

VOLUME ONE HUNDRED AND TEN

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



The beauty and the intricacy
of God's creation!

Calvary's Tree

Betty Lancaster Underhill

I wonder what I will be,
What purpose God has planned
for me?
I may be a table in a humble home
Or a furnishing in the courts of
Rome.

Oh! Soldiers are coming near
To Cut me down, I fear.
One soldier says, "See that tree?
Strong! Just what we need!"

Oh God, this is the purpose
You have for me:
To be the cross, the cruel tree...
The nails pierce His hands
into my wood,
His Pain — I would bear it, if I
could.

His blood stains me crimson red,
In forgiveness, He bows
His sacred head.
Help me to stand in grateful pride:
God chose me to hold His Son
as for man He died...

IF WHEN BAPTIZED...

YOU

- Put On Christ
Galatians 3:27
- Wash Away Sins
Acts 22:16 cf. Rev 1:5
- Have Remission of Sins
Acts 2:38
- Are Made Free From Sin
Romans 6:17-18
- Benefit By Jesus' Death
Romans 6:3-5
- Enter The Body Of Christ
1 Corinthians 12:13
- Are Saved
Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21

THEN Ask Yourself....,
“WHAT IS MY CONDITION
WITHOUT BAPTISM?”

ROMANS 6:5 — “FOR *IF*...

WE HAVE BECOME UNITED WITH HIM IN THE LIKENESS
OF HIS DEATH, WE SHALL BE ALSO IN THE
LIKENESS OF HIS RESURRECTION.”

CHURCH OF WHOSE CHOICE?

DENOMINATIONS

Morality.....Acts 10:1-2; 11:14
Sincerity.....Acts 26:9
Conscientious.....Acts 23:1
Benevolence.....1 Corinthians 13:3
Good works.....Ephesians 2:8-10
Traditions.....Matthew 15:8-9
Ignorance.....Romans 10:1-3
Hearers Only.....James 1:22-24
Faith Only.....James 2:17, 24
Church of Choice.....Matthew 15:13

SOCIAL CLUBS

KINGDOM OF CHRIST

All Promises.....2 Corinthians 1:20
All Blessings.....Ephesians 1:3
Salvation.....2 Timothy 2:10
Forgiveness.....Ephesians 1:7
Redemption.....Colossians 1:14
Reconciliation.....Ephesians 2:16
Created.....Ephesians 2:10
New Creature.....2 Corinthians 5:17
Complete.....Colossians 2:9-10
Blessed in Death...Revelation 14:13

CHURCH OF THE LORD

INFIDELITY

FAMILY OF GOD

BODY OF CHRIST

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



Who Knew What When?

Louis Rushmore

“Who Knew What When?” is a common international news headline. Let’s explore “Who Knew What When?” concerning, “Who in the first century believed Jesus’ kingdom was spiritual?”

As the first century A.D. began, there was an air of expectancy among the Jews that the long-prophesied kingdom of the Messiah was about to be established (Isaiah 2:2-3; Daniel 2:26-45). The fourth earthly kingdom from the time of and including the Babylonian reign under Nebuchadnezzar – the Roman Empire – had been ruling the Jews for a little less than 100 years. Therefore, the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth created quite a stir among the Jews as John and Jesus both began preaching that the kingdom was near (Matthew 3:1; 4:17).

The Jews expected an **earthly kingdom** comparable to the kingdom as it was when Solomon was king. Israel desperately wanted to overthrow Roman rule and occupation of their homeland. Therefore, many Jews were aroused by the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. They wanted to take Jesus by force and make Him their earthly king (John 6:14-15). However, many of the Jews turned away from following Jesus Christ once they realized that He did not come to establish a physical kingdom (John 6:66).

“Who Knew What When?” Many of the Jews who formerly were stirred by preaching about the kingdom were among the first to understand that the nature to the kingdom about which John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth preached was spiritual rather than physical and earthly. The apostles, though they continued with our Lord, still clung to the notion that

Jesus was about to establish a physical kingdom (Acts 1:6).

The Jews would not have crucified our Lord had He determined to establish a physical kingdom, because that is exactly what they wanted. The Sanhedrin and Jewish rulers would not have resisted the Christ and caused Him to be crucified if our Lord had come to establish an earthly kingdom that could repel the Romans. The Sanhedrin also understood, therefore, the true nature of the kingdom Jesus came to establish was spiritual and not earthly, despite its charge against Jesus before Governor Pilate (John 19:12). [Premillennialists make the same mistake as the first century Jews in expecting an earthly kingdom when Jesus Christ, instead, is the King of a spiritual kingdom – the body, the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18).]



One of the thieves on the cross – the penitent thief – seems to have grasped the true, spiritual nature of the kingdom Jesus came to establish. Jesus as well as the two thieves also on Calvary’s hill that day were about to die physically. Their deaths were inevitable. Yet, the one thief trusted in the establishment of the kingdom by the crucified Christ (Luke 23:42).

Alas, the apostles of Christ on whom our Lord would depend to administer the kingdom and spread its borders in the first century did not understand the spiritual nature of the kingdom. Earlier in the ministry of Jesus, the apostles vied for positions in an earthly kingdom that they expected Jesus to establish (Matthew 20:21; Mark 10:35-37). After Jesus resurrected and immediately prior to His ascension, still the apostles expected the soon to be established kingdom to be physical (Acts 1:6); they were clueless that the kingdom was spiritual. Others, mostly enemies of our Lord, realized the spiritual nature of the kingdom and wanted no part of it. The penitent thief also realized the spiritual nature of the coming kingdom. The apostles, however, had no idea yet that our Lord was about to establish a spiritual kingdom. Had the Holy Spirit not inspired the apostles and directed their preaching and teaching (Acts 2:1-4), apparently the apostles would have been unable to comprehend the nature of and to administer the spiritual kingdom – the church (Acts 2:47).

“Who Knew What When?” The many disciples who turned from following Jesus Christ realized that our Lord’s kingdom was to be spiritual. The Sanhedrin and Jewish leaders understood that Jesus came to establish a spiritual kingdom rather than to re-establish Solomon’s kingdom. Governor Pilate understood that our Lord’s kingdom was spiritual rather than physical; otherwise, he could not have found Jesus faultless (Luke 23:4, 14; John 18:38; 19:4, 6). The penitent thief believed in the spiritual nature of our Lord’s kingdom. Lastly, the apostles, too, comprehended the true nature of the kingdom of prophecy – the church, and they were willing to die for it (Acts 12:2).

Every person worldwide needs to realize the true nature of the kingdom of Jesus Christ – the church – and to obey the inspired message that was proclaimed on the birthday of the church (Acts 2:38) to be added to it by Jesus Himself (Acts 2:47). Waiting for Jesus to establish a physical kingdom is misguided and useless. Joining oneself to a manmade church rather than being added to the spiritual kingdom Jesus established is pointless and without the ability to save anyone from anything. Don’t be like the many who turned from Jesus in the first century or even like the clueless apostles prior the baptism of the Holy Spirit upon them. Embrace the Gospel message, obey it (2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17) and be added to the spiritual kingdom today! 

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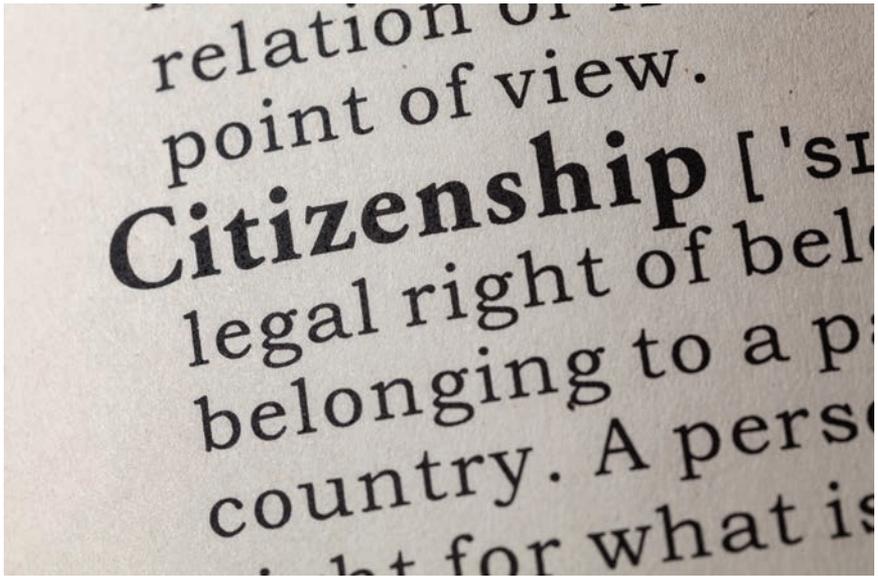
Our Citizenship Is in Heaven!

Jerry Bates

In Philippians 3, Paul encouraged the Christians to have their minds on spiritual things. Paul wrote in verses 14-17 that his mind was on the goal of following Christ and encouraged the Philippians to follow his example. In contrast, there were some whose minds were on earthly things, and their god was their belly (3:18-19). The word “for” at the beginning of verse 20 connects this verse with the previous verses. Why should our minds be on spiritual things rather than on earthly things? After all, we are living on the earth.

Our minds should be on spiritual things because our citizenship is in Heaven. Philippi was a Roman colony, and its people were proud of their citizenship. Being a Roman citizen carried with it both responsibilities and privileges. One’s allegiance was pledged to Rome, and he was governed by its laws. Citizens were expected to spread Roman thought and culture wherever they went. One also enjoyed certain privileges on which he might call wherever he might be. Paul was a Roman citizen, and he claimed certain privileges upon at least two occasions when he was mistreated. Being a Roman citizen was something of which to be proud, but as good as that might be, Paul wanted these Philippians to realize that their real citizenship was in Heaven, a much better place than Philippi or Rome. As Christians, this world is not our home. As Peter said, we are “*strangers and pilgrims*” (1 Peter 2:11). Since this world is not really our home, why should our minds be filled with material things and values?

Paul continued writing that we should be eagerly waiting for Christ’s return. Christ has promised that He will come back. Shortly before being



crucified, He told His disciples, “*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also*” (John 14:3). When Jesus ascended into Heaven, the disciples were reminded by two angels that He would come in like manner as they saw Him go into Heaven (Acts 1:11). The early church lived in a state of constant expectation that Christ would return, which helped them face daily hardships and persecution.

What does it mean to be eagerly waiting for Christ? Some may have the idea that to be waiting for Christ means to always be on one’s knees praying. However, that is not what Paul meant. Paul said he was eagerly waiting for Christ, but he was not always praying. To be waiting for Christ means to be earnestly yearning for and desiring His return. To be waiting for Christ means to be busy doing His will and His work. There is an example in the Parable to the Talents. The master gave one man five talents and another two talents. While the master was away, both were busy working for the master and gained more talents. When the master returned, both were prepared and were rewarded. These men were distinguished from the one talent man who did nothing and was punished by the master.

Are you waiting for Christ's return? If you are not, it is because you have filled your life with the less important things of the world, such as jobs, sports, pleasures or family. I wonder how we would react if we received a vision from God, and He told us that Christ was coming back tomorrow? Would we say as John did in Revelation 22:20, ***“Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”*** Or would we, as I think many would, begin to plead with God for a few more years, because we have many plans and need time to fulfill those plans. If we were earnestly desiring the return of Christ, we would want Him to return soon.

Why should we desire Christ's return? Because He will transform our lowly (weak and insignificant) bodies into glorious bodies. We all know how weak and frail these bodies are, but we have the promise that we will have more glorious bodies. We do not know what our new bodies will be like. ***“The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body”*** (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). John wrote in 1 John 3:2, ***“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see Him as he is.”*** John simply said that whatever kind of body Jesus has now, we will be like Him. Included in the idea of our citizenship in Heaven is the promise of a new and glorious body. Why would we want to hold on to a weak and frail body when we have the promise of a far more glorious one, where there is neither pain nor growing old? These bodies are not fit for Heaven, but God will transform these bodies into ones that are suitable for Heaven.

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:20 NKJV).

Since all these things are true, where is your mind? Obviously, considering our citizenship being in Heaven, that is where our minds and focus should be. We should not love the world, where all will pass away. We should constantly think about Heaven. Think about Heaven when life is hard; think about Heaven when life is good, and be busy working for the Lord. Do not be so discouraged about all the problems and stresses of this life, because this world is not our home. Thinking about Heaven should encourage us. Where is your mind? ✝

Jerry Bates is a missionary, Gospel preacher and one of the editors of the quarterly magazine *The Voice of Truth International*. He resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.



Paradoxes of Christianity: Remembering Yet Forgetting

Shane Fisher

A paradox is defined as “a statement that seems self-contradictory or absurd, yet in fact expresses a possible truth” (www.dictionary.com).

The Bible teaches the Christian is to remember some things and yet to forget some things.

Elephants are known for their long-term memory. There is a true story in my wife’s hometown, Hohenwald, Tennessee, that took place in 1999. It happened at the Elephant Sanctuary, a place that cares for old elephants which no longer work in a circus. There was an elephant named Jenny who was introduced to another elephant named Shirley. One of the caretakers noticed that when the two elephants met, they both seemed as if they had come across each other before that time. It so happened they had! The caretaker did some research and found that Jenny was in the traveling circus in Asia and Shirley had been **in the same traveling circus 23 years earlier only for a couple of months. They had remembered each other from that long ago!**

When I think about how God made the elephant with a good memory – I muse that we, too, need to have a memory like elephants (i.e., to be able to remember things easily and for a long period of time). **The long-term memory of the elephant is key to its survival, and likewise, a long-term memory of God’s Word and its application is also key to our spiritual survival, as we remember what God has done for us.**

The Bible frequently affirms we are to remember God and His



Word. In the Old Testament, Moses reminded Israel repeatedly to not forget God or His Word (Deuteronomy 4:9, 23, 31; 6:12; 8:11, 14, 19; 9:7; Joshua 1:13). What will happen to an upcoming generation of children who are not taught God’s Word in the home? Judges 3:7 states, “*So the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD. They forgot the LORD their God, and*

served the Baals and Asherahs.” We must inoculate our children with the Christian worldview (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

The Bible frequently affirms that God remembers His people.

God constantly reminded certain individuals of the covenants He had made with them: Noah (Genesis 9:15,16), Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Leviticus 26:42-45), Israel (Nehemiah 9:6-38) and David (Psalm 89:1-52). God remembers you and me as His beloved children, and as such, we have access to the blessings of the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:8-13). We should never forget that truth.

The Bible affirms the people of God (whether it be the Patriarchal, Mosaic or Christian dispensation) are to remember the mighty acts that God has done for them. The Israelite nation was to remember it was enslaved in Egypt and God brought it out of slavery (Deuteronomy 5:15; 16:3, 12; 24:18). The Israelites were to be constantly reminded of what God did to Pharaoh and all Egypt (Deuteronomy 7:18). They were to remember God in the wilderness journey (Deuteronomy 8:18). The Israelites were to remember the past and ask their elders about it (Deuteronomy 32:7).

May we always remember what Jesus Christ has done for us (2 Timothy 2:8). Christians need to remember what God has done for them in Christ! In 2 Peter 1:15-18, Peter wanted Christians to be reminded that he was a reliable and trustworthy eyewitness of the Messiah. We also need to remember the mighty acts of the Lord while He was here on the earth. What is a specific way in which we can remember the Lord and His mighty acts, especially relating to one’s salvation? We always remember the Lord particularly when we partake of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34).

May we always remember the words that the apostles spoke, which were written down in God's confirmed and final revelation to mankind (Jude 17; 1 Corinthians 13:8-13; 14:37; Ephesians 4:7-16; Jude 3). Further, let us show our faith, love and obedience to Jesus and grow in grace.

The Bible affirms we as Christians need to continue to grow in the faith lest we forget to whom we belong. Peter wrote his second epistle to combat the false teachers who were about to infiltrate some congregations in the provinces of Asia Minor (2 Peter 1:1; 3:1). He reminded early Christians that they had obtained and inherited precious promises from God and escaped the world and its lust (2 Peter 1:4). In order to stay sanctified for the Master's use, a Christian must add faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love (2 Peter 1:5-8). If a Christian does not keep growing, he will regress. Peter warned in 2 Peter 1:9, *"For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins."* This is certainly what happened to some of the five churches of Asia Minor (Revelation 2:5; 3:3).

