, Matthew 19:6, and the expectation is that the two will stay together for the rest of their lives), it can be quite intimidating. Yet, these thoughts are good and healthy. The man and the woman need to look long and hard into the decision they are about to make. They need to have a high level of assurance that “he is the one for me” and that “she is the one for me.”

Second, when there are doubts about the love and the commitment of the other, be proactive in getting it resolved. The Shulamite could have stubbornly said, “We’ll see how long it takes before he finally shows up!” Instead, she went out to find him. This was not an easy task for a country girl trying to navigate her way through a big city. However, her willingness to do this (even at night) showed her level of commitment. She just needed to learn about Solomon’s level of commitment. As couples approach their wedding day, they should have long talks with each other. This is the time to learn as much about the desires, goals, dreams and aspirations of the other as possible. It is, especially, the time to see each other’s level of commitment to God. The bottom line is that he or she will **not** be a good life-mate if there is not a true, genuine devotion to God.

Third, when doubts are removed, it is time to move on in love and in trust. It is not healthy for one to live day-to-day wondering about a partner’s commitment. When the Shulamite found Solomon, she hugged him and would not let him go. He was her choice, and she was comfortable with it. She also was comfortable with his level of commitment to her. In a short time, they were to be married. 

Denny Petrillo is the President of Bear Valley Bible Institute in Denver, Colorado, USA.

More on Solemnized Pronouns

C. Philip Slate

Regarding *solemnized pronouns*, it is worth noticing that words tend to undergo meaning changes over time and space. I have known and know of fine Christian people in the former British colonies (India and Nigeria) who used words that were naughty back in England, but the colonials did not know that when they picked up the English language.

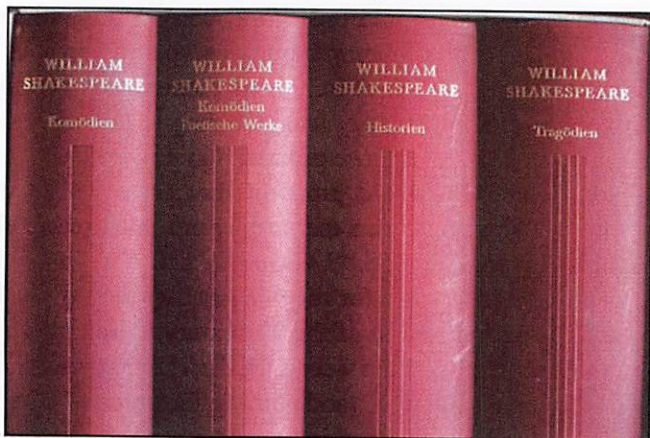
Further, words change meanings within the same country over time. Words have meanings *as used*, and often that use bears little relationship to their root or original meanings. This change has occurred with the use of the pronouns “thee,” “thou” and “thine.” It is the transition in meanings that causes confusion. In neither the Hebrew Old Testament nor the Greek New Testament are there two sets of pronouns — common and solemn. That point is well made in citing God’s speaking to Satan (Genesis 3:15 KJV) and Christ’s speaking to the devil (Luke 4:8 KJV); neither the Father nor the Son were acknowledging Satan as deity by the use of “thee” and “thy.” Scripture uses the same pronouns for humans and for deity. In German and at least one Scandinavian language there are more and less formal pronouns but not in Scripture.

The common use of “thee” and “thou” is found in the writings of Shakespeare and other writers of the Elizabethan period. When Shakespeare wrote, “Go, prick thy face, and over-red thy fear, Thou lily-liver’d boy” (*Macbeth*, 5.317-18), he was neither being reverent nor respectful. In his day, being “lily-livered” was to be cowardly. Nor was he being reverent in the lines, “If thou neglect’st or dost unwillingly what I command, I’ll rack thee with old cramps, fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar that beasts shall tremble at thy din” (*The Tempest*, Act 1, Scene 2). Those pronouns were used in common relationships, and that is the usage reflected in the King James Version (1611) of the same era.

TEXTUAL STUDIES

I lived and worked in England during the decade of the 1960s. Gradually, I learned about the marked regional differences in accents and vocabulary. During that time, I witnessed one incident and heard about another, both in Yorkshire, that illustrate the changes.

Ralph Limb told me about a time (perhaps the late 1940s or early 1950s) he and another preaching brother were working as evangelists in the Morley area. For their tea break, they went to the home of




Donald Hardy, which was in the back of his general provisions shop. The two preachers thought it was fun to wait on the customers, as far as they could. During tea break one day, Ralph said the shop door opened and he said, "My turn." He arose, walked into the shop area but saw no one. When he heard a faint sound, he leaned over the counter and saw what he described as a "grubby little urchin." Ralph said to him, "Yes, sonny, what do you want?" In a surprisingly deep voice the little fellow said, "Thou knows." He had been in the shop earlier, had insufficient money to pay for the item and went back home to get more funds. So, his "Thou knows" meant, "I was in earlier and now I have the money. You know what I want." In that area, people from the lower economic classes were still using "thee" and "thou" in everyday speech. There was nothing sacred about it.

The other incident occurred perhaps a couple of decades later, oddly enough in the same Donald Hardy's home. A couple of his wife's elderly aunts and a gruff uncle were also there. The uncle did not stay long,

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but while there, he used “thou” and “thee” a few times in conversation. He spoke stiff Yorkshire. In one sentence he referred to “t’ larum clock” (the alarm clock). After he left, I remarked to his sisters, both faithful Christians, “I noticed your brother’s using ‘thee’ and ‘thou.’ Under what circumstances do people use those words?” One sister answered, “Ah, brother Slate, only country bumpkins such as brother say that. In fact, when I hear brethren at church using those words in prayer, it sounds a bit irreverent.” The sweet lady was referring to the confusion she felt during the transitional use of those pronouns in prayer.

Of course, those old pronouns are preserved in many of the older hymns we sing, but even there, they are not used exclusively for deity. Francis Havergal’s 1858, “I Gave My Life for Thee,” is a case in point. “I gave, I gave My life for thee: What hast thou giv’n for Me?” John M. Neale’s 1862 translation of the 9th century words by Stephen the Sabvaite is another case. “Art thou weary, art thou languid; Art thou sore distressed? ‘Come to me,’ saith One, ‘and coming, Be at rest.’” The KJV was still “the Bible” of the English-speaking world when those hymns were penned.

When the RSV appeared (1948, ‘52) the translators preserved the old pronouns for what they called the *liturgical texts*, meaning prayers and the Psalms. There was no basis in the Hebrew or the Greek languages for that decision. It was in deference to common usage in some “church” situations. Thus, for some, the transition continues. Oddly enough, though, in German and at least one Scandinavian language, there are levels of formality in pronouns. In German, the Christians use the familiar “du” rather than the formal “Sie” when praying to God — the opposite of some pronominal usage in the USA. “Why?” I asked a German-speaking Swiss brother, “do you use the familiar in prayer to God?” “Because He is our Father,” he said. By usage, one can argue the case both ways — solemnized pronouns as an act of reverence or ordinary pronouns regarding a familial relationship to our Father. So, it is important for us to be understanding with each other during this long transition. God knows our hearts, whether we address Him as “Thou” or “You.” 

