

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



Bear Valley Bible Institute
INTERNATIONAL



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.

Matthew 28:18 10th word _____

Matthew 7:21 1st word _____

Romans 10:17 2nd word _____

Mark 16:16 9th word _____

Luke 13:3 1st word _____

Romans 10:10 5th word _____

1 Peter 3:21 5th word _____

Acts 2:38 8th word _____

1 Corinthians 15:57 10th word _____

Bible text: New King James (NKJV)

(See the back cover for answer.)

WHY DID THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH GO DOWN INTO THE WATER? Acts 8:26-39



HE DID NOT NEED TO GO DOWN INTO THE WATERS OF BAPTISM IF...

1. ...**FAITH ALONE SAVES**. BUT GRACE AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS ARE ALSO NOT NEEDED (**EPH. 2:8-10**). WHO TEACHES THAT? FAITH, BY ITSELF, NEVER SAVED ANYONE. SEE **JAMES 2:19-24**.
2. ...**GRACE ONLY SAVES**. **EPH. 2:8-10** MENTIONS NEITHER FAITH ALONE NOR GRACE ALONE. THE GRACE OF GOD IS OBTAINED THROUGH FAITH AND OBEDIENCE, WHICH INCLUDES BAPTISM (**HEB. 5:9**)!
3. ...HE WAS **SAVED BEFORE BAPTISM**. BAPTISM IS FOR BURYING THE DEAD, NOT THOSE ALIVE IN CHRIST (**ROM. 6:3-5**).
4. ...**BAPTISM DOES NOT SAVE**. THE APOSTLE SAID, "BAPTISM NOW SAVES US!" **1 PE. 3:21**. BELIEVE GOD'S WORD!
5. ...**THERE WAS NOTHING HE COULD DO TO SAVE HIMSELF?** GOD COMMANDS NOTHING OF MAN THAT IS NOT FOR THE SAVING OF HIS SOUL. "SAVE YOURSELVES FROM THIS UNTOWARD (CROOKED) GENERATION." SEE **ACTS 2:38-40; JOHN 12:48**.

HE WENT DOWN INTO THE WATER...

1. ...**BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT HE WAS TOLD TO DO**. BAPTISM IS PART OF PREACHING JESUS (**V.35**). NOTE: HE DID NOT ARGUE — HE SIMPLY OBEYED. **ACTS 8:34-36; MARK 16:15-16**.
2. ...**TO OBEY CHRIST AND BE SAVED**. **LUKE 6:46; HEB. 5:8-9**.
3. ...**BECAUSE BAPTISM IS A BURIAL, IMMERSION ONLY**, NOT SPRINKLING OR POURING. **MARK 1:9-10; ROM. 6:4-5; ACTS 8:38-39**. NO NEED FOR GOING DOWN OR COMING UP FOR SPRINKLING OR POURING.
4. ...**BECAUSE "BAPTISM DOES NOW SAVE US."** **1 PE. 3:20-21**. SEE **REV. 1:5; ACTS 22:16**—WHAT & WHEN SINS WASHED AWAY.
5. ...**IN ORDER TO BE CLOTHED WITH CHRIST**. **GAL. 3:27**.
6. ...**IN ORDER TO REJOICE (ACTS 8:39)**. HE DID NOT REJOICE BEFORE BAPTISM, BECAUSE HE WAS NOT SAVED UNTIL AFTER BAPTISM.
 - a. SAMARITANS — **ACTS 8:4-6, 8** ONE HAS NOT FULLY TRUSTED
 - b. PHILIPPIAN JAILER — **ACTS 16:34** JESUS UNTIL HE OBEYS HIM.

WHICH IS TRUE CHRISTIANITY?

DENOMINATIONALISM

Division

Many Bodies

Many Faiths

Many Baptisms

THE BIBLE

JOHN 17:20-23
EPHESIANS 4:3
GALATIANS 3:28
1 CORINTHIANS 1:10

MATTHEW 16:18
EPHESIANS 1:22-23 & 4:4
ROMANS 12:4-5
EPHESIANS 5:25

JUDE 3 **2 PETER 1:1**
1 TIMOTHY 4:1
2 TIMOTHY 4:7

MATTHEW 28:18-20
ROMANS 6:4
1 PETER 3:21
EPHESIANS 4:5

CHURCH OF CHRIST

Unity

One Body

One Faith

One Baptism

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

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Louis Rushmore



There's nothing like a catastrophic event to capture the imagination of people and fuel prognostications of fiery pulpites regarding the end of the world. The signs of the times are thought by many to signify the imminent return of Jesus Christ and end-times. These assumptions are based on a misunderstanding of or, in the case of religious leaders, sometimes the outright abuse of Scripture, namely

Matthew 24:6-7. *“And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against*



kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places” (NKJV).

Though the apostles did not realize it yet, they essentially asked Jesus Christ two different questions in Matthew 24. “...*Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?*” (Matthew 24:3). They could not perceive of the massive Temple in Jerusalem being so utterly demolished that not one stone remained upon another except that the entire world would be destroyed also (Matthew 24:1-2). Nevertheless, our Lord answered the two questions posed by the apostles, first regarding the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and secondly about the end of time when Jesus’ Second Coming would occur.

It is important to observe that Jesus repeatedly cautioned His disciples not to be fooled by pretenders — false christs (Matthew 24:4-5), “*false prophets*” (Matthew 24:11) and “*false christs and false prophets*” (Matthew 24:24). It is as equally important in the 21st century for us not to be fooled by “*false christs and false prophets.*” “*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world*” (1 John 4:1).

While Jesus answered the first of the two questions posed by His disciples, He referred to what people commonly call **the signs of the times**. However, notice that all of what Jesus said — including the signs of the times — was relative to the generation that was then living during the ministry of our Lord. “*Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place*” (Matthew 24:34). Therefore, the signs of the times about which our Lord spoke pertained **only** to the first century and were **only** relative to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The *Merriam-Webster* dictionary defines the word “generation” as “the average span of time between the birth of parents and that of their offspring” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/generation>). Hence, a generation is approximately 30 years (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation>). Everything Jesus said about the signs of the times was to take place within about 30 years. Therefore, Jesus’ response to His apostles about the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem was contained within the timeframe of about 30 years, and the signs of the times could have neither relevance nor application to happenings in the 21st century.

Every generation experiences “*wars and rumors of wars,*” sees “*nation...rise against nation*” and observes “*famines, pestilences, and earthquakes.*” Therefore, what Jesus said about the signs of the times could only refer to the generation living in the first century. Furthermore, our Lord’s elaboration about fleeing to the mountains (Matthew 24:16), a woman being pregnant or having infants (Matthew 24:19) and the Sabbath (Matthew 24:20) does not correspond to the Second Coming and the end of the world. Fleeing to the mountains at the Second Coming of Christ doesn’t make any sense; no one will be able to flee from our Lord to anywhere at His Second Coming. Being pregnant or having small children would not hinder anyone regarding the Second Coming. Further, what difference would it make were the Second Coming to occur on the Sabbath?

On the other hand, these matters do make sense when read within the context of Jesus answering the first question of His disciples, regarding the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. At the appearance of the approaching Roman army, Christians were to flee Jerusalem to avoid being caught up in the city’s impending overthrow. The haste with which Jesus said those fleeing should flee to the mountains could have reference only to escaping Jerusalem before it was besieged (Matthew 24:17-18). Pregnant women and families with small children would face difficulty in hastily fleeing an approaching horde of soldiers. If the Roman legions arrived on the Sabbath, the closure of the city gates by the Jews in the observance of the Law would greatly hinder anyone fleeing to the mountains.


“Of the past 3,400 years, humans have been entirely at peace for 268 of them, or just 8 percent of recorded history” (Hedges). Wars and rumors of wars, etc. in Matthew 24 can only be relative to a particular generation — the first century — since **every generation** experiences them. Likewise, earthquakes and disease occur in **every generation**; a glance into history confirms this.

Even plagues of worldwide proportion have occurred from time to time:

- A prehistoric epidemic in China about 3000 B.C.
- The Plague of Athens in 430 B.C. killed about 100,000 in Greece.
- Antonine Plague from A.D. 165-180 killed over 5 million people in the Roman Empire.
- The Plague of Cyprian from A.D. 250-271 killed 5,000 people daily in

Rome alone (a bishop in Carthage attributed the plague as the sign of the end of the world).

- The Plague of Justinian from A.D. 541-542 killed about 10% of the world's population.
- The Black Death from 1346-1353 originated in Asia and killed half the population of Europe after it migrated there.
- The Cocoliztli Epidemic from 1545-1548 killed 15 million in Mexico and Central America.
- American Plagues in the 16th century brought from Europe by explorers killed 90% of the indigenous population of North and South America.
- The Great Plague of London from 1665-1666 killed 100,000 or 15% of London's population.
- The Great Plague of Marseille from 1720-1723 killed about 100,000 people or approximately 30% of the city.
- The Russian Plague from 1770-1772 killed about 100,000 in Moscow.
- The Philadelphia Yellow Fever Epidemic in 1793 led to 5,000 deaths in the city.
- The Flu Pandemic from 1889-1890 originated in Russia and reached its peak globally within five weeks — killing one million.
- The American Polio Epidemic in 1916 started in New York City led to 6,000 deaths in the USA.
- The Spanish Flu resulted in 50 million deaths worldwide and 675,000 in the USA (“1918 Pandemic”).
- The 1957 Pandemic — Asian flu — led to 1.1 million deaths worldwide and 116,000 deaths in the USA (“1957-1958 Pandemic”).
- The 1968 Pandemic — flu — caused one million deaths globally and 100,000 in the USA (“1968 Pandemic”).
- The AIDS Pandemic and Epidemic from 1981 through the present has claimed 35 million lives.
- The 2009-2010 Swine Flu Pandemic infected 1.4 billion and killed between 152,700 and 575,400 worldwide and caused 12,469 deaths in the USA (“2009 H1N1 Pandemic”).
- The West African Ebola Epidemic from 2014-2016 led to 11,325 deaths.
- The Zika Virus Epidemic 2015 through the present is still being tabulated. Plainly, the current strain of coronavirus or COVID-19 is only the

latest plague battering humanity among many diseases that historically have ravaged the human population regionally or globally. Therefore, COVID-19 is no more a sign of the Second Coming of Christ and of the end of the world than any previous pandemic, epidemic or plague. While answering the second question of the disciples regarding the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ, Jesus said, **“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only”** (Matthew 24:36). To illustrate that statement, our Lord related that people would be **“...eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage...”** (Matthew 24:38), working **“in the field”** (Matthew 24:40) and **“grinding at the mill”** (Matthew 24:41), as they were in Noah’s day, when our Lord returns (Matthew 24:37-41). Jesus plainly said regarding the end of the world and His Second Coming, **“Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming”** (Matthew 24:42) and **“Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect”** (Matthew 24:44). 

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The Importance of Assembling Together!

Jerry Bates

Worship has long been viewed as an essential part of our Christian service to God, and most Christians look forward to meeting with the saints and worshipping the one true God. However, there are times when one is prevented from assembling. It might be an extended illness, natural catastrophes or even a pandemic such as the recent coronavirus outbreak. There are times when it is not possible for Christians to assemble together. The world has been afflicted with the coronavirus, which has affected virtually every nation to some degree. Many countries went on lockdown, and the majority of churches all around the world stopped meeting together for a time in an effort to keep everyone safe from the very contagious virus. However, that did not mean that all worship ceased.

Worship is an individual service that a person gives to God. It comes from the heart, and it has often been said that one can praise God anywhere. During the pandemic, Christians continued to pay homage to God, but it was a family worship or small groups meeting in homes. Most churches streamed their worship services so their members could “virtually” assemble and worship together. Many have wondered if that was acceptable and whether that type of service is “just as good.” Furthermore, if we can worship God individually as it has been done, why do we need to assemble at all? Will Christians stop assembling and just worship God individually? Those are good questions to consider. Only time will tell whether many Christians stop meeting with other Christians, but we can consider the question whether an

individual worship is “just as good” as a corporate worship.

One danger of individual worship is that worship can easily deteriorate into a requirement or a ritual that we must perform. Since worship would be individual, that means you can do it anytime. Rather than worship being planned and everything else is worked around it, the opposite occurs. Worship is simply planned around other activities whenever it is most convenient. For example, one could be busily engaged in other activities, then he suddenly stops for a few minutes to perform the acts of worship, after which he immediately goes back to his other activities — or even worse, do those activities while we are supposedly worshipping. Rather than worship being a sacred time to honor, glorify and praise God, it can easily decline to doing certain rituals to “check that box” before moving on to other things.



Furthermore, many seem to forget about the purpose of worship. Yes, it is primarily about giving homage to God, our Creator. However, there is another purpose. The writer of Hebrews encouraged us to ***“not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching”*** (Hebrews 10:25). In this passage, we see that we are to encourage one another because it is quite easy to become discouraged. We can best accomplish that by meeting together. Christians are continually exhorted to encourage one another. ***“Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing”*** (1 Thessalonians 5:11). The Thessalonians were busy edifying one another, and they are exhorted to continue doing that. We really can only do that by assembling with fellow Christians. Whenever one neglects to assemble, he discourages everyone else rather than encouraging others. Thus, we see another purpose to worship is encouragement of fellow Christians, as well as we ourselves are encouraged.

Additionally, we are to be concerned with one another as a spiritual family and render assistance to others as they may have need. This may be financial

help, but more often, it is simply love, concern, compassion or a shoulder on which to cry. This help is very encouraging to struggling Christians, but how are we going to learn about such needs if we do not assemble? With today's modern technology, we can get the Word around to some extent by other means, but it is still not nearly as effective as actually meeting together.


Solitary worship or with a small group simply is not the same as corporate worship.

One can engage in the same acts and listen to good spiritual lessons, but one does not receive the same benefits. There is something about being with fellow Christians that simply cannot



be replaced or duplicated. Many have discovered this in the recent pandemic. After being separated for several weeks, it was so good to once again be able to assemble with fellow Christians.

It is difficult to faithfully follow Christ very long by ourselves. One illustration that has often been used is of a stick in a fire. If the stick of wood is in a fire surrounded with other sticks, it will burn and give off heat. However, if one stick is pulled out all by itself, its fire will soon go out. Accordingly, if one Christian lives to himself without the encouragement and companionship of other Christians, he will likely become discouraged, and his spiritual fire will go out.

Let us never be deceived into thinking that one can worship God by himself and thus not need to assemble with the saints. If we begin to think like that, it is likely that we are on the road to destruction, and it will probably have a detrimental effect on the spiritual welfare of others as well. There are great benefits for assembling that we all need. Undoubtedly, God knew that, which is why He commanded us to assemble. 



PARADOXES OF CHRISTIANITY: ALWAYS AT WAR, YET AT PEACE

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. Consider the paradox that a Christian is always at war yet at peace.

Are not those two opposite concepts? When war is occurring, there is no peace because nations are fighting against one another. During wars, bullets are flying. Bombs are being released from planes to destroy certain targets. We think about all the years throughout world history in which war after war occurred, and it never seems to end. Indeed, how is it possible, you may ask, for a Christian to be at war and yet be at peace? The true meaning behind the paradox is that a Christian is always involved in spiritual warfare, yet at the same time experiences the peace Jesus offers.

A. THE BATTLE OF THE AGES

Imagine yourself asleep on a very silent night and all of a sudden you hear shots outside and bombs going off. Yet, you remain asleep amidst all the noise around you. A normal response for many of us, even if we were deep sleepers, is that we would wake up to the terrible noises happening outside our bedroom window.

Spiritually, in the unseen realm, the above scenario is really happening. Many of us are asleep spiritually, and there is a battle that has been going on **behind the scenes** ever since the beginning of the creation (Romans

13:11-14; Genesis 3:1-6). This battle was started by Satan, who seeks to destroy human beings and turn them against the Creator (2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 12:7-12; Job 1-2; Matthew 4:1-11). Satan is like a parasite who seeks to corrupt God's good and wonderful creation.

There is a battle being waged on ultimate reality. If Satan can cast



doubts on the existence of God, then he will use that tactic. Does the God of the Bible exist? We can understand that (a) there is design in the universe that demands a Designer (Hebrews 3:4), (b) a universe that is contingently dependent upon a Cause that is timeless, spaceless and im-

material — which fits the description of a supreme Being known as God (Romans 1:20), and (c) God is the foundation of why we can understand there are certain objective moral values (Galatians 5:19-21; Romans 1:18-32).

There is a battle being waged on knowledge. Satan wants us to doubt whether we can even know certain things are true or false. It would put us in a self-contradictory position to assert that we cannot know anything (when we can know that one thing)! If Jesus taught us that it was possible for man to know the truth, then it is possible for man to know and to be sure of the truth (John 8:31-32). There are many people who believe the Bible cannot be understood by all people alike, and that encourages the multiplicity of different religious denominations and the teachings of error. Was God not powerful enough to communicate His Word to us? Was God not wise enough to communicate to us? Did God not have the desire to communicate to us what He clearly wanted? Those who believe we cannot understand the Bible alike cast doubt upon the infinite attributes of God.

There is a battle being waged on the origin of mankind.

The “theory” of macroevolution (amoeba to man) continues to have a firm holding in our educational systems, textbooks and media outlets. If Satan can get us to cast doubt on our origin, then he will try to keep us in that alternate fantasy world of believing there is (a) no free will, (b) no ultimate

foundation for morality and ethics, (c) no ultimate meaning, and (d) no existence after physical death (Provine).