The Bible affirms we are to forget some things. Listen to Paul in Philippians 3:13-14, *"Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."* In the context, Paul referred to his credentials as a Jew of which he could have boasted: being from the tribe of Benjamin, sitting at the feet of one of the greatest rabbis (Gamaliel). However, Paul realized there are things that we must let go so we can press on to higher ground. There are certain things in the world that have the potential to hinder us, such as a higher education (if one allows it to corrupt our Christian faith). Certainly, it is not wrong to obtain academic degrees, and yet, there is the temptation for highly-educated people to feel superior to others or to reject the first principles of the Word of God. Some people might appeal to a significant, well-known family lineage and feel the temptation to be above others. Some things, though not sinful in and of themselves, can hinder our growth in Christ. We must choose to forget those things and remember to Whom we belong (Romans 6:1-21).

The Bible affirms God does not remember our sins for which we

have repented and for which we have been forgiven.

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. (Hebrews 8:11-12)

Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:18-19)

God acts like those sins never happened. He does not hold them against us.

Paul remembered that he was a persecutor of the church. In 1 Timothy 1:12-13, he wrote:

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”

Even though Paul was likely haunted by some of the atrocities, such as consenting to the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1), after he became a Christian, he did not allow himself to be chained to the past. He learned that the grace of God had forgiven him. First Corinthians 15:9,10 states:

For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

One of the lies of which Satan continues to plague Christians is to entrap them in thinking they have not been forgiven. Perhaps there is someone who once practiced homosexuality, and he or she lived in fornication. After learning the truth and placing faith in Jesus, that one obeyed the Gospel (Mark 16:15,16). To show fruits worthy of repentance (Acts 2:38), that person changed his or her attitude toward homosexuality,

broke up the relationship with that partner and no longer participated in that activity. There is the potential for doubt to haunt a person and to believe such a one has not been forgiven. However, according to 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, all manner of sins can be forgiven. ***“And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God”*** (1 Corinthians 6:11). The Bible teaches that a person is forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ by submitting to the ***“washing of regeneration”*** (Titus 3:5-6). God is always faithful to His Word and will never lie (Titus 1:2)! Know with 100% assurance and confidence that you have been forgiven if you have submitted to Divine conditions of forgiveness.

Likewise, when a brother or sister in Christ repent of his or her sins, we must forgive them. Luke 17:3-4 states:

Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, “I repent,” you shall forgive him.” Matthew 6:14,15 states: ***“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”***

We must treat our brother or sister in Christ as God has treated us — forgiven, without holding sins against our brother or sister. We are not to have hearts of bitterness (Ephesians 4:31; Hebrews 12:15).

Conclusion

Do you remember God and His Word? Do you read it, study it and meditate upon it? Do you remember the mighty acts that God did for you in Christ? Will you as a Christian continue to grow in the faith, lest you forget to Whom you belong? Will you forget some things that hinder you from pressing on to higher ground? Will you comfort yourself with the truth that God does not remember our sins if we have complied with His instructions? 

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1932—2008

THE JUDGMENT TO COME

J.C. Choate

People often live their lives as though this existence is all there is, that there will be no after-life. Therefore, they act as though there will be no judgment. The Bible teaches that there will be a Judgment Day for all of us.

How do the Scriptures describe what will happen in that moment of time? *“...The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power”* (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised...” (1 Corinthians 15:52).

...Fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. (Revelation 20:9-12)

- **No human being knows when that day will be — it is a day appointed by the Lord.** *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27).
- **All who have ever lived, or who will ever live, will be there.** Paul wrote, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God”* (2 Corinthians 5:10). Again, he said, *“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God”* (Romans 14:12).
- **God will judge everyone through Christ and His word.** Paul explained to the Athenians, *“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead”* (Acts 17:30-31).

Christ warned, *“He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”* (John 12:48). *“...Judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”* (1 Peter 4:17).

- **This statement, made by Peter, identifies the dividing line in judgment.** The “house” of God (1 Timothy 3:15) is the “household” of God (Ephesians 2:19), the “kingdom” (Ephesians 5:5), the “body” (1 Corinthians 12:27), the “church” (Colossians 1:24), the “bride” (Ephesians 5:23, 31-32) of Christ.
- **So we must be in that body in order to be saved in the Judgment.** How do we get into that body? Peter said by *“...obeying the Gospel.”* First Corinthians 12:13 explains, *“...For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...”* Being buried with Christ in baptism, we are then raised to walk that new life in Him (Romans 6:3-4).
- **As Christians, living obediently and safely within the spiritual fold of God, we can face the Judgment with confidence and hope.** We will be judged by the way we have lived, by our thoughts and by our words. Christ declared:

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. (Matthew 12:35-37)

- **The Lord will be no respecter of persons.** Paul explained to the Colossian brethren, *“But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons”* (Colossians 3:25).
- **The judgment will be final.** When one dies — either safe in the Lord, or never having had his sins washed away in obedience to Christ — his status before the Lord cannot be changed. His relatives cannot save him by their prayers or by paying others to pray that he will be saved. There will be no second chance for him. That is why one must prepare to meet God in this life, by obeying Him and by being faithful unto death (Mark 16:16; Revelation 2:10).
- **The Lord will send the wicked into everlasting punishment but will give the righteous life eternal** (Matthew 25:46). One existence is just as lasting as the other. In other words, the lost, sinful, ungodly and unfaithful will be cast into torment forever. Some would challenge, “That’s not fair! A loving God would not do that!” Yet, we can’t blame God. He loved all of humanity and gave His Son to provide salvation for everyone. If a soul rejects that love, grace and mercy, then he is the one who will have to face the consequences for his actions. Those who do obey God and remain faithful to Him will dwell with the Lord forever in the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21-22).

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:13-15)

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20). 



The Apostles' Doctrine Concerning Evangelism

Byron Nichols

The apostles' doctrine (teaching) had an immediate impact on the infant church, as we see in Acts 2:42 that the new Christians "*continued steadfastly*

in the apostles' doctrine..." It is obvious from the instant and continuing growth of the church that the apostles impressed upon those disciples the necessity of teaching others the Gospel, the ongoing need for evangelism.

The church today knows about the Great Commission, that we are to take the soul-saving message to all people everywhere. We know that this was done by the early church, and thus, we know that it **can** be done! Like in so many things, we **know** better than we **do**!

We all appreciate and benefit from words of encouragement and commendation, but there are times when we can also benefit from words that are not so encouraging but are needed for correction and rejuvenation.

Evangelism Today

There was a time in the lifetime of many of us when the Lord's church was the fastest growing religious group in America. What a glorious time that was as the church was actively engaged in both group and individual evangelistic efforts, and we saw that the efforts were indeed successful! However, that was **then**, and this is **now**. I believe that no one would dispute the fact that the church is not as evangelistic as it was a few decades ago.



Why Is This True?

I believe that there is one word that perhaps answers the question better than any other – **apathy**. Apathy involves a lack of passion, feeling, emotion or excitement.

Please notice with me now just a few of the many causes of apathy regarding lost souls. **(1) Desire for acceptance and popularity.** Satan takes advantage of our natural yearning to be accepted – popular. Even in the church this can become a problem when we neglect our evangelism for fear of offending others with the Gospel, thus endangering our acceptability.

(2) Tolerance and broadmindedness. Misunderstood tolerance and broadmindedness **greatly deter evangelism**. In the eyes of many, we are guilty of self-righteousness when we try to share the message of salvation. The idea seems to be that “we have our faults” and “they have their faults,” so we have no business trying to show to them that what they are practicing religiously is different from what the Bible teaches. This kind of thinking contributes to a willingness to let evangelization of the world go lacking.

(3) A growing spirit of universalism. It is sad that even some in leadership roles in the church are no longer sure that the lost are really lost. Much of what has been black and white from the first century has now become gray. Some believe that all people will ultimately be saved, despite Christ’s warning regarding ***“the broad way that leads to destruction”*** and the fact that ***“there***

are many who go in by it” (Matthew 7:13-14). To believe in universalism is to deny the Great Commission and any purpose for evangelism.

(4) **Lack of commitment and conviction.** Several years ago, a Communist military officer told an American missionary that he would be quite willing to die if it would help advance the cause of Communism. He then told the missionary, “Christianity means **something** to you, but Communism means **everything** to us.” For the most part, the Lord’s church is not displaying a commitment equivalent to that of some of Christianity’s greatest foes, resulting in an evangelistic effort that is not what it **could** and **should** be.

(5) Another cause of apathy in evangelism is a **greater emphasis on sound doctrine than on Christ**. Brethren, please stay with me on this and don’t misunderstand what I am saying. I am a strong believer in sound doctrine, but it is possible to have a **correct mind** and a **cold heart**. We can, as the church or as individual Christians, be absolutely right doctrinally but have practically no evangelistic outreach. It is quite possible for us to be **doctrinally sound** but **sound asleep** regarding evangelism. Let me say, however, that **genuinely sound doctrine includes a sincere love for the lost and an ardent desire for them to be saved.**

Conquering Apathy in Evangelism

An old preacher once said, “If man has a soul, and he has, and if that soul can be won or lost for eternity, and it can, then the most important thing in the world is to bring a man to Jesus Christ.” Surely, he was right in his assessment. Apathy toward evangelism **can** and **must** be overcome because it is our responsibility as God’s children to take the message of salvation to the world. Souls can be won, but this is only done **intentionally**, not **accidentally**.

We can conquer apathy in evangelism if we can come to understand what Christianity is really all about. We must come to see that we are not our own but that we have truly been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). We must move from **selfishness** to **selflessness** and **sympathy**, sympathy for those who are still lost in sin. It isn’t hard at all to get lots of people to give a great deal of themselves in rescue efforts to find a lost child. Surely, with proper motivation, the church can be moved to try harder to rescue **the lost souls of the world.**

Several years ago, a good friend of mine began preaching for a small rural congregation. One Sunday, he asked the members to let him know of

anyone with whom he might be able to have Bible studies. One of the men in the church was about 50 years old, very poor and could neither read nor write, but he was kind and humble. This man told the preacher to be at his house on Tuesday evening, and he would have someone there with whom to study.

Tuesday evening arrived, and as my friend drove up to the house, he saw a large number of cars and pickups. His first thought was that some family member must have died. Instead, at least 100 relatives and friends of the man and his wife had come at his invitation. They were packed into every room, as well as outside on the front porch. The preacher couldn't even talk to them all at one time; he had to move from room to room just to talk to them.

Because of the great number of folks who were willing to study with him, my friend had to divide them into small groups so that the studies could be conducted. Several of the couples were living together but were not married. As he taught them and they learned from the Bible, he began baptizing folks and then conducting their weddings rather simultaneously. Over a period of time, some 50 or so of these folks repented of their sins and obeyed the Gospel! All of this came about because one illiterate, backwoods Christian was just the opposite of being apathetic toward evangelism. He did what he could! This gentle disciple is alive today, and he still is unaware that he is a hero of the faith.

Our proper perception of the cross is critical to the seriousness of our evangelism. P.T. Forsyth once said, "You may always measure the value of Christ's cross by your interest in missions. The **missionless church** betrays that it is a **crossless church**, and it becomes a **faithless church**." Along this same line are these stirring words by Leighton Ford. "When the Christ of the **judgment seat** and the Christ of the **cross** become the Christ of the **heart**, we cannot help looking at others through new eyes – the eyes of Christ – and sharing with them the One who means so much to us."

E. Stanley Jones was a longtime denominational missionary to the Hindus of India. During one of his attempts to teach about Jesus, one very perceptive Hindu man spoke up and said, "Sir, if what you say about this Jesus is not true, it doesn't matter at all. But, if what you say about Jesus is true, **then nothing else matters at all**." Isn't that amazing! That Hindu man, knowing only Hinduism and nothing about Christianity, very quickly could see that, if true, the story of Jesus totally surpassed everything else

in importance! In just a few moments, he was able to see something that many Christians have not seen throughout their lifetime!

The church has **many ministries** but only **one mission**. Think about Christ. He performed many good works. He showed compassion, fed the hungry, healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, cured lepers and raised the dead. His **ministries** were many, but His **mission** was one! He proclaimed His mission in Luke 19:10, *“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*



Christ’s church should also have many **ministries**, but only **one mission – to seek and save the lost!** We say that we believe that *“the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation”*

(Romans 1:16). Let’s all resolve right now that we will, both individually and collectively, do our part in evangelism by sharing with others **the Gospel – God’s power to save the world.**

On June 5, 1910, American short story writer O. Henry lay on his death bed. As he slipped from life into death, his final words were, “Turn up the lights. I don’t want to go home in the dark.” Apathy in evangelism can be overcome by a realization of these three things: **(1) Who** we are, **(2) Whose** we are and **(3) Why** we are. As the Lord’s people, **let’s “turn up the lights.”**✝

Byron Nichols is Editor Emeritus of *The Voice of Truth International*. He resides in Springfield, Missouri, USA.

[Editor’s Note: A more excellent article in this edition of *The Voice of Truth International* or in any other and elsewhere as well cannot be found. This call to awake and light up the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ is much needed by every Christian and each congregation of the Lord’s church today. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Blessings

Paula Bates

1. *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has _____ us with all _____ blessings in heavenly places in Christ”* (Ephesians 1:3).
2. *“And I am sure that when I come unto you, I shall come in the _____ of the blessing of _____”* (Romans 15:29).
3. *“And I will make them and the places round about my hill a _____; and I will cause the _____ to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessings”* (Ezekiel 34:26).
4. *“And I will make of thee a great _____, and I will bless thee, and make thy _____ great; and thou shalt be a blessing”* (Genesis 12:2).
5. *“Saying with a loud voice, _____ is the _____ that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honor and _____ and blessing”* (Revelation 5:12).
6. *“Bring all the _____ into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this, says the _____ of hosts, ‘If I will not open for you the _____ of heaven and pour out for you such blessing...’”* (Malachi 3:10).



- Answers:**
1. Blessed, spiritual
 2. Fullness, Christ
 3. Blessing, Shower
 4. Nation, name
 5. Worthy, Lamb, glory
 6. Tithes, Lord, windows

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The God Who Desired Relationship: Genesis 1-11

Jeremy W. Barrier

I frequently hear Christians expressing the need to spend more time in Bible study and prayer. This is a need that exists within humans where we are seeking a deeper understanding and even a relationship with God. It is through Bible study that individuals are hoping to *hear* (i.e., *read*) something that God is trying to tell them in their lives. The other side of the conversation comes from our attempt to speak and talk to our Heavenly Father through prayer, intercession and praise. Often, this is accomplished by people expressing to God how impressed they are with His creation, how thankful we are to Him for giving us our lives and asking for assistance in difficult circumstances. To put it quite simply, people desire to know and to be known by God. It is my hope (and I believe God's hope) that people can come to realize that we can have a daily walk with God, spending time with God Almighty, be humbled by God and learn from the our Creator. If one wants to know the Creator, then where does he or she begin? The obvious answer is the Bible.

Have you ever been able to read a Bible? Have you ever known a Christian who told you about the Bible? While many people in the world do have access to Bibles, there are still many who have not had this opportunity. Imagine that you have never read the Bible and you were to pick one up and begin reading. Where would you begin reading? What would you find? The most likely answer is that you would begin reading the book from the beginning. The first pages to which you turn will probably have the name "Genesis" written on them. To put it simply, the word "Genesis" is a word in the language of Latin that means "beginnings." As you begin reading, you notice that the text is divided into chapters and verses. The chapters are larger units of text and every sentence or two the text is divided into smaller sections called verses. If you were to read through Genesis, chapters one to eleven, what would be the picture that begins to develop around God and humans?

Without going into too much detail, the picture begins to develop in this way. As time began, there was nothing but a formless and an undeveloped darkness in which the Spirit of God hovered and shook violently over the substance, and from out of this deep darkness God said, "Let there be light!"

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From this point on, one begins to see in the light the magnificence of God's hand in the entire creation process, all the way from creating the massive universe filled with stars and planets down to every fish in the sea. Lastly, God made the amazing and complex creation of humans. As the record develops, and we are further introduced to these first creations, we are impressed with the fact that everything is pure, good and clean. It is a view of the world that each of us is deeply longing to know and to recover for ourselves. It is a vision of the universe that we only saw when we were still young, innocent children, filled with energy and life, seeing no limits, knowing of no troubles, and simply desiring the small pleasures of life, such as jumping in a rain puddle in the mud.