C. Philip Slate is a Gospel preacher and writer. He resides in Germantown, Tennessee, USA.

TEXTUAL STUDIES

HOW TO SHINE IN A DARK WORLD

Hiram Kemp

The world in which we live has always been dark. Since the fall of humanity in Genesis 3, sin has been in the lives of people and destroying those who submit to sin rather than God. Though we may look at our current times as intensely dark and sinful, the things being done today should come as no surprise to the student of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:13). Jesus told His disciples that they were to be different. He wants us to shine our lights in this world so God our Father will receive the glory (Matthew 5:16). The idea of shining our light is normally taken to simply mean Christians should be good examples. Most certainly, Christians should be examples, but in what ways? How can we practically let those around us know that this world is not our home? I believe there are practical ways that we can let our light shine, which will catch the attention of those around us (Philippians 2:14-16). Near the end of 1 Thessalonians, Paul gave several commands that we should take to heart and adopt. When we examine 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22, I think we get a clear picture of how we can shine our light in a world that desperately needs it.

ALWAYS REJOICE (1 THESSALONIANS 5:16)

Paul told the Thessalonians to rejoice evermore (1 Thessalonians 5:16 KJV) or to rejoice always (NKJV). This does not mean that Christians never experience sadness. We do, but **our overall disposition should be one of constant joy** (Romans 12:15). We can have an abiding joy that is more permanent than momentary happiness because we know that God is in control of the world. We rejoice ***“in the Lord”*** at all times (Philippians 4:4). When we consider God reigning in Heaven, we can have joy even when many others think the sky is falling. In a world overrun with bad

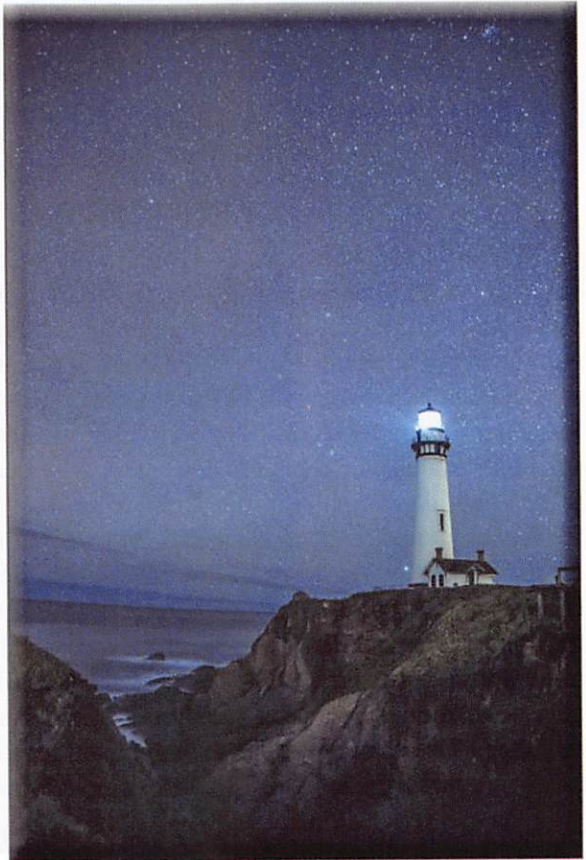
TEXTUAL STUDIES

news, those of us who have the good news should demonstrate it by not being downcast or sullen but instead by rejoicing continually (2 Corinthians 6:10).

Many people in our world seek joy through substance abuse, perfect circumstances or material possessions. We should be paving the way to show others that true and lasting joy is tied to our relationship to God, not to things of the world.

Paul previously praised the Thessalonians for being examples to all of those around them because of their conversion (1 Thessalonians 1:8-10).

They would continue to be examples if they demonstrated persistent rejoicing in a world of persistent negativity and pessimism. We should sing with joy (James 5:13). Most importantly, we should share the good news of forgiveness with joy in our hearts (Ephesians 1:7). Jesus told us that we could be of good cheer because He overcame the world (John 16:33). **If our joy is full, it will spill over into every area of our lives.** Our friends, neighbors and relatives will take notice (1 John 1:4). We will be able to point them to Jesus, who is the True Light, when they see the light in us (John 1:4).



TEXTUAL STUDIES

PRAY INCESSENTLY (1 THESSALONIANS 5:17)

Paul's command to pray without ceasing is easy to quote and hard to practice. Our light will shine bright in this dark world if we actually take the Holy Spirit's words seriously and pray constantly. When we see crisis in our world, we should be those who fall on our knees in prayer before we do anything else. Instead of posting on social media about all that is wrong, we should be praying to the One who can make it right. Rather than pouting about how terrible things in the world have become, we should be petitioning God to allow us to continue to spread the Word freely, which can change hearts (2 Thessalonians 3:1). The Colossians were told to be steadfast in prayer (Colossians 4:2). The Romans were admonished to be constant in prayer (Romans 12:12). The darker things get, the more we have about which to pray. We should accompany our prayers with action as we have the opportunity to put our faith into operation.

Yet, we should always remember that prayer is in itself an action. When we pray, we involve the God of the universe Who can do the most about our situation. People should hear Christians say, "I'm praying for you." When people express fear and anxiety about the events in the world, we should be saying, "I'm praying and trusting the Lord." **If we are just as faithless and overwhelmed as unbelievers, we will never draw them closer to God. Prayer must not be regulated to a last resort. Prayer is our first line of defense as we boldly approach the throne of grace and find the help that we need** (Hebrews 4:16).

BE THANKFUL (1 THESSALONIANS 5:18)


One thing that sets Christians apart from the world is our attitude of thankfulness. We are told to ***"give thanks always and for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"*** (Ephesians 5:20). Paul told the Thessalonians that it was the will of God for them in Christ Jesus to give thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:18). In a world of gripes and ungrateful people, we can shine our light if we fail to voice our complaints. The New Testament describes the worldly person as ungrateful (2 Timothy 3:2) and unthankful (Romans 1:21). It is not that we do not see things that enrage

TEXTUAL STUDIES

us or make us wish things were different, but we know things could always be worse. Also, we appreciate that God can use anything to His ultimate good (Romans 8:28). Practice gratitude. Do not just feel thankful inside but express it to God and to others. It will be impactful. Gratitude shows that we know we are undeserving of God's blessings, and we want to thank Him for them. Count your many blessings and name them one by one. It may help someone else to count theirs, too.

LOVE GOOD & REFRAIN FROM EVIL (1 THESSALONIANS 5:19-22)

The last few verses in this section deal with our relationship to the truth of God's revelation. We should not quench the Spirit or put out His work (1 Thessalonians 5:19). We should not despise prophecy (1 Thessalonians 5:20). We need to test everything and hold onto what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Lastly, we must abstain from evil in every avenue it appears (1 Thessalonians 5:22). One could summarize Paul's thoughts here by saying we should love the good and refrain from the evil (3 John 11). Paul wanted the Thessalonians to treat the Word of God properly and reject everything that was opposed to it.