There is a battle being waged on the identity and the history of mankind. Even if our true origins are twisted and distorted by false worldviews such as naturalism, Buddhism, etc., in addition, Satan also does not want us to know our true identity and our true history that is found in Genesis. Human beings were made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). We are the crown of His creation (Psalm 8). All of us who are accountable to God have sinned against Him and have separated ourselves from Him (Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:1-2). It was through the line of Adam and Eve, Abraham, etc. that there would come a Victor who would conquer the devil and reverse what had been done (Genesis 3:15; 12:1-3)!

There is a battle being waged on morality and values. Satan wants us to believe and to hold to his lies because he is the father of all liars (John 8:44). He does not want the truth of God's Word to influence you (Matthew 13:19). He wants you to believe: (a) we are **not** bound by any commandments under the new covenant age (Hebrews 8:8-13; Isaiah 2:2-4), (b) abortion, homosexuality, pedophilia, pornography, drunkenness, profanity, covetousness, etc. are **not** sins (Galatians 5:19-21; Romans 1:18-32), (d) we are **not** responsible or accountable for how we act in this life (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Romans 6:23), (e) marriage is **not** a lifelong commitment in a God-approved marriage between one male and one female (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-12), (f) abortion is **not** the murder of a human being, and (g) sex outside of a God-approved marriage (fornication, adultery, homosexuality, pedophilia, bestiality, etc.) is **not** sinful (Revelation 21:8).

There is a battle being waged on the destiny of mankind. Satan will try to get us to cast doubt on Heaven and Hell. Satan will try to change our view that Hell is not a place of eternal, conscious punishment (Jude 7; Matthew 25:41-46; Mark 9:42-48; Revelation 14:9-11).

There is a battle being waged on doctrines of the Bible. Satan wants you to believe: (a) there are no specified roles for men and women (1 Timothy 2:8-15), (b) water immersion is not a necessary component of the faith-obedient response to obtain salvation (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:20-21) and (c) we can do whatever we want in new covenant worship because no authority is needed (Colossians 3:17). We could list much more, but he is waging a battle to corrupt our minds. Satan

wants us to give up certain doctrines that are clearly taught in the Bible.

B. THE BANNER OF PEACE

His Ancestry (Isaiah 11:1): *“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.”* As Satan has targeted many areas of God’s creation, he has indeed unleashed havoc and chaos on getting the human race to fight against God. We have allowed ourselves to become selfish, made war against the wrong Person — God — and fought among ourselves. Can we be at peace with God, with one another and within ourselves? What is the solution to this predicament? The solution is found in God Himself — who came as a human being (from the line of David, the son of Jesse, Matthew 1:1), conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20) and Who died on the cross for our sins so that we might be forgiven — if we respond to His gracious call with faith and obedience (John 1:14).

His Anointing (Isaiah 11:2): *“The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.”* Jesus was chosen to be the Messiah (“the Anointed One”). He was empowered by the Holy Spirit at His baptism (Matthew 3:13-17; Acts 10:38).

His Administration (Isaiah 11:3-5): *“His delight is in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist.”* The reign of God was given into the hands of Jesus and He was given all authority and power in Heaven and on earth when He ascended to be at the right hand of God (Hebrews 1:1-4; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:17-20). Jesus is the perfect King because He has a faithful and a righteous character; therefore, He treats everyone equally. His administration is perfect in every way, and we should all desire to manifest His reign in our lives. He brings true peace into our lives so that we can be at peace with God, with our neighbors and within ourselves.


His Accomplishments (Isaiah 11:6-16, verses 10-11): *“And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to*

the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious. It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left, From Assyria and Egypt, From Pathros and Cush, From Elam and Shinar, From Hamath and the islands of the sea.”

On June 6, 1944 (known as “D-Day”), a famous day in World War II, the Allied powers were able to invade the beaches of Normandy, France and take it back from the Axis powers. Although the war did not end that day and continued almost another year (May 8, 1945 — “V-Day”), it marked the beginning of the end for Axis powers. When Jesus came and accomplished His mission, that was “D-Day” marked out for the devil and his evil forces because the reign of God through Jesus was invading with righteousness what had been corrupted with evil. Jesus paved the ultimate exodus in that He is able to deliver us from the bondage of sin by granting us access back into His life-giving presence (John 10:10). The hostility between God and us can cease because we have been brought back into a right relationship with God through the Gospel. Even though faithful Christians are involved in this spiritual war, we can experience that *“peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:7).

CONCLUSION

The devil is on the losing side. His destiny is an eternal hell (Matthew 25:41). The devil is doing all in his power to deceive humans to join his side. The devil is not going to give up!

Jesus is still holding up the banner high, shouting out the **battle call**, rallying faithful Christian soldiers around the banner and waging war against the devil. Jesus wants all to come, trust and obey the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16). He commands us to put on the whole armor of God so we can withstand the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:10-18). Jesus is winning! Let us fight the good fight of faith (2 Timothy 4:6-8). May we look forward to that day of victory when Jesus returns and the war will finally be over. Then, we can all go to that eternal peaceful home with the Lord. 

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1932—2008

Why Do So Many People Accept False Doctrines?

J.C. Choate

To those who read the Bible and know God’s will, the question arises as to why so many accept false teaching. Why are they so easily deceived and led astray? Can’t people see the difference between the truth and a lie?

Of course many *want* to be deceived. They look for a teaching that agrees with what their parents taught them, with what they already believe or with the kind of life they want to live. Others are impressed by some popular personality to the point that they get to thinking that this is surely the truth because so many are following it, and if “I don’t accept it, I am rejecting the truth.” **Paul said that this was also true of those who had been deceived by the things of the world:**

*“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who **suppress the truth** in unrighteousness, ...although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore*

God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” (Romans 1:18-32).

A good example of how people can be influenced is found in the music world. You can take a mediocre piece of music or a song and play it enough that it turns into a number one hit. Another example is where someone with money can take an unknown and give him enough publicity that he becomes a world-renowned personality. One can be trained to like a fruit or vegetable by eating it often enough. We know in the fashion world, in sports or with any product or activity, “nothings” can become popular when enough publicity is given to them, if enough use it or do it. Politicians are notorious for running commercials that are lies, but when aired enough, they have the same desired effects as if they were the truth.

The lies promoted as truths are much worse when morals are corrupted, as is the case throughout the world today. As Paul described in the passage we just read from Romans, **our world accepts many heinous sins as culturally “alright” simply because they have come to be so widely practiced.**

False things accepted as truth is certainly the case in the religious world. I wonder how many times the story has been told about the thief on the cross being saved without baptism to try to prove that any sinner can be saved today without baptism. How many times have you heard that one church is as good as another, that one can be saved by faith only, that all humans are born in sin and thousands of other erroneous religious doctrines that have been accepted as truth for centuries?

False teachings are well known and accepted because the majority of preachers and teachers are proclaiming them all over the world in a popular manner. They are well packaged in printed form, on radio and TV, in beautiful meeting houses, through schools and hospitals, and in many other ways that are appealing to the masses. Because they have wide acceptance, they are deemed to be the truth.

On the other hand, congregations of the Lord's church are usually small. We have only a few preachers who are preaching the whole truth, and when we condemn error and ask that people return to the Bible for God's will, we are often rejected, criticized and portrayed as a little group that thinks it is the only group going to Heaven. Sometimes, even weaker brethren succumb to these criticisms and rejections by giving up and joining the opposition. This is sad, indeed, since the majority accepting a thing does not make it right. Christ Himself said, ***“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it”*** (Matthew 7:13,14). Was our Lord in the minority or in the majority?

We must remember that the Lord's Word is Truth (John 17:17) and that **only the truth** makes us free (John 8:32). Christ also said, ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me.”*** (John 14:6). Finally, He said that if we reject Him and His word, we have one that will judge us in the last day (John 12:48).

Keep in mind that even though the majority may believe and practice something, that does not make it right. Don't follow men and their teachings, since there is the great likelihood that they are wrong. **Hear the Word of the Lord, believe it and obey it, and only then will you be right.** Remember that God's way is right even though all may be against it. Do it God's way if you want to be saved eternally. †



GOD IS UNDER ATTACK!

Byron Nichols

Dear friends, I am writing this with a heavy heart. It is exceedingly sad, but true. **We are at war**, and the battle is being fought in America and in the rest of the world. I'm not referring to military, governmental matters, political matters but to **spiritual** matters — a spiritual battle that is rapidly spreading and intensifying.

WHAT PROMPTED THIS CONCERN?

One morning, I was going through my usual routine of eating my breakfast while reading the local newspaper that had just been delivered. I came across an article that ruined my day. The article was written by a well-known columnist who writes material that is printed in many newspapers across the country. He titled this article, ***“So, when does God accept His/Her share of blame?”*** Let me reveal to you now just a few excerpts directly from the article.

But we don't seem to hold this Omnipotent Being responsible for His or Her actions. Let the heavens open and dump a foot-and-a-half of snow on your street, and before the afternoon is out, you're blaming the government for not clearing it off yet. But you never blame the Being that put the snow there in the first place. ...Our

money tells us “In God We Trust,” but it doesn’t tell us what we trust Him/ Her to do. Do we trust God to be just and loving? I hope not because He/She is not doing a very good job. ...Never underestimate God’s ability to take a bad situation and make it worse. But it’s government that gets the blame.

These quotations are just a small portion of the disgraceful misrepresentation of our God that appeared in newspapers all across America. It is not only disgraceful that the writer wrote such blasphemous things about our Creator, but he also was given the opportunity of exposing millions of other readers to such mockery of the Father of all mankind.

A QUICK LOOK AT GOD AS HE TRULY IS

That writer and others would have us believe that God (if He even exists, and if He actually is a He) is in fact utterly weak and limited. However, the Genesis account of creation presents just the opposite picture of the one and only true God. Not only did God bring the



whole universe into existence, He continues to monitor the situation and provides ongoing care for His creatures. It only takes a fair-minded assessment of our surroundings to verify the existence, power, and love of God.

Psalms 19:1 declares, ***“The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.”*** Paul affirmed the deity and power in Romans 1:20, where he penned, ***“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.”*** That columnist and others like him seem to want to portray our God as one of severe harshness, much like a being that would brandish a huge club and destroy the helpless and the hopeless.

The Bible, as a book of total honesty and fairness, reveals that God

can indeed be demanding and severe, depending on the circumstances, but it likewise shows that God is exceedingly good. Paul wrote, *“Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness”* (Romans 11:22). Anyone who sincerely wants to know what God is like will be delighted to become aware that God is an intensely **loving** God. He is so loving that John says in both 1 John 4:8 and 16, *“God is love.”* John affirmed that God is the very personification of love; He is the epitome of love; He loves to the highest possible degree!

It is imperative that we understand that **our God is under a vicious and wicked attack** from many who have either knowingly or unknowingly become pawns in the hands of Satan. Jesus said that we are either **for** or **against** Him (Matthew 12:30), and the same has to be true regarding God the Father.

We have many times sung the great song, *“Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus.”* As Christians, it certainly is time for us to stand up together for both Jesus and God. Hopefully, these words by an unnamed writer will be of benefit as we think about our God.

MY OATH TO YOU

WHEN YOU ARE SAD, I WILL DRY YOUR TEARS.

WHEN YOU ARE SCARED, I WILL COMFORT YOUR FEARS.

WHEN YOU ARE CONFUSED, I WILL HELP YOU COPE.

WHEN YOU ARE LOST AND CAN'T SEE THE LIGHT,
I SHALL BE YOUR BEACON, SHINING EVER SO BRIGHT.

THIS IS MY OATH, I PLEDGE 'TILL THE END.

WHY, YOU MAY ASK? .BECAUSE I'M YOUR FRIEND.

SIGNED

GOD





5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Trust in the Lord

Paula Bates

1. Blessed is the man that _____ in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a _____ planted by the waters, which spreads out its _____ by the river, and will not fear when _____ comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding _____. Jeremiah 17:7-8
2. The Lord redeems the soul of His _____, and none of those who trust in Him shall be _____. Psalm 34:22
3. For to this end we both labor and suffer _____, because we trust in the _____ God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who _____. 1 Timothy 4:10
4. Now may the God of _____ fill you with all joy and _____ in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the _____. Romans 15:13
5. For whatever is born of _____ overcomes the world, and this is the _____ that has overcome the _____ — our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the _____ of God? 1 John 5:4-5



- Answers:**
1. trust, tree, roots, heart, fruit
 2. servants, condemned
 3. reproach, living, believe
 4. hope, peace, Holy Spirit
 5. God, victory, world, Son

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The Humility of Jesus

Royce Frederick

Jesus told us to be humble (Matthew 23:12). Did He practice what He preached? Consider some examples from His life.

He left the glory of Heaven to come to Earth. Jesus had the very best home, the ultimate *comfort zone*! Yet, He left it for us. *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men”* (Philippians 2:5-7). Can you leave your comfort zone to serve God? Who provided your comfort zone (James 1:17)?

He chose a lowly birth. He was not born in a king’s palace but in a stable, and He was laid in a manger (Luke 2:1-7). He was born into a poor family, and He had to help them by working as a carpenter (Mark 6:3). Do you envy other people who have more things or more expensive things than you?

He obeyed His parents during His childhood. He *“was subject to them”* (Luke 2:51). Is it always easy to obey your parents and honor them? Obeying your parents *“in the Lord”* is always right, and it is pleasing to God (Colossians 3:20; Ephesians 6:1-3).

He did not seek riches, houses and land. He warned one man who wanted to follow Him, *“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests,*

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but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Luke 9:58). Are you devoting your life to having your *heaven on earth*? Where is your treasure (Matthew 6:21)?

He was rejected by some cities, yet He did not seek revenge. People in His hometown tried to push Him over a cliff, but He simply passed through the crowd and left (Luke 4:29). Near Gadara, He cast demons out of two men. However, the people were afraid of His power (Mark 5:15); *“the whole city came out to meet Jesus. And when they saw Him, they begged Him to depart from their region”* (Matthew 8:34). Instead of getting angry, He got back into the boat and left. Another time, when a Samaritan village refused to let Jesus enter, two disciples wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy them. Instead, He rebuked His disciples and went peaceably to a different village (Luke 9:51-56). When you try to teach someone, and that person rejects God’s Word, do you leave peaceably and give the seed a chance to germinate in one’s heart? Do you keep on inviting and trying to teach others?

He mixed freely with outcasts and lowly people. Jesus did not seek to *hang out* with evil people all the time, but He *did welcome everyone*. He was not ashamed to eat with tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 9:10-13). He invited all who are troubled, saying, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28). His compassion was probably one reason why *“the common people heard Him gladly”* (Mark 12:37). We should seek godly friends, not evil ones (1 Corinthians 15:33; 2 Timothy 2:22). However, we should be sure to *welcome everyone* (Hebrews 13:2; James 2:1; Romans 15:7).

He did not seek earthly fame. Jesus chose to be born into a family that was neither famous nor powerful. He made Himself of no reputation (Philippians 2:7). He did not even seek attention by preaching loudly in the streets (Matthew 12:15-21). Some people wanted to make Him an earthly king, but He refused (John 6:15; Matthew 4:8-10). He later explained, *“My kingdom is not of this world”* (John 18:36). He did not seek worldly fame, yet He became famous through His humble service. Do you seek the praise and approval of the world (John 12:42-43; Luke 6:26; James 4:4)?

He helped people who would not let Him rest. When Jesus heard

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about the death of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:13), and when the disciples had returned from a special mission, He told them, “***Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat***” (Mark 6:31). So, they went in a boat to a deserted place. However, the multitude ran on foot and met Him at the shore. Instead of losing His patience, Jesus healed the sick, taught them and fed them (Matthew 14:14-22). Are you patient and kind when people will not let you rest?

He submitted to the authority of God and human government. Jesus taught, “***Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s***” (Matthew 22:21). He obeyed God’s Old Law for Israel, and He even paid the Temple tax (Galatians 4:4; Matthew 26:18; 17:27). True humility includes submitting to God and His Word, but not to doctrines of men (Matthew 15:13; 2 John 9; Jude 3). Humility also involves submitting to the laws of government, unless a law is against God’s Word (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17; Acts 5:29).

He served His disciples. The night before His death, Jesus washed the feet of His apostles, including Judas (John 13:1-17). Is there any good work that you think is beneath your dignity?

He poured out His heart to God in prayer. Before choosing His twelve apostles, Jesus “***continued all night in prayer to God***” (Luke 6:12). He often prayed far into the night (Matthew 14:23-25), or Jesus rose up very early to pray (Mark 1:35). The night before His death, He prayed fervently with sweat and tears, asking God to spare Him from suffering and death (Luke 22:44; Hebrews 5:7). However, He also said, “***Your will be done***” (Matthew 26:42). Do you pour out your heart to God in prayer (1 Peter 5:5-7)? Then, do you humbly accept His will?

He endured mockery and abuse without retaliating. Religious leaders, soldiers and other people slapped Him, spat on Him, whipped Him, insulted Him and mocked Him (Matthew 27:27-44). Yet, Jesus did not even say angry things at them (1 Peter 2:21-24). Instead, He prayed, “***Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do***” (Luke 23:34). Do people sometimes push you *too far*? Do they *cross the line*? Where is


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your *line*, or what is the limit of your patience?

He gave His life for our sins. Jesus knew far ahead of time that He would suffer and die (Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; Isaiah 53; 1 Peter 1:11). However, He went to the cross willingly. “...**He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross**” (Philippians 2:8). Is your life a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1)? “... **He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren**” (1 John 3:16).