As this universal story continues to develop, it does not take long for the first woman and man to disobey God. We learn that God asked the humans to take care of the Garden of Eden where they lived, and not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The humans were not obedient, and they were forced to leave the Garden. It is at this point – this first breach of contract between God and humans – that God was forced to make the humans separate from His sight and fellowship. This was the beginning of the divide of a relationship, but God was and is not willing to stop trying. In time, Adam and Eve, the first humans, had children. The two sons were named Cain and Abel. Cain was a tiller of the ground, and Abel was a shepherd. Cain had a disagreement with his brother Abel, and he killed him. Once again, we see the failure of relationships from the perspective of humans.

Then, the account shifted from the Garden scene to the spread of people in greater numbers. At this point, civilization appeared to be going in a very unsatisfactory direction. Therefore, God sought to make a new start by saving Noah and his family. God sent a massive flood to consume all peoples on the earth – except Noah and his family. The family of Noah and the rest of the animal world were saved through the flood by Noah taking his family along with specimens of each kind of animal onto the boat. After the flood waters subsided, Noah and his family left the ark, they were left with the responsibility of repopulating the earth again. This finally led to the narrative found in Genesis 11. There, the civilization of humanity finally grew in great numbers but failed to do what God asked them to do. In particular, God asked them to spread out and fill the earth, but they resisted and decided to stay in one location. The people built a great city with a tower

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reaching up to the heavens. This tower represented the strength and might of humanity to build great structures, to rely on their own strength and to not look to God for assistance. Another example of the building of one of these great cities with a tower is found in Jeremiah 51:53, which reads, ***“Though Babylon were to mount up to heaven, And though she were to fortify the height of her strength, Yet from Me plunderers would come to her, says the Lord.”*** As the Genesis message continues, God confused their language and dispersed the humans to fulfill His wishes for humanity spread over the earth. All of this shows the sad reality early on within the human story.

What do these events say about God’s relationship with humanity? Well, numerous points come to mind. This beautiful history tells us from where we came and Who created us. It accounts for different languages and groups of people. We are introduced to God for the first time, and we are introduced to sin and justice for the first time. We learn all of these things in the first eleven chapters of the Bible. That really is a lot of information in such a short space. One of the things that is important to me is what the text says about God’s relationship with humanity and our relationship with Him. From the very beginning of time, God has wanted communion and a relationship with humanity, and humanity did not know what it wanted, but it was obviously not God. Humans have continued to struggle with this problem, but God has continued to look after people and direct their steps. God offers to be with us, and yet, we seek fortitude and security in other places than in Him. The episode with Babel illustrates man’s faulty confidence in the security of numbers and fortifications for protection. How wrong was humanity then, and how wrong we are today when we, too, possess a faulty confidence. If only we could come to realize that there is a God, who loves and cares for us as humans and continually seeks for ways that He might be able to share in a relationship with us. It does not take long to learn from reading the Bible – which is a powerful guide in one’s life as – to realize what an awesome and amazing Creator the God of the Bible is. Last, but not least, I think the idea is well founded that through the Scriptures, we can come to know God, and along with this, God does desire to hear from us through our prayers. What an amazing God! 

Jeremy W. Barrier is a missions evangelist and head of the graduate program at Heritage Christian University in Florence, Alabama, USA.

GOD

Jesus the Breaker

Emanuel Daugherty

I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them. (Micah 2:12-13 KJV)

The righteous souls of Jacob and Israel in the Book of Micah are representative of all God's people from the Northern and Southern Kingdoms who were to make up the remnant. The remnant composed so great a portion of thought among the prophets that Isaiah named his son Shear-jashub, "***the salvation of the remnant***" (Isaiah 2:21; 6:9-13; 7:3; 8:2, 18; 9:12). His name served as a reminder to those of the captivity that there would be a return.

The remnant here in Micah is described as "***large,***" but it is still much smaller than the previous population of the two kingdoms. This gathering of the remnant is God's work through the Shepherd Messiah.

The assembling of the remnant began with the work of Zerubbabel (Ezra 1-2) and Ezra (Ezra 7). These gatherings were but types of the Gospel gathering which is still going on today. While the focus here is primarily on Jewish "sheep," Jesus emphasized that he had "other sheep which were not of this fold." (Smith 327)

Micah said the gathering would be like a great herd of sheep and noisy as a great multitude.

The prophet then spoke of the Leader of the remnant. "***The breaker is gone up before them... the King goes before them... Jehovah at their head.***" This is an obscure prophecy of Jesus the Messiah as discerned from the context.

"Their king, the Messiah... the Liberator, one who breaks through the

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gates of their bondage” (Hailey). Respected commentator C.F. Keil said of this passage, “Breaker” is “the counterpart of Moses, viz. Zerubbabel, and in the highest sense Christ.”



The lead ram was the ram who went before the flock to butt or break down any and all barriers, rubbish, brush and undergrowth, making a way for the sheep that followed it. Just so, the Messiah Lord, Leader of the remnant flock, will break through all barriers to the ultimate accomplishment of God’s purpose, i.e., the gathering of God’s people into one body, the church. From this passage, the “Breaker-through” was one of the titles of the Christ known to the Jews (Pusey). Notice in this one verse there are three references to the same person: He is the Breaker, the King and Jehovah. This can only refer to Deity, Jesus the Messiah.

Let us now consider how Jesus through His work in the New Testament is identified with the Breaker of Micah’s prophecy. When one sees the redemptive work of Christ in the New Testament, it is easy to see that He is the “lead ram.” Jesus is not only the Good Shepherd and the Door to the

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sheepfold, He is as well their King who passes before them and the Lord Jehovah at the head of them.

1. He has broken the shackles of sin, giving men freedom, by His death on the cross (Isaiah 61:1-4; Luke 4:18-19).
2. He has broken the bonds of death by His resurrection (Romans 1:4).
3. He has broken down the wall of partition that divided Jew from Gentile, making both one (Ephesians 2:14).
4. Jesus breaks through sin and confusion, and He has made the way plain (Isaiah 35:8; John 14:6-7).
5. Jesus breaks down the hardness of men's hearts by His love, mercy and grace (Romans 2:4).
6. Jesus the Breaker leads the way to salvation, abundant living and to Heaven itself (John 10:10; 14:1-3).
7. Jesus the Breaker is our King Eternal, leading, guiding, instructing, encouraging and going before to prepare the way to Life Eternal (John 5:28-29).

Has He broken through to your heart? Are you letting Him lead your life?✝

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The righteous souls of Jacob and Israel in the Book of Micah are representative of all God's people from the Northern and Southern Kingdoms who were to make up the remnant.

Ten Characteristics of God's Word

D.A. Adenugba

The Word of God is powerful to change a sinner into a saint. These are ten characteristics of the Word of God. The Word of the Lord is...

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Right | Psalm 33:4 |
| 2. Settled in Heaven | Psalm 119:89 |
| 3. Inspired | 2 Timothy 3:16-17 |
| 4. Tried | Psalm 18:30 |
| 5. Truth | John 17:17 |
| 6. Pure | Proverbs 30:5 |
| 7. A lamp | Psalm 119:105a |
| 8. A light | Psalm 119:105b |
| 9. Spirit | John 6:63a |
| 10. Life | John 6:63b |



Do you read and study God's Word? Never fail to read the inerrant Word of God daily (1 Timothy 4:13). ***"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). 

Adenugba D. A. preaches the Gospel in Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria.

THE WORD OF GOD

The Word Law

Russel G. Bell

The word “law” is used many times in the New Testament, and under-



standing its meaning or to what it refers is essential to understanding God’s will — the Bible. When one reads the word “law” in the New Testament, equate it with the Old Testament or the Old Law, and it will help you get the meaning. For

example, Paul wrote in Romans 7:4, *“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law [Old Testament] through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God.”*

Again in verse 6 of the same chapter, the apostle penned, *“But now we have been discharged from the law [Old Testament], having died to that wherein we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter.”*

Again in Galatians 5:4 Paul wrote, *“Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law [Old Testament], ye are fallen away from grace.”* Paul made it very clear in these three passages that one must leave the Old Testament Law and follow the New Testament Law; otherwise, a person will be severed from Christ. We were freed from the Old Testament Law so we could be joined to the New Testament Law. We must keep the more perfect law — the New Testament of Jesus Christ. ✝

Russell G. Bell is a longtime preacher who lives in Topeka, Kansas, USA.

THE WORD OF GOD

What Is the Benefit of a Tract?

Robert Rawson

We have a tract printed each month for placement on the display tree stand in the foyer at Crockett Church of Christ. They are for anyone's use. Now, what is the benefit of a tract?

There are several benefits. One, *it is small in size* and affords a quick reading and subsequent re-reading more readily (and more likely) than reading a full-size book on a subject. Verses are limited, and thereby, they are easily read or encourage follow up in the Bible to see the full context. Such is so helpful to discern real righteousness found in believing in Christ instead of resorting to our personal definitions of righteousness (Philippians 3:9). In this way, we can go back to the examples in the Book of Acts of the Apostles and see how they understood the message and obeyed to receive the righteousness of the Lord.

Two, *a tract sums up the subject*. The front of a tract usually reveals the subject matter and may even imply a biblical application of the truth about the topic. Sometimes, a tract may use a chart that shows how a person about whom we read in Scripture understood and obeyed the Gospel that he was taught.

Three, a person can underline points to emphasize them. Highlighters and pens work well for providing emphasis of information we don't want someone to whom we give the tract to overlook. Marking or highlighting makes it possible to immediately revisit the major points. By encouraging a friend in study to give attention to the highlighted areas, the study may be taken to another level quickly and I have had people say, "I never saw that prior to your pointing this out."

Four, of all the good a tract can do, *there is one thing a tract cannot do*. It cannot reach out and take anyone's hand to **force a person to take a copy of the tract**. Sometimes, the subject is of great enough interest, it seems to cause the tract to *fly off the shelf* on which you have placed it to be seen and to be taken, but that's the interest of the reader, not the tract

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forcing anyone to receive it or to read it.



Have you seen tracts as beneficial for you and your personal work with others? 

Robert D. Rawson preaches for the Crockett Church of Christ in Crockett, Mississippi, USA.

[Editor's Note: Written literature is always ready when the reader is ready (unlike radio or TV), it has a long shelf life, it can go places we cannot go, and multiple copies of a tract can go simultaneously in different directions. Tracts are more affordable to produce and distribute than books, and because of their comparative brevity, they are more likely to be read. A well-written tract provides the crux of any subject discussed therein. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Did You Know?

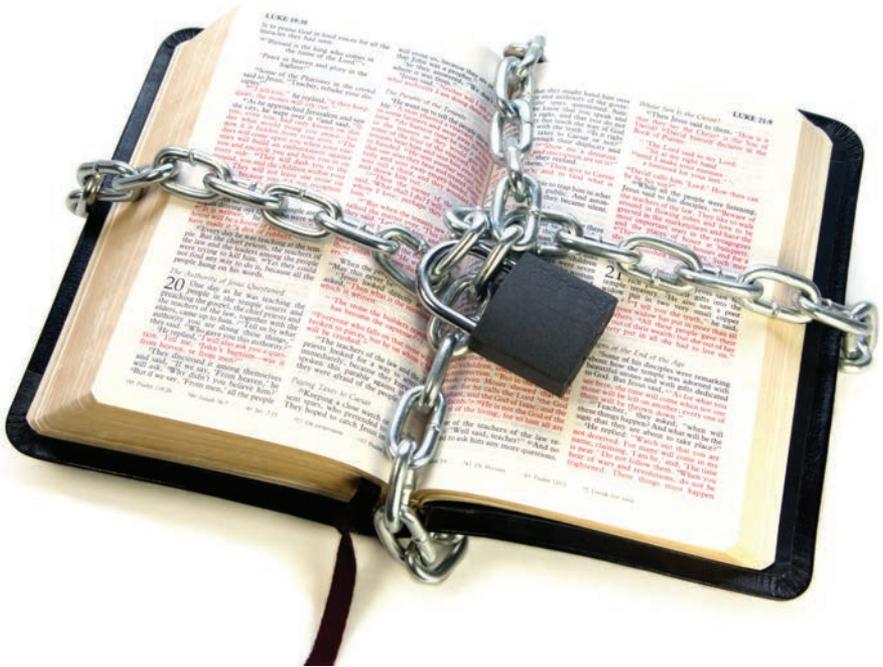
Matthew recorded three miracles of Jesus not found in the other Gospel accounts: healing two blind men (9:27), healing a demon-possessed, mute man (9:32) and the temple tax in the fish's mouth (17:24).



THE WORD OF GOD

The Chain of Scripture

Dale Parsley



“I don’t find Paul’s writings very authoritative,” were the words from a coworker years ago regarding the topic of whether the Bible endorses capital punishment (as it does in Romans 13:1-6). Paul claimed his writings were from God. First Corinthians 14:37 states, ***“If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord.”*** Yet, some deny Paul’s apostolic authority wherever he wrote about things that they consider offensive, such as what he commanded about marriage (Ephesians 5:23-28; 1 Corinthians 7), women’s role in worship (1 Timothy 2:8-12; 1 Corinthians 14:34) and

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even about various sins (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Romans 1:18-32).

In order to be consistent, to deny that these passages are from God, one must deny also that the entirety of the letters are from God, since those verses appear therein. To deny these letters are from God is to deny all of Paul's writings to be from God. To deny that all the apostle Paul wrote in Scripture is from God is to disregard almost half of the New Testament, since Paul authored thirteen of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament.

Furthermore, to dismiss Paul leads to the dismissal of the writings of the apostle Peter, for Peter acknowledged Paul's writings were from God (2 Peter 3:15-16). If Peter was not able to detect that Paul's writings were not from God, how can it be said that Peter was inspired of God himself?

To dismiss Paul also leads to the dismissal of the writings of Luke who was a travelling companion of Paul (2 Timothy 4; Colossians 4) and who wrote the Gospel of Luke and Acts. In reading Acts 14-28, one will see repeatedly that Luke acknowledges Paul as an authoritative apostle.

Since rejecting Paul implicitly dismisses Peter, this calls into question the inspired authority of Matthew and his Gospel account, for he wrote about Peter as an authoritative apostle (Matthew 10:1-20). This same line of reasoning can be applied to the apostle John who acknowledged Peter to be an apostle (John 1:42; 21:15-25) and who authored the Gospel of John, 1-3 John and Revelation. Likewise, John Mark, who wrote the Gospel of Mark, acknowledged Simon Peter to be an inspired apostle (Mark 1:16-19; 3:16).

As one can see, the books of the New Testament are interlinked like a chain. To dismiss one is to essentially dismiss them all. The kind of approach to Scripture, which rejects as inspired passages what one does not like and dismisses their human penman, results in idolatry – a remaking of Christ and Christianity according to one's own image, likeness and desires. Faithful followers of Christ receive the books of the New Testament ***“not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God”*** (1 Thessalonians 2:13). 

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Religious but Lost

Wayne Barrier

Studies indicate that most people in “Christian societies” believe themselves to be saved. We meet very few people who understand the concept of God, Jesus and church who are in fear of everlasting punishment. Most will provide a reason for their belief concerning their saved state. Unfortunately, the Bible does not teach that most who claim Christian salvation are in fact in a secure state. Actually, the opposite is taught in Scripture. Consider Matthew 7:21-23, which states, *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”* These are religious people who do religious things. Why are they rejected? They do not do the will of the Father.