Much of what on which people meditate today is contrary to the Word of God. The nightly news can keep us informed, but it will not help us to be conformed to the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). **If we love the things that God loves and reject the things He hates, people will know that we are different.** Shining our light in this dark world is not about being an example in a general way. There are concrete and specific ways by which we can announce to the world that our citizenship is in Heaven. Study 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22. Go and do likewise. 

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Did You Know?

Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah and Lamech were all still alive when Adam died (8 generations from Adam).



Rebecca Rushmore

(answers inside back cover)

1. What did the psalmist hide in his heart?
2. From what did the psalmist need help turning his eyes?
3. To whom was the psalmist a companion?
4. How long will God's Word endure?
5. On what does the psalmist meditate all day?
6. What is a lamp and a light to the psalmist's path?
7. The psalmist loves God's commandments more than what?
8. Why does the psalmist cry?
9. What part of God's Word is truth?
10. What does the psalmist ask God to teach him?

Did You Know?

The first recorded mention of music is Genesis 4:21. The verse states a man named Jubal is *"the father of all those who play the harp and flute."*

Rebecca Rushmore is a Staff Writer for The Voice of Truth International and a schoolteacher. She resides in Collierville, Tennessee, USA.



Miriam was a woman of note in the Holy Bible, who had her strengths and weaknesses like any one of us. We offer some facts on who Miriam was, along with brief comments. Miriam, sister of Aaron, was:

* The caring sister of Moses (Exodus 2:4).

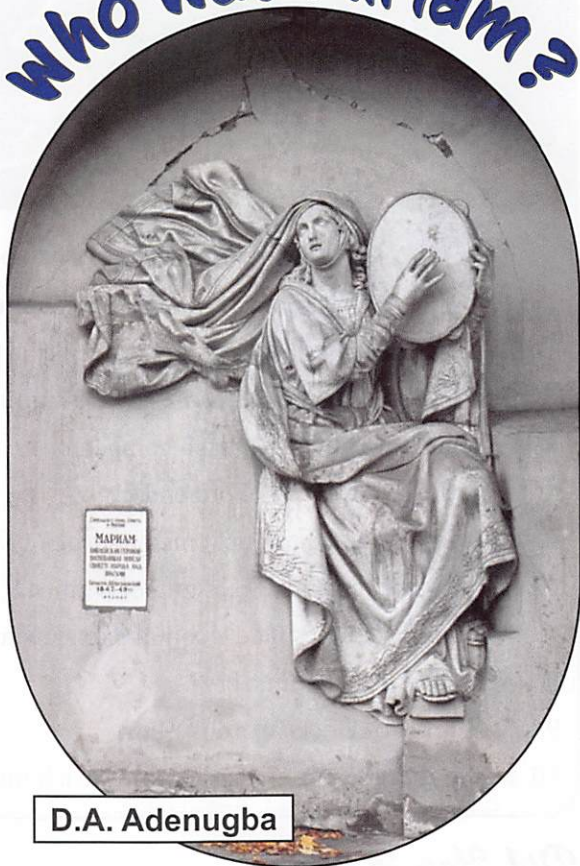
* A proactive woman. She quickly offered to assist Pharaoh's daughter to get someone to find a nurse for the child who the Princess later called Moses, *"because I draw him out of the water"* (Exodus 2:7-10).

* A clever woman.

After she received the go-ahead to find a nurse for the child found inside a basket by the riverside, Miriam fetched "the child's mother" (2:8).

* The daughter of Amram and Jochebed (Exodus 6:20). *"The name of Amram's wife was Jochebed the daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt; and to Amram she bore Aaron and Moses and their*

Who Was Miriam?




D.A. Adenugba

BIBLE CHARACTERS

sister Miriam” (Numbers 26:59).

- * A Prophetess (Exodus 15:20).
- * A leader of Jewish women (Exodus 15:20c).
- * A singer. She sang along with other women to praise the Lord for what God did for Israel.
- * Not an ingrate. She appreciated God in sweet melody to His glorious name for the victory He won over Pharaoh and his strong soldiers in the Red Sea for the Jews.
- * A rebel. She and Aaron rebelled against Moses, regarding an Ethiopian woman he married (Numbers 12:1-9).
- * A leper. *“Miriam became leprous, white as snow”* for opposing Moses (Numbers 12:10).
- * A disgrace for her sin. She was shut out of the camp for 7 days for being a leper. Miriam was admitted again upon being healed (Numbers 12:15-16).

Miriam died at Kadesh (Numbers 20:1). Both males and females have their weaknesses and strengths. Kudos to Miriam for leading the women to appreciate God in praises to His great and glorious name. Never be rebellious in the church against church leaders because of the unsavory result (1 Timothy 5:1-2). Let all grievances be channeled to the leaders in the spirit of meekness and with a view to finding a solution, not to disrupt things.

The church will do well to promptly attend to all problems that are brought before her as the apostles did in Acts 6:1-7. *“Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil”* (Ecclesiastes 8:11). 

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Did You Know?

None of the miracles of Jesus were recorded in all four Gospel accounts.



BIBLE CHARACTERS

LUCIFER

Mark McWhorter


Many religious people around the world are familiar with the name Lucifer. Most believe it is a name for Satan. It appears in the King James Bible [and some other translations] in Isaiah 14:12. *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!”*

Isaiah 14:4 identifies the person of verse twelve. This condemnation was toward the king of Babylon. The king of Babylon was a haughty and an arrogant man. Isaiah told him that even though the king thought himself to be the greatest man in the world, he would be brought low by God.

The Hebrew word used in verse twelve is the word for morning star. This star was the last star on the horizon just before the sun came over the horizon. It was extremely brilliant in its shining just before the sun came up. Yet, as soon as the sun came over the horizon, the morning star could no longer be seen.

Just as the morning star was bright for a brief time, so would the king of Babylon be. He would shine brightly among men but disappear quickly when God, the ultimate light, decided to destroy him. Leaders of countries today should learn a lesson from this. They should desire to serve God and be the best leaders they can be. They should realize that they should lead their people in proper ethics and morals. They should be good examples. While they may be powerful, it is only for a brief time.

All people should desire to be the best they can be. All of us are only on earth for a brief time. During that time, we should desire to serve God.

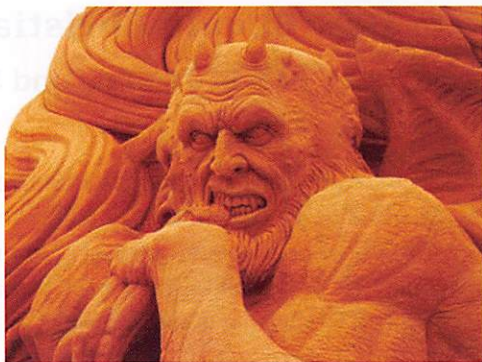
Do not be like Lucifer, the Babylonian king. Do not be arrogant. Do not think more of yourself than you should. Desire to serve God. Be good to all men. Study your Bible. Learn how to obey God. 