He continued serving after His death and resurrection. Shouldn't it be enough that Jesus gave His life for us? After that, couldn't He *retire* from serving? God gave His risen Son all authority in Heaven and on Earth (Matthew 28:18). Yet, Jesus *never* stopped *servicing*. He even cooked breakfast for His disciples by the sea. He was the risen Lord! Yet, He prepared fish and bread, and then, Jesus served it to them (John 21:9-13). Have you served enough? Do you **tire** and want to **retire** from serving God (Galatians 6:9-10; 1 Corinthians 15:58)?

He's still servicing. Jesus *changed jobs*, but He did *not quit* serving. He was exalted to the highest place, to a throne on the right side of God (Philippians 2:9-11; Acts 2:33-34). However, He is still serving *us*, always *interceding* for us (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25).

The entire life of Jesus is an example of humility. He was the Son of God walking in the midst of the sinful people He had created (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). Yet, He did not parade around with pride and pomp like earthly kings love to do. He told His disciples, “**You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many**” (Matthew 20:25-28). 

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The Three Crosses of Calvary

Cliff Holmes

Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:39-43 NKJV)

We have heard and read the Scriptures concerning the three crosses on calvary the day that Jesus was crucified. Each cross has its own meaning and significance for all of us.

Cross Number One:

The Cross of Rashness, Rebellion and Rejection

The criminal hanging there in agony took no thought for the reason that he should suffer this awful fate. He rashly taunted Christ. He, in anger and rejection, mockingly called out, ***"Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us."*** He not only rejected Christ, but in total rebellion, he refused to acknowledge his own responsibility for his sinful ways.

Cross Number Two:

The Cross of Repentance, Reception and Request

This man showed repentance in his rebuke of the man who had railed on the Lord Jesus. He, in asking, ***"Do you not fear God?"*** accepted the fact that he himself was responsible for his own plight. He, then, expressed his acknowledgement of who Christ was, recognizing the pure innocence and sinlessness of the Son of God. Next, he asked only that Jesus remember

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him once He had come into His kingdom. This was truly a humble request from a penitent sinner.

Cross Number Three: The Cross of Righteousness, Redemption and Relief

Jesus Christ, the righteous Son of God, felt this repentant sinner's anguish of heart, soul and spirit. Jesus extended redemption to that poor, dying soul and granted relief and the promise of paradise in the life hereafter with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and the holy angels.

The lessons we should take from the three crosses of Calvary are these. Avoid a life that leads to the cross of rashness, rebellion and rejection. Live a life that leads to repentance, acknowledgement of the Lord Jesus and the right to make your humble request for the righteousness, redemption and relief that can only be found in the loving arms of our Lord Jesus. It was He who died on that third cross. He did it for you, for me and for all mankind.✝

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The Influence of the Bible

T. Pierce Brown

Regrettably, I do not now seem to find time to read as widely in classical literature as I might. However, yesterday I again picked up some of Shakespeare's writings for a few moments and was impressed again with what I had noted many years ago when I read more from great authors. Practically everyone I remember would frequently allude to some biblical story or character. A person reading their writings without a familiarity with the Bible would have found it "flat, stale and unprofitable," as Hamlet put it.

The assumption of those great writers that their readers would be familiar with the Bible reveals a great deal about their own familiarity with it, as well as the great esteem in which they held it. A lengthy article could be filled with specific quotations from multitudes of great men of literature, art, sculpture, science and various other disciplines that show their respect or reverence for the Bible. It is at least as impressive to me to find literally thousands of allusions to some remote biblical circumstance with the awareness that their readers did not need a footnote with an explanation of the time and place of its occurrence.

One might expect to find this in the writings of Alexander Campbell, Moses E. Lard or others of the great Restoration, or even those of the Reformation movement, but to find it so widely in men of general literary fame is instructive. If there is any one thing that more readily shows the influence of the Bible and the respect in which it was held, I do not know of it.

Seldom have I found it advisable to accuse a man of lying, but if I should ever need to do so, I should like to be able to do it as superbly as did Moses Lard. He said, in reviewing Mr. Jeter's book, *Campbellism Examined*, "It is to be regretted that an author whose pedigree points to an American origin should still by his speech so often betray a Cretin extraction." Brother Lard expected his readers, largely men of religious interest, to understand his allusion to Titus 2:12 without any explanation.

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It is almost equally fascinating to hear Shakespeare saying, “The sons of Edward sleep in Abraham’s bosom” (showing his familiarity with such passages as Luke 16:22) or Pope saying, “Who sees with equal eye, a God of all, A hero perish or a sparrow fall” (indicating his familiarity with such passages as Matthew 10:29-31). One might expect Bunyan, Milton or others who were writing of biblical themes to fill their writings with such references, but when so many others, whatever their theme, are found doing it, it gives us particular pleasure.



Although it is probably possible to read most of the kinds of literature produced in recent generations without knowing anything about the Bible (and much of it could not be read with interest by anyone who cared much about the Bible), if we want our children to understand some of the greatest literature of the ages, we will have to help them learn the Bible. ✝

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THE WORD OF GOD

Learning the Truths of the Will of God

Ronald D. Reeves

The ideal congregation responds positively when encouraged to better learn the truths of the will of God, the body of divinely revealed knowledge that is essential for our personal salvation. Our spiritual screen must ever allow the fresh gentle breeze of God's Word to penetrate deeply into the whole of our spiritual house. Our spiritual screen must also be strong enough to prevent



pests of error from entering our personal and congregational fellowship (Ephesians 5:11). To be such a people, let us view ourselves as students truly in need of a greater measure of knowledge of the Word of God. Let us be committed to

growing beyond spiritual infancy (Ephesians 4:15), accompanying such commitment with decisive action. Let us plan well and readily implement our plan as we seek success in spiritual growth. May we open our minds anew to the wonders of the Word of God. May we hunger and thirst after righteousness more so than we ever have in the past (Matthew 5:6). Growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord is worthy of our best efforts (2 Peter 3:18)! †

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THE WORD OF GOD

The Conclusion


Denny Petrillo

Much has been said. Many topics covered. Yet, Solomon in all his wisdom reduced his conclusion to two simple truths: “***fear God and keep His commandments***” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Are these really simple truths? In one sense, yes. There isn’t a whole lot of theology involved, not a need to call in the scholars to explain to us their meaning. In another sense, these points are remarkably complex. Indeed, volumes have been written discussing the many facets to these two statements.

Why, though, do these two truths entail “the conclusion”? Solomon explains with his two “because” clauses. Why should we fear God and keep His commandments?

First, because this applies to every person. While other points made through the Book of Ecclesiastes have application to some, this point doesn’t. The rich need to hear this along with the poor. Those in foreign lands as well as our next-door neighbors need to hear these truths. So do the old and the young, the brave, the weak, world leaders and hermits. Think about it. Who doesn’t need to be told to “***fear God***”? Who doesn’t need to be encouraged to “***keep His commandments***”?

Second, because God will bring every act to judgment. Everyone needs to hear this because everyone will be judged (Revelation 20:11-14; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Acts 17:30-31). Does this mean that, literally, no one will escape God’s Judgment? Yes! This is why it is imperative for people to know what lies ahead. They need to think about the future and prepare for it (Matthew 24:36ff).

All has been heard. What remains to be said? “***Fear God and keep His commandments!***” 

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

I Know My Name Is Written There

Rodney Nulph

One of the great hymns often sung for *“teaching and admonishing one another”* (Colossians 3:16) is a song entitled, “I Know My Name Is Written There.” This song was written by Daniel Sidney Warner, a denominational preacher in the Church of God in the late 1800’s. This song centers around the *“book of Life.”* The Book of Life is a very special book that God revealed throughout the pages of inspiration. The things that God revealed about this wonderful book are comforting to those who have obeyed the Gospel and are remaining true to it.


The Book of Life — Past The first mention of the Book of Life came from the pen of Moses. In fact, Moses offered to have his name erased from this book for the sake of Israel. *“And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written”* (Exodus 32:31-32). As noble as Moses’ intentions were, thankfully, for Moses sake, God does not operate in such a way. David went to the other extreme and asked God to remove the names of David’s enemies from the Book of Life. *“Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous”* (Psalm 69:28; cf., Isaiah 4:3; Daniel 12:1; Malachi 3:16). From various other Old Testament passages, it appears that the Jews kept a register of their citizens, which was known as the Book of the Living (Ezekiel 13:9; Nehemiah 12:22ff). From this register, they would add names of those born and remove names of those who died each year.

The Book of Life — Present When we turn to the pages of the New

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Testament, we see the Book of Life again, but now it does not deal with physical Israel but rather with spiritual Israel, the church of our Lord. Upon returning from the Limited Commission, the disciples, excited about their God-given powers, were told to not rejoice in miracles, ***“but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven”*** (Luke 10:20b). Paul, by inspiration’s pen, affirmed that the names of many of those who labored with him from the church in Philippi ***“are in the book of life”*** (Philippians 4:3). How comforting it must have been for the persecuted saints during John’s time to know that faithfulness would ensure that their names would not be blotted out of the Book of Life (Revelation 3:5). Writing of Heaven itself, John penned, ***“And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life”*** (Revelation 21:27).

The Book of Life—Personally Is your name written in the Lamb’s Book of Life? Only those whose names are written there are going to Heaven (Revelation 21:27). Therefore, it is imperative that our names are inscribed upon the Book of Life’s pages. How does one get his name written there? For God to record our names in the Book of Life, we must become spiritually alive to God. When we die to sin and are born again (John 3:3-5; Romans 6:1-5), our names are written in the book of the living. If we continue faithfully and never quit, our names will continue to be chiseled upon the sacred pages of God’s Book of Life (Revelation 3:5). However, our names can be removed from this book as well. If we become unfaithful to our Lord and His church, ***“God shall take away his part from the book of life”*** (Revelation 22:19).

Have you obeyed Jesus? Are you currently faithful to Him and His kingdom? There are only two groups of people — those whose names are written in the Book of Life and those whose names are not written therein (Revelation 13:8; 17:8). Eternity is at stake; make sure your name is written there! For what a comfort it is to honestly sing, “I know, I know my name is written there”! 

Rodney Nulph is a Gospel preacher and the Associate Editor of Gospel Gazette Online magazine. He resides in Beavertown, Pennsylvania, USA.

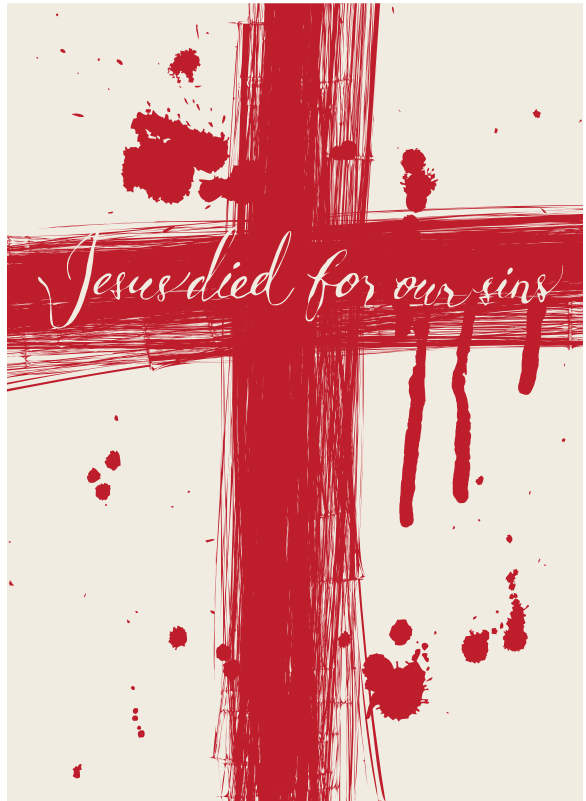
SALVATION

LET HIS BLOOD BE UPON US

Mark McWhorter


When the Jewish leaders brought Jesus to Pilate, they wanted Pilate to kill Him. Pilate tried several ways to figure out how not to find Jesus guilty unto death. He finally made them choose between Jesus and a known murderer, Barabbas (Mark 15:7). To his surprise, the Jewish leaders managed to influence the crowd to ask for the release of Barabbas (Matthew 27:20). Pilate wanted to know what he should do with Jesus.

The crowd cried out that they wanted Him crucified, but they went even further in their insistence that he be killed. It is recorded in Matthew 27:25 that they stated, ***“His blood be on us, and on our children.”*** That is a remarkable statement. They wanted it on record that they desired His blood to be shed,



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and they wanted it known that they took responsibility for it. It is sad that this was not the way Jesus wanted His blood to be used. They took their rejection of His life and love for them as a badge of honor. Jesus intended to shed His blood, but He was doing so to save them. Instead, they rejected Him.

Later, the Jewish leaders got extremely angry when an inspired Christian accused them of having Christ's blood on their hands. In Acts 5:28, the Jews told the apostles to stop bringing Jesus' blood upon them. This is an amazing indication of hypocrisy. They took responsibility for His death when it was convenient. Then, they wanted to deny their responsibility when it was not convenient. It is also sad that Jesus and the apostles would have loved for the Jewish leaders to have accepted the blood of Jesus in the right way. Rather than taking credit for His death in a gloating way, they should have been acknowledging guilt in killing Him, and then, allowing the blood of Jesus to immerse them and cleanse them as entrance into the kingdom of Christ. Study your Bible. Learn all you can about our great Savior. Learn how to let His blood be upon you. Then obey Jesus. 

[Editor's Note: Happily, about 3,000 Jews, on the birthday of the Lord's church, did acknowledge their guilt in the death of Jesus Christ. They were baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:22-23, 36-38, 41). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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

ROBISON'S RUBIES

Luke 3 opens with a story set purposely in a historical context. Luke says in verses 1-2, *“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.”* There are the names of seven governing officials from the time frame claimed by the author. Why is this significant? If one were writing a fraudulent document trying to fool people, he would not include the names of officials that could be checked with other historical records. The Bible, though, never shies away from setting itself in a definite, checkable historical context. The more archaeological records that are discovered, the more the historical nature of the Bible is proven.

SALVATION

WHAT WAS PAUL'S “MUST DO” TO BE SAVED?


David Conley

We are all very familiar with the question, “What must I do to be saved?” It is the most important question that anyone will ever ask. It has been asked by millions of people over the centuries. When the first century Jews asked Peter, “*What shall we do?*” (Acts 2:37), Peter promptly told them to “*repent and be baptized*” (Acts 2:38). What about Paul? He was on the road to Damascus to arrest Christians who had asked that question, had received the answer and had obeyed the Gospel. What was Paul’s **must do** to be saved?

He personally **spoke with Jesus**, but did that save him? Paul asked Jesus, “*What wilt thou have me to do?*” Jesus answered him, “*Go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do*” (Acts 9:6). Therefore, a personal visit with Jesus Himself did not put Paul in a saved relationship with God. There was something that Paul had to be “**told**.”

He **fasted** for three days, and yet, did that save him? Paul was “*three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.*” (Acts 9:9). He **prayed** for the same three days, but did that save him? “Behold he prayeth” (Acts 9:11). He **saw a vision**; however, did that save him? He “*hath seen a vision*” (Acts 9:12). Further, he **received a miracle**, but did that save him? “*He received his sight forthwith*” (Acts 9:18).

When Paul recalled this wonderful experience, he **told** it to a large Jewish mob. He explained that he was **told** what to do. Ananias, a Christian, came to him and **told** him, “*And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (Acts 22:16).

When Paul experienced an encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, it caused him to believe, repent and confess — leading to his fasting and prayer. Nevertheless, Paul still had to be **told** to be **baptized**. When he was told what to do to be saved, he obeyed. Will we? 

David Conley is the pulpit minister of the Liberty Church of Christ in Dennis, Mississippi, USA.



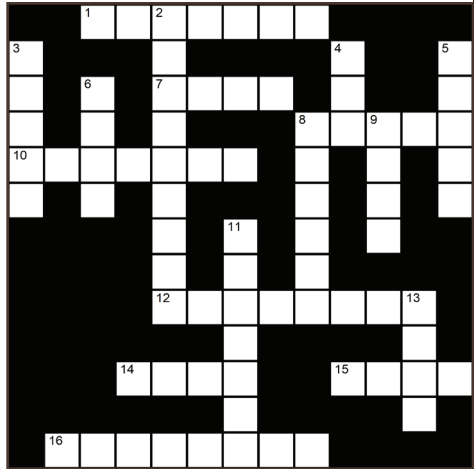
Bible Find

Martha Rushmore

WHO AM I?

ACROSS

1. Jesus raised him from death, John 11:43-44
7. First murderer, Genesis 4:8
8. Crucified for us! Mark 15:24-25
10. Husband of Sarah, Genesis 17:5
12. Wife of Ananias, Acts 5:1
14. Physician, Colossians 4:14
15. Built the ark, Genesis 6:13
16. He saved David from death, 1 Samuel 20:2-4



DOWN

2. Climbed a tree, Luke 19:2-4
3. Betrayed Christ, Matthew 26:15-16
4. First woman, Genesis 3:20
5. He parted the Red Sea, Exodus 14:21
6. Sat at the feet of Jesus, Luke 10:39
8. Had a coat (tunic) of many colors, Genesis 37:3
9. Paul's other name, Acts 12:9
11. Son of Noah, Genesis 6:10
13. First man, Genesis 2:19

Verse Search



1 CORINTHIANS 15:29-49

Jerry Bates

1. Why did Paul say he was willing to live in jeopardy? (v. 30)
2. If the dead do not rise, by what philosophy did Paul say man should live? (v. 32)
3. “Evil company corrupts _____.” (v. 33)
4. What did Paul encourage the Corinthian Christians to do? (v. 34)
5. What question did the skeptics of the resurrection often bring up to ridicule the idea of the resurrection? (v. 35)
6. What sort of body did Paul say we would have after the resurrection, and who gives the body? (v. 38)
7. How many kinds of flesh is there for men? (v. 39)
8. Are the glory of all the celestial and terrestrial bodies the same? (v. 40)
9. “The body is sown in _____; it is raised in _____.” (v. 42)
10. “There is a _____ body, and there is a _____ body.” (v. 44)
11. “The first Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a _____ spirit.” (v. 45)
12. The first man was made of _____; the second man is the _____ from Heaven. (v. 47)
13. What image will we bear after we are raised? (v. 49)

(See the back cover for answers.)