***We need to know the Father’s will.
Serious Bible study and commitment are
required to know His will. Yet, many are
unwilling to put forth the effort to know God’s will.***

The Bible must be understood in total (2 Timothy 3:15-16) and obeyed. We can get help from others who are teachers of the Scriptures, but **we must accept personal responsibility to know the truth.** There are many who teach false doctrine while claiming to teach the Truth (2 Timothy 4:2-4; Acts 20:20-30). We must study and verify everything others teach us. **It is not enough to simply be religious and do good works. We must obey God.✝**

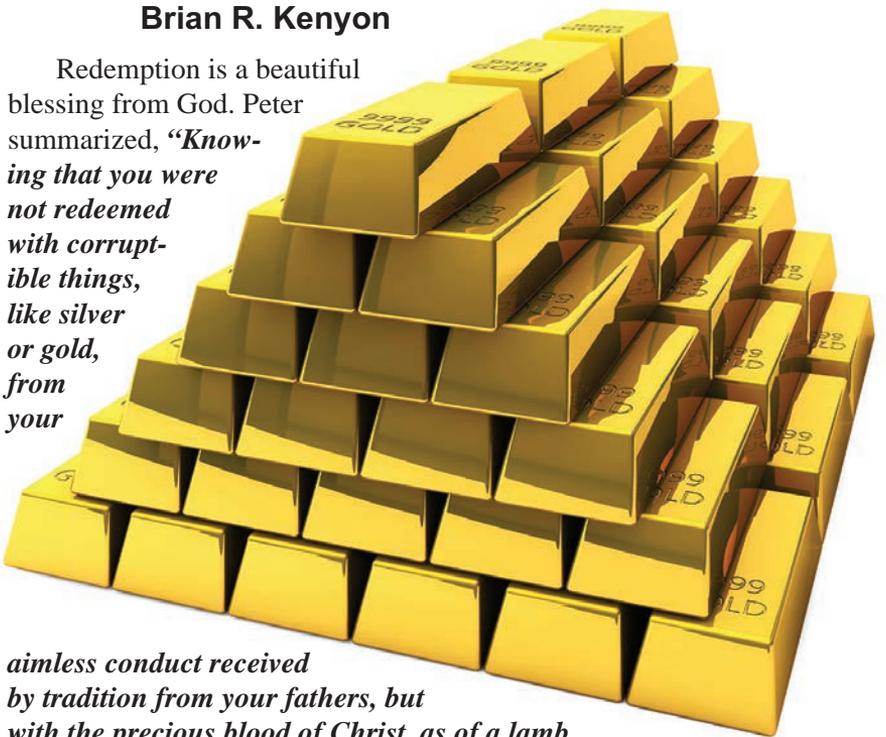
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SALVATION

Realities of Redemption

Brian R. Kenyon

Redemption is a beautiful blessing from God. Peter summarized, ***“Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your***



aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19). This particular word translated ***“redeemed”*** (from *lutroomai*) refers to being set free from bondage by some sort of payment – ransomed. This Greek verb is found in only two other places (Luke 24:21; Titus 2:14). Peter listed three important realities about our redemption in these verses.

First, Peter revealed from what we were redeemed – ***“aimless conduct.”*** This term, also translated ***“vain conversation”*** (KJV), ***“vain manner of life”*** (ASV) and ***“futile way of life”*** (NAS), can refer to any life lived apart from God, but it is especially suggestive of the life of idolatry,

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which is often connected with futility (cf., 1 Kings 17:15; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Jeremiah 2:5, 8; Acts 14:15; Ephesians 4:17). This God-opposed way of life was **“received by tradition from your fathers,”** which means it was according to their family’s tradition. When people choose **family first** over God’s will, the result is inevitable: souls are lost, enslaved to sin and stand in need of redemption.

Second, Peter revealed by what we were not redeemed – **“corruptible things.”** The word **“corruptible [perishable, ESV]”** means subject to decay, perishable or mortal. It is from the same word used earlier, when Peter declared his readers’ faith was **“much more precious than gold that perishes”** (1 Peter 1:7). Gold and silver were usually used in ransoming slaves. A first century slave in the Greco-Roman world could be redeemed for a price ranging from the equivalent of sixty-six days’ wages to 233,333 days’ wages (Rogers and Rogers 596). However, when the Lord comes in Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46), no amount of gold, silver or anything of this world will be able to pay the price for our redemption!

Third, Peter revealed by what we were redeemed – **“the precious blood of Christ”** (1 Peter 1:19)! Christ gave Himself as the **“spotless lamb”** of God (John 1:29). Christ’s blood is precious because: **(1)** it cleanses the conscience (Hebrews 9:14); **(2)** it gives access to God (Hebrews 10:19); **(3)** it continuously cleanses from all sin (1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5); **(4)** it gives victory over Satan (Revelation 12:11) and **(5)** it, as here, rescues us from a sinful way of life (1 Peter 1:19).

Jesus died for all humanity (Hebrews 2:9), but only those who come in spiritual contact with His cleansing blood will be redeemed (Revelation 1:5). Baptism is how and where that contact takes place (Romans 6:3-4). Is redemption your reality? †

Works Cited

Rogers, Cleon L., Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers, III. *Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament, The*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.

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SALVATION



It seems that no matter how good a thing is, there is always someone wanting to mess it up. However, when God created the heavens and the earth for us in which to live, the Bible tells us that God looked at what He had done and pronounced it “**good.**” In the day that God finished His creation, He looked and said it was “**Very Good.**”

When God acknowledged that among all the creatures there was not a helper for man, He created the woman whom Adam called Eve, for she would be the mother of all living mankind.

In telling man to be fruitful, reproduce and fill the earth, God made the first pair agents of a free moral spirit. He gave them the choice of whether to follow His instruction. God told them one little thing they could not do and left them the choice to obey or to disobey. At this point all was still “**very good**” in the eyes of the Lord God.

Satan, however, could not leave well enough alone. He had to stir things up for mankind, leading humans to rebel against what God had said. Ever since that time, there has been someone (every accountable soul at

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some time, Romans 3:10, 23) among the human race who sought to prove that he knew better than the Creator what was good for man to do. Such schemes have always been a dismal failure.

Man was not put on this earth as a sinful being, but rather each baby is born pure and sinless into a sin-sick and dying civilization, which in turn drags man into the ways of sin. The soul of man has been tarnished with a stain – sin – that no detergent known of man’s making can cleanse away.

To restore the soul to its original purity man must find cleansing by the blood of Christ. We all need to come just as we are. “Just as I am, I come broken to be mended, I come wounded to be healed, I come desperate to be rescued, I come empty to be filled, I come guilty to be pardoned by the blood of Christ, Who is the Lamb. I am welcomed with open arms. Praise God, I come just as I am.” The wonderful peace, joy and cleansing are prepared for you and me. I implore you, *don’t mess it up.* †

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[Editor’s Note: Jesus Christ, Who has “all authority” (Matthew 28:18-20) summarized God’s plan for man’s redemption in Mark 16:16, which reads, “**He who believes and is baptized will be saved;** but he who does not believe will be condemned.” ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Cecil’s

COMMENTS

Just Be There

Job’s three friends were a comfort to him for a full week. They were silent but there (2:13). When they spoke, they were “*worthless physicians*” (13:4) and “*miserable comforters*” (16:2).

A little girl was “adopted” as a grandchild by a couple next door. The wife died; the girl went next door and sat outside with the old man for a couple of hours. When she came home, her mother asked, “What did you say to him?” “Nothing,” she said. “I just sat with him and helped him cry.”

When death or other tragedies occur, often there are no appropriate words to say. To be of genuine comfort, **just be there.**



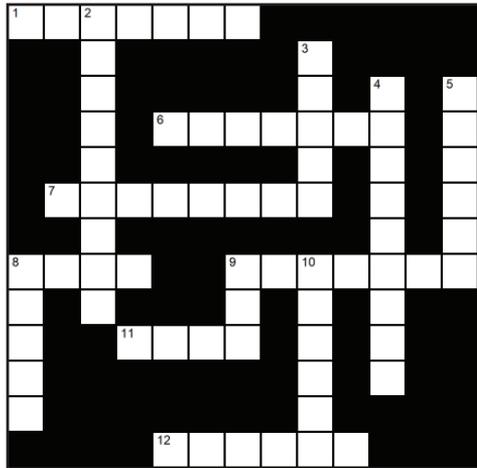
Bible Find

Martha Rushmore

THE APOSTLES

Across

- 1 He was a tax collector. Matthew 10:3
- 6 Father of James and John.
Matthew 10:2
- 7 Saul saw Jesus on a road to where? Acts 9:1-2
- 8 Saul's name after becoming a Christian. Acts 13:9
- 9 Apostle who took Judas' place. Acts 1:26
- 11 Who was the beloved apostle to the Lord? John 19:25-27
- 12 Brother of Peter. Mark 1:16



Down

- 2 The surname of Lebbaeus.
Matthew 10:3
- 3 He betrayed Christ. Luke 6:16
- 4 The name of the gate at the temple where Peter and John healed a lame man. Acts 3:2
- 5 Another name of Peter. John 1:42
- 8 Luke talks about whose mother-in-law? Luke 4:38-39
- 9 Jesus told Peter and Andrew He would make them "fishers of _____."
Matthew 4:19
- 10 There were how many original apostles? Matthew 10:2-4

See inside back cover for the solution.

Verse Search



2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-11

Jerry Bates

1. Who wrote the book of 2 Corinthians? (1:1)
2. To whom was this book written? (1:1)
3. Paul said that God is the Father of _____ and God of all _____. (1:3)
4. Why did Paul say God comforts us in our troubles? (1:4)
5. Just as the _____ of Christ abound in us, so does our _____ around through Christ. (1:5)
6. Why did Paul say he was afflicted or comforted? (1:6)
7. Paul knew that just as they were partakers of the sufferings, they were also partakers of the _____. (1:7)
8. Of what did Paul not want the Corinthians to be ignorant? (1:8)
9. How much suffering did Paul endure in Asia? (1:8)
10. What did Paul say he learned through that suffering? (1:9)
11. Who delivered Paul from that sentence of death? (1:10)
12. Did Paul trust that God would continue to deliver him? (1:10)
13. To what other source did Paul attribute the gift of his deliverance from death? (1:11)
14. Since many prayed for Paul's deliverance, what was the result of his deliverance? (1:11)

(See the back cover for answers.)

VERSE SEARCH

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia: **2** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, **4** who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. **5** For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. **6** Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. **7** And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.

8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. **9** Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, **10** who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, **11** you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.

NOTE: This passage begins the second epistle to the church in Corinth. After the initial greetings, which are common to most of Paul's writings, he expressed his thankfulness to God for the comfort that he had received through his many tribulations. However, he pointed out that he was not comforted just for his sake, but rather so that he could then comfort others. This points out one reason why we might suffer. Many Christians question why God allows His children to suffer. While there may be several reasons, one reason is so that we can comfort others. When we are comforted, this becomes a gift that we can then give to others. Only by being in a similar situation as others can we provide comfort to others in their tribulation.

Christ was willing to suffer for us, and as the servants of Christ, we can expect to suffer as well (John 15:20). However, if we are willing to suffer, we can also expect to be comforted and to receive *“a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”* (2 Corinthians 4:17).

The province that Paul mentioned in verse 8 refers to the Roman province in western Asia, which would be present day Turkey. Exactly where or what was the suffering to which he referred is unknown, but Ephesus is certainly one possibility. A great uproar was stirred up against Paul in that city by Demetrius the silversmith (Acts 19:23-41).

Sweet Fellowship

Dan R. Owen

The most wonderful blessing we have in Christ is the blessing of fellowship. Our culture has removed the biblical definition of the term and made fellowship into something common and unremarkable. Those who understand what it really means know how sweet it really is to claim this blessing. In order to understand what fellowship is, we must appreciate the layers of God's goodness. Like the earth's crust has layers and just as there are layers in the skin, there are also layers to God's goodness. God's generic goodness in creation applies to all mankind. God has made the natural world good and for our benefit. The second layer of God's goodness is the layer of specific temporal blessings. God has blessed different people with varying degrees of food, clothing, educational opportunity and a host of other things. Some have been given more than others. These blessings belong to all people, Christian or not. The deepest layer of God's goodness, however, is an acceptance that only comes with the removal of sin through Christ. This is the intimate acceptance the Bible calls fellowship.

Fellowship is not the same as love. God loves the whole world, though he can never personally accept those who are separated from Him by sin. Fellowship is not the same as kindness. God's kindness is evident all around us, and He expects us to be kind to everyone. Fellowship is not the same as friendship. We can be good friends with people who are separated from God, and we can truly enjoy their company. Only God controls fellowship because only God forgives sin – and only on His terms. So, how should we feel about this priceless commodity called fellowship?

First, if we don't have fellowship, we should pursue it with a vengeance. We should seek God and His revealed will so that we can accept the grace of God on His terms. Next, if we have fellowship, we should strive to maintain it by living according to God's will to the best of our abilities. We know that we have fellowship with God as "*we walk in the light*" (1 John 1:7).

THE CHURCH

Heaven on Earth

Robert Johnson

Have you ever heard someone describe something they have done or would like to do by saying, “Oh, that would be Heaven on Earth!”? The phrase refers to the joy or delight a person receives from anything that offers him or her pleasure and happiness. This is consistent with the idea many have of Heaven in the afterlife, which is filled with joy and with no sorrow or regret. For them, the statement, “That would be Heaven on Earth,” is apropos [descriptive] of the feelings they have.

Of course, Heaven is a spiritual place rather than a physical location. Therefore, to speak of Heaven on Earth is really an oxymoron [a contradictory notion]. Also, many of the things people describe as being “Heaven” in this life are not matters that will either commend us to live there in eternity or be found there. However, if one were to look for the closest entity on earth that could be associated with Heaven, what would it be? Perhaps to answer that question we should seek to understand what Scripture says about Heaven itself. It is a place where the saved of all ages will be gathered for eternity (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 3:5; 21:7). It is a place where God is worshipped (Revelation 5:11-14). It is a place where God will be served (Revelation 7:15). It is a place where the God Who is love will fully express that love, without the consequences of sin besetting us (1 John 4:16; Revelation 21:4). So, considering all of this, what we seek must be something spiritual in nature.

Knowing these things – how Heaven is described in Scripture – what in this life can be experienced in eternity? Perhaps the closest expression of Heaven on earth is found in the Lord’s church. This is where the saved have been added by the Lord (Acts 2:47). Christians worship God as the church in spirit and truth (John 4:24; Hebrews 10:25). Through the church, we are strengthened and encouraged to serve God (Romans 12:11; Hebrews 12:28; 1 Peter 4:10; Hebrews 6:10; Galatians 5:13). God’s love is fully expressed in the church – the body of the saved (1 John 3:11; 1 Corinthians 13:13).

If these things are true, then, just how important is being part of the Lord’s

THE CHURCH

church to you? If assembling with brothers and sisters in Christ is unimportant now, if it's not an experience you would call Heaven on Earth, why would you think the actual Heaven is something you would want to experience? If worshipping God is not considered Heaven on Earth, something from which you have no problem being absent, why would you find joy in worshipping God in Heaven? If serving God is not something you feel motivated to do – not a Heaven on Earth type of experience – why would you think serving God in Heaven is something you would like? If we ignore God's love today by ignoring its manifold expressions – not cherishing it as a Heaven on Earth experience – why would we look forward to enduring it forever in Heaven?

This is an issue because we don't love with the love of God, we don't comprehend the depth of meaning Jesus' death should have to us and we have been deluded into thinking that no matter how we treat God's church, He isn't offended. Really? How can we think this way? The church was in the mind of God from eternity (Ephesians 3:9-10). He sent His Son to die for it so that we might be purified from sin and be prepared for eternity (Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 John 3:1-3). How can we allow a love for the world to supplant love for God (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17)? In reality, every excuse we offer to dismiss the church and its role in our lives is an indication of a lack of love and a disrespect for God. One may want to go to Heaven to avoid Hell, but if the spiritual is lacking in everyday living, if we don't live on Earth in anticipation of Heaven, we will miss Heaven. If earthly hobbies enthrall us more than the hope of Heaven, will we be able to experience Heaven?

We beg, plead and pray for people to love the Lord, to love His Son and to love His church, because God and His Son love the church. We shouldn't have to be prodded along to reflect this in our lives. Being part of God's church family should be a foretaste of Heaven on Earth, for all it means to us and for all we mean to each other. Without a love of the church and a preference for brethren (1 Peter 1:22; 2:17; 3:8; 4:8), will we know Heaven in eternity? ***“The one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit”*** (Galatians 6:8). 

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The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth

Bill Boyd

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). Premillennialists have taken Matthew 5:5 as a proof text that they will live and reign on the earth for a thousand years. Also, those who are advocating for a *renewed earth* take it to say that they will live on the earth forever. It is like a millennial reign that never ends.

Many of the Jews in the days of Jesus expected the kingdom of God to come as an earthly kingdom. They thought Jews would displace the Romans as rulers of the world. Matthew wrote with these Jews in mind. He frequently called the kingdom of God, *“the kingdom of heaven.”* He is the only writer who did this. He knew his audience. The kingdom is *“of heaven”* because it is not *of earth*. It is a spiritual kingdom – not another earthly one. Worldly-minded Jews, premillennialists and renewed earth advocates of today all have a worldly view with an earthly hope.