Mark McWhorter has written daily devotionals for youth for decades. He lives in Pell City, Alabama, USA.

More about Lucifer

Mark McWhorter

Many religious people in the world believe that the name Lucifer was given in the Bible for Satan. However, the name Lucifer is actually used in Isaiah 14:12 for the king of Babylon.



The word Lucifer is a Latin word used to translate the Hebrew word for morning star. The word was first used for Satan by Tertullian and Origen, but it did not become common as a name for Satan until Milton used it in his *Paradise Lost*. After *Paradise Lost* became popular, many people started believing that Lucifer was actually a name given in the Bible for Satan.

The king of Babylon was compared to the morning star. All of those hearing Isaiah's prophecy would understand this comparison. There was an ancient Canaanite story regarding the morning star. According to the story, the morning star desired to become king of the mountain of the gods in the north. The morning star wanted the highest place of the highest god and wanted to be ruler of the world. He was defeated in his attempt and was thrown down to the underworld.

This is what Isaiah was saying would happen to the king of Babylon. He desired to be the greatest of all kings on earth. He even considered himself as high as God, but he discovered that God is more powerful.

Do not be like the king of Babylon. Do not think too highly of yourself. Be humble no matter how important you may become in this world.

Study your Bible. Learn to serve God. 

Mark McWhorter has written daily devotionals for youth for decades. He lives in Pell City, Alabama, USA.

How Should Christians Face Islam?

David Fanning and Shane Fisher

Christians Must Not Fear Muslims

The command “*do not fear*” is found frequently in the Scriptures (Matthew 10:28-31). Fear is the antithesis of faith. We see examples where fear crowded out the faith of individuals such as: (1) Abraham (Genesis 12:10-13), (2) Peter (Matthew 14:29-30) and (3) the spies of Canaan (Numbers 13:31-14:1, 6-9). Remember, God is in control, and He is on the throne (Revelation 4:1-11).

Christians Must Love Muslims

We must do what is best for our neighbors if we really love them (Matthew 22:38-42). We ought to try to win our Muslim neighbors to Jesus, the one true Son of God, and to His true church (Matthew 5:43-48; 1 John 4:18; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

Christians Must Pray for Muslims

We must continue to pray that Muslims will hear and obey the true Gospel of Christ (Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 23:34; Acts 2:40-41; James 5:16-17). Jesus prayed for His enemies while He was on the cross, and His prayer was later answered when some of them did obey the Gospel on the Day of Pentecost.

Christians Must Be Ready to Give an Answer to Muslims for the hope that lies within them, with fear and meekness

We must be ready to help Muslims understand the truth of the Christian system. We need to be ready to address their questions (1 Peter 3:15; Philippians 1:17; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Let’s use an acronym, **READY**, to help us spread the Gospel to our Muslim neighbors.

R - Read the Qur’an and Islamic history

Read the Qu’ran, which is supposed to be the book revealed by Allah to Muhammad, the last prophet. Read the Muslim’s trusted historical traditions. You will gain a better insight into Islam if you do.

BIBLE QUESTIONS

E - Evidence for the Faithful Transmission of the Bible

When a Muslim makes the claim the Bible has been corrupted in its transmission, ask them these questions: (1) **When was it corrupted?** (2) **Where was it corrupted?** (3) **Could you provide me with some specific examples of where the Bible was corrupted doctrinally?** It would take a great world-wide conspiracy to have controlled the whole transmission of the text.

We know this because: (1) the New Testament authors expected a wider audience in which these congregations would copy the inspired letters and would send them to other congregations (Colossians 4:16), (2) there was a widespread circulation in which numerous copies were made (Galatians 1:2; 1 Peter 1:1) and (3) early Christians who lived in various locations quoted from them frequently, showing the New Testament had circulated around the known world at that time.

We admit there were copyists' mistakes, but **we can be confident that those errors did not result in any doctrinal changes in all the manuscripts as textual critics are able to point them out and distinguish them from the ancient body of New Testament manuscripts.**

▲ - Asking Questions about the Differences

There are differences between the Qur'an and the Bible that need to be addressed, which certainly shows that both of them could not have originated from the same Author. This should motivate both Christians and Muslims to open up honest discussion concerning the differences that lie between them.

1. **Surah 2:249; Judges 7:1-8** - the Qur'an states it was Saul and his men who were tested; in the Bible, it was Gideon and his men who were tested.

2. **Surah 11:42-44** - One of Noah's sons (unnamed) drowned in the great Flood; in the Bible, all three sons lived because they were on the ark.

3. **Surah 19:10; Luke 1:22, 59-64** - Zechariah could not speak for three days after the angel encounter, but in Luke's account, he could not speak until nine months and eight days after John was born.

4. **Surah 19:28; Luke 3:28-38** - Mary, the mother of Jesus, is also mistakenly identified as Miriam, the sister of Aaron.

5. **Surah 20:95** - A Samaritan is spoken of in the golden calf narrative; it is a matter of historical fact that Samaritans did not appear until 700 years later.

BIBLE QUESTIONS

6. **Surah 26:49** - The Pharaoh from the time of Moses was using crucifixion when it is a matter of historical fact that crucifixion was not used as a form of punishment until much later in history.

7. **Surah 28:6; 40:24, 36** - The Pharaoh of Moses and Haman from Esther both lived together to build the tower of Babel, but that would be mixing together three different historical periods.

8. **Surah 38:22-24; 2 Samuel 12:1-7** - There are great differences in the parable that Nathan told David who had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

D - Death of Jesus - Did It Really Happen?

In Surah 4:176, the Qur'an states that Jesus did not die on the cross. This is a great historical problem for Muslims because the prophecies of the Old Testament (Isaiah 53; Psalm 22), the New Testament documents, the first generation of Christians, the second generation of Christians, Jewish historical sources (such as Josephus, the Talmud), Gentile historical sources (such as Lucian, Tacitus, Mera bar Serapion) accurately record that Jesus died on the cross. An honest individual would have to admit there is a greater weight of evidence that Jesus did die on the cross rather than to believe the claims of the Qur'an, made 600 years later and after the fact.

Y - Your God and My God - Are They The Same God?

It is often assumed that Allah is the God of the Bible, but when a person carefully reads both the Qur'an and the Bible, comparing the accounts, the major differences show that the god of the Qur'an is not the God of the Bible. Some Muslims misunderstand Jesus being the "Son of God" as God the Father having sexual intercourse with Mary to produce Jesus, but the Bible has never taught that. The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and Jesus was miraculously conceived in her womb (Luke 1:26-38). Muslims falsely accuse Christians of being polytheists. On the contrary, Christians believe there is one God (Divine Nature) who is composed of three Persons - the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20). ✝

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THE PHENOMENON OF SAP

Dave Everson



As we come to late winter and early spring, a tradition begins in many Appalachian communities, that of collecting maple sap to boil down into maple syrup. As we can see from the psalmist, the Lord created the trees that are full of sap. *“The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted”* (Psalms 104:16). Explaining this process has not been as easy as scientists might have liked, so let’s take a look at the mystery of the rising sap of the maple tree.