VERSE SEARCH

29 Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? **30** And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? **31** I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. **32** If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!”

33 Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.” **34** Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

35 But someone will say, “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?” **36** Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. **37** And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain — perhaps wheat or some other grain. **38** But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body.

39 All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds.

40 There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of terrestrial is another. **41** There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.

42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. **43** It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. **44** It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. **45** And so it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. **47** The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. **48** As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. **49** And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

THE CHURCH

CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Tom Baxley

Bodies are composed of many members with differing functions (1 Corinthians 12; Romans 12), and this is true of the Lord's body — the church — as well (Colossians 1:18). Ephesians 4:11 states that some were given as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists and some as pastors. No one alive today meets the qualifications to be an apostle (Acts 1:21ff), and prophecy was a miraculous gift of the 1st century, and as such, it is no longer present. (Only apostles could pass on the ability to others to perform miracles, Acts 8:18.) This leaves us with evangelists and pastors. The evangelist is the one who proclaims the Gospel, and pastors are the ones more commonly known as elders (Acts 20:17, also known in Scripture as shepherds or pastors, Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2).



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miracles, Acts 8:18.) This leaves us with evangelists and pastors. The evangelist is the one who proclaims the Gospel, and pastors are the ones more commonly known as elders (Acts 20:17, also known in Scripture as shepherds or pastors, Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2).

Deacons are important to the body as well, but their task is a different one. According to their establishment in Acts 6, their purpose is to meet physical needs while the leadership focuses on the spiritual needs. This doesn't make one role more important than another, just like one part of your body is not more important than another. What this means is that for bodies to function properly, the different members need to be present and working together to bring glory to the Head — Jesus. ✝

Tom Baxley preaches for the Highway Nine Church of Christ in Piedmont, Alabama, USA.

THE CHURCH

What is Church Growth?

Dan R. Owen

“What is Church Growth?” We ask this question from a biblical perspective, using a biblical definition of “church” and a biblical definition of “growth.” The Church Growth Movement in the U.S. studies congregations of any denomination as sociological phenomena and determines characteristics of expanding congregations. Many principles from these studies are applicable to the quest for biblical church growth, but there are points at which they diverge. So, what is church growth?

First, it would be helpful to understand what church growth is not. Church growth is not congregational swelling due to Christians playing congregational musical chairs. When members in a community go from one congregation to another, the church is not growing. The kingdom is not advancing.

Next, large crowds do not necessarily equate to church growth. Crowds that gather for marriage seminars, graduation days, mother’s day or a special children’s program are great, but if people in those crowds are not taught the Gospel so that they respond in obedience, the church does not grow. Theoretically, then, attendance could be quite large, but unless people are being taught and baptized, there is no church growth.

Church growth comes from the kingdom seed. The seed is the Word of God. When it is planted in human hearts, there is the possibility of church growth. When the word is accepted in a good and honest heart, a person is convicted. Once convicted, the thinking changes, and there is conversion. Once the thinking is altered, there is a decision and initial obedience to the Gospel in baptism. When that happens, the Lord adds the redeemed person to His church. That is church growth.

As the kingdom seed spreads through a person’s life and character, that is also church growth. God continues to work in the convert’s heart to change and mold character, to produce a new lifestyle and to mature the individual spiritually to the point of service and the influence of others for Christ. This is the growth of the rule of God in an individual’s life.

THE CHURCH



All true church growth originates from the kingdom seed, the Word of God. The church grows only when people receive it, respond to the Word of God in obedience, allowing it to take over their lives. In order for this to happen, we need to contact people. We need to expose people to the Word. We need to develop and maintain relationships with people. This is where many principles of the Church Growth Movement become valuable because they help us gain exposure to the maximum number of people. As we pursue church growth, let us be careful to remember what church growth really is. 🇺🇸

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



DID YOU KNOW?

When Jonah fled from God's command to go to Nineveh, Jonah got on a boat headed for Tarshish. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, in modern day Iraq. Tarshish was in modern day Spain, just outside the Mediterranean Sea. The two cities were on opposite sides of the known world, about 2,500 miles apart.

THE CHURCH

Seed of Abraham

Dwight Fuqua

God promised Abram, ***“I will make you a great nation”*** and ***“in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”*** (Genesis 12:1-3). When God later confirmed His covenant, He promised Abram that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars of heaven (Genesis 15:5). These promises were renewed with Isaac, Jacob and others.

What do these promises mean to us? When we first read them, our thoughts turn to the children of Israel and to the Promised Land. Yet, these promises cannot be fulfilled in and should not be limited to a physical nation. The seed of Abraham extends beyond national boundaries and physical genes.


Are you a Christian? Then you, my friend, are the seed of Abraham! Look at Galatians 3! Paul reasoned how Christ is the seed of Abraham (v. 16). He then concluded, ***“And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”*** (v. 29).

You are Christ’s! Abraham’s seed! A child of God! An heir to the promise! Awesome thoughts! John wrote, ***“Behold what manner of love the father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God”*** (1 John 3:1).

We are the seed of Abraham! We are the children of God! As the seed of Abraham and the children of God we are ***“heirs according to the promise.”*** Paul reminds us that the children of God are heirs of God (Romans 8:17). My brother, you have ***“an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you”*** (1 Peter 1:4).

We are the seed of Abraham! It does not matter whether we are Jews or Gentiles, slave or free, male or female. We are ***“all one in Christ Jesus”*** (Galatians 3:28). What a fantastic thought! ***“All one in Christ Jesus!”***

How does one become the seed of Abraham, a child of God? Paul wrote, ***“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”*** (Galatians 3:26-27). The very means by which one is saved from sin (faith and baptism, Mark 16:16) is the very means by which one becomes a child of God.

The seed of Abraham! ***“Beloved, now we are the children of God”*** (1 John 3:2). Keep thinking this thought! 


Dwight Fuqua preaches for the Findlay congregation in Sparta, Tennessee, USA.

LEARNING FROM GRACE

Wayne Barrier

The apostle Paul instructed Titus concerning lessons we should learn from an understanding of the grace of God. Paul wrote in Titus 2:11-3:9,

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you. Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward men appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy He saved us. Through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men. But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless.

We can be blessed beyond the merits of our works of righteousness by responding to the grace of God. Our place as His own special people is the greatest of all, and Jesus makes this possible. Learn from grace. 

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

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Why Do People Baptize Babies?

Sunny David

For many years, people have been taught that their babies must be baptized. The doctrine of infant baptism grew out of a belief that should a child die without having been baptized, he or she would suffer eternal punishment in Hell with the devil and his angels. It is supposed that souls share in Adam's guilt, and every person, therefore, is under condemnation and is punishable for the inherited guilt quite apart from any actual sins one may commit. Hence, the manmade doctrine of original sin teaches that children are born with the guilt of sin through inheritance and are depraved in nature.

However, this is not what the Bible teaches. Had it been so that children are born in sin, and thus depraved, Christ would not have said to His disciples, ***“Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted, and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven”*** (Matthew 18:3). Again, in another instance, when little children were being brought to Him so that He might put His hands on them and pray, His disciples rebuked those who were bringing their children to Him. Then, Jesus said to them, ***“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven”*** (Matthew 19:14). Now, if those children were depraved sinners, as some people suppose, why did Christ say, ***“of such is the kingdom of heaven”***? Further, why did He tell the disciples to become as little children to enter the kingdom of Heaven?

The truth of the matter is that babies, little children, have no sin in them. They are as pure as Adam and Eve were in the beginning when God created them after His own likeness and in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27). Adam and Eve were not created by God as little babies, but as full-grown man and woman. They were intelligent, rational, were able to differentiate between wrong and right, and Adam and Eve were able to choose to do or not to do a certain thing. However, they chose to disobey

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God's command, and therefore, the first pair became sinners when they did what God had commanded them not to do (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-13).



This is how sin is defined in the Bible. It says, ***“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness”*** (1 John 3:4). Adam and Eve disobeyed the law or the command of God and, thus, became sinners. Likewise, when a baby is born, he or she is without sin. He does not have the capability to understand right from wrong or the full consequences of disobedience. True, at an early age a child can begin to understand obedience to parental commands, but the concept of God and of obedience to Him, and the laws concerning sin and its consequences are beyond the mental capacity of a little child. However, when the baby grows and becomes


of a mature age — when he or she is able to know right from wrong, is able to make personal decisions, is able to choose to obey God or to disobey Him, when he or she is accountable to God — from that point onward, God holds him or her responsible for every action he or she does.

Some turn to Romans 3:23 to teach that all are born with the sin of Adam, but it does not say that. It reads, ***“All have sinned.”*** It does not say, “All are born with sin.” Others go to Psalm 51:5 to justify the erroneous belief that babies are born as sinners. Yet, again, this is not what is taught in that passage. Notice, King David said, ***“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity.”*** David was brought forth, but who had brought him forth? His mother! So, he was talking there about his mother who had brought him forth and who was in iniquity when she had brought him forth. Again, notice, next he said

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in that passage, *“And in sin my mother conceived me.”* Who had conceived David? His mother! So, who was in sin? His mother! David was not yet even born! This statement is parallel to someone saying, “In anger my mother beat me.” Now who was angry? The mother, not the child! David was certainly bemoaning the fact that as an adult he was a sinner. He said one reason he committed sin was sinful influence into which he was born. He did not say he was born a sinner, but he was brought forth in iniquity. He did not say he was conceived as a sinner but was conceived during the time his mother was in sin. In other words, the people who were around him after he was born tempted and influenced him to sin.

David’s situation was like Adam and Eve’s when they were created. They were created sinless, but it was through the persuasion of the devil they chose to sin. So it is with every individual. One is born innocent into the world, but it is a world made up of sinners. It is a world of sinners persuading others to sin. *“Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death”* (James 1:14-15). Sin is committed personally by every individual and is not inherited from another. Likewise, the Bible teaches in Ezekiel 18:20, *“The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.”*

To be saved from sin, the Bible teaches, all need to be baptized (immersed in water) for the remission of sins, after believing in Christ, repenting of sins and confessing Christ as the Son of God (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-39). The fact of the matter is that a baby or child is not a sinner, and therefore, that baby or child does not need baptism. 

Sunny David lives in New Delhi, India, and is a Hindi-speaking TV evangelist and an elder for the Lord’s church.

[Editor’s Note: People are generally confused not only about who needs to be baptized, but they are equally mistaken often regarding how to baptize a person. Bible baptism is by immersion rather than by sprinkling or pouring water over someone (Acts 8:38; Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY



Things the Gentiles Seek

Beth Johnson

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. (Matthew 6:31-34)

Today, we see so many in the church working long hours or even more than one job, sending the wife out to work and often the older teenagers. We have to wonder if they truly are trusting God. They drive the newest cars or SUVs, have a new multi-story home and even a boat or camper in the backyard. They have parties and go to all the sporting events and clubs. Then, they worry about losing all they have mortgaged or charged to the credit cards.

Judging from Jesus' words in Matthew 6:31-34, the Gentiles (in the figurative sense) were deemed to be destitute of the true doctrines of religion, and unacquainted with proper dependence on God — heathens in every sense of the word. According to the passage, they made it their chief anxiety to seek


DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

food and clothing, whereas Christians, who have knowledge of the Father in Heaven, who know that He will provide for their needs, should not be anxious for those things. Christians should seek first Christ's kingdom, seek first to be righteous and seek His favor while understanding that all necessary things will be added. God has control over all things, and He can give Christians what they need. He will give Christians what He deems best.

Should we be concerned with earthly pleasures? Should we strive to fit into the world's pattern where our physical possessions and appearances are more important than our souls and our service to the Creator? Do we want to imitate the worst kind of pagans in our daily living and by our goals? God, our Heavenly Father, is infinite in wisdom, and He knows all our needs. It is the attribute of a wise and tender father to provide necessities, and not superfluities, for his children.

Numerous passages admonish Christians to be different, better and more focused on spiritual things (Luke 12:29-31; Ephesians 4:17-19). Christians are not to think like the Gentiles, who consider only their fleshly desires — their physical needs for fun and fulfillment. The Gentiles were greedy for the things of the world and worried themselves sick to obtain them.

One thing that surprised me several years ago was to realize that even the way we choose a mate is important to God. We should neither lust after a mate nor should we take a wife the same way the Gentiles did (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5). Our choice in a partner should be based on spiritual qualities and spiritual goals. However, even the Gentiles knew that committing incest was wrong (1 Corinthians 5:1).

How much easier our lives would be, how easy to overcome worry, if we truly depended upon God for our every need and if we trusted Him in our relationships with each other. 

Beth Johnson lives in Chennai (old Madras), South India.


[Editor's Note: While it is not inherently sinful to be rich (e.g., Job, Abraham), often wealth is burdensome to one's spiritual commitment (1 Timothy 6:10). Truly, especially in prosperous settings worldwide, frequently, it is difficult to distinguish a difference between Christians and non-Christians regarding their respective priorities in this physical world. Such ought not be the case and directly contradicts the divine guidance of the Son of God in Matthew 6:33. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT OF THESE CHANGES?

Fenter D. Northern



I have lived many decades. I have witnessed the rise of a new generation within Christianity that has taken the scandal out of the cross, much of the news out of the Good News and the sting of repentance out of preaching. A visitor can attend some congregations for many weeks, even months, and never hear a clear, complete textual sermon on what to do to be saved. Some preaching merely tags hear, believe, repent and be baptized onto a sermon as a closing codicil [a legal detail]. Some services today run the gamut from enervating [lacking physical,

mental, or moral vigor] to a continual repetition of therapeutic homilies of comforting, sentimental therapies. Today's preaching blurs the commands of God, especially on moral issues. It offers a soft cushion for facing the hard problems of life. It is filled with consolatory stories to sedate one against any contemporary problems and ushers them into 28 minutes or so of sleepy tranquility, using adoration of praise that shrouds the plain message of salvation for sinners. Let him who has an ear to hear... 

Fenter D. Northern is a preacher living in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION



Emily Fisher

The culture at large has become increasingly self-centered. This is no surprise, since from the beginning, Satan has succeeded in tempting mankind to serve self by doing what we think is best and doubting God's Word (Genesis 3:1-7). Throughout history, Satan continued to corrupt what God had made good. At times, Israel doubted, "Will God really deliver us?" "We can just worship this golden calf as our god" (Exodus 32; Numbers 14). Just within the last few hundred years, especially with the acceptance of Darwinism, man has questioned whether the Genesis record can be trusted. "Did God really make the earth in six literal days?" Today, we live in the age of thinking, "Does God really exist?" and we are seeing the fruits of atheistic reasoning. Man is his own god (2 Timothy 3:1-5)!

Therefore, in such a humanistic culture, we see the serving of self in the world every day. The media parades the philosophy of self before our eyes every time we turn on the TV or computer. Ads are full of beautiful

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It's not all about you

and handsome (but often indecently dressed) individuals persuading us that we need whatever product in our lives, and many times we think to ourselves, “I could look like that and be happy like them if I bought the product.” Technology today allows us instant self-gratification. We order things for next day delivery; we download and upload whatever we want; **everything** is at our fingertips. Slogans such as “believe in yourself,” “do what makes you happy” and “have it your way” are common. Taking pictures of oneself has become a popular trend on social media (called selfies). What goes through our minds when we do and see these? “I’m not as pretty as she is,” “I hope so-and-so sees how beautiful/handsome I look in this picture,” “She/He is so thin; I wish I could look like that.”

The breakdown of the home is another result of the problem of selfism. Husbands and wives are so quick to divorce, not wanting to put the hard work and sacrifice into maintaining a loving marriage. Children (if they are not killed in the womb) are often left alone as parents/guardians work long hours. The list of examples could go on, but we can easily see how distracted we are with ourselves! Although, some of these things are not necessarily sinful (like ordering express shipping), they do influence us, and we must ask the question whether the influence is for the better or the worse.

Some may ask, what is really wrong with such thinking? Why can’t I think about myself and let others think about themselves? Simple answer: God’s Word teaches the opposite. We are not to always be thinking about ourselves – our feelings, our wants and even our needs. We can see this just by reading the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). As noted earlier, Satan has

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deceived us into believing the lie that we are most happy (and our happiness is of utmost importance) when serving ourselves. Evolution – a philosophy that teaches man arose from single-celled organisms, evolved over billions of years, and has survived by being the “fittest” – has given selfism a foothold as more people accepted this lie and thus conclude “number one” must be top priority. This kind of thinking undermines Christianity, and if we are not careful, we Christians will look, walk and talk just like the world – no longer being the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16, 44-48; 6:30-33)!