Context is a fundamental rule of hermeneutics [biblical interpretation]. Matthew 5:5 is part of the Sermon on the Mount. John and Jesus were preaching, *“The kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matthew 3:2; 4:17). *“Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom”* (Matthew 4:23). Those who heard Jesus preach the Sermon on the Mount recognized that it was *“his doctrine”* (Matthew 7:25). The Sermon on the Mount is a sermon on the kingdom. It is the doctrine of Christ about the kingdom of Heaven. It begins, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:3). That is the first of eight introductory beatitudes. In the last beatitude he said, *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:10). The beatitudes begin and end with a promise of the kingdom that was *“at hand.”*

The blessings of these beatitudes would come when the kingdom came. The mourners would be comforted; the spiritually hungry would be filled;

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the merciful would obtain mercy; the pure in heart would see God; the peacemakers would be called the children of God. All the blessings of the beatitudes are spiritual, and they are all realized in the Lord's church. It is in this context that Jesus said, "***Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth***" (Matthew 5:5). Jesus did not promise a spiritual blessing for the poor in spirit and slight the meek with an earthly one. In the context of Matthew 5:5, "***the earth***" is a metaphor. Jesus used the language of Psalm 37:11. "***The earth***" is a metaphor there as well. Understanding the metaphor in the Psalm will help us appreciate the metaphor in the Lord's Sermon.

In the 37th Psalm, the land that God had promised to the children of Abraham was overrun with evil. In response, the psalmist admonished the children of Israel to be meek. The psalm explains the meaning of meekness: "***Fret not... neither be thou envious...***" (v. 1). "***Trust in the LORD, and do good...***" (v. 3). "***Delight thyself also in the LORD...***" (v. 4). "***Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him...***" (v. 5). "***Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself...***" (v. 7). "***Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any way to do evil***" (v. 8).

Meekness is not weakness. The meek "***trust in the Lord,***" "***fret not***" and "***wait patiently for him***" (Psalm 37:1, 3, 7). God assured the meek that they would dwell in the land and receive their inheritance. "***So shall thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed***" (v. 3). The promise is repeated throughout the psalm: "***He shall give thee the desires of thy heart...***" (v. 4). "***He shall bring it to pass...***" (v. 5). "***Evildoers shall be cut off, but they that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth***" (v. 9). "***The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace***" (v. 11). "***The LORD knoweth the upright, and their inheritance shall be forever***" (v. 18). "***For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth***" (v. 22). "***The righteous shall inherit the land, and shall dwell therein forever***" (v. 29). "***Wait on the LORD, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the land***" (v. 34).

When David sang, "***The meek shall inherit the earth***" (Psalm 37:11), he was not telling the Jews that they would rule the whole world. God was not giving them the globe. David used "***the earth***" as a metaphor to assure them that they would have all the promises God had made to them through

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Abraham, including their land.

God did not promise to give the land of Israel to His church. Jesus used the same *“inherit the earth”* metaphor to assure His disciples that they would enjoy all the spiritual blessing they were promised. Jesus was not affirming a *renewed earth* in the beatitudes.

Before we give up our hope of Heaven for an eternal earth, we ought to read the rest of the sermon. In the Sermon on the Mount, Heaven is always greater than the earth. Immediately after the beatitudes Jesus said, *“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven”* (Matthew 5:11-12). He did not say, “Great will be your reward on the earth.” The reward of the prophets was in Heaven, and our reward will be there too. Jesus said, *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven”* (Matthew 6:19-21). Hear it, “...not on earth,” but *“...in heaven.”* Jesus did not teach Heaven on earth. We cannot lay earthly treasures up for ourselves in Heaven.

Jesus does not want us focused on earthly blessings like those promised to earthly Israel. Jesus said heaven and earth would *“pass.”* He said, *“Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled”* (Matthew 5:18). The law that gave the Jews their earthly inheritance would be fulfilled. The fulfilled law would pass and with it all the earthly hopes under that law. **The heavens and the earth, too, will someday pass, but the spiritual blessings of the spiritual kingdom will endure.** In the next verse Jesus said, *“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:19).

Greatness in the spiritual kingdom of Heaven is not for those who keep the Law of Moses, but it is for those who keep the commandments of Jesus. Their righteousness would *“exceed”* the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, not because they would be stricter in keeping the old commandments, but because they would keep exceeding commandments of an exceeding law of an exceeding kingdom. Without this exceeding righteousness, they would *“in*

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20).

Jesus taught His disciples to pray, *“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”* (Matthew 6:10). Renewed earth advocates renew the old premillennial assertion that the will of God will be done on the earth after the Lord returns, but in this sermon, Jesus spoke of the kingdom that was *“at hand”* (Matthew 4:17). When this kingdom came, the Father’s will for its establishment was *“done in earth”* as it was conceived *“in heaven,”* but that did not make the Earth into Heaven.

Our Father is in Heaven. We are to glorify the *“Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16). In behavior, we are to be *“children of our Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 5:45) and *“Be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect”* (Matthew 5:48). We hope for a reward of our *“Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 6:1). We pray to *“Our Father which art in heaven”* (Matthew 6:9). He is our *“heavenly Father”* (Matthew 7:32). Heaven is *“God’s throne”* (Matthew 5:34); earth is *“his footstool”* (Matthew 5:35). We do not expect God to leave His throne in Heaven and sit with us forever on His footstool.

At the end of the sermon Jesus said, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21). There is a sense in which we *“enter the kingdom of heaven”* when we obey the Gospel, because that is when we are added to the church, but in the immediate context of this passage there are eternal consequences in view. In the next verse Jesus said, *“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”* (Matthew 7:22-23).

Jesus did not advocate an earthly hope in the Sermon on the Mount. In the context of spiritual blessings, the *“meek”* would *“inherit the earth”* in *“the kingdom of heaven”* that was *“at hand.”* †

Source

Boyd, Bill. “The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth.” *Seek the Old Paths*. Sep 2018, 65, 71.

What Makes “Yoo-fay-mos”?

Robert C. Lupo

“Yoo-fay-mos” is the English phonetic spelling of the two-part Greek word, “euphemos.” The first part of the word, “eu” (yoo) means “good,” while the second part, “phemos” (fay-mos), basically means “fame” or “reputation.” The question is, “What makes ‘good fame’?”

We are known by what we say and do. Our fame is whatever our widespread reputation is – for what we are known – good or bad. The Greek word “euphemos” occurs only once in Scripture. It is variously translated, “*good report*” (KJV, ASV, NKJV) and “*commendable*” (ESV). *Weymouth’s New Testament* has “*good repute*.” The Douay-Rheims Bible translates it as “*good fame*.”

Things That Make Good Fame

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report [euphemos], if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8 NKJV). In this text, Paul wrote about the things that Christians ought to think. **This is not simply suggested subject matter for Christian meditation, but the things that an apostle of Jesus Christ said, we must contemplate and do.**

The fame that we as Christians are to have is good fame – behavior in speech and actions that are well spoken of by others. We are to strive to have a good reputation among all men, irrespective of whether they are Christians. Notice the various things on which Paul wrote that Christians should concentrate and do:

- *“Whatever things are true”* These are things that are truth or true. God’s Word is truth (John 17:17).
- *“Whatever things are noble”* These are things that are honorable before God and men. **Christians should be known as honest people.**

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- **“Whatever things are just [holy or righteous]”** Christians keep God’s divine laws. They are to do what is approved of or acceptable to God. They treat others fairly (Matthew 7:1-12; Luke 6:31-38).
- **“Whatever things are pure”** These are things that are spiritually clean, things which excite reverence. They are godly, not worldly but pure from every fault.
- **“Whatever things are lovely”** These are things that are acceptable and pleasing to others. We might describe it today as being friendly.
- **“Whatever things are of good report [euphemos]”** These are things that make us widely known as good people – having a good reputation.
- **“If there is any virtue”** These are things that, by God’s standard, are morally good or excellent.
- **“And if there is anything praiseworthy”** These are things by which we are able to receive commendation from God and others.
- **“Meditate on these things”** Literally, we are to take an inventory of the things mentioned before. This is the imperative, a command. When we take an inventory, we see what we possess and what we do not. We are responsible for our thoughts – our minds.

Philippians 4:9 reads, **“The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”** There is a blessed thought here! If we obey God, we have God (Matthew 7:24-27; James 4:13-17; 2 John 9-11). There is a haunting thought as well. **What good is it to know these things if we do not do them?** The terrible thought of this passage is that if we fail to think on and do proper things, God will not be with us.

While the word “euphemos” only appears once in Scripture, once is sufficiently authoritative. The principle, however, is taught throughout the New Testament.

- **“Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business”** (Acts 6:3). These men were to be chosen to serve in the community if they met the qualifications given, one of which

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was a good report (martureo, honest, well reported of).

- Even before becoming a Christian, Cornelius was a righteous man, according to the Law of Patriarchy under which he lived (Acts 10:22). He feared God. Even though he was a Gentile, he had a good reputation (martureo) *“among all the nation of the Jews”* (ASV). *“The grace of God appeared bringing salvation to all men”* (Titus 2:11-12), and Cornelius received his vision in direct relation to the good life he lived.
- *“Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odor of a sweet smell. But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as becometh saints; nor filthiness, nor foolish talking, or jesting, which are not befitting: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ...for ye were once darkness, but now are light in the Lord: walk as children of light”* (Ephesians 5:1-5, 8). Notice that Christians are to imitate God in life (Ephesians 5:1). *“Befitting”* (v. 4 ASV) comes from an interesting word in the Greek. Translated as *“not convenient”* in the KJV, it means “to reach or attain to.” We are the children of God. As such, we should not reach for things that are base or worldly. We should reach or seek to attain to do things that are godly. We should reach high, as unto God.
- All Christians are to walk wisely toward folks outside the church (Colossians 4:5-6). Colossians 4:6 says, *“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer each one.”*
- Christians are to abstain from every form of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22).
- No man may serve as an elder (bishop) in the Lord’s church who does not have a good reputation among them who are *“without”* (outside) the church (1 Timothy 3:7).
- A man desiring to serve as a deacon in the Lord’s church was to first be *“examined”* or tested. In other words, if his life was found to be

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in harmony with the Gospel, then he could serve. This could only be determined by his behavior or reputation — *“if they be blameless”* (1 Timothy 3:10, 13). Note that by serving well, brethren gained a good standing or reputation with God and great assurance of their faith.

- Widows indeed within the Lord’s church are to be *“well reported of for good works”* (1 Timothy 5:10), among other qualifications, if they are to receive financial or other aid from the church.

There are many more such passages in the New Testament that speak of the example which we are to live before all men.

What Makes You and Me Famous?



What makes you and me famous really depends upon what you and I meditate upon and what we practice in life. The things you and I think about help to determine the kind of reputation that we have both before God and men. If we dwell on evil things, it should not surprise us if our speech and actions follow suit. If we think on good things, we should do good things. It really is as simple as that. *“The good man out of his good treasure bringeth forth good things: and the evil man out of his evil*

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treasure bringeth forth evil things,” said Jesus in Matthew 12:35.

Some things, introduced to the mind only once, make such an impression that they stay with us for a lifetime. This is true whether they are good or evil. Certainly, if one is so inclined, there is a mountain of garbage on which he or she can focus one’s mind today. However, the good news is that there is a far better way. In obedience to Christ, we can think on holy, righteous and spiritual things. **The only way to protect the mind is to expose it to only the best!**

While we may not be able to remove completely from our minds what we have introduced into it, we can certainly transform (change) and renew (renovate) our minds by changing on what we dwell. We should test what is that good, acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2) before it ever goes into our minds. This involves a **deliberate act**. Once we prove what is good (God’s Word being the standard), we should never let it go (1 Thessalonians 5:21). *“The things which ye both learned and received [taken, accepted] and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you”* (Philippians 4:9).

By thinking on good things and by doing these good things, we might even change the minds of some with whom we have previously had a bad or an un-Christian-like reputation. This should be our goal as we bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. See Matthew 3:8, Ephesians 5:9 and Philippians 1:11. **More importantly, we may change the way God views us.**

Does it matter what kind of reputation we have before God and men? Of course, it does! Obviously, **if we are more concerned about what God thinks of us – if we do what is pleasing to Him – the rest will take care of itself.** The result will be that God is pleased and we will set a good example for others to follow. God will be with us. †

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Did You Know?

The initial audience for the Book of Matthew was Jewish.

Well-Driven Nails

Denny Petrillo

“The words of wise men are like goads, and masters of these collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd” (Ecclesiastes 12:11). Even though my grandfather was a master carpenter, I was not blessed with his construction abilities. My thumb can attest to the accuracy of my hammer strikes. Trying to nail drywall to the stud can be quite the adventure. I suspect that most who have tried to nail something to a wall have had the frustrating experience of having the nail miss the stud. Whatever is being attached simply will not stay.

Solomon expressed the desire of every preacher. He wanted his words to **stick**. He worked hard and pondered how things could be said that



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would have the desired effect. His “*nails*” were “*given by one Shepherd.*” That is, God gives them. So, **God gives spiritual carpenters the nails, and it is their job to make sure they nail them in the right spot.** There are several significant lessons that we can learn from this.

First, we’re not using just any nail. The words we speak are not ours (or shouldn’t be) but are the words of God. Paul wasn’t ashamed of the Gospel because it is “*the power of God for salvation*” (Romans 1:16). People don’t need to be given our **nails** – our thoughts, beliefs and opinions. They need to be given the Word that can save their souls (James 1:21).

Second, we have to know where the studs are. Preachers need to know the people to whom they preach. Teachers need to know their students. How many times have we heard a lesson or sermon that had no relevance to us? We feel like it was wasted time. When we’re teaching the eternal truths of God, we need to make sure that they are reaching the hearts of our listeners.

Third, we have the responsibility of doing it right. No one wants a carpenter who can’t drive a nail in the right place. Equally, no one wants a preacher or a teacher who hasn’t taken time to make sure that what is being said is absolutely true according to God’s Word. James warned that one should be careful about deciding to be a teacher, because teachers will incur a stricter judgment (James 3:1). We need to become “*masters of these collections*” of wisdom teachings (which ultimately have God as their source). †

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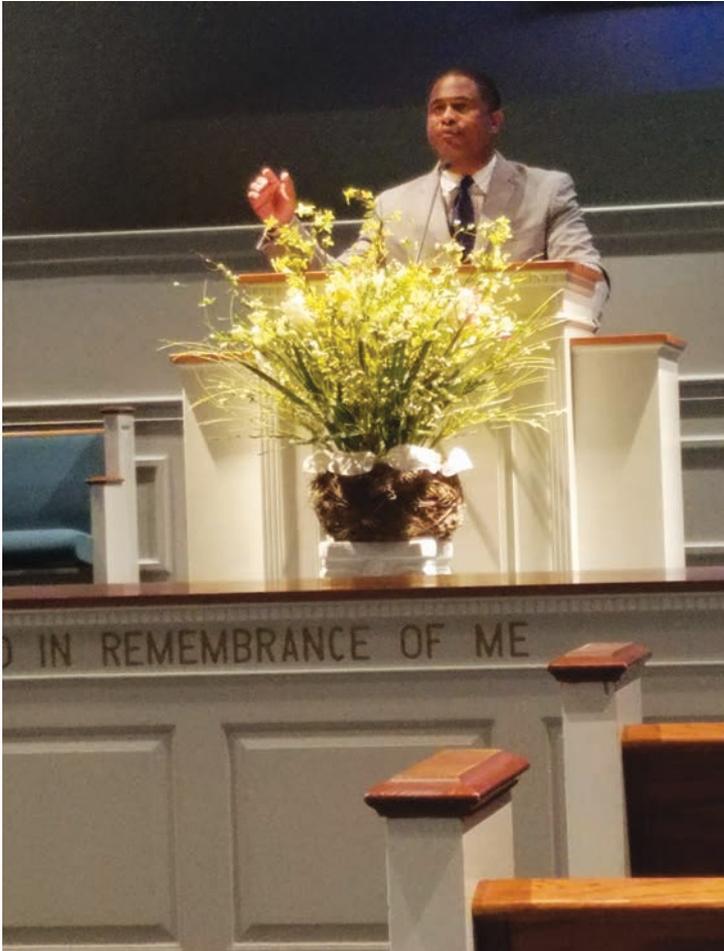
Robison's Rubies

Jesus once said, “*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*” (Matthew 5:4). What a blessed beatitude! Disciples of Jesus can be assured that all their grief will one day be taken away. They look forward to a time where “*there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying*” (Revelation 21:4). In the meantime, they follow the “*Father of mercies, the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation*” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). This world brings a lot of grief – over broken relationships, death, disease, and the plain old harmful effects of lives lived in rebellion against God. Jeremiah was one who cried and cried over the sins of his people. Sometimes we do that, too, don’t we? Here is a precious promise: In Christ there is comfort.