Plants were created with a pipe-like vascular tissue that provides them with the crucial tubes through which water and nutrients flow. The vascular system is composed of two types of specialized tissue called xylem (which transports water and dissolved minerals) and phloem (which conducts food

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from the leaves to all other parts of the plant). The xylem is located more closely to the center of the plant, and wood is the best known of the xylem tissues. It is mostly composed of dead cells with a tube-like structure. The phloem, however, consists mostly of living cells. Located closer to the outside of the plant and just under the bark in trees, the phloem moves organic nutrients (known as photosynthate). The dependence of the plant upon phloem is why trees can be killed simply by removing a circular layer of bark around the trunk. There are many other types of supporting cells that work together to allow these tubes to function and allow movement of water and food in trees more than 350 feet high like the Giant Sequoia.

The processes that move fluids around the plants are complex. Water is moved from the roots to the rest of the plant due to two factors: Root pressure (in which osmosis moves water from the soil into the roots) and transpirational pull (where water is lost by transpiration in the leaves and the resulting surface tension pulls water up the xylem). Sugars are concentrated during the summer, which makes some water flow through osmosis. The fancy name for the movement in the phloem is called the **Pressure-flow Hypothesis**. **Yet, the flow of maple sap mid-February through mid-March is not by any of these processes and is a totally unique physiological event that God has created.**

Maple syrup makers have long known that the key to sap flow is cold nights followed by warm days. Only when the day and night temperatures fluctuate above and below freezing will the trees release their sweet elixir. At night, when it is normally cold, there is little sap flow. In the daytime, once the temperature warms above freezing, sap flow begins. The amount of sap flow is related to how cold it got during the night and is most directly connected with the temperature of small branches in the canopy of the tree.

It has been discovered that as night falls and the temperature drops, air bubbles in the sap contract and dissolve, decreasing the pressure within the cells. This initiates a suction pressure that pulls water from nearby cells. In turn, these cells are refilled by water absorbed from other cells and ultimately from the roots. As the temperature continues to drop, water freezes inside in the xylem and in the intercellular spaces. The next day, when the temperature warms, the ice bubbles melt and the compressed

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gases expand, producing the pressure that pushes the sap up the stem to produce maple sap flow. So, the cycle of freezing and thawing from night to day is what causes the sap to move up the stem where the taps intercept the flow and collect it for boiling into maple syrup.

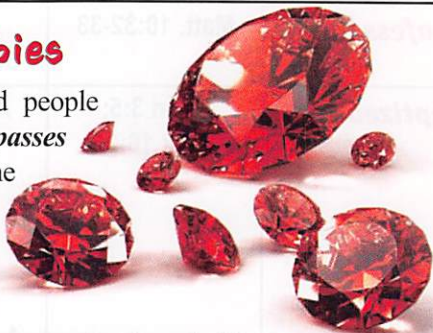
The collection of sap is not harmful for the trees, and the amount of sap produced depends on many factors, such as the health of the tree, the amount of sugar produced last summer and variation of the day and night temperatures. Not all trees have been created with the ability to produce sap that contains enough sugar to boil down to obtain a sweet tasting treat. Besides maple trees, other trees, producing smaller amounts of sap, are butternut, walnut, sycamore, birch, boxelder and ironwood — all of which can be tapped. God has provided for all of the needs of mankind, including the “...trees of the Lord...” being “...full of sap...” Let us always praise the Lord for the blessings He has provided. †

David Everson is a retired biology teacher and conducts creation science seminars. He is also an elder in the church of Christ in Belington, West Virginia, USA.

Robison's Rubies

In Ephesians 2, Paul addressed people who were once “*dead in trespasses and sins.*” He said they, at the time they were such, “*walked according to the course of this world.*” That can be a pretty good description of sin. You

just go along with the crowd, no matter what they do. You never take a stand. If the crowd has morals that slide, you slide along with them. It is easy to walk according to the course of the world, at least for a time. Things eventually turn ugly, because sin always ends up destroying lives, sometimes physically and always spiritually. God provides a better way — a way that saves lives and does not destroy. Sometimes, though, that way requires taking a stand against the course of the world.



CHARTS & OUTLINES

God's Family Plan

Helen Mann

	<i>Jesus Said</i>	<i>Peter Preached</i>	<i>Other New Testament Writers</i>
<i>Hear</i>	Matt. 7:21-27; Luke 6:46-49	Acts 2:14-36	Rom. 10:8-15
<i>Believe</i>	John 8:24; Mark 16:16	Acts 2:37 demonstrated	Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:13-14
<i>Repent</i>	Luke 13:3, 5	Acts 2:38	Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10; 2 Pet. 3:9
<i>Confess</i>	Matt. 10:32-33	Acts 2:37 demonstrated	Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10
<i>Baptized</i>	John 3:5; Mark 16:16	Acts 2:38-41	Acts 8:35-38; 10:47-48; 16:25- 34; 22:6-16; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21
<i>Result</i>	Saved, Mark 16:16; Sins remitted, Acts 2:38	Added to the Lord's church by Jesus Christ, Acts 2:41-47	Sins washed away, Acts 22:16; Rejoicing, Acts 8:39

When one completes the steps above, the Lord adds that person to His church (Acts 2:47). This is the church Jesus promised to build (Matthew

CHARTS & OUTLINES

16:18), the one He purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28), the church that is the body of Christ and the church of which He is the Head (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:24). There is one body (church), one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:4). Acts 4:12 reads, ***“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*** The name referred to here is Jesus Christ of Nazareth who was crucified for our salvation, whom God raised from the dead. Ephesians 5:23 says, ***“Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.”*** The church is subject to Christ (Colossians 1:24). See also Colossians 1:15-23; Christ has the preeminence (first place) in all things. †

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God's family plan triumphs over all others!

Cecil's Comments

What Do You Think? “You folks think you are right, and everybody else is wrong.” Of course, we do! So do you. If we did not think we were right, we would change to what we did think was right. If we are right, obviously whatever disagrees with us is wrong. Some folks think everything is right for the one who believes it. They think they are right about that. Just disagree with them! You will find out quickly they think you are wrong.

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



How Paul Became a Man of the Sea

Wayne A. Dixon

My earthly father, Captain M.A. Dixon, was a man of the sea. He was a veteran of the Navy, Coast Guard and Merchant Marines. He attained his captain's license in the Merchant Marines at age 26 and spent most of his oceangoing career in that capacity.

Being raised as the son of a seafarer in the port city of Norfolk, Virginia, and spending two summers at sea in the Merchant Marines to defray college expenses, gave me a special appreciation of Paul's sea-time experiences, especially considering the fact that I rode out a hurricane on the Atlantic Ocean. Additionally, I was employed as a surveyor for the better part of two years on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel – one of the engineering marvels of that day. Being on the Chesapeake Bay frequently while being raised there and almost daily while working on that well-known body of water, helped me relate to and hopefully pass on a deeper understanding of a side of Paul, not inspired, but gained through close to six decades of water travel.