What is to be done? How do Christians fight against the philosophy of self? We must be diligent students of His Word. Jesus said, ***“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”*** (John 8:31-32). We have Truth! Not a truth but the Truth! Are we spending more time with Truth or with the distractions of this world (watching movies, playing games, hobbies, etc.)? Let us honestly evaluate ourselves where our heart is – laying up treasures on earth (serving self) or laying up treasures in Heaven (serving others). ***“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”*** (Matthew 6:19-21). We must remind ourselves every day that self-seeking is damnable (Matthew 23:25; Romans 2:8; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:20; Colossians 2:23; 2 Peter 2:9-10). Study these passages in their respective contexts and spend time in prayer to God about overcoming self and serving God alone (Matthew 6:24; James 3:13-18; Romans 12:1-2). ***“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself”*** (Philippians 2:3). ✝

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Did You Know?

There have been three physical temples in Jerusalem. The first was built by Solomon (966 B.C.) and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (586 B.C.). The second was built by Zerubbabel and the elders of the Jews (516 B.C.) and was desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes (169 B.C.). Herod the Great restored the Temple built by Zerubbabel (19 B.C.). It was later destroyed by the Romans (A.D. 70).

Giving

Dean Kelly



I have read several articles lately that have attacked brethren for saying that giving is a command of God. I am trying to figure out the purpose of these articles, and I can only assume that the authors oppose the idea that there are designated items which should be part of our gatherings to worship God on the Lord's Day. In sort of a conglomeration of the ideas that I have seen various ones express, it seems to boil down to a couple of arguments. (1) If it is commanded, then, it will be done ***“grudgingly and of necessity”*** (2 Corinthians 9:7). (2) First Corinthians 16:1-2 and 2 Corinthians 8-9 do not apply to us because those passages only relate to those doing a specific giving — the collection for the saints.

Let's note, first of all, some commandments: believe (Acts 16:31),

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repent (Act 2:38; Acts 17:30) and baptism (Acts 10:48). Now examine all of these by the arguments being made. If these three things are commanded, and they are specifically called commands, then does that mean that they are to be done grudgingly and of necessity? Can one obey a command and do so without it being grudgingly or of necessity? I contend that one not only can do so but must do so. So, to argue that teaching giving is a command means that it is not being done purposefully and willingly, then we do not believe, repent or allow ourselves to be baptized purposefully and willingly.

Also, carefully note 1 Corinthians 16:1, which reads, “***Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also.***” “***Order***” is from the Greek word “diatasso,” and it means to command. Now, wait a minute Paul; one cannot command giving or it will not allow for “***not grudgingly or of necessity.***” Yet, Paul said, “You must do.” The Greek word “houto” means “on this wise, in this manner.” In other words, “You have the same command.” Paul commanded the Corinthians to give. Giving is a command.

Secondly, noting all three examples, and of course we could list many more Scriptures for each one, Scripture never says, “Dean Kelly, you must believe, repent and be baptized.” I have to make the necessary inference that this applies to me as well.

Again, there is a specific context about this giving, the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem. However, this is the example given of how the church is to give for the needs that must be met. There is no other Bible instruction on it. I have a problem assuming that Paul was giving them a new commandment, that they had never before taken up any funds for the local congregations in the years since the church in Jerusalem sold what they had and gave at the apostle’s feet. Even the apostles had a treasury, and Judas was the keeper of it. I believe that the church in the 20-30 years that had gone by since it began was already practicing this type of giving, and that Paul simply included the special collection for the saints in that same thing. I know it is an assumption, however, to assume that they did not give on a regular basis and in this manner clouds this argument that some are making.

(Consider one sidenote about something that concerns me about the

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attitudes of some who write today. There is a common practice of making fun of and ridiculing brethren over things that are neither inappropriate nor unscriptural. I have seen many ridicule brethren for saying, “separate and apart from” about the collection when it is done immediately following the Lord’s Supper. Every few months I head the table in the rotation of men who do so where I worship. I don’t know that I have ever said “separate and apart from.” I usually make other comments. However, is the act of giving included in the Lord’s Supper? No. Therefore, it is separate. Is the act of giving a part of the Lord’s Supper? No. Hence, it is apart from the Lord’s Supper. Why make fun of brethren who are making an accurate and clarifying statement. All I can conclude is that there is a disrespect and disdain for brethren.)

The bottom line is very simple. **Paul commanded giving, and that form of raising money is the only one authorized in Scripture.** Paul, in 2 Corinthians 8-9, dealt with the attitude about giving. In 8:8-12, he made it clear that he was encouraging them, on a personal level, to give based on a readiness of mind, according to what they had, not according to what they didn’t have. Just like any act of obedience to a command of God, giving should be done willingly from the heart. That does not make it less of a command, but it makes obedience to God’s commands an act that comes from a heart that is submissive to Him. †

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Kenney's Pennies

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18 NKJV). One should not be surprised when those who reject the gospel of Christ mock those who accept it. The more atheists and secularists become emboldened, the worse their derision and mockery will be.



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Preach Jesus

Cecil May, Jr.

Preachers in Acts preached the Lord Jesus (Acts 11:20). Paul decided to know nothing *“except Jesus and Him crucified”* (1 Corinthians 2:2). We are to preach Jesus, His teachings, His life as our example, His death, His resurrection and His ascension to Heaven, where *“He always lives to make intercession for them”* (Hebrews 7:25).

Preaching Jesus to the Ethiopian treasurer included preaching baptism (Acts 8:35-38). When the Ephesians *“learned Christ,”* they learned a more moral and holy lifestyle, different from the pagans (Ephesians 4:17-20).

Biblical preaching how husbands and wives are to treat each other (Ephesians 5:22-23), conduct in the workplace (Colossians 3:22-24), responding to unjust suffering (1 Peter 2:21) or being kind, gentle and forgiving (Ephesians 4:32) is all related to Christ.

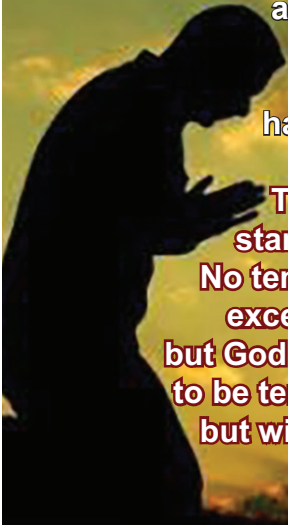
Preachers can neglect other essential things, but no one can preach Jesus too much. 



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How Do You Measure Up?

Now these things became **our examples**, to the intent that we should not **lust after evil things** as they also lusted. And do not become **idolaters** as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” Nor let us commit **sexual immorality**, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us **tempt** Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor **complain**, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them **as examples**, and they were written for **our admonition**, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.



Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

1 Corinthians 10:6-13

PROVERBS 17:22



Eight-year-old Sally brought her report card home from school. Her marks were good, mostly A's and a couple of B's.

However, her teacher had written across the bottom, "Sally is a smart little girl, but she has one fault. She talks too much in school. I have an idea I am going to try, which I think may break her of the habit."

Sally's dad signed her report card, putting a note on the back, "Please let me know if your idea works on Sally because I would like to try it out on her mother."



A man phoned a lawyer and asked, "How much would you charge for just answering three simple questions?"

The lawyer replied, "A thousand dollars."

"A thousand dollars!" exclaimed the man. "That's very expensive, isn't it?"

"It certainly is," said the lawyer. "Now, what's your third question?"



If ignorance is bliss, why aren't most people in a better mood?



An eccentric philosophy professor gave a one-question final exam. He picked up his chair, plopped it on his desk, and wrote on the board: "Using everything we have learned this semester, prove that this chair does not exist." Pencils flew, erasers erased, notebooks were filled; some students wrote over 30 pages. One student finished in less than a minute. He earned an A for his two word answer: "What chair?"



I was in the McDonald's drive-through this morning, and the young lady behind me leaned on her horn because I was taking too long to place my order.

"Take the high road," I thought to myself. So when I got to the first window, I paid for her order along with my own.

The cashier must have told her what I'd done, because as we moved up she leaned out her window and waved to me and mouthed "Thank you," obviously embarrassed that

PROVERBS 17:22

I had repaid her rudeness with a kindness.

When I got to the second window, I showed them both receipts and took her food, too.

Lesson: Don't honk your horn at old people.



Mr. Rabbit was walking down the road when he spotted a crow at the tip top of a very tall tree. He shouted, "Good morning, Mr. Crow."

Mr. Crow shouted back down, "Good morning, Mr. Rabbit."

Mr. Rabbit shouted up, "Whata ya doin' today?" and the answer shouted back down was, "Absolutely nothin' Mr. Rabbit! Absolutely nothin' and loving it."

Well, that sounded pretty good to Mr. Rabbit. So he shouted back up, "Do you think I could do that too?"

Mr. Crow shouted back down, "I don't see why not!"

Well, Mr. Rabbit lay down on the side of the road and began doing absolutely nothing.

In 30 minutes a fox came along and ate him.

The moral of the story: You can get away with doing absolutely nothing, but only if you're really high up.



"Yes," said the lawyer to his client. "You have got the best case I have ever heard."

"Thanks," said the client, grabbing up his coat and heading out the door.

"Where are you going?" asked the astonished lawyer.

"I'm going to settle this case out of court," said the leaving client.

"But I told you it is the best case I have ever heard?"

"Maybe," began the client, "but not for me, I told you the other fellow's case."



A magician came to our table and did a card trick. Impressed, I asked him how he did it. He said, "I can tell you, but I'd then have to kidnap you and take you away." I said, "Can you tell my mother-in-law?"



People with hearing aids can mute you in real life.



Whoever said nothing is impossible never tried to slam a revolving door.





Solitude

Michael Brooks

“The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him” (Mark 1:12-13 ESV).

When traveling to distant and sometimes unfamiliar places, I miss home, with all of my family, friends and normal routines. Though I am usually busy and in the presence of many people, I can still feel lonely and isolated because of who I am **not with** and what I am **not doing**. Loneliness is a condition most of us experience at times, and it is one that is not generally pleasant.

After Jesus went to the Jordan River to be baptized by John, He was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness where He fasted for 40 days. Though by all human standards Jesus was by Himself, Mark made it plain that our Lord was not actually as lonely as we might assume. In the short

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two-verse version of Jesus' temptation in the second Gospel account, we find four other presences accompanying him. These I call "four things we can never escape."

First, Jesus was "driven by the Spirit"

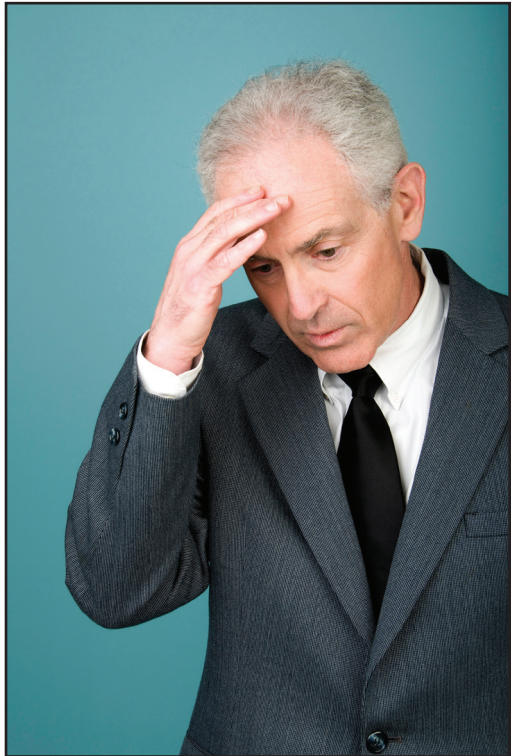
I think Mark's choice of verbs is deliberate and significant. Our Lord was about 30-years-old and had been anxious for His Father's business since at least the age of 12 (Luke 2:41-52). Surely Jesus was anxious to begin His earthly ministry. I cannot imagine that He wanted to spend more than a month alone in the wilderness. Yet, that was God's plan for this particular time. Jesus would not and could not avoid God's Spirit — that is, God's purpose and plans for Him.

Neither can we. We can neglect the Spirit, disobey the Spirit, quench the Spirit, but we cannot escape God's purposes.

Second, we cannot escape physical circumstances

Jesus was God in the flesh, and as such, He could feel heat, cold, rain, sun and all other conditions. He also was vulnerable to dangers, just as are all other humans. Mark says, "*he was with the wild animals.*"

The key to survival and happiness is acceptance and



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perseverance. As Paul said, *“I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content”* (Philippians 4:11).

Rather than complain about the cold or the heat, the rains or the drought, let us learn to appreciate this world that God has given us and be thankful for all of its conditions.

Third, we cannot escape evil and temptation


Even alone in a harsh environment with little to apparently tempt Him, Satan found our Lord, and he also found much with which to lure Jesus from His purpose on earth. We often blame our circumstances for our sins.

I once counseled a man who found it impossible to stay faithful to his wife (his words). It turned out that he would visit bars and pick up women there. I told him, “Stay out of bars.” However, I knew that if he could not practice self-control, he would find temptation in other places just as easily.

Where we are is not the problem. Many parents send their children to private schools so they will not be confronted with all of the temptations found in some public schools. It is true that in many private institutions children may not be confronted as openly or as often with drugs, violence or other problems, but temptations will occur. There is no perfect place where sin is completely absent.

Fourth, Jesus was ministered to by angels

We cannot escape God’s grace. Wherever we go, no matter how sinful and separated from God we become, God’s love can find us, and His grace can cleanse us when we repent and return to Him. Nothing in all of creation can separate us from the love of God, which is expressed in Christ Jesus His Son (Romans 8:39).

We can refuse and resist grace, but we cannot go beyond its reach. If and when we seek repentance and obediently trust in Jesus’ sacrifice for us, we will be drawn back into fellowship with God and with all of His people (1 John 1:5-10). 

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In our text, Ephesians 6:10-20, Paul reminds us that the kingdom of Christ is engaged in a spiritual war with the kingdom of darkness. (See also Colossians 1:13 and Revelation 12:17.) This is not a war of physical forces, but a war of truth against error and good against evil. Christians are to




prepare themselves to do battle with the “soldiers” of Satan — those forces that would destroy them and those that would surround them with sin. Here we are told what we must put into our lives to resist these enemies of Christ. Notice each part of the “uniform” and think about your own progress in *“putting on the whole armour of God.”*

- 1. Girdle of Truth** — The wide belt around the middle not only protects the body in that area but also holds the breastplate in place. **Truth** is essential in our battle against evil. We must know it, believe it and practice it.
- 2. Breastplate of Righteousness** — The vital organs of the body must be protected. So must the spiritual heart be protected, and this is the job of **righteousness**. This word refers to proper actions and right ways of living. Wrong living makes it easy for the enemy to kill us spiritually.
- 3. Sandals of Preparation** — It does little good to put on the other parts of the uniform if the feet are not *“shod”* for movement. In the

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uniform of the Christian soldier, this concern for movement involves *“the preparation of the Gospel of peace.”* We must learn how to serve the Lord and how to use our *“sword of the Spirit”* properly.

4. **Shield of Faith** — The overall defense of the Christian against the spiritual weapons of Satan is his or her **faith**. What you believe about Christ and His teachings, how strongly you accept His promises and how trusting you are in following Him comprise your faith. These are what faith is all about, and if you do not have enough faith, Satan will find an opening in your protection (your *“shield”*) and destroy your relationship with Christ.
5. **Helmet of Salvation** — Our head must be protected because this is the control center for the whole body. In this spiritual uniform, it is **salvation** that protects our “control center.” One who has not learned **how** Christ saves and has not **obeyed** those instructions is simply trying to fight the battle of life with no protection of his spiritual control center at all. Such a person has **no chance** against Satan.
6. **The Sword of the Spirit** — In any battle, the soldier must have a weapon. In this spiritual war, ours is *“the sword of the Spirit,”* the **Word of God**. The message the Father sent to the world through Jesus Christ is our weapon for destroying false ideas, wrong teachings and evil standards of behaviour. Jesus constantly used the teachings of the Old Testament (under which He and other Jews lived at that time) in silencing the enemies of truth. We have even more truth than had been revealed at that time because the apostles passed on to us the message of Christ in the written form of the New Testament (Hebrews 1:1-2; 2:1-4; John 16:13; 2 Peter 1:2-4).

With such a “uniform” as this and supported by God because of our contact with Him in prayer, we will be successful in this spiritual war. Having done all this, Paul says we shall *“stand,”* not fall as victims of Satan. Our concern with getting this “uniform” on properly and completely is of the greatest importance. 

Ardron Hinton (1929-2015) was a preacher of the Gospel and lived in Roosevelt, Oklahoma, USA.

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“Especially Made”

Betty Burton Choate



In today’s world, there is a wide range of feelings about women. Sadly, some feel that a woman is little more than an unpaid servant, bound to obey her husband’s wishes and to work endless hours every day taking care of his needs.

On the other extreme are the “modern” women who would prefer to enter the man’s world, declaring themselves to be “equal” to men. Some even go as far as to demand all the “advantages” they believe men to have, yet at the same time they would expect consideration and concessions because they are women. **What those women really want are the privileges of both groups and the responsibilities of neither.**

Between these two extremes (neither of which is right) is woman as she was created to be. Can you imagine the scene “*in the beginning*”? God had prepared a perfect home — a literal paradise — for the crowning act of His creation: man. He formed man lovingly, perfectly, from the

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earth, in His own image. Then He breathed into him the breath of life and that first man — Adam — became a living, moving, thinking being, with God’s moral laws imprinted in his conscience.

Only one thing was wrong with this otherwise perfect scene. Every living thing was paired with another of its own kind, and all were empowered by God to “...*be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth... Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind...*” Only Adam was alone. When he had seen all the creatures “...*there was not found a helper comparable to him*” (Genesis 1:22, 24; 2:20).

“And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. “And Adam said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:21-24).