WORSHIP

Preach Because God Is the Greatest Authority

Gary C. Hampton



WORSHIP

The Sadducees were jealous of the apostles because the people regarded them highly and large numbers were being added to the church. The apostles had continued to preach in Jesus' name despite an earlier warning, so they were seized and placed in a common prison. God sent a messenger to release them, again proving to be more powerful than any earthly authority. The messenger commanded them to go to the Temple and preach the words that give eternal life.

The high priest called for the council to assemble and sent for the apostles. The officers came back, reporting the jail was secure but the apostles were missing. Someone came to tell them they were in the Temple teaching the people (Acts 5:17-25).

The captain and his officers brought the apostles back to the council, but without violence because they feared the people. The high priest asked why they continued to preach in Jesus' name, which they had been strictly told not to do. The council was particularly concerned that the apostles were portraying them as responsible for the death of the innocent, despite the fact that they had earlier been willing to have that very blood on their hands (Acts 5:26-28; Matthew 27:25).

Peter and the other apostles answered, *“We ought to obey God rather than men.”* The implication, even for Christians today, is that **no law should be considered greater than God's law**. The limits of the authority of the Sadducees had already been demonstrated by the Almighty in the resurrection of Jesus, the one they had crucified. The apostles declared that God had at that very time seated Jesus on His throne in Heaven as Ruler and Savior. The Lord had been empowered by His Father to give repentance leading to the forgiveness of sins to all of Israel. The twelve stood as witnesses of God working, and the Holy Spirit confirmed the truthfulness of the events they related through the miracles He enabled them to perform (Acts 5:29-32).

The message for us is plain. The proclamation of the death, burial and resurrection of the Savior is too important to be held in check by inferior earthly authorities. We must preach Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2).✝

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How Do You Measure Up?

❄️ These are admonitions the author of the Hebrews letter wrote to the Hebrew Christians; How do you, as a Christian today, measure up?

- ❄️ Be not forgetful to entertain strangers...
- ❄️ Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.
- ❄️ Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled...
- ❄️ Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have...
 - ❄️ Remember them which have the rule over you...
 - ❄️ Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines...
 - ❄️ But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.
 - ❄️ Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves...
 - ❄️ Pray for us...
 - ❄️ Now the God of peace... Make you perfect in every good work to do His will...
 - ❄️ Suffer the word of exhortation...
 - ❄️ Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints.

Hebrews 13

PROVERBS 17:22



A grandfather bought a hobby-horse by mail order as a Christmas present for his granddaughter. The toy arrived in 189 pieces.

The instructions said that it could be put together in an hour; however, it took the old man two days to assemble the toy.

Finally, when it was all put together, he wrote a check, cut it into 189 pieces and mailed it to the company.



A man went to the doctor complaining about stomach problems. The doctor asked him what he had been eating.

“I only eat pool balls,” he said. “Red ones for breakfast, yellow and orange ones for lunch, blue for afternoon snacks, and purple and black for dinner.”

“I see the problem,” said the doctor. “You’re not getting enough greens.”



A kindergarten teacher handed out a coloring page to her class. On it was a picture of a duck holding an umbrella.

The teacher told her class to color the duck in yellow and the umbrella green. Little Johnny, the class rebel, colored the duck in a bright fire-truck red.

After seeing this, the teacher asked him, “Little Johnny, how many times have you seen a red duck?”

Little Johnny replied, “The same number of times I’ve seen a duck holding an umbrella.”



This is the transcript of an actual radio conversation of a US naval ship with Canadian authorities off the coast of Newfoundland in October, 1995.

Americans: Please divert your course 15 degrees to the North to avoid a collision.

Canadians: Recommend you divert your course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision.

Americans: This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert your course.

Canadians: No. I say again, you

PROVERBS 17:22

divert your course.

Americans: This is the aircraft carrier USS *Lincoln*, the second largest in the U.S. Atlantic Fleet. We are accompanied by three destroyers, three cruisers and numerous support vessels. I demand that you change your course 15 degrees north or counter-measures will be taken!

Canadians: We are a lighthouse. Your call.



One week our preacher preached on commitment and how we should dedicate ourselves to service. The song leader led in singing, “I Shall Not Be Moved.”

The next Sunday, the preacher preached on giving and how we should gladly give to the work of the Lord. The song leader then led the song, “Jesus Paid It All.”

The next Sunday, the preacher preached on gossiping and how we should watch our tongues. The hymn was, “I Love to Tell the Story.”

The preacher became disgusted over the situation, and the next Sunday, he told the congregation he was considering resigning. The song leader then led, “Oh, Why Not Tonight.”

When the preacher resigned the next week, he told the church

that Jesus had led him there and Jesus was taking him away. The song leader then led, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.”



Ken and Jim were fortunate in that they each had a season ticket to watch the Kansas City Royals. However, they had a friend, Ed, who would give his right arm for a season ticket. They could not help noticing that there was always an empty seat next to theirs.

One day, during a rain delay, Ken and Jim went to the ticket office and asked if they could buy the season ticket for their friend. The man at the window said, “Sorry men, that seat has already been sold.”

Nevertheless, game after game, it was still empty. Then on Labor Day, much to Ken and Jim’s amazement, for the first time that season, the seat was full. Jim could not resist asking the newcomer, “Where have you been all season?”

“Don’t ask,” he said. “My wife bought this season ticket back in March, and gave it to me yesterday for a surprise Birthday present.”



You Can Do This

David Myers

While on a mountain and after giving the apostles the Great Commission, Jesus said, *“and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen”* (Matthew 28:20). Before ascending to Heaven to be with the Father, our Lord gave these men (and us) the assurance that He would be with them to the finish line (Hebrews 13:5; 12:1-3).

Later in the New Testament, we have another example of a great servant of God who was also concerned about believers not making it to the finish line. One of the themes of 2 Timothy is to finish the course, to stay in the race and to not shrink back in faith and give up (Hebrews 10:39). Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 4:6-8 about fighting the good fight, finishing the course and keeping the faith. Going back to 2 Timothy 2:1-8, Paul encouraged Timothy (and us) to learn obedience like a soldier, the rules of the athlete and the patience of a farmer.

Remembering and believing the words of Jesus and the apostle Paul, the question is, “How do we keep from quitting and stay in the race?” Paul gave the answer in 2 Timothy 2. First, he encouraged Christians to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (v. 1). It will be His grace that will enable us to finish the race. We cannot run this race and make it to the finish line on our own. Remember, we are not alone (Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5).

Second, Paul reminded Timothy, *“Remember that Jesus Christ, the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to [the] my gospel”* (2 Timothy 2:8). When we live our lives from day to day and act like Jesus is not alive and present in our lives, it will greatly affect whether we will finish the race and cross the finish line. Paul finished his words of encouragement with this affirmation, *“Therefore, I endured all things for the elect [chosen ones], that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory”* (2 Timothy 2:10). Do you want to make it to the finish line? Paul said to be strong in the grace of Christ and remember He has risen, and **we are not alone.** †

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DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

Is There a Minimum?

Ron Boatwright



Many people want to know what the bare minimum is with which they can get by in their lives. Also, some Christians want to do the minimum in their spiritual lives. However, does God allow a bare minimum? Jesus said, *“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength”* (Mark 12:30). If we really love God, we will want to do **all** we can.

Some may ask, “How many times a week do I have to go to church?” or “How much do I have to give?” or “How much do I have to do?” **This is the wrong attitude.** Jesus declared, *“So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do’”* (Luke

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17:10). If we try to get by with the bare minimum in our spiritual lives, we will most likely be horribly surprised on Judgment Day, when we hear the Lord say, *“Depart from Me,”* because we have not faithfully done the will of the *“Father in heaven”* (Matthew 7:21-23). It will be too late, then. It will be final. Can we do too much for the Lord? No!

We must do the most we can for the Lord. We must, *“be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 15:58). **Our number one priority in this life must be to go to Heaven when this life is over.** God *“is a rewarder of those, who diligently seek Him”* (Hebrews 11:6). We must diligently seek God if we expect to receive the reward of Heaven. The Bible says, *“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure”* (2 Peter 1:10). We must be *“looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God”* (Hebrews 12:15). We can definitely fall from the grace of God, even though Satan says we can’t.

What about those who are lukewarm? Jesus said, *“So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth”* (Revelation 3:16). Those who are lukewarm make Jesus sick at His stomach. However, Jesus promised, *“Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life”* (Revelation 2:10). **Let’s make sure we go to Heaven. Nothing is as important.** †

[Editor’s Note: Many members of the Lord’s church practice their Christianity as though it were merely an inconsequential club membership, in which they are unwilling to invest themselves or their money. Virtually every club has on its rolls a large percentage of such so-called members, and although not a club, the same is true, unfortunately, of the churches of Christ. It ought not be the case. Just think of what the church could be and how many more joyous souls there would be in eternity if more Christians exhibited religious conviction and conversion. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Did You Know?

Mark recorded two miracles of Jesus not found in the other Gospel accounts: healing a deaf-mute (7:31) and healing a blind man at Bethsaida (8:22).



What Does Prayer Accomplish?

Betty Burton Choate

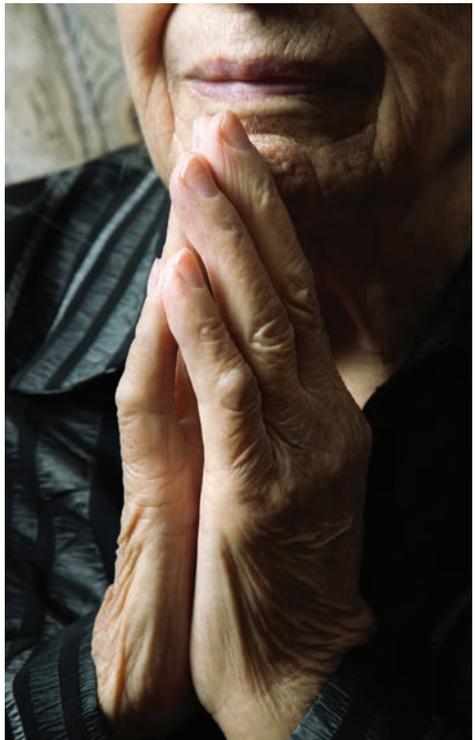
What is the promise? “...*I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it*” (John 14:13-14). What a bold statement! Yet, does that mean that if I ask for a new house and a car, Jesus will just give them to me?

In order to properly understand Scripture, there must be harmony among the passages dealing with a particular subject. Notice this further promise concerning our petitions to God:

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. (1 John 5:14-15)

These verses promise that if the thing for which we ask God is according to His will — something that will be good for all who will be affected by the answering of the petition — then, not only will He do it, but a positive answer is of such certainty that, in effect, we already have the thing for which we asked!

James further explained in James 5:16, “...*The effective, fervent prayer*



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of a righteous man avails much.” So prayer is probably the most powerful tool available to the faithful Christian, because we can petition God for His help with any need that is beyond our human ability to meet. What security!

However, prayer is even more than the act of “asking.” Think about what actually takes place when we pray: I, as a child of God, am turning in love, in need or in thanksgiving, to my Father. Though, I don’t go alone. God’s Holy Spirit, within me, *“makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered”* (Romans 8:26), as God grants us *“...to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man”* (Ephesians 3:16).

Through Whom do I pray? Whose name becomes my **open door** to the heart of God? My Brother, Jesus Christ, Who died that I might have my sins washed away, Who died that it might be possible for me as a human to actually come into the presence of Almighty God — is my Mediator! So, in the act of prayer, God’s Spirit is helping this needy human in His petition **to and through My Brother, Who turns as Mediator to My Heavenly Father**, so that I may be assured that whatever I ask the Father in His name, according to His will, will be done! The Elohim of the universe is listening and is involved when I pray!

It is a faith-building exercise to keep a log of special needs and petitions, not only of the asking but of the answers — or of the seeming lack of answers. In conjunction, an analysis of the effects of the prayer would be educational in growth in understanding **how God answers prayers** and **how providence works**.

Living a life of prayer requires important mindsets:

- Pray with an attitude of **submission** of your will to God’s. Far too often, without realizing what we are doing, Christians so fervently desire a thing that our prayers are attempts to convince God that He should do what we want, an attempt to change God’s mind to fit our judgment of what would be best.

We are instructed: *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, and thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God”* (Philippians 4:6). Yes, our Father wants us to express our heart’s desires to Him, but we must be careful to search our hearts first, and to know that – ultimately – we want **His** will, not **ours**.

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- Pray with **patience**. Sometimes the unspoken attitude of Christians is, “I want or need this, and I need it NOW.” Reread Scripture and see again how exactly God determines the times of what He does in our lives. Abraham was promised a son. When his and Sarah’s patience was exhausted, they made a plan that resulted in the birth of Ishmael — interference that continues to bring enmity and war among Abraham’s descendants.

According to God’s timing, Isaac was born; according to God’s timing, the Israelites entered the Promised Land when the iniquity of the Amorites was complete. According to God’s timing, Christ was born — when the Greeks had unified the world with one language; when the Romans had brought relative peace to the Empire, connecting it with a well-established road system. Later, Jewish Christians were dispersed throughout the world as the first recipients of the Gospel when persecution scattered the early Christians.

Even today, God answers prayers with precise timing. **Take note**, and your faith will grow through the waiting and the realization of His total comprehension of your needs and of the exact time to respond.

- We are to pray **without anxiety**. As James warned, “...*let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord...*” (James 1:6-7). Have you ever noticed how often your prayers that are coupled with doubt are not answered? The “No” may come from your own lack of faith rather than from God.
- We are to pray with **thanksgiving**. Surprisingly, this admonition is actually for our benefit, not simply a reminder to say “thank you” to God. Looking back at what He has already done will strengthen our faith in the good that He will bring to our lives in answer to our prayers. 

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We will probably be surprised at some of the people we meet in Heaven. Reckon how many will be surprised to see us there?

Cecil's

COMMENTS

Sunday Guests

Rebecca Rushmore



Growing up, Saturdays were usually cleaning days. The whole house was cleaned from top to bottom in preparation for Sunday company. On Sunday morning, Mom was up a little early to get last minute things done in the kitchen before we all went to church. When we arrived home from worship, guests came with us. Sometimes we knew on Saturday who was coming. Some days, enough food was fixed for guests and Dad just invited a family or two after services. Looking back now, I realize Sunday guests were not an every week occurrence as it seems in my memory. They were, however, a very frequent event and one I greatly enjoyed.

Many times, I regret that circumstances in the last few years since I moved out on my own have not permitted me to entertain “Sunday Guests” like I remember growing up. Not only are these get-togethers enjoyable,

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they also fulfill one of God's commands for His children. The Bible commands us to be hospitable (Hebrews 13:1-3; 1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Peter 4:8-11; 3 John 5-8; 1 Thessalonians 5:14). The command is not limited to our brethren, and there is much room for individuals to carry out this command in their own way.

To Whom Should We Be Hospitable?

There are basically two groups of people we are commanded to include in our hospitality. One group is our brethren. In 1 Thessalonians 5:14, we read, ***“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.”*** First Peter 4:8-10 says, ***“And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”*** Other verses instruct us to help those Christian widows who have been hospitable (1 Timothy 5:10) and that we are to be given to hospitality ***“preferring one another”*** (Romans 12:10-13).

The second group to whom we are commanded to be hospitable is strangers. Third John verses 5-8 commend the brethren for remembering brethren and strangers. Hebrews 13:1-3 brings to mind Abraham and Sarah showing hospitality to strangers. Verses like Ephesians 4:32, Galatians 6:10, Luke 14:12-14 and Matthew 25:34-35 tell us we should be kind to others, especially the poor and needy.

Why Should We Show Others Hospitality?

There are several reasons we should show hospitality to others. First, as we have seen, it is a command of God. Secondly, showing hospitality to strangers can open doors. When we are kind to strangers or help them out when they are in need, we fulfill the commands of Matthew 5:16, ***“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*** Our example in this matter many times allows us the opportunity to tell others about Christ. Those who

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would not normally listen to our words may become interested because of our actions. As found in Matthew 25:34-45, when we show care and concern for those in need, we show care and concern for Christ. Others will notice this attitude and glory will be given to God.

A third reason for showing hospitality is to fulfill the command of unity in the church. Consider Ephesians 4:1-3, which says, ***“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*** Paul by inspiration commanded the church to be unified, peaceful and patient with one another. If we do not know each other, it is impossible to keep these commands. When we show hospitality to our brethren, we become better acquainted and therefore better equipped to ***“keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”***

What Is Hospitality?