Saul's contact with the maritime world began at his birth. He was born about A.D. 3 (Webster) in the port city of Tarsus in the Roman province of Cilicia on the southeastern side of the Anatolian peninsula. The city of Tarsus was located on the Tarsus River (Latin: Cydnus), which was located approximately twelve miles north of the Mediterranean Sea. This tributary is named the Berdan River in present-day south-central Turkey.

His parents likely took him in his preteen days dockside to look at the ship movement. This was my experience as I grew up in Norfolk, Virginia, and what greater thrill for a young boy is there than to watch the ships come and go?

At the age of fourteen (Webster), Saul traveled by ship from his home of Tarsus to the coastline of Judea and made his way to the university at Jerusalem to study the Torah at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). He returned home by ship across the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea after these studies, and during this time is likely when he learned the trade of tentmaking (Acts 18:3).

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Saul returned to Jerusalem, probably after Pentecost, and again relied on the Phoenician trading vessels (Jackson) of that era for transportation back to Jerusalem where he began his self-appointed mission of persecuting Christians. The first event recording his involvement in this type of activity is found in Acts 7:58, where he cared for the outer garments of those stoning Stephen, and we learn in Acts 8:1 that Saul consented to his death.

After Saul's conversion recorded in Acts 9:18, his trip to Arabia (Galatians 1:17-18) and his preaching in Damascus (Acts 9:20), he preached in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26). The unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem tried to kill him as a similar group had tried in Damascus. Faithful brethren in Jerusalem saved his life, but instead of a basket used by the brethren in Damascus (Acts 9:25), they resorted to a ship (Acts 9:30), sending him back to his home in Tarsus. In this instance a ship was his physical salvation.

Barnabas and the apostle Saul were commissioned by the Holy Spirit in Acts 13:2-4 to go forth with the Gospel message. Once again, sea travel was required to cross the Mediterranean to Salamis on the island of Cyprus (Acts 13:5). After their stay in Salamis, they proceeded to Paphos, and Saul's name was changed (Acts 13:9). As was necessary in traveling to Cyprus, once again a ship was used to exit the island across a portion of the Mediterranean to Perga (Acts 13:13). Likewise, the return leg of this first missionary journey required sea travel to return to Antioch of Syria and give a report to the elders there (Acts 14:26-27).

On Paul's second missionary journey, Paul once again used waterborne vessels to transport himself and other members of his evangelistic team to their destination. After receiving the Macedonian call (Acts 16:9), Paul, Luke and others left from Troas by ship and arrived at Neapolis, Philippi's harbor, the next day (Acts 16:11). At the end of this, his second missionary journey, he sailed from Greece to Ephesus and then on to Caesarea before going overland to Antioch (Acts 18:18-22).

Paul's third missionary journey was yet another inspired account of how he gained so much knowledge of the sea. After Paul's extended stay in Ephesus, Luke recorded his departure to Macedonia, no doubt by water (Acts 20:1). After spending three months in Greece (probably Corinth, Acts

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20:3), he planned to return from there to Antioch but had to change his plans due to yet another death threat (one of many during his preaching career) (v. 3). His revised itinerary took him back through Macedonia and over to Troas, launching from the area of Philippi (Acts 20:6). This trip took five days where the identical voyage during his second missionary journey took a little over a day (Acts 16:11). Paul's knowledge of the sea and her ever-changing personality was increased as he was no doubt mindful of the previous "*...straight course*" (Acts 16:11) of that voyage versus the likely contrary winds of this considerably longer voyage over the same water.

As Paul's return trip continued, he hiked across the island of Assos, got back on board with his group, followed by island hopping possibly in a smaller vessel used to navigate among these islands (Acts 20:13-15). After his farewell address to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-38), more sailing was necessary for Paul. Island navigation was required by the captain of his vessel as they sailed to Coos, Rhodes and Patara. Note that, as was the case in their first trip to Neapolis, Luke once again recorded "*a straight course*" (Acts 21:1), indicating favorable winds on that voyage. Paul's knowledge of the sea continued to grow as these island trips were generally done in the daylight due to the lack of sophisticated navigational aids for sailing close to land at night.

Note the significance of Luke's observation "*and finding a ship.*" Ships of that time were not on a precise schedule as scheduling was tenuous at best due to unpredictable winds and other maritime factors associated with sailing in the true sense of the word, depending strictly on the wind, currents and navigational skills. Paul boarded another ship, likely a seagoing vessel, and crossed the Mediterranean, docking at Tyre to unload cargo (Acts 21:3). The inspired account of Acts as recorded by Luke gives us amazing detail of the sailing of that day. His observation was, "*Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand*" (Acts 21:3). That shows the captain and all aboard knew that they were on course! Navigation of that day relied heavily on visual shoreline observations. From there, they sailed to Ptolemais and on to Caesarea (Acts 21:7-8). Paul, then, traveled overland to Jerusalem (Acts 21:14-17).

It is likely that the epitome of Paul's maritime adventures was his voyage to Rome. Unlike his many other voyages, on this one he was a Roman prisoner

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accompanied by Luke and Aristarchus (Acts 27:1-2). After setting sail from Caesarea, their first port-of-call was Sidon (Acts 27:3). From there, the sailing was very slow and arduous due to contrary winds (Acts 27:4) as they made their way westward to the port of Myra, where the centurion found a ship bound from Alexandria to Rome (Acts 27:6). The statement, *“the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing unto Italy,”* once again brings to the forefront the element of time and effort regarding sea travel of that day. The sailing continued to be very slow as they navigated to the island of Crete (Acts 27:7).

At this point, Paul’s earthly wisdom coming from the experience gained by his many years of ocean travel became evident. It was the beginning of an approximate four-month period of time (November-March) that experienced seaman simply would not put to sea in the single-masted Phoenician designed ships of that day (Jackson). They had proven not to be seaworthy in the rough seas generated by winter storms on the Mediterranean.

A meeting was held to discuss whether to take the chance of moving from one Crete port (Fair Havens at Lasea, Acts 27:8) westward to another (Phenice) at which to winter. Luke recorded the meeting in Acts 27:9-12 in which Paul strongly advised them against such a move (v. 10). Many scholars suggest that the second letter to the Corinthians had already been delivered. When we read 2 Corinthians 11:25b, *“thrice I suffered shipwreck a night and a day I have been in the deep,”* we can rightly conclude that Paul’s admonition in Acts 27:10 was tantamount to him saying, “I don’t want to add another shipwreck to my seafaring mishaps.” Also, with his statement to the Corinthian brethren with regard to spending approximately twenty-four hours floating around, likely on a piece of wreckage from one of his previous shipwrecks, obviously being shipwrecked was high on his list of situations to avoid.

However, Paul was outvoted, as we read in vs. 11-12. As they say, “The rest is history.” Paul was right. The northeast storm (Euroclydon) that hit them immediately (vs. 14-15) was vicious. It was so severe that Luke said, *“all hope that we should be saved was then taken away”* (Acts 27:20). In other words, all 276 aboard were ready to accept an epitaph of “Lost at Sea.”