What do we learn from these verses?

1. That man, alone, *was not* and *is not* complete.
2. God’s intention in making woman was to design a helper who would be comparable to man, one who would soften his sternness and strengthen his weaknesses so that together they would be lacking in nothing, physically, emotionally and spiritually.
3. Woman was not made from another lump of clay, but she was made from man, so that both she and the man would realize the special oneness God wanted them to share.
4. When a man and a woman marry, they are to devote themselves to each other for life.

So, Eve, the mother of all living, was especially made for Adam. Subsequently, throughout history, a good wife has continued to be God’s greatest gift to a husband and a home. 

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, founder of *The Voice of Truth International*. She resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

A WISE SON VERSUS A FOOLISH SON

Aaron Cozort

Every righteous father looks for opportunities to direct his children down the path of righteousness. He sees them growing up and imagines that one day they will walk a path of faithful obedience to the Lord. His heart rejoices each time that a child makes a choice displaying an inward man of thoughtfulness, godliness, love and righteousness. These things and many more point to the growth of a child who will be wise.

In Proverbs, there is one thing intended by the word “*wise*.” It is being obedient to God. Proverbs 9:10 reads, “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding*” (NKJV). If wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord, one will never reach true wisdom while being in opposition to the Lord.

James further illustrated this.

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (James 3:13-18)

The proof of wisdom is the implementation of righteous behavior. One might parade himself as a wise person, but inwardly he may only be “*wise*” in unrighteousness. Note that even James described this wicked behavior as a sort of wisdom, but one that does not originate with God and brings no

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good. In all reality, this “*wisdom*” is the true foolishness that Solomon wanted his son to know would lead to the grief of his mother.

When a godly mother realizes that her son is full of envy, self-seeking, sensuality and only those things that are concerns of this physical world, the weight on her heart is indescribable. Throughout her days, her mind seeks out the words to say to turn her son’s direction



around, and day after day, she knows that ultimately that is a choice only he will be able to make for himself.

Solomon again admonished, “*The wise in heart will receive commands, But a prating fool will fall. He who walks with integrity walks securely, But he who perverts his ways will become known*” (Proverbs 10:8-9). Are you a son or a daughter of righteous parents? Which path have you chosen? If you are bringing grief to your mother, will you decide to turn to wisdom today and begin to bear the fruit of righteousness? “*A wise son makes a glad father, But a foolish son is the grief of his mother*” (Proverbs 10:1). †

Aaron Cozort preaches for the Church of Christ in Collierville, Tennessee, USA.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME


Hannah, a Woman Who Dedicated Her Son to God

Gary C. Hampton

Hannah grieved because she had no children. Her deep sorrow made her husband miserable (1 Samuel 1:2, 7-8). She took her grief to God in prayer (1 Samuel 1:10-11). Her request for a son was an acknowledgement that children are a blessing from God (Genesis 33:5; Psalm 127:3). Recognizing children as a blessing from the Father should cause us to realize the importance of bringing them up in the way He desires.

Hannah named the son God gave her, Samuel, meaning “heard of God.” She gave him to God, committing herself to maintaining that gift for life (1 Samuel 1:20, 28). **Dedicating children to the Lord involves intentionally choosing throughout a child’s life to put God first in every part of his or her life.** God blessed Hannah for making such choices in the rearing of Samuel (1 Samuel 2:10-21). Like Jesus, Samuel *“grew in stature, and in favor with the Lord and men”* (1 Samuel 2:26; Luke 2:52). Timothy’s mother and grandmother taught him Scripture starting from infancy, just as we should (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

Eli’s sons were to be cut off because they did not honor God. The Almighty said He would raise up for Himself a faithful priest who would do according to what was in God’s heart (1 Samuel 2:27-35). Eli served Israel as both a priest and judge, and Samuel assumed that role after Eli died. His efforts resulted in Israel serving only the Lord (1 Samuel 7:3-4). Clearly, Hannah’s dedication of her son to the Lord was used by the Almighty to bring forth good fruit among His people.

We should follow Hannah’s example in taking our deepest concerns to God in prayer. We should realize children are a blessing from the Lord. Our children’s lives ought to be dedicated to Him. Our commitment can result in our children being favored by God. Hannah teaches us to dedicate our children to God’s glory. 

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The Mother of Timothy

Ernest S. Underwood

Solomon wrote, *“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). Do you know the name of Timothy’s father? Neither do I. In fact, all that the Bible tells us about him is that he was a Greek — a Gentile. If his father played any part in the rearing of Timothy, the Bible is silent on the subject. Who, then, was Timothy, and why should Christians today be interested in or concerned about him? Let us notice the following.

We first meet this young man in Acts 16. Here it is recorded, *“Then he [Paul] came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there named Timothy, a son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was a Greek.”* We are further told that this young man was well spoken of by the Christians at Lystra and Derbe.

Now, a question. From whom and by whom had this young man been trained or brought up, and what



was the material used in his training? In his second epistle to Timothy, Paul wrote, *“...when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and you mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also”* (2 Timothy 1:5). Later on in his second epistle, he wrote, *“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ”* (2 Timothy 3:14-15). Again, the apostle wrote:

But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you

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shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. (Philippians 2:19-23)

There are many more references to the young man Timothy, but perhaps these are sufficient to allow us to ask a question. Why did the apostle Paul have such love for and put such trust in this young man? I believe there are at least two things that come into play to cause such an attitude in Paul. First, Timothy had a grandmother and a mother who loved him enough to teach him the Holy Scriptures, and he evidently gladly learned them. Second, from the first time Timothy met Paul until the death of this great apostle, Timothy had an example to follow who was worthy of imitating. By this example which he could follow and imitate in

his training and life, this young man learned to be dependable.

Mothers and fathers ought to embrace all of the passages in both Old and New testaments that command and encourage parents, to ***“Bring up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it”*** (Proverbs 22:6). Yes, Proverbs 22:6 is a general statement of what will happen if one follows the stated action; however, it is also true that many, many parents, even in the Lord’s church, do precious little teaching their children the Word of God. Far too many times, the only occasion on which some sons and daughters receive any biblical instruction is in a 45-minute class at the church building on Sunday morning. Even then, many parents do not bring their children to the Bible study hour. Fathers and mothers, do you have a set time each day when you study with and teach those precious children that God gave you? A fair, and maybe a heartrending question, might be, ***“Where would our children spend eternity if, today, they were to meet their Maker?”***✝

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Solemnized Pronouns

David R. Kenney

I am a fan of the comic strip Calvin & Hobbs. Sometimes you just have to laugh! In one of the comic strips, Calvin, who is not fond of school, told Hobbs that a pronoun “is a noun that has lost its amateur status.” I thought of this definition when I came across the term “Solemnized Pronouns” in a discussion group. I had never heard the term, but it was not difficult to derive the meaning.

Some appreciate the beauty of the *King James Version*, and I would include myself among them. That being said, some misconceptions have arisen over time. One misconception is the belief that certain pronouns should be used to increase solemnity or reverence for what is being read or spoken. I used to feel that way myself. Who would want to read or speak of God’s Word irreverently? Not anyone I would want to fellowship. Yet, must we use certain pronouns such as “thee,” “thou” or “ye” in order to convey reverence? No. The original use of these pronouns was not a function of reverence but of grammar. The notion that pronoun usage denotes reverence is a misperception.

It may surprise some to read a comment that Alexander Campbell made in relation to old English and “solemnized pronouns” in the Preface of his translation:

The old Gothic buildings in North and South Britain are generally places of worship; hence, although this style of architecture was once as common in England and Scotland as any of the present models; yet this style being preserved only, or almost exclusively, in the places of worship which the veneration of our ancestors preserved from dilapidation, has given a sacred aspect to places of worship, and has rendered the Gothic style of architecture as sacred as the obsolete style of King Henry or King James. Had it not been for the veneration shown to places of worship, not a

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specimen of the Gothic style would at this day have stood upon the British Isles; and had it not been for the same species of veneration, we should not have had at this time any book, sacred or profane, written or published in the style of the 16th century. This style we have avoided in the present addition, and have, as far as was practicable in one effort, removed from the sacred writings the obsolete verily, ye, unto, liveth, keepeth, heareth, doth, hath, thou, thee, and thy: and all their kindred terms and phrases of the same antiquity. They have yielded their places to another race in all our writings and speeches, except in the pulpit or synagogue; why not also in the sacred writings? We might as reasonably contend that men should appear in the public assemblies for worship with long beards, in Jewish or Roman garments, as that the Scriptures should be handed to us in a style perfectly antiquated, and consequently less intelligible. (449-450)

The idea that the use of “thee,” “thy” and “thou” is meant to show reverence really runs aground when you examine passages such as: ***“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”*** (Genesis 3:15 KJV). God is the one speaking to the serpent. Does God intend to convey reverence to the serpent with the use of the pronouns “thee,” “thou” and “thy”? Does God intend to show disrespect with the use of “his” in reference to the seed of the woman (Christ)? Of course not! I have no problem with translations using “Thee,” “Thou,” etc. in reference to deity, but I do not think one is required to do so.

I freely admit that I felt the same way about the reverent sound of the *King James Version*, and I still love to hear this beautiful translation being read. Of course, a comparison to the Hebrew and Greek in any translation is the benchmark. I found the following statement by Jack P. Lewis to clear the matter up for me, and perhaps it may bring clarity to you too:

From the first man who prayed in Greek until the last, the pronoun $\sigma\upsilon$ was used both for God and man. When Jesus prayed to God he

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used the same pronouns that he used when he spoke to disciples, making no distinction in pronouns... When Peter, Paul, John, and all the apostles prayed, they made no distinction in pronouns. When these men, guided by the Holy Spirit, wrote the New Testament, they used the same pronouns to refer to God that they did to refer to their fellowman. The Holy Spirit made no distinction in pronouns. (370)

We may prefer matters a certain way; however, our personal preferences are not the standard by which we judge others. We must have love and forbearance for others who use a translation that may not retain our preferences. This includes capitalizing references to deity. Remember, uncials were Greek texts in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS. There is more to showing reverence to God than the kind of pronouns we prefer. †

[Editor's Note: Many things deserve greater reflection and amount to an awakening when one becomes personally acquainted with a foreign culture and especially an unfamiliar language. Except for where westerners have exported their culture along with the Gospel, dress shirts, ties, suits and shiny shoes may give way to skirt-like apparel for both men and women accompanied by colorful tribal shirts and bare feet in Christian worship. Likewise, foreign dialects have no provision for so-called solemnized pronouns. I still use Thee and Thou for God in my public prayers, but I would not have to do that. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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Did You Know?

Gautama Buddha (India), Confucius (China) and Socrates (Greece) were contemporary with the events described in the Book of Ezra.

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Rebecca Rushmore

(answers inside back cover)

1. Why did John say he wrote 1 John?
2. What do we have if we walk in the light?
3. Who is our Advocate with God?
4. How do we know if we know God?
5. What is sin?
6. From where does love come?
7. When does God hear us?
8. How did John find some of the children of the elect lady?
9. What does John call those who “do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh”?
10. Who did John condemn for loving to “have the preeminence” in the church?



From Wanderer to City-Dweller



Rebecca Rushmore

In Genesis 11:27, Lot is introduced into the biblical record. He was the son of Haran, the nephew of Abraham. Between Genesis 11:31 and 13:4, the Bible account tells of the nomadic life of Abraham and his family, including Lot. In verses 5 and 6, the text describes the great wealth of both Abraham and Lot. ***“Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together.”***

In order to preserve peace in the family, Abraham proposed a separation and offered Lot first choice of available land (13:8). Lot took note of the well-watered plain of Jordan and ***“pitched his tent even as far as Sodom”*** (13:12). At this point, Lot was still in the tent of a nomadic herdsman, but he was living close to the city of Sodom. Verse 13 notes that ***“the men of***

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Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord.”

In Chapter 14, one reads of Lot being captured in a battle between two groups of kings. Note that Lot was captured while he “*dwelt in Sodom*” (14:12). Apparently, Lot was no longer living in a tent near Sodom, but he had moved into the city itself. After he was rescued by Abraham (14:13-17), Lot once again returned to the city of Sodom (19:1).

As already noted, Genesis 13:13 records that the men of Sodom were very wicked and sinful. In Genesis 18:16-33, Abraham conversed with the Lord about the righteous men of Sodom and the coming destruction of the city by God. In the end, the Lord agreed not to destroy the city if ten righteous men could be found. In the next chapter, messengers of the Lord entered Sodom to rescue Lot and his family. Lot pled with his family, but his sons-in-law and married daughters refused to listen. In the end, Lot, his wife and two unmarried daughters were the only ones to survive the destruction of Sodom (19:15-16).

Notice Three Observations from the Life of Lot


Lot allowed himself to gradually move closer to sin. For a time, Lot lived under the influence of faithful Abraham. When he departed from his uncle’s influence, he placed himself closer to the sinful people of Sodom. Later, Lot moved into the city itself. A man who started as a nomadic herdsman gave up a life of wandering to live in the comforts of a city. The biblical text does not tell us if Lot left the management of his vast herds to others while he lived in comfort in the city, or if he sold his herds and lived off the wealth. Either way, Lot was no longer a wanderer; he was settled in an area of gross immorality (Genesis 18:20-21; 19:4-11). The Book of James tells us that sin in our lives is also a gradual thing (1:14-15). Sin begins with giving in to desires instead of fleeing them. Christians must be careful to resist the devil and turn to God instead (James 4:7). Sin begins with our thoughts, which lead to sinful actions (Matthew 15:18-19).

Lot remained righteous, even in the midst of wickedness. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as well as the cities of the plain around them were utterly destroyed by God (Genesis 19:24-25) because of their great wickedness

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(Genesis 18:20-21). Yet, Lot was spared because he was righteous before God (2 Peter 2:7-8). When visitors arrived in Sodom, Lot insisted on providing hospitality and protection against the wicked men of the city (Genesis 19:1-11). He did not allow the wickedness of the city to change the way he acted. Christians today need to remain righteous in the face of the wickedness around us. We need to ***“not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God”*** (Romans 12:2).

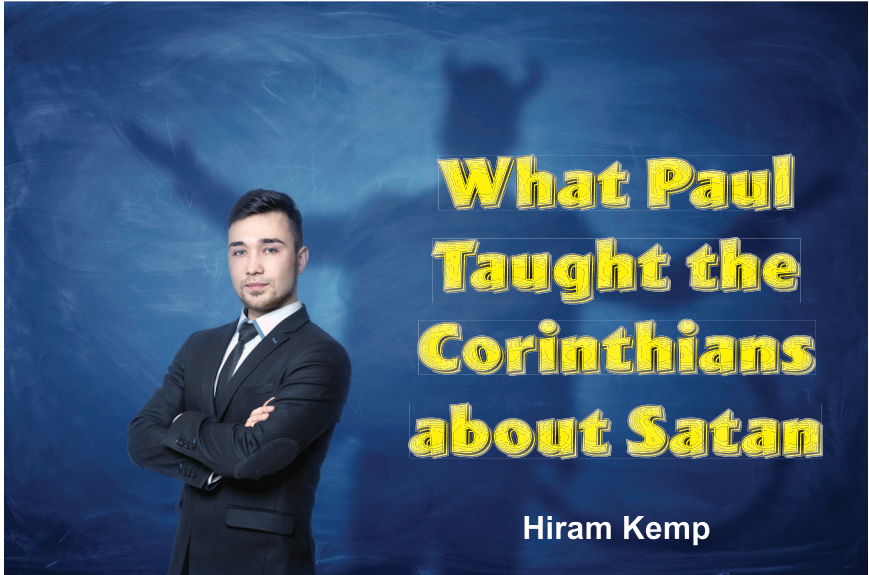
Lot remained righteous, but he lost most of his family. Apparently, some of Lot’s daughters married men of the city of Sodom. When Lot pleaded with them to leave before the destruction, they refused (Genesis 19:14). Only Lot, his wife, and two unmarried daughters left the city (19:16). After leaving the city, Lot’s wife disobeyed the command to ***“not look behind you”*** (19:17), and God turned her into a pillar of salt (19:26). Later, Lot’s daughters tricked their father into an incestuous relationship to preserve the family lineage (19:30-38). The daughters lacked faith in God to provide for them, and they were evidently influenced by the wickedness of their former home. **Christians today must be careful not to lose their families as they shine as a light to the world** (Matthew 5:16) and spread the Gospel to the lost (Mark 16:15). Old Testament instructions to diligently teach our children the precepts of God (Deuteronomy 6:7; Proverbs 22:6) and New Testament commands to ***“bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord”*** (Ephesians 6:4) must not be neglected. Including children in your work for the Lord as you live a godly life worthy of imitation is essential (1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17).

Paul noted in Romans 15:4 that the Old Testament was written ***“for our learning.”*** Even though Lot appears in relatively few verses, there is much we can learn from this righteous man. 

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The New Testament tells us that Satan is a roaring lion who walks around seeking to devour God's people (1 Peter 5:8). Christians are clothed with the armor of God as they seek to be on guard against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:11-17). The more we know about the way Satan operates, the better off we will be in our efforts to withstand him. As Christians, we should remember that we do not have to fear the devil because Jesus has destroyed him and the power he possesses (Hebrews 2:14-15). However, he can still exercise power and influence over us if we yield to him.

Paul dealt with several issues in 2 Corinthians: defending his apostleship, discussing the contribution for Jerusalem and following up on some of the things he wrote in 1 Corinthians. Also within 2 Corinthians, Paul spoke more about Satan and how he works than he did in any of his other writings. The Corinthian congregation is known for the problems it had. Like every congregation, there were issues with which to deal, and these two letters reveal the guidance Paul gave them. By looking at the warnings he gave the Corinthians and also the way in which he described Satan's work, we can be better prepared to resist the devil ourselves.