So far, we have looked at the commands to show hospitality, the people to whom we are to show it and the reasons behind it. However, what, exactly, does it mean to be hospitable or to show hospitality? *Webster’s New World Dictionary* defines hospitality as “friendly and solicitous toward guests, new arrivals, etc.” According to the *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*, in the original Greek, the word for hospitality in Romans 12:13 means “love to strangers.” The form of hospitality in 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8 and 1 Peter 4:9 means “generous to guests.” When we show hospitality to others, we show kindness, generosity and welcome. This involves not only our words and actions but our attitudes as well. All of this should be motivated by our love for others (1 Corinthians 13).

How Can We Show Hospitality?

Many people in the Bible show us by example how to be hospitable. In 1 Kings 17:9-16, we read of a woman who gave food to a prophet of God, and in 2 Kings 4:2, 8-11, another woman provided a room for one of God’s prophets. In Luke 10:30-37, the Good Samaritan provided medical

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help, food and lodging for an injured stranger. Acts 16 tells of the kindness of Lydia and the jailer toward Paul and his fellow travelers.

There is much we can do to show hospitality to those around us. Send cards and call or visit those who are sick in the congregation. Help widows with yardwork or housework. Many times parents of sick children would appreciate an offer to stay with the child so they can run a few errands or attend a worship service. If there are siblings who are not sick, offer to take them for an outing or to your home for a few hours. Send cards of encouragement and holiday boxes to missionaries; include items they may not be able to get in foreign lands.

There is much we can do for those who are not members of the church as well. Contribute to your congregation's clothing and food pantry. If you do not have one, ask the elders what you could do to start one. Visit neighbors who are ill and take them hot meals. Welcome newcomers to your neighborhood and invite them to attend worship with you. The possibilities for hospitality are limited only by your imagination and willingness to work.

Not everyone can have "Sunday Guests" each week. Though this is one great way to show our hospitality, it is by no means the only one. We are each commanded to be hospitable. Our abilities and circumstances determine how we fulfill this command. As long as we are fulfilling God's commands with the right attitude (love for others and a desire to bring glory to God instead of a feeling of "since I have to"), God will be pleased with our best efforts, no matter how small they may seem to men. ✝

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Liar, liar? Sinner, sinner? Have you ever lied? Few would say "No." Those who did would face skepticism. There is a big difference between occasionally lying and being a liar no one can trust. Similarly, no one, not even faithful Christians, can truthfully say, "I have never sinned," (1 John 1 :8, 10). However, "sinner" no longer characterizes who we are (1 John 3: 4-6). We are saints, forgiven, redeemed.

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The Traditional Home

Rodney Nulph

The world is changing right before our very eyes! Just in the past 10 years, America has seen some big changes to our culture, the church, the home, industry and in a host of other areas. Not all change is bad; for example, technology is a rapidly changing item that seems to make life easier. However, some change is not only harmful to America but sinful as well. One of the areas that is rapidly changing for the worse is the family and the home. Not only are many embracing this change, but some are even promoting it. **The traditional home is under serious attack!** The traditional home, by definition, is simply a home where father and mother are both present, living together, married to each other, loving one another, and together rearing their children. Sadly, some scoff at the traditional home, while others are vehemently opposed to it. In fact, there is a movement in America to change and to transform the traditional home. As such, more than ever, God-fearing, Bible-believing people of faith **must** rise up and defend the traditional home. **We do not defend the traditional home because it is traditional but rather because it is designed and defined by God Almighty!**

Firstly, consider the **plan** for the traditional home. **Mankind has no authority to change what God has planned.** God's plan from the very beginning of creation was for one man to be married to one woman for life (Genesis 2:21-25). When His opposers tried to trap Him, Jesus brought their attention right back to the original plan for the home (Matthew 19:1-9). Jesus was not closed-minded, a bigot, hateful or caught in a rut here; He simply affirmed the plan from the beginning. When we preach, teach, write or advocate the original plan for the home, please understand, Dear Reader, that we are simply appealing to the ultimate authority from the One Who designed the home. We are not hateful or bigots by doing so. Not my way or your way but God's way is the way that is right in every area

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generally and for the home specifically! The plan is simple, and **nothing** will change it — one man and one woman for life!



Secondly, consider some of the **perversions** to the traditional home. Today mankind is promoting many perversions to God's plan. One of these is deliberate single-parent

homes (artificial insemination, etc.). Adulterous homes where husband or wife, and sadly even sometimes both, are ineligible for marriage (Matthew 5:32; 19:1-9; Romans 7:1ff; 1 Corinthians 7:1ff) is another perversion of the home that God designed. Possibly more than any other, this perversion is affecting the purity of the Lord's church in many locations!

Living together or "shacking up" is all too common in the world today, which is a perversion to God's plan (Hebrews 13:4). Dishearteningly, lesbian, transgender and homosexual couples are a degrading perversion to God's plan for the home as well. This perversion is at an all-time high and rapidly growing in most communities. **It will never be accepted by God for two men or two women to be married, no matter what the law of the land may advocate (Acts 5:29)**. Please understand that Christians do not hate homosexual or lesbian couples. Rather, we simply want to share with them God's plan, which is the best plan for them, not only here on earth but ultimately in eternity!

Lastly, consider the **power** of the traditional home. (1) God is Glorified! God can never receive the glory and honor that is due Him when man perverts

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the home. God is not honored and revered when two men “marry”! It is a disgrace and a dishonor to God when we laud and encourage such sinful actions. The opposite is true as well; when the traditional home is promoted and protected, God is honored and glorified (Psalm 127:1ff; Proverbs 31:10ff). (2) Families are unified! Social science research for decades has shown the vital and necessary role that both mother and father play in the stability of the home. The absence of a father in the home has been proven to increase fear, anxiety and low self-esteem in children. Children who have been raised without mothers tend to show a lack of feelings and sympathy, as well as to exhibit hostile and antisocial behaviors.

Simply stated, both mom and dad add strengths to the home that no one else can. Families are strong and united when God’s plan for the home is honored. (3) Society is dignified! **“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people”** (Proverbs 14:34). **God will not continue to bless a nation that promotes and exalts the breakdown of the home.** As goes the home, so goes the nation! Therefore, when we, as a nation, promote sinful homes, we should expect God’s anger and vengeance (Genesis 19; Jude 7), but when we defend the traditional home, we will enjoy God’s blessings. (4) The devil is horrified! The devil is behind every sinful idea to destroy the foundations of the traditional home. Surely, one of Satan’s worst fears is for the home to be strong and spiritual. When we defend the home that God designed, we are deflecting one of the devil’s fiery darts (Ephesians 6:16).

God’s way is the right way! Only God defines the acceptable, traditional home. Dear Readers, we must unite and defend the very structure that is seriously under attack today, the home. May we together promote the traditional home, seek to practice the values and principles that make up the traditional home, and patiently teach and educate our friends, acquaintances and coworkers about God’s perfect design for the home and family. **“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it...”** (Psalm 127:1)! 

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The Text Does Not Stop There

Marilyn LaStrape

One of the panelists on a recent segment of a religious TV program made a comment that immediately caught my attention. In referencing his remarks on a passage, he said, “The text doesn’t stop there, but often our reading does.” How true! **Some of us, including yours truly, stop reading or listening before God has finished talking.** Every time we do that, we are certainly missing something vital to our spiritual understanding, since there are no wasted words in Scripture. Due to space restraints, just a few of the more familiar passages will be cited.



- **Psalm 46:10**, “*Be still and know that I am God...*” **The text does not stop there.** It continues, “*...I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth!*” What dynamic declarations from the Creator of the universe! Yet, many plaques, posters, bookmarks, Bible

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covers, etc. do not include those eternal declarations.

- **Psalm 51:10**, “*Create in me a clean heart, O God...*” **The text does not stop there.** It continues, “...*And renew a steadfast spirit within me.*” Many times, the latter is virtually ignored in our quoting of this verse.
- **Psalm 14:1**, “*The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’...*” **The text does not stop there.** It continues, “...*They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.*” God is warning us in this verse alone about the acts and attitude of a fool, if we would just keep reading.
- **Proverbs 1:7**, “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...*” **The text does not stop there.** It continues, “...*But fools despise wisdom and instruction.*” Do we need to know the latter part of this verse?
- **Proverbs 4:7**, “*Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom...*” **The text does not stop there.** It continues, “...*And in all your getting, get understanding.*” Getting understanding of God’s Word is not negotiable if we want to go to Heaven.
- **Proverbs 23:7**, “*For as he thinks in his heart, so is he...*” **The text does not stop there.** It continues, “...*‘Eat and drink!’ he says to you, but his heart is not with you.*” How many books, articles, pamphlets, tracts, etc. have been written on the first part of this verse? However, to get a clear understanding of this Scripture, verse 6 needs to be read, since the thought begins there and verse 8 needs to be read because it answers the why of verses 6 and 7. Verse 6 says, “*Do not eat the bread of a miser [one who has an evil eye], nor desire his delicacies.*” Verse 8 says, “*The morsel you have eaten, you will vomit up, and waste your pleasant words.*” How many sermons and lessons have we heard on these three verses lately?
- **Philippians 2:12-13**, “*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling...*” **The text does not stop there.** It continues, “...*for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*” Too often, the initial thought in

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verse 12 has been used to promote the false premise of works of merit. Works of merit have never saved anybody! As verse 13 completes the thought, it is God working in us through our submissive, obedient faith, in accordance with and in the center of His will that saves us.

- **Colossians 4:6**, *“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt...”* **The text does not stop there.** It continues, *“...that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”* Ouch!
- **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**, *“Rejoice always...”* **The text does not stop there.** It continues, *“pray without ceasing...,”* but **the text still does not stop there.** It continues, *“...in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”* We frequently hear these three verses as three independent thoughts, especially the first two, as they are used to make points in sermons and lessons.
- **1 Timothy 6:10**, *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil...”* **The text does not stop there.** It continues, *“...for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”*
- **James 4:8**, *“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”* **The text does not stop there.** It continues, *“...Cleanse your hands [actions], you sinners; and purify your hearts [thoughts], you double-minded.”*
- **James 5:16**, *“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another...”* **The text does not stop there.** It continues, *“...that you may be healed.”* **Still, the text does not stop there.** It continues, *“...The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”* The last part of this verse is quoted repeatedly as a stand-alone passage.

We would do well to slow down and look more closely at the countless passages we have chopped up for years. We have heard them so many times and put our personal interpretations on them. We fail to realize we are missing not only words but complete thoughts of inspiration given to us by the Holy Spirit. God help us. *“For He knows our frame, He remembers that we are dust”* (Psalm 103:14). †

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THE

Bob Howton

Webster's Everyday Encyclopedia of the New World Dictionary of the American Language (1967) devotes a large section to a "Guide to English Grammar." The first presentation in this section is a brief description of an "Article" in English grammar. It says:

An Article is a word placed before a noun to show whether the noun is used in a **particular** or **general** sense. (1) Give me a book could mean **any** book. (2) Give me the red and green striped book, on Golf, would mean **only** the specific book indicated. The article "a" when used, indicates something general, or **any** item. When the article "the" is used, only the specific, one-of-a-kind item defined by the description given is meant.

In simpler terms, the article "the" points to things that are one of a kind, singular or unique. The article "a" is a general term denoting more than one or many of a type. Did you ever employ such reasoning in your attempts to study the Bible? Doing so will amaze you as you attempt to "*...show thyself approved unto God...*" (2 Timothy 2:15). Let's look at some simple examples of this truth.

In 760 B.C. Isaiah said, "*...for out of Zion [Jerusalem] shall go forth **the** law, and **the** Word of **the** Lord from Jerusalem*" (Isaiah 2:3). Employing the established rule of 'articles' in English grammar would render this verse thusly. "*for out of Zion [Jerusalem] shall go forth **the [only]** law, and **the [only]** Word of **the [only]** Lord from Jerusalem.*" One has only to look at Acts 2 to see this prophesy fulfilled.

Why is this an important idea? The proper appreciation of articles is important because Christ said, "*...I am **the** way, **the** truth, and **the** life: No man cometh to the Father but by Me*" (John 14:6). Employ the "article" rule and look at what Christ said. "*I am **the [only]** way, **the [only]** truth, and **the [only]** life*" (John 14:6).

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Anyone who might have trouble believing, accepting or understanding the simple truths from God can study other relative Scriptures to better understand what is taught. *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). Essentially, this means: It’s God’s way or it’s a wrong way! Remember, *“there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Proverbs 14:12).

A brief survey of Colossians 1:18, making proper grammatical use of the article “the,” will forever settle the questions that arise when the multitudes ask, “How many churches are there?” Colossians 1:18 reads, in part, *“And He is the head of the body, the church...”* Imposition of the “article” rule will render this verse as follows: *“And He is the [only] head of the [only] body, the [only] church...”* (Colossians 1:18).

The inspired prophet Jeremiah spoke truth when he said, *“O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”* (Jeremiah 10:23). Since this is an eternal truth, what can man do? Do what God directs! *“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good”* (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Remember! *“Sanctify them through Thy truth. Thy Word is truth”* (John 17:17). That settles it! Nothing else can save us, so nothing else is needed! †

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Kennedy's Pennies

“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14-15 NKJV).

We may wonder if someone is ever listening, or we may just wish we were heard. God is always listening, and you are always heard. That does not mean you are going to get everything you want, but you have the confidence of knowing that God is listening. Are you talking?





Rebecca Rushmore

1. In the first nine verses, how many times did God tell Joshua to have strength and courage?
2. Which three tribes had land on the east side of the Jordan River?
3. Who hid the spies in the city of Jericho?
4. When did the waters of the Jordan River stop so Israel could cross it?
5. Who took forbidden items from Jericho?
6. Who was present when Joshua read the Book of the Law after the conquest of Ai?
7. Name the people who tricked Joshua into making a covenant with them.
8. How many kings did Joshua conquer?
9. How old was Caleb when he inherited his land?
10. Whose bones did the Israelites bring out of Egypt, and where were they buried?

(answers inside back cover)

Abraham's Faith Is Tested

Therman Hodge

Although Abraham may have had many trials of his faith, the trial in Genesis 22:1-13 is expressly stated as a trial of his faith. He had exhibited his faith since he first learned of Jehovah and responded to His call to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees.

We know that it is impossible to please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6). Before faith is perfected or complete, it must be tried or tested, and that takes some kind of action on the part of the individual. Yet, just any kind of action will not do; it must be action ordained by God (James 2:21-24).

Abraham, as the father of the faithful, had to be tested. The purpose was not to weaken or to destroy but to purify and strengthen (Job 23:10). Abraham had to realize that Jehovah is supreme and that man's highest duty and blessedness lies in obeying Him. He had to be absolutely certain that Jehovah could be depended on to fulfil His promises regarding Isaac, even though he was offered as a sacrifice on the altar.

Hebrews 11:17a provides for us a **golden text**. *“By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac.”* The manner in which Abraham met this great test should be a great encouragement to all of us. All men of faith must be tried if their faith is to be made perfect or complete. We are no exception.

Genesis 22:1-2 presents the **command** to Abraham. Consider first, *“And it came to pass after these things, God did prove Abraham.”* *“These things”* refer to Abraham's dealings with Abimelech (Genesis 20-21). Abraham's faith had grown to the extent that the time had come to put it to the supreme test. Testing time is never pleasant, but if it is successfully met, testing will yield *“peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness”* (Hebrews 12:11).

Jehovah proved Abraham when He put him in such circumstances that would reveal and test his faith. No man can know what his faith can endure until he is put to the test. For the Christian, the handling of vexing problems

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of the world and the strain of trouble and sorrow are often used to show one just what he really is or what he is capable of enduring: (1) if one's patience endures this provocation, (2) if one's pride will submit to mortification, (3) if one's vanity will withstand a slight, (4) if one's faith can withstand severe disappointment, (5) if one's love is equal to a heavy sacrifice.

“And he said unto him, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee unto the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of” (Genesis 22:2). Abraham was reminded point by point (thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac) of the dearest possession of his life about which Jehovah was talking. Abraham was **commanded** to offer him as a burnt offering upon an altar.

Trials that are put upon us with apparently no reason for them at the time are the severest tests of all. When one rises to the occasion and cheerfully responds to the demands that are made upon him, he will surely be blessed. Mt. Moriah was where Jerusalem was built and specifically the place where the Temple was erected (2 Chronicles 3:1).

Genesis 22:3-8 addresses **preparation**. *“And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.”* There was no hesitation on the part of Abraham, no doubt in his mind of what he was to do (cf., Psalm 119:60). Abraham loved God and had faith in Him (see 1 John 5:3). He had no doubt about the outcome (i.e., that somehow God would be able to keep His promise regarding Isaac, the son of promise).