The severity of this storm was such that Paul was afraid. Again, this now aged *man of the sea* knew from his years of experience (Acts 27:21)


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that this was indeed a killer storm. God, however looked after him with the assurance that there would be ***“no loss of any man’s life among you”*** (Acts 27:22b). Christians have the same spiritual assurance today as recorded in Hebrews 13:5, ***“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”***

Their physical salvation from that storm was conditional: The ship had to wreck (Acts 27:26), and they all had to stay on the ship (Acts 27:31). Our spiritual salvation today is also conditional based on our obedience to God’s will. ***“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”*** (Matthew 7:21).

For those not familiar with this type of storm endured by Paul and his shipmates, a good example of the magnitude of the strength it generated is found in a study of the Ash Wednesday storm of 1962. That 1962 storm was the most extreme nor’easter on record to hit the mid-Atlantic coast of the United States. Storms of this type have caused untold loss of life and property damage over the centuries.

Paul counseled the newly established Galatian congregations ***“that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God”*** (Acts 14:22b). At the outset of Paul’s preaching career, Ananias was told that Paul would suffer tribulation. ***“For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake”*** (Acts 9:16).

The apostle Paul traveled over 6,000 miles across the Mediterranean and Aegean seas and was indeed ***a man of the sea***, and his maritime tribulations along with all the others in his evangelistic life serve as a shining example for us today. ***“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”*** (John 16:33). 

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THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S GRACE

Malcolm Parsley

Let's think about the greatness of the value of God's grace. If we could earn our salvation and eternal home in Heaven with God, what would be the cost? If we had to pay for our time in Heaven, what would be the needed charge to us for our time there? What would the charge be like to have one day that all of our sins are forgiven, all

of our debts were paid, no hate and meanness were found, there is no fear but only the guarantee of wellness, and there would be no concern of death.

On this day, all of our righteous friends, old and new, would be there, as well as all of our righteous loved ones. We would have all of our clothing provided, our food taken care of, our more-than-sufficient accommodation secured, all that we needed and wanted provided, the insurance of total peace with no fears whatsoever?

There all truth would be spoken, all intents would be pure and all words would be said with gentility and love with everyone being like God, Christ and the Holy Spirit — giving all of their hearts, time and effort to the pleasing of all others, including us.

We would have total freedom to travel as we pleased and the best of weather for all occasions. There would be no bad news, only good and pleasing events for all. Every meal would be our choice of the finest

FROM THE HEART OF

dessert in existence and eaten in the presence of our Father God, all loving and almighty.

What would the body and soul of man pay for just *one hour* of such utopia? What would be its equitable value in cost to us? What if we multiplied that by twenty-four and made it a *whole day*? Now what if that day had no night and that day had no end? If we did our utmost best to be perfect every day of our lives and did not sin even once, how many hours of that day could we equitably purchase or even rent?

What would we use to pay to the God who owns all and who already possesses the estimated over 300 galaxies in existence and does not need gold, silver, precious jewels and the services of meager man? Wouldn't it be an insult to Him if we even offered to pay our most valuable treasures for such an idyllic experience? What would our 70 years of life's living be worth to justify the portion of heavenly stay we rented? Here our honesty is needed. No duping of ourselves of the ludicrous value of our wondrous righteousness in this life. If we knew the true value of a home in that eternal world, then what we could offer of this life would probably not get us past the first step inside the pearly gates or even, like Moses, only a glimpse from a far distant point. If and when we do get to Heaven, it will surely not be by our deserving such a reward. It will totally be by the grace of God!

Let us live as best we can to please our God of love and live the best we can, not to be **worthy** but to be **thankful** for His precious grace that loves our sincere efforts so much He sees us as perfectly acceptable, and He longs for our arrival in that home of the soul.

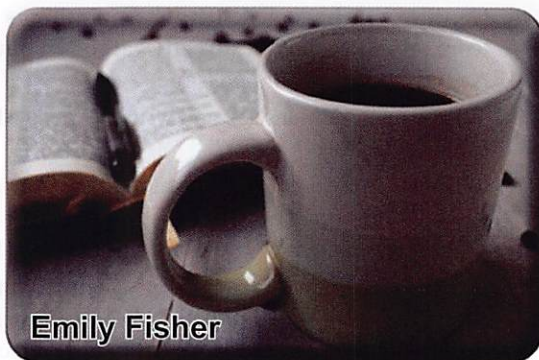
“Oh, Lord, please read our minds and listen to our loving, pleading hearts to be with You and to be the children You designed us to be on this earth, in preparation for an eternity in Your presence. Our souls avidly long to be engulfed in Your smile and filled with Your most Holy Spirit. We want to do Your will. May it be and forever be so. Your child who loves You and insatiably desires to be unconditionally, eternally Yours. I love you Father. Please accept my love, for it is all I am and it is all yours. Your child who longingly desires soon to be home with you.”

~ Your Humble Child



Malcolm Parsley has been a missionary in South Korea for 60 years.

Noting Your Bible




Call on the Name of the Lord

Today, some claim that all one needs to do is “*call on the name of the Lord*” in order to be saved, but by that, they really mean you only need to say a prayer, often called, “the sinner’s prayer.” Is that what calling on the name of the Lord means? How does Scripture define this phrase? Let’s open the Bible and study this important topic so we will be able to study it with our neighbors.

1. In the front of your Bible, note this topic, and next to it write, “**Genesis 4:26**.” Turn to this verse and write next to it, “(See 13:4, 21:33).”
2. Turn to Genesis 13, and note, “**In the context of worship (also 26:25) (see 1 Kings 18:24).**” You can note, too, that Abraham had obedient faith (Hebrews 11).
3. At 1 Kings 18:24, write, “**Something done by the power/authority of God (also 2 Kings 5:11) (See Colossians 3:17).**”
4. In Colossians 3:17, note, “**Christians are to do all by Christ’s authority (See Psalm 116:17).**”
5. Turn to Psalm 116 and write, “**Calling on the name of the Lord includes giving Him thanks (See Acts 22:16).**”
6. In Acts 22:16, write, “**Includes obedience to His commandments (also 2:38; 10:48) (See Joel 2:32).**”
7. At Joel 2:32, note, “**Salvation through Christ in prophecy (also Zephaniah 3:9) (fulfilled in Acts 2:21).**”
8. Turn to Acts 2:21 and write, “(See **Romans 10:13**).” Also in the context of Acts, note what was commanded of believers in 2:38.
9. In Romans 10 and in the context of verses 8-17, note, “**Calling on the name of the Lord includes confessing Him, and anyone who does so, Jew and**

Gentile, can be saved! (See 1 Corinthians 1:2).” You can note also in Romans 10 that Paul already talked about baptism (6:1-4) and again, Acts 22:16 with this passage.