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We Know How Satan Works

In 2 Corinthians 2, Paul wrote about receiving the one who had repented. He told them that they should realize the punishment the brother received was enough (2 Corinthians 2:6). They should forgive and comfort him so that he would not be overcome with sorrow (2 Corinthians 2:7). Additionally, they needed to affirm their love for him (2 Corinthians 2:8). Paul encouraged them to do all of these things because they were not ignorant of how Satan operates (2 Corinthians 2:11). Satan would love for hard feelings to persist and for grudges to build.

The Corinthians were to be wise and not to let Satan gain an advantage or outwit them (ESV). We, too, are not ignorant of his devices. We have a Bible full of details about the ways he behaves. From Genesis 3, we know that Satan seeks to introduce doubts into our minds about God and what He says (Genesis 3:1-6). Later, John spoke of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, in which Satan is, no doubt, a major contributor (1 John 2:15-17). We read of him tempting the Son of God and how he tried to cause Him to stumble when He was physically weak (Matthew 4:1-11). Knowing how Satan works, we should not be caught off guard by the tactics he employs. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to rely on their knowledge about him and make the right decisions. We know the things that tempt us most and how Satan has used those things in the past to trip us up. We need to be people who are aware of the devil's strategies and respond accordingly.

Satan Does Not Always Look Like Satan

Paul dealt with false teachers who were trying to turn the Corinthians against him. He said the false teachers were deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:13). The false teachers are similar to Satan who transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). The Corinthians were not to mistakenly think that everyone who claimed to love God and the Gospel told the truth. Some claiming to be ambassadors of Jesus were teaching another gospel (Galatians 1:6-10). When most people think about Satan, they think about a red suit, horns and a pitchfork. The Bible says he will **not** come in a

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costume that will easily identify him. The truth is, **Satan will probably come to us with a Bible verse on his lips and a hymn in his heart.** We should not be fooled but test everything and hold on to what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21). We should be sure to examine everything people teach us by what we find in Scripture, so that we are not deceived (1 John 4:1). Many have been led astray and misled because they could not see through the disguise of the evil one. **Though Satan tries to mask his appearance, he cannot mask his fruit.** Jesus assured us that people can be known by the fruit that they bear (Matthew 7:15-20). **Realize that Satan does not always look like Satan, but he is still Satan!**

Satan Harasses Christians

Though Satan is not everywhere and does not know everything, he does try to harass Christians. Paul said a messenger of Satan was sent to **“buffet”** (KJV), **“harass”** (ESV) or **“torment”** (NASB) him (2 Corinthians 12:7). He does this in various ways and through various people taken captive by him (2 Timothy 2:26). Satan can harass us, but he cannot harm us (1 John 5:18). God protects Christians, and His grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Though we must temporarily deal with Satan on earth, his time is running out. Satan knows that he has a short time (Revelation 12:12).

Christians have overcome him in the past, and we can do so today as well (Revelation 12:11). When we finally overcome, we will dwell with God forever. Satan will be tormented day and night forever (Revelation 20:10).✝

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Kenney's Pennies

“Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:28 NKJV). Notice “Christ Jesus.” Christ is not His last name, but who He is. Christ is the Greek form of the Hebrew word for Messiah.

Both words mean “the Anointed One,” anointed for our salvation.

WAS JESUS A SINNER?

Robert Johnson

A CNN host, discussing the current craze to destroy monuments, made this analogy. “Jesus Christ — if you believe in, if that’s who you believe in, Jesus Christ — admittedly was not perfect when he was here on this earth. So why are we deifying the founders of this country?” (www.dennisonforum.org). What is the basis of his pronouncement that Jesus was not perfect? Essentially, growing up in a traditional Christian denomination, he found himself at odds with biblical teaching, specifically on same sex relations. He objected to Scripture stating one engaging in such practices would not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:10).

If one accepts the premise that Scripture is the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17) and that the teaching of Scripture condemns such a lifestyle, then, for those who accept that lifestyle, Scripture is wrong, and thus, Christ cannot be perfect. It is an intellectual exercise done to justify a way of thinking and a way of living. However, as the saying goes, wanting something to be so does not make it so.


Such is not surprising, as recent polls show that some 44 percent of American believers think that Jesus sinned (www.christianheadlines.com). The survey also revealed a dramatic decline in the number of Americans who hold to a biblical worldview. According to the survey, about 51 percent of American adults have a traditional view of God as opposed to 73 percent in 1991, a 22 percent drop from 30 years ago. George Barna stated of these results, “Tens of millions of Americans consider themselves to be Christian but do not believe that God is really in control or cares what happens to them.” He noted the shift in worldview from thirty years ago, saying that people went from “learning and thinking about God” to becoming “more self-absorbed,” rejecting the existence of absolute moral truth.

Scripture, however, offers a different view of Christ than this. Jesus was without sin and deceit (1 Peter 2:22). He knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). He was tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews

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4:15). He is holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners (Hebrews 7:26). In Him there is no sin (1 John 3:5). Of course, someone can say anything about anyone, but the testimony of Scripture has been confirmed and established time and again. The recording of history in the Bible is presented fairly and accurately. It was written when people of that time could have offered a differing view historically, but it has withstood its critics and has been verified repeatedly. The issue is not the accuracy of Scripture but sin in the human heart.

God's Word has been rejected and vilified from ancient times. People have sought to minimize it and to destroy it, but the Word of God still stands. Hearts can be hardened against it, but it is still the basis on which everyone will be judged someday (John 12:48). Isaiah's statement, repeated by Peter, still endures. ***"All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever"*** (Isaiah 40:6, 8; 1 Peter 1:24-25). Humanity is corrupt with the deceit of sin, which only leads to condemnation. The truth of the Gospel sets one free (Romans 8:31-32), offers an abundant life (John 10:10) and provides eternal life (James 1:25).

Who will we choose to believe? There are only two options — God or Satan. How sad to reject the truth that can save for the lie that will only destroy. The greatest challenge for us all is to be honest with ourselves and evaluate our motives. It will be too late, standing before God in Judgment, to change sides, to reevaluate what one believes. ***"Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain"*** (2 Corinthians 6:1). 

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[Editor's Note: Had Jesus sinned even once, He could not have fulfilled the role of Savior. The fact our Lord did not commit sin at any time (Hebrews 4:15) contrasts with high priests after the order of Aaron who sometimes sinned (Hebrews 5:1-3). Unlike earthly priests, Jesus Christ has been "perfected" (Hebrews 5:9) through "obedience" (Hebrews 5:8), whereby He is "the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:9). To ascribe sin to Jesus Christ is blasphemous as well as discards the only Savior afforded mankind (Hebrews 10:26), which leaves one in the perpetual state of hopelessness (1 Corinthians 15:19). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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Shall We Observe the Sabbath Today?

Louis Rushmore

Sixty-six books comprise the Bible, and they were written by about 40 different divinely inspired penmen across approximately 1,600 years. Thirty-nine of those Bible books are in the Old Testament, and the remaining 27 books are in the New Testament portion of the Bible. Two different, God-given law systems appear in the Old Testament: Patriarchy (a family-type religion) and Judaism (a national religion); another or third God-given law system is in the New Testament: Christianity (a universal religion).

It is no wonder, then, that the apostle Paul wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV). Another translation renders the verse, *“...handling aright the word of truth”* (ASV). The student of God’s Word must distinguish between the Old Testament and the New Testament. One must know the difference between Patriarchy, Judaism and Christianity, or the difference between family religion, national religion and universal religion.

Several New Testament passages demonstrate that the Old Testament, though the foundation and forerunner of the New Testament, has been replaced by the New Testament. While Jesus did not *“destroy the Law”* or Old Testament, He did *“fulfill”* it (Matthew 5:17 NKJV). It was always God’s intention to replace the Old Testament Law with the New Testament. Notice the Old Testament prophecy and the corresponding New Testament fulfillment regarding the New Testament replacing the Old Testament.

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband

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to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, “Know the Lord,” for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more. (Jeremiah 31:31-34)


*For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has **made the first obsolete**. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to **vanish away**. (Hebrews 8:7-13)*

Consequently, the Old Law or the Old Testament has been replaced with the New Testament. The Old Law or Old Testament has been “**abolished**” (Ephesians 2:15) and “**wiped out... taken out of the way, having nailed it to the cross**” (Colossians 2:14). Since the cross of Jesus Christ, mankind has “**been delivered from the law**” (Romans 7:6). The next verse describes that law from which man has been delivered by

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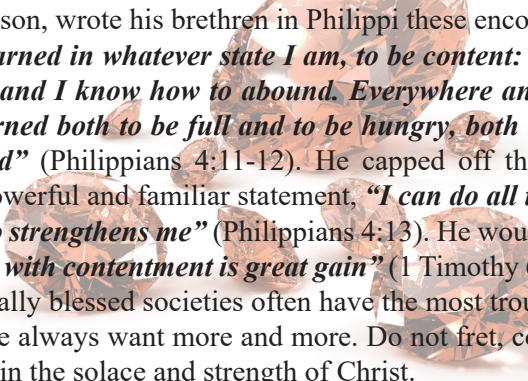
citing the Ten Commandments. Man, today, no longer looks to the Old Testament — not even to the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament — for religious instruction. The Old Testament remains valuable and useful (Romans 15:4) but not for instructing anyone concerning Christianity.

Whereas directly or indirectly perhaps nine of the original Ten Commandments have been reinstated in the New Testament, to **“remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy”** (Exodus 20:8) **has not been repeated in the New Testament**. Instead, the first day of the week rather than the seventh day of the week is designated in the New Testament for the obligatory day on which to worship God weekly (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). In addition, Jesus arose from the grave and, later, the Lord’s church came into existence on the first day of the week.

Keeping the Sabbath involved much more than worship (e.g., travel restrictions), and it included the sacrifice of animals in worship. **No one** claiming to be a Christian actually keeps the Sabbath today. Anyone who attempts to keep any portion of the Old Law today is **“estranged from Christ”** and **“fallen from grace”** (Galatians 5:4). 

Louis Rushmore is the Editor of The Voice of Truth International and Gospel Gazette Online. He has been preaching since 1973 in the USA and abroad as well as authored several books and tracts. He resides in Ocala, Florida, USA.

Robison’s Rubies



Paul, in prison, wrote his brethren in Philippi these encouraging words, **“I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and suffer need”** (Philippians 4:11-12). He capped off those sentiments with the powerful and familiar statement, **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”** (Philippians 4:13). He would say later that **“godliness with contentment is great gain”** (1 Timothy 6:6). It is ironic that materially blessed societies often have the most trouble with being content. We always want more and more. Do not fret, contentment can be learned in the solace and strength of Christ.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

[Colossians 3:1-10]

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

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

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: **anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.** Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him...

We are living in troubled times. The year 2020 has seen more unexpected disasters and horrors than probably any year in our memories.

For Christians who look to God and His Word for hope and peace at heart, we are the most blessed of all people in the world. Why? Because we can look beyond this life, with all of its challenges, to the promise of the glory that is to come.

God also guides us with clear words on how to avoid the repercussions of the horrors of this world. He tells us of the sins that have, sadly, corrupted humanity throughout history. Those sins not only bring sorrow, pain, and death to humans who choose such a life, but the promise is that ultimately those souls will experience the eternal wrath of God.

Not only are we warned not to live such evil and immoral lives, Christians must be careful to watch the words that fall from their mouths. Why? The mouth speaks what is in the heart. Christians, keep yourselves pure before God!

THE LEAVES OF THE TREE

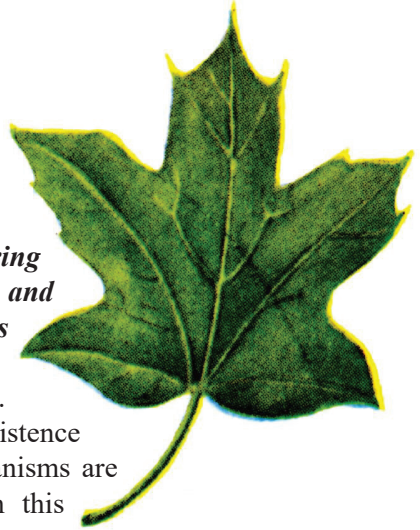
David Everson

“And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth,’ and it was so” (Genesis 1:11).

With these words God brought into existence the plants upon the earth. These organisms are critical for the existence of life on this planet. They capture sunlight in a process called photosynthesis and convert it to sugar for animal use. They also, as a by-product of this marvelous process, make oxygen, which is also necessary for our existence. These processes occur on trees in structures called leaves. Plants also provide shade under which we can rest, clean our air and absorb sounds in our busy cities. Upon closer examination of these marvelous designs that we call leaves, we can see so much more of the wisdom of God than is noticed at first glance.

With spring and summer come storms that blow, which tear homes and vegetation alike. How do trees, covered with leaves withstand these storms that threaten to tear and uproot? Scientists have discovered that in the very aerodynamics of leaves is the evidence of the Creator. God knew exactly what would be necessary to protect trees during a storm.

Trees must have a good covering of leaves in order to take the best advantage of the sunlight hitting them, but these work against trees in a storm by providing resistance that could break the tree. Of course, in the most violent of storms there is no protection for trees. Normal winds of 30-50 mph can also be harmful — except that the leaves are engineered to minimize the wind’s effects!



EVIDENCES

Leaves of trees, when tested in a wind tunnel, show how God designed them to avoid some of these effects. Any object that experiences high wind forces is better off if designed with a very streamlined shape. Airplanes, cars, bullet trains and other manmade objects show this design. When God created leaves, He also knew plants would need this ability.

When leaves from several trees were tested, they each showed the ability to become more streamlined as wind speeds increase. When wind speed increased, single leaves began to form cones that reduced the drag to which the tree was exposed. This is caused by the architecture of the cells of the leaf and petiole. The tulip poplar, oak and apple leaves, each having a long stem, roll up very nicely as wind speeds increase. These tests showed that the drag on these leaves was reduced by as much as two-thirds over the unrolled leaf.

The compound leaves on trees like black locust and black walnut also show this rolling effect as the leaves form cones to protect the tree from increasing winds. Leaves such as those on holly trees are very hard and brittle and are not able to roll into a cone, but they show a protective effect as they lie flat against one another in increasing winds.



It has also been noted that when a leaf does not perform well in the wind tunnel tests, it is because of some type of damage or flaw in the leaf. If an insect has eaten out areas of a leaf, as they do many times, it prevents the leaf from reducing its surface area and often causes it to be torn from the tree.

God in His infinite wisdom and perfection left nothing to chance when He created leaves so that trees can survive the storms of life. The author of Genesis noted by inspiration in 1:31, ***“And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.”*** We should be humbled that in the ***“invisible things of Him from the creation of the world,”*** we can know that GOD IS! ✝

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.

GOD OUR FATHER

Loy Mitchell

Introduction

1. In this prayer of Jesus, we have a picture of God (Matthew 6:9-13).
2. The Bible is filled with word pictures that endeavor to convey to us as human beings the relationships that we sustain with God, and His interest in us.
3. Jesus never endeavored to give us a definition that would be all encompassing, but He chose to represent God to us in a way that would help us understand His nature.
4. He chose to use a figure drawn from the family relationship: ***God our Father.***

Body

I. IN WHAT SENSE IS GOD OUR FATHER?

- A. Did He mean “God our Father” in the universal sense?
- B. God did create all mankind (Acts 17:28).
- C. The term “Father” in the teaching of Jesus and in the rest of the New Testament emphasizes a spiritual relationship that exists between God and His people.
- D. We are His spiritual children (Galatians 3:26-27).
- E. The God that Jesus reveals to us is the only true God, the God who saves, and the God who has a high purpose for each one of us.


II. WHAT DOES GOD’S FATHERHOOD MEAN TO US?

- A. It means I am related to God, and He is related to me (John 3:3-5).
 1. One newborn baby may not look like the parents, but as the child grows, everyone will see the resemblance to the parents.
 2. If I am a child of God, I should look like God.
 3. Because I am a child of God, I am to think as He thinks.
 4. I am to love my enemies (Matthew 5:43-48).
 5. Fatherhood means that I am the child of the infinite God of Heaven with all His rich resources, His tremendous power and His love.
- B. To be a Father involves assuming responsibility.

CHARTS & OUTLINES

1. When you bring a child into the world, you assume responsibilities for that child's welfare.
 2. God does not bring me into His family and then leave me to starve and shiver through neglect.
 3. He provides for all my spiritual needs so that I can live with Him in eternity (1 John 2:25).
 4. He knows my weaknesses and strengthens me (Hebrews 4:16).
 5. He has laid on His children the responsibility for communicating His great love for all men and allowed us to bring others to Him.
 6. The life that He holds before His family is a life of great demand and high calling (2 Peter 1:10; Romans 6:23).
- C. God's fatherhood also means His discipline in our lives, for we cannot think of a father without thinking of discipline.
1. Because we have surrendered to God's will, being born into His family through baptism into His Son, Jesus Christ, God has become our spiritual Father.
 2. The Bible emphasizes that discipline comes from God (Hebrews 12:6-11).
 3. Fleshly fathers make mistakes in their disciplining, but the infinitely wise and loving Heavenly Father does not make mistakes.
 4. Are we disciplined by God through His Word? (Psalm 119:105).
 5. God is the true Father who chastens us when in our pride we come to think of ourselves as self-sufficient.
 6. God is preparing us for eternal life.

Conclusion

1. God is our Heavenly Father!
2. Our fleshly parents pass on, but God the Father is eternal (Isaiah 57:15).
3. If we do not make Him our Father in this life, can He be our Father forever in Heaven?
4. When we pass the chilly waters of death, will He greet us as His children on the other side? 

Loy Mitchell (deceased) worked as a missionary for many years in Zimbabwe.

The Influence of One

Stephen D. Eckstein, Jr.

The world has never been influenced by a group, but actually by individuals who formed and led the group. A group is composed of individuals, each of whom must act for himself. No one can act for you. Thus, no one should minimize any person, young or old, rich or poor, male or female, etc. Each person wields an influence that is eternal in its reach and impact.

GOOD or BAD

Bad

Adolph Hitler was once a babe in arms. Later, he became dictator of Germany and for twelve years changed the course of history. Directly and indirectly, he was responsible for the death of over 20 million people, the maiming and wounding of millions more in body and in mind. His decisions led to property loss in the trillions of dollars. His influence has affected directly or indirectly nearly every person alive today.

Good

Abraham lived about 2000 B.C. Major events in his life are recorded in Genesis 12-25. The influence of the patriarch is evident as one reads the Bible. Fifteen Old Testament books and eleven in the New Testament refer to him. John 8, Acts 7, Romans 4, Galatians 3 and 4, Hebrews 7 and 11 relate his significance in the biblical message. If all the material in the Bible about Abraham was deleted, great gaps would appear in the text. Abraham exerted a powerful influence upon the world and still does through the biblical record. What kind of good impact do you have on people for the glory of God?

Good or Bad?

In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. No one can measure the influence this instrument has exerted in our world. The number and kinds of calls made by man stagger the imagination. This

HISTORY

scientific marvel is neutral. A person may use it to encourage the sick, talk to a loved one, convey the Gospel of Christ, gossip about another, tempt one to sin or threaten his fellow man. How do you use the telephone?

Single but Important Impact

After Joshua reprimanded Israel for serving other gods, he declared, “*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*” (Joshua 24:15). Countless numbers of people have been uplifted by Joshua’s choice.

Ruth, a Moabitess, chose God rather than idols and became a link in the fulfillment of the promise of the Messiah. A Bible book bears her name. Her sister, Orpah, chose Moab and left no record other than her wrong decision (Ruth 1:14-18; 4:21; Matthew 1:5).

An unnamed captive Israelite girl changed the course of Naaman’s life by a few words to her mistress concerning a prophet who could cure leprosy (2 Kings 5:2-3).



A Tremendous Lasting Influence

About 62 A.D., Paul wrote four letters while bound by chains and guarded by Roman soldiers. He had no idea that nineteen centuries later his letters, as part of the New Testament, would be translated into over 1,000 languages and be read by hundreds of millions of people all over the world. Nor did Tychicus, a beloved fellow servant, realize the importance of his ministry — to deliver the letters to their destinations (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7-9). Both writer and messenger had important tasks and far reaching impacts.

HISTORY


The Greatest Life

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came in human form, died on a cross for the sins of mankind, was raised from the dead and before ascending into Heaven promised to come again. His life completely changed the course of human history: hopelessness into hope, death to life, etc. “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, sweetest name I know” is absolutely true to each child of God. If each Christian removed the name of Jesus every time he had read it in the Bible, in a paper or periodical, sung in a song, spoken in a word or heard from another person, then great segments of one’s life would be radically altered. Every joint-heir of Christ will say, “Jesus has changed my life completely.”

Strangely, even non-Christians are profoundly influenced by God and Jesus. Why don’t people swear and use profanity in the name of John Doe instead of in the name of our Creator and Savior? It is because God and Jesus are known as the greatest names in the world. The profane person supposedly strengthens his words by the vain use of the name of God and Christ.

The Christian recognizes the powerful influence of Jesus in such marvelous communication as ***“There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus”*** (Romans 8:1). ***“If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature”*** (2 Corinthians 5:17). God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son (1 John 5: 11). ***“For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”*** (Acts 4:12).

Each choice we make will influence someone, even though it may not be known by the world, perhaps even by you. God knows, though, and will honor every cup of water given (Matthew 10:42). ***“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God”*** (1 Corinthians 10:31).

If your name is in the Lamb’s Book of Life, you will be saved (Philippians 4:3). No one can be saved or lost for you. It is an individual matter. Choose Jesus today and every day. Let your life be a continual influence for Him by doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (Colossians 3:17). 

Stephen D. Eckstein, Jr. is a Gospel preacher living in Lubbock, Texas, USA.

FROM THE HEART OF

Bear Valley Bible Institute

Today, as much as ever before, the church needs dedicated men for work in His kingdom. As the world's population grows to over 7.5 billion souls, the need to sow the seed of the Gospel in men's hearts has never been greater. Even within the brother-



hood, congregations are leaving the pattern of sound words contained in the Scriptures. The problem is growing, and the threat is real. In 1965, the young congregation at Bear Valley began a school to train men for ministry for these very reasons. Through the years, what is now known as the Bear Valley Bible Institute has stood for truth and taught men how to teach it.

We Train Preachers. The motto of “We Train Preachers” is more than just a slogan. It is what we have done for the last 55 years. Sound and dedicated preachers are needed to fill many empty pulpits and to proclaim boldly the truths of God's inspired Word. We train men to preach and strive to instill in them the desire to serve where God may use them the best. Our students spend over 1,000 classroom hours in the Bible texts, plumbing Scripture's depth and



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discussing how to present God’s message to the world.

We Train Missionaries. However, the work of the Bear Valley Bible Institute is more than just training men to stand in a pulpit. We also train missionaries. Sound, compassionate missionaries are needed, both here in the U.S. and world-



-wide, to take the saving message of Christ to the lost and dying. Many of our students develop a “mission mentality” while in school. As such, many of our graduates go into either domestic or foreign mission works. Small mission churches in the U.S. are strengthened and edified. Countries around the world gain sound Gospel preaching from our graduates. More and more, the world needs God’s saving message. Our students are often willing to take it wherever that may be.

We Train Youth Ministers. Satan and the world are hard at work to capture the minds of those most impressionable. Some of our graduates go into work in which they are working with youth groups and young families. They want to help strengthen those



relationships and help young men and women see the importance of building a relationship with Jesus.

We Train Biblically Sound Workers for the 21st Century. Exegesis makes the difference. We don’t just teach our students what the Bible says and what it means. We equip them to properly interpret Scripture using exegetical tools and techniques. A true exegetical approach to the study

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of God's Word provides a foundation for a lifetime of accurate and sound exploration of the biblical text.

Bear Valley was the first preaching school in the brotherhood to offer a course in Ministry Technologies. Students are trained to use Logos Bible Software. They learn how to communicate God's message more effectively using presentation tools like PowerPoint® and Keynote®. They learn to leverage websites, blogs and social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter to reach wider audiences with the Gospel. New technologies like podcasting, QR codes and video also provide new opportunities to share the message, edify the church and reach the lost. Bear Valley is committed to leading the way in this area of ministry education.

We Build Relationships. At Bear Valley Bible Institute, our students forge relationships that last a lifetime and into eternity. This is valuable for many reasons, not the least of which is that ministry is about relationships. Classmates and staff become friends, mentors, confidants and family.

We Use A Variety of Means. As we seek to train men for ministry, build the kingdom, honor God, and encourage young men toward ministry, we use a variety of special events throughout the year. We host a Future Preacher's Training Camp in June.



FROM THE HEART OF

Our annual lectureship, though canceled this year, is held annually in September. Every other March, we partner with Bible Land Passages for our Bible Lands Study Program. Our students and staff go on evangelistic campaigns throughout the country every March and October.



We've been doing this a long time. Since 1965, the Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver has been training men and women for work in the Lord's kingdom with a strong emphasis on studying the Bible. Our mission is to ground faithful men in the truth of God's inspired Word and fan their desire to go out into the world and preach. We believe in the pattern of sound words God has revealed to mankind in the Bible. Each day we work at entrusting this pattern to faithful men who will teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2). Learning from men like Denny Petrillo, Michael Hite, Mike Vestal, John Moore, the men of Apologetics Press and others, faithful instructors allow one to glean from experts in their field of study.

We currently have an enrollment of 34 full-time students and 15 part-time students. In May of 2020, we had 24 graduates, of whom, 16 received bachelor's degrees, 3 received associates degrees and 5 women completed the wives' certificate program. These men and women are now serving the Lord's church in West Virginia, Colorado, Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, China, Ghana and Uganda. Through the years our graduates have served the Lord's church in every state and on every continent (with the exception of Antarctica).

All of this is possible for three reasons. First, the Almighty has blessed our work greatly through the years, and we are ever thankful for the many ways He has and continues to bless us. Second, the Bear Valley Church of

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Christ and her shepherds (who oversee this work) are to be commended for their foresight and sacrifice through the years to provide for this work. Third, there are so many congregations and individuals throughout the brotherhood who support the Bible Institute, our staff and faculty, and our students. We thank the Lord for you every day.

If you would like to know how you can partner with this work, or if you are interested in training for ministry at Bear Valley, you can find more information at WeTrainPreachers.com. You may also check out our YouTube Channel or follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

The Bear Valley International Program

For decades, the brotherhood has sent families into the mission field to reach foreign cultures with the Gospel, and these efforts have had mixed results at best. Many works thrive as long as the missionaries stay in the field, but as soon as they return home, the work they leave behind crumbles.



As a brotherhood, we have also spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to bring men to the States to be trained to preach, expecting them to return to their countries and evangelize. This has also had mixed results as once these men spend two or three years in the United States, they do not want to return to their home countries. If they do return, they often want to live much like they did while they were in the States. Obviously, this poses many problems.

At Bear Valley, we take a different approach to these problems. We train preachers in their home countries. Working with congregations throughout the brotherhood, preaching schools have been established in many foreign countries, with more on the way. We train men to be preachers and evangelists while they live within their own communities and culture. They become the

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preachers and the missionaries to their own people. This way, there is no culture shock and no dependence on American missionaries.


Since 1997, God has blessed our efforts greatly! The year 2019 was truly unprecedented in the history of the Bear Valley Extension Program, and we want to share some of the excitement with you. In 2019, we started several new schools, which means there are now **43 schools in 27 countries around the world**. Also in 2019, we were privileged to teach **834 students!** Just think of all the potential in those men and their families in the years to come, considering the vast majority of them are serving in the most fertile places in the world. This is truly exciting!

Yet, we know that we are not doing this alone. We depend on partners and supporters to help us train preachers and church leaders around the world. In addition to our all-important supporters, **178 different local teachers** taught in Bear Valley international schools this year and **another 102 men taught a “short course”** to our students. This truly is a team effort at every level.

In addition to teaching these men how to preach and to live, we want to instill in them a passion for soul winning. This is borne out in the many studies, campaigns and Gospel meetings in which they are involved throughout the year. As a result of these efforts by the current students and teachers, in 2019 alone, we know of at least:

- 3,426 baptisms (more than 15,000 in the past 5 years)
- 69 new congregations started
- 293 campaigns and Gospel meetings
- 25 restored churches

To God be the glory!

However, we are not resting on our laurels as we look to an exciting future. There are already many new students set to enter the program this year, and more new extensions are set to begin this year. Each new year promises to be another productive one of training preachers around the world! At Bear Valley, we thank all those who support us and partner with us to carry out the mandate of 2 Timothy 2:2. 

Jerry Bates, one of the editors of *The Voice of Truth International* is one of the Bear Valley instructors in foreign lands, and he travels to several countries on various continents annually in that capacity. **Louis Rushmore**, also one of the editors of *The Voice of Truth International*, has taught or teaches classes for Bear Valley in two Asian countries.

Noting Your Bible



The Blood of Christ

From the beginning of time, when God created all things, blood has remained important (Genesis 9:4-7). God created blood as *“the life of the flesh”* and to *“make atonement for the soul”* (Leviticus 17:11). The Old Covenant with Israel was established upon animal-blood sacrifices, pointing to the ultimate one-time sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which established the New Covenant (Hebrews 8-10; John 19:34). In this study, we are going to look at what the blood of Christ *does* as the blood of the New Covenant.

1. Note this topic in your Bible and next to it reference **“Exodus 12:13.”** Turn to Exodus 12 and write, **“Blood of the lamb was necessary for salvation, pointing to Christ (See 1 Peter 1:19).”**
2. In 1 Peter 1:19 (see verse 2 also), note, **“We are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb = Christ (See Romans 3:25).”**
3. Note in Romans 3:25, **“Christ is our propitiation = mercy seat, see also Leviticus 16 (See Hebrews 12:24).”**
4. Next to Hebrews 12:24, write, **“His blood is better – He was sinless (Hebrews 4:15) (See Hebrews 9:11-15).”**
5. Turn to Hebrews 9 and write, **“Only Christ’s blood has the power to cleanse (See 1 John 1:7).”**
6. Note in 1 John 1:7, **“His blood continually cleanses (See Hebrews 10:19-29).”**
7. In Hebrews 10, note, **“Christ’s blood sanctifies us and makes it possible for us to enter God’s presence; don’t reject it! (See Colossians 1:20).”**

8. Turn to Colossians 1:20 and write, **“His blood brings peace (See Ephesians 2:13).”**
9. Write next to Ephesians 2:13, **“Christ’s blood brings us near God (See Romans 5:9).”**
10. In Romans 5, note, **“His blood justifies/saves us from God’s wrath (See Revelation 1:5).”**
11. Note in Revelation 1:5, **“His blood washes us from our sins; see also Revelation 7:14 (See Ephesians 1:7).”**
12. In Ephesians 1, write next to verse 7, **“Forgiveness of sins comes through Christ’s blood (See Revelation 5:9).”**
13. Turn to Revelation 5:9 and note, **“His redeeming blood available to all people — Jew & Gentile! (See Acts 20:28).”**
14. Note in Acts 20:28, **“The church is purchased with His blood (see Acts 20:7).”**
15. In the same chapter, look at verse 7 and write, **“The church assembled on the first day in order to observe the Lord’s Supper (See Matthew 26:26-29).”**
16. Turn to Matthew 26 and write, **“(See 1 Corinthians 10:16).”**
17. Note in 1 Corinthians 10:16, **“Communion — our unity as one body (See 1 Corinthians 11:23-29).”**
18. Turn to chapter 11 and note, **“Privilege as a Christian — to partake of His body and blood, proclaiming His death; warning to Christians — guilty of His body and blood if we are not living according to His Word (John 6:53-58) (See 1 John 4:7-5:6).”**
19. Read the whole book of 1 John and meditate on what the Holy Spirit said. Note, **“Christ’s blood makes fellowship possible with one another and with Him; as we keep His commandments, God’s love abides in us and our faith in Jesus Christ overcomes the world (See Revelation 12:10-12).”**
20. Lastly, turn to Revelation 12 and write, **“We overcome the Accuser (Satan) when we are covered by Christ’s blood!”**

Are you covered by His blood (Romans 6)?

West Virginia Christian is an excellent monthly, 4-page, tabloid, newsprint magazine. Each issue contains insightful, uplifting and edifying religious articles by faithful Christian men and women. In addition, one can find in its pages pertinent news and information about events of interest to brethren in West Virginia and nationwide. Single subscriptions are \$10.00 per year, and bundle rates are available. Readers may write or email for information: West Virginia Christian, 647 Water St., Salem, WV 26426 or WVaChristian@aol.com.

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Gospel Gazette Online is a monthly Gospel magazine on the Internet, begun by Louis Rushmore in 1999.

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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?

To help with this particular need, please send your checks to:

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P.O. Box 72, Winona, MS 38967

To speed up your announcement that you want to help,
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Website: WorldEvangelism.org

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◆ I want to subscribe to the quarterly magazine, ***The Voice of Truth International***. Enclosed is my check for \$15.00 for four issues, or \$25.00 for eight issues, starting with Volume _____. My address is given below.

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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. Because Christ had been raised from the dead.
2. Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!
3. Good habits.
4. Awake to righteousness and do not sin.
5. How are the dead raised and with what body will they have?
6. A body as God pleases.
7. One.
8. No.
9. Corruption; incorruption.
10. Natural; spiritual.
11. Life-giving.
12. Dust; Lord.
13. Image of the heavenly Man.

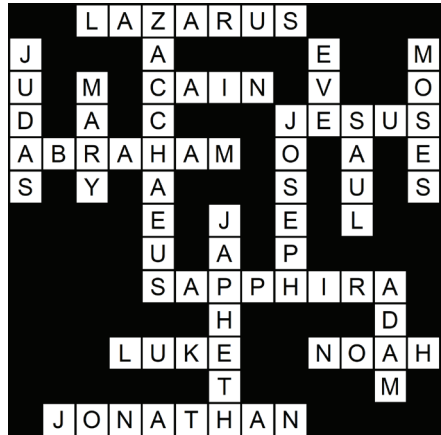
Scavenger Hunt (page 81)

1. "that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:4)
2. fellowship and the blood of Christ cleanses our sins (1 John 1:7)
3. Jesus Christ (1 John 2:1)
4. if we keep His commandments (1 John 2:3)
5. lawlessness (1 John 3:4)
6. God (1 John 4:7)
7. when we ask according to His will (1 John 5:14)
8. walking in truth (2 John 1:4)
9. "a deceiver and an antichrist" (2 John 1:7)
10. Diotrephes (3 John 1:9-10)

Bible Word Scramble (inside front cover)

Salvation

Bible Find (page 41)



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