10. Turn to 1 Corinthians 1:2 and write, **“Those who call on His name are sanctified saints (see Acts 4).”**
11. Read the context of Acts 4 that centers around preaching Jesus, and note at verse 7 and 10, **“The power is in the name of Jesus,”** and verse 12, **“No other name will save (See Philippians 2:9-11).”**
12. Turn to Philippians 2 and soberly consider this passage. One day (Romans 14:10-13), everyone will bow knee and confess Jesus as Lord. It will be too late for many (Matthew 7:21). With this subject, it is fitting to note Acts 22:16 again just as the Spirit of God said through Luke: **“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”** May we call on the name of the Lord, submitting to His authority today in obedient faith! 

Emily Fisher is a missionary, a staff writer for The Voice of Truth International and works with World Evangelism. She resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.



On the way to worship one morning, two young boys had their change in hand to give when the contribution basket was passed around. Their father explained to them how they would be giving their money to God. The time came for the contribution. The man holding the basket came to the pew where the little boys sat. The first boy dropped in his money and then held the basket for his younger brother. The little boy looked up at the man, studied him carefully, then dropped his money in the basket. The child looked up to his father with eyes as big as saucers, pointed to the man now holding the basket, and said, “Daddy! THAT was God!”



One Sunday after morning worship, a family invited the visiting preacher home for lunch. When the meal was ready, the family and visiting preacher gathered around the table and bowed their heads for prayer. As soon as the “Amen” sounded, the son quickly tattled on his sister, “She didn’t shut her eyes when we prayed!”

HYMNS

Added By The Lord

Words and Music
by: Paul Mays

1. Je - sus built His church and He off - ers sal - va - tion, He made one sim - ple way to get
2. Pe - ter told the crowd that they killed God's on - ly Son, They asked "What should we do?" and he
3. Now has come the time when you should make up your mind, Right now you can re - ceive the for -

in and to be saved. Those who will be - lieve and are bap - tized will be saved,
told the sim - ple truth. Re - pent and be bap - tized were the words Pe - ter spoke,
give - ness that you need. Go down in the flood to be cov - ered by His blood,

It's by di - vine de - cree that im - mer - sion is the way.
Three thou - sand folks re - ceived, they were bap - tized, they be - lieved.
It's on - ly those im - mersed have put on our Lord and Christ.

Have you be - en, Have you be - en, Have you be - en, When you
Add - ed by the Lord? Cov - ered by His blood? Add - ed to His church?

o - beyed, And will you now, be - fore it is too late, all can be add - ed
O - beyed His pre - cious truth, per - pe - tu - ate, add - ed by the Lord!
Add - ed by the Lord!

Paul Mays is a Christian hymn writer who resides in Roanoke, Virginia, USA. Visit <https://www.youtube.com/user/neanderpaul> to listen to the hymns.

HYMNS

I Can Do All Things

Words and Music
by: Paul Mays

I can do all things through Christ, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. He strengthens me.

1. Can we ov-er-come tempta - tion? Can we keep the faith, An ac - tive faith that saves?
2. Can we be so bold as we teach? Can we search the Word, and know just how to serve?
ov - er - come tempta - tion.

Can we shine His light in dark - ness? Can we seek the lost and
Can we a - bide in His doc - trine? Can we speak the same and
His light in dark - ness

Both times D.S. #
point them to the cross? Can we do all this through Je - sus? I can do
speak in Je - sus name? Through my Je - sus

◇ CODA
How about you?

Paul Mays is a Christian hymn writer who resides in Roanoke, Virginia, USA. Visit <https://www.youtube.com/user/neanderpaul> to listen to the hymns.

What Can You Do to Help Spread the Word?

- * For just a moment, put yourself in a village in Africa, or even in a large city in India, or in the jungles of South America. You are an immortal soul, living in a perishing body. How will you knowledgeably prepare for the judgment and eternity that awaits us all?
- * Does the church of Christ exist in your community, so that you can hear the Gospel preached? For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.
- * Is there a source for buying Bibles in your community? Though the Bible has been translated into most languages, villages seldom have bookstores. For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.
- * If you have found the Truth and are a Christian, is there a bookstore from which you can order additional study materials? For most people in the world, the answer is “No”.

So you are born into an unbelieving home, you live according to the religion of your parents, you grow old, and you die, thrust into eternity to meet the God you never knew. What unspeakable tragedy! The scenario is LIFE for the majority of the people of the world.

Through mass media — radio programs, TV, and literature — we are doing all we can to bring God’s Word to people who have so little hope. Half of each issue of *The Voice of Truth International* is sent free of charge to churches and individuals who have few or no other study materials, to aid in their spiritual growth. We ask brethren to help us with \$35 a month, to cover the \$8,000 postage bill incurred with every issue. Will you please have mercy on these souls and help us share the saving Gospel with them?

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◆ We want to give \$_____ each month to help send this magazine to mission fields of the world, including the USA.

◆ As a congregation we want to help print and circulate copies of each issue of this magazine by making a special contribution to this effort. We can specify where the copies we pay for will be used, whether in our personal work, in jail ministry, overseas, or...

(Return this form in an envelope, along with your check, to the following address, stating your wishes.)

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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (page 42)

1. Flesh and blood
2. At the last trumpet
3. Trumpet, incorruptible
4. We will put on incorruption and immortality.
5. Death, sting, Hades, victory
6. Sin
7. Law
8. Through our Lord Jesus Christ
9. Be steadfast, immovable, abounding in the work of the Lord
10. Lay by in store
11. As we have prospered
12. Sent to the church in Jerusalem
13. Whoever they appointed would take it
14. Churches of Galatia.

Scavenger Hunt (page 87)

1. God's Word (v. 11)
2. worthless things (v. 37)
3. all who fear God and keep His precepts (v. 63)
4. forever (v. 89)
5. God's Law (v. 97)
6. God's Word (v. 105)
7. fine gold (v. 127)
8. men do not keep God's

Bible Word Scramble (page 65)

Redemption

Bible Find (page 44)



9. Law (v. 136)
10. the entirety (all) (v. 160)
10. "Your statutes" (v. 12, 26, 64, 68, 124, 135), "the way of Your statutes" (v. 33), "good judgment and knowledge" (v. 66), "Your judgments" (v. 108)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Being deeply involved in mission work in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India, our family sometimes made those arduous trips from one side of the globe to the other. On one such journey, we ended up in the city of Rome on the Lord's Day. Our flight schedule would not allow time to meet with the church, so we had private worship.

Naturally, being in such a great historical city, we went to the top of one of the "seven hills of Rome" and gathered together, looking down at the ruins of what had once been momentous memorials erected in honor of the rulers of the Empire. What an overwhelming statement of power those edifices must have been for everyone walking those streets!

In the worship of our Lord, we also had a memorial: the simple unleavened bread representing the precious body that was so cruelly sacrificed for our sins, and the fruit of the vine in remembrance of the blood that daily enables us to come into our Father's presence as innocent souls.

What a contrast! Monuments erected at great cost and labor, now fallen into decay, and the names of the men for whom they were built now remembered only in history books. **But the memorial for Jesus Christ? Though seemingly insignificant — only a little perishable bread and fruit of the vine — but it lives today in the worship by His brothers and sisters all over the world!**

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Betty Burton Choate