There must have been a great strain on Abraham and the thought of slaying his son must have cut him to the heart. All of this is implied, but if it were not the case, there would have been no testing. If Abraham had doubted, there would have been grief, but *“there is no fear in love: but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love”* (1 John 4:18).

“On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and he saw the place afar off” (Genesis 22:4). It was about a 40-mile journey from Beersheba

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to the place God designated for the sacrifice. *“And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship, and come again to you”* (Genesis 22:5). Abraham was confident that Isaac would return with him, although he fully expected to kill him (Hebrews 11:19). *“And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife; and they went both of them together”* (Genesis 22:6). There must have been some sufficient reason for Abraham and Isaac to go alone to the place of the sacrifice even though one of them would have to carry the wood. (Jesus carried the wood [i.e., the cross] for His own sacrifice.)

Because of the undaunted faith, and that perfect obedience of Abraham and of Christ also, both were tested to the uttermost. In the case of Jesus Christ, He destroyed our enemies and won our salvation. In all the annals of history, can any other acts of faith outshine the two we are studying now?

“And Isaac spoke unto Abraham, his father, and said, My father; and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?” (Genesis 22:7). What a hard question for a father who fully expected to sacrifice his only son of promise! *“And Abraham said, God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son; so they went both of them together”* (Genesis 22:8). In this reply, Abraham was speaking the language of faith and obedience. Was Abraham thinking of Isaac as the lamb or was he speaking prophetically concerning the lamb?

Genesis 22:9-13 shows **result**. *“And they came to the place which God had told him of: and Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.”* Abraham began to prove his great faith and obedience. With his faith and hope of the restoration of his son’s life, he proceeded with his duties without any misgivings. Surely, only a father in this place could explain the feelings in his heart. Why do you suppose that Isaac was bound?

“And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.” This shows that he fully intended to carry out Jehovah’s command to the letter. *“And the angel of Jehovah called unto him out of*

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heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham, and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou has not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.” God knew before He gave the command what Abraham’s reaction would be, but he wanted Abraham himself to meet the test; Abraham needed to know, too.



“And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for the burnt-offering in the stead of his son.” There is no evidence to show that Abraham expected to find a ram to offer instead of his son, even though this was a literal fulfillment of his saying that *“God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt-offering.”* *“And Abraham called the name of the place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, in the mount of Jehovah it shall be provided”* (Genesis 22:14).✝

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[Editor’s Note: The testing of Abraham’s faith ought to provide God’s children today with an invaluable perspective on the testing of one’s faith, irrespective of the form in which tests or trials of faith may manifest themselves. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

BIBLE CHARACTERS



What Was **RIGHT** with King David?

David Conley

When we think about King David, we think about the good things and the bad things he did during his life. We proclaim him as a hero when he killed the mighty giant Goliath with just a sling and a stone. We are impressed with his battle skills as a war hero by defeating tens of thousands! We admire his loyalty to King Saul even when Saul was trying to kill him. We appreciate his kindness to his sons, even to Absalom who tried to take away the kingdom! We are shocked when he commits adultery and tries to hide his sin with murder! We are puzzled when he allows Joab, his general, to get away with murder!

No wonder we are surprised when God refers to David as **“a man after his own heart”** (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). What was so **right** with King David? The first thing that comes to mind is his willingness to repent when he had done wrong. When Nathan pointed out his sin with Bathsheba saying, **“Thou art the man,”** David repented with tears!

Let’s look at one more truth. In 2 Kings, we find several kings of Judah that **“did that which was right,”** but they left the high places. These were altars of sacrifices to pagan gods. In 2 Kings 16:2, we find that Ahaz was 20 years old when he became king of Judah **“and did not that which**

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was right in the sight of the Lord his God, like David his father.” We find in the next verses that he worshipped pagan gods!

Then, we see in 2 Kings 18:2-4 that Hezekiah was 25 years old when he became king of Judah *“and did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did. He removed the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves...”*

Of all the good or bad things that we know King David did, one thing that can be observed about him is that **God was his only God!** The psalms that he wrote are full of praise for **the one true God!** Unlike Saul and Solomon, David’s loyalty to God is seen in his life and his writings! We may be weak and fall short, but if we are willing to repent and always worship God, we too are people *“after God’s own heart”!* †

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Cecil's

COMMENTS

Grace and Truth *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ”* (John 1:14, 17). Grace and truth complement each other; neither stands alone. Some want a **truth church**, but truth without grace is harsh and severe. Some want a **grace church**, but grace without truth becomes an **anything goes church**, even *“perverting the grace of our God into sensuality”* (Jude 4). **Truth without grace is not the whole truth. Grace without truth is not true grace.**

Was John the Baptist Elijah?

David Fanning and Shane Fisher

Skeptics of the Bible attempt to search for supposed contradictions that will show that a Divine Mind did not supernaturally superintend over its contents. One of the supposed contradictions that skeptics assert is that the Gospel writers seemed confused over whether John the Immerser was Elijah or not (<http://www.skepticsannotatedbible.com/contra/elijah.html>).

Was John the Immerser Elijah? Matthew and Mark give a “Yes” (Matthew 11:13-14; 17:12-13; Mark 9:13). However, the Gospel writer John answered the question, “No” (John 1:21). Have the skeptics finally found a contradiction? **Absolutely not!** The law of non-contradiction states that contradictory statements cannot both be true **in the same sense and at the same time.**

Elijah

Elijah was one of the most famous prophets in Israel (1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2). He was known for his uncompromising stance against the cultic idol worship of Baal that had made inroads into the northern kingdom of Israel via the notorious Jezebel and Ahab. It became such a heated battle that a contest was held on Mount Carmel between Elijah, who represented the God of Israel, and the prophets of Baal, who represented the god of the weather (1 Kings 18). This should have been an easy contest for Baal, but he failed miserably! It was no contest, though, for the God of Israel, who **actually does** control the weather.

Elijah was also known for his fiery preaching, so much so that it could turn the hearts of the people back to the true God (1 Kings 18:39).

Malachi, who served as a prophet to the post-exilic community of Israel, prophesied in 400 B.C. that an “Elijah” would come who would bring back another restoration movement before the coming day of the Lord, which in this context, was likely referring to the conquest of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Romans. This “Elijah” was to come before that awesome and terrible event of national judgment. **Was this prophecy fulfilled before that time reference? Yes.**

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John the Baptist Came in the “Spirit and Power of Elijah” (Luke 1:17)

While serving in the Temple, Zechariah was told by the angel Gabriel that he would have a son, even though his wife Elizabeth was barren. Gabriel gave the aforementioned prophecy of Malachi and stated that Zechariah’s son, who would be named John, would come “*in the spirit and power of Elijah*” (Luke 1:17). When John grew up, he became “*...the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord...’*” (Isaiah 40:1-3).

John was also one of the most famous prophets. He was not afraid to preach on subjects such as repentance and hell, which are looked down upon in modern times (Matthew 3). John was a preacher whose heart was on fire for the Lord. He did not back down from the truth on marriage, divorce and remarriage, even if it cost him his life (Mark 6:17-18).

John set out to fulfill the mission God had given him to help bring people out of idolatry back into fellowship with God. John was as bold and courageous as Elijah was in his preaching. Elijah had his enemies — Jezebel and Ahab — while John had his enemies — Herodias and Herod Antipas.

When the scribes and Pharisees approached John, they wanted to find out who he was. When John answered “**No**” that he was not the Old Testament prophet Elijah, but instead he was the fulfillment of the prophecy that one would come in the spirit and power of Elijah, preparing the way of the Messiah. Yes, he resembled Elijah in his character, manner of preaching and involvement in bringing people back into a restored fellowship with God, but **he was not Elijah reincarnated.** †

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Did You Know?

When Shem died, Abraham was 150 and Isaac was 50.



BIBLE QUESTIONS



Is Giving an Act of Worship?

Rusty Stark

One of the questions lately raised about taking up a collection is whether giving is an act of worship. This question must be answered in the affirmative – without doubt and without apology. That giving is worship can be proved easily by a simple, straightforward understanding of the word “worship” and a clear explanation of the concept of giving.

An Explanation of Worship

Worship is paying homage or showing adoration toward deity; it is to praise and glorify. *“Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name...”* (Psalm 29:2). “Worship may be described as an expression of awe, devotion, and love – from man, the creature, to his Creator” (Jackson). Another important fact necessary to distinguish *what is worship* and *what is not* is this: Worship is prescribed by God, that is, He has given directions to man, showing him how to pay homage, show adoration, praise and glorify Him (John 4:24). Those actions that God has prescribed as a way of showing homage to Him are worship.

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An Explanation of Giving

1. The giving commanded in the New Testament is a prescribed action (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
2. It was to be done when the saints assembled. If it were not done during a time when the church came together, the money would not have been collected in one place. Paul's stated purpose in making the command is so the money would already be gathered when he arrived at Corinth (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
3. This action was performed for the purpose of: (a) glorifying God (2 Corinthians 9:11-13), (b) showing our love to Him (2 Corinthians 8:8-9) and (c) meeting certain needs for others (Romans 15:26).
4. Notice that giving was also commanded in a discussion of the worship assembly of the saints (1 Corinthians 11:17-16:2). First Corinthians 11:17 begins a discussion of the worship assembly – the time when the church came together into one place. The Lord's supper is discussed in chapter 11:17ff. Chapter 14 shows how preaching and teaching, prayer and singing fit into our public assemblies. Chapter 16 gives us the prescription for *how* to give during the time we come together for worship.

Giving as an Act of Worship

As many have pointed out, worship often included the giving of gifts.

1. In Numbers 18:11, the heave offering brought for sacrifice was called a "gift."
2. One of the tithes given by the Israelites was specifically associated with a feast they ate before God as worship (Deuteronomy 12:17-19).
3. Hebrews 5:1 reads, "*For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.*"
4. The wise men came from the east to worship Jesus (Matthew 2:2). They brought gifts (Matthew 2:11).

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5. In Philippians 4:18, the gift sent to Paul from the Philippians was called *“an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.”*
6. Hebrews 13:16 reads, *“But to do good and to communicate [share, be generous] forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”*

Once we understand what worship is, and we understand what giving is, it seems a little silly to ask if giving is worship. A much better question might well be this: “How could giving to God, as a demonstration of our love, in the prescribed place and time (the worship assembly), for the purpose of carrying out the mission of the church, be considered anything other than worship?”

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Is Still Applicable Today

As amazing as it seems, some are questioning whether we can apply the commands in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 to the church today. Some reason that this was a gift for a special need at the time (needy saints), and that it was never intended to become a pattern for *how* and *when* saints give today.

This reasoning is faulty and dangerous. The instructions given to the early church are set forth in Scripture for a reason. We must take such guidelines as normative – providing a pattern for all Christians unless there is some conclusive contextual reason for seeing them in a more limited way. If we don’t see it that way, then the New Testament cannot be a pattern. If the New Testament is not a pattern, then the chaos and division in the religious world is justified because we have no guidelines for what *church* and *worship* are all about. God is not to blame for the chaos and confusion in the religious world (1 Corinthians 14:33). He has left us a pattern, and He commands us to follow it (2 Timothy 1:13).

Furthermore, the need that was met by giving is not a temporary need. Jesus said in Mark 14:7 that the poor would always be with us. Meeting the needs of the needy is part of pure religion. This was not simply a first century problem. It is an ongoing problem with which every century and every generation must deal. How do we go about meeting this need and fulfilling this obligation? How do we gather money to help the poor? God has not left us in doubt, for He has given us the pattern in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.

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First Corinthians 16:1-2 authorizes a treasury, that is, a collective *store* of money. In Galatians 6, we see a context in which both giving to the poor and providing for the preaching of the Gospel come together. Verse 10 commands us to do good unto “*all men.*” Galatians doesn’t tell us *how* to fulfill this command. We are left to verses like 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 for guidance in *how*. Notice that Galatians 6:6 commands that *those* who are being taught should support the *ones* who do the teaching. Again, nothing is said about *how*, but the same pattern given for the support of the weak would also provide for the support that allows “*those who preach the Gospel*” to “*live of the Gospel*” (1 Corinthians 9:14).

First Corinthians 16:1-2 is not only still applicable today, but also it is *binding* on us today. It is a means of showing our love and a beautiful, divinely prescribed act of worship to our great God. †

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Kenney's Pennies

Psalm 47:8 declares, “*God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne.*” Proverbs 14:34 reminds, “*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.*” In Acts 17:26, Paul said that God “*has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings.*” In contrast to Deists [who espouse natural religion and reject divine revelation and God’s contemporary, providential involvement with humans], the Bible affirms God is still involved in the national affairs of humankind. His ethics and morals make for a civilization that is – well – civil! When His principles are abandoned, things seem to go downhill quickly. We humbly suggest that all societies are better off when they honor the God of the Bible.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

(Hebrews 12:22-24)

22 But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

These verses make the contrast between God's appearance to the Israelites in the wilderness and His presentation of Himself to the brothers and sisters of His only begotten Son, Jesus. On Mount Sinai, before the Israelites, there were thunderings, lightnings, a thick cloud, the loud sound of a trumpet, and God descended on the mountain in fire and a thick cloud of smoke, in the midst of an earthquake. This caused such terror in hearts of the people that they begged Moses to speak to God in their stead.

In contrast, the children of God in this Christian age approach our Father's throne, with our Brother and our Judge sitting at His right hand (Acts

8:56) *in the heavenly Jerusalem*. Our hearts are filled with peace and confidence, knowing that, as we bow in spirit before Him to worship — in our private prayers, in our public assemblies, and when we cry out to Him as we walk the roads of life, He hears us and does for us what is good (John 16:23).

How blessed we are to be among that *“general assembly and church of the Firstborn”* — the church of our Lord Jesus Christ — knowing that we, as a body of believers, stand cleansed before God by the eternal sacrifice of the blood of our Lord, and that our names are already written in Heaven. Thank God we live in this age of forgiveness and the promise of eternal life in that new heaven and earth.



The Desert Pupfish

Dave Everson

In the caves, streams and small rivers around the world, especially in desert regions, is a group of fish called pupfish. They belong to a group of fish called killifish, and they have some very amazing abilities that God created in them. Let's take a quick look at why these fish have been called extremophiles by scientists and more specifically as euryhaline and eurythermal.

The desert pupfish was created to tolerate an extreme range of environmental conditions. The word euryhaline refers to the ability to live in a wide range of salinities. They can survive in dissolved salts ranging from zero or freshwater to as high as 70 parts per thousand. As a reference, seawater has a salinity of 35 parts per thousand. Eurythermal is the ability to withstand a wide range of temperatures. The pupfish can withstand temperatures from 39 degrees Fahrenheit to 95 degrees Fahrenheit. Not only can these fish withstand these wide ranges, but they also tolerate very rapid changes in both salinity and temperature. This sets them apart from most every other fish in the world. Besides the ability to tolerate a rapid change of temperature and salt content, the pupfish can also withstand dissolved oxygen as low as 0.13

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ppm (parts per million). The average dissolved oxygen level most fish endure is somewhere between 2.5 and 10 ppm. So, God gave these fish an incredible ability to withstand some wide extremes of conditions.

Besides the tolerance for a wide range of salt and temperature swings, the pupfish also can swim in water that would burn the skin off of humans! In the heart of the Guadalupe Mountains in southern New Mexico are caves where rock-eating microbes called “snottites” by scientists are at work eating the minerals in cave rocks and dropping sulfuric acid into the water. Among the caves is one known as Cueva de Villa Luz, which emits a toxic, rotten-egg smell of hydrogen sulfide from its entrance. Inside, humans must wear respirators and carry poison-gas monitors to protect themselves from the hydrogen sulfide that reacts with water in the cave to form caustic sulfuric acid where the pupfish lives. This ability to survive in this kind of acid water is very unusual, and God demonstrated His design abilities when He created the pupfish. The waters here can have a pH as low as 3.0, which is very acidic and is generally about 50 times more acid than is suitable for most aquatic life.

However, there are a few other fish that God created to be able to withstand acidic waters. The Japanese dace prospers in the acidic waters of Lake Osorezan in Japan, where the pH can range down to 3.4. Essentially, both of these fish swim in the equivalent of a giant bowl of vinegar. While long-term exposure to these conditions is toxic and generally fatal to most fish, the pupfish and the Japanese dace have been designed with the ability to change the pH in their blood and reduce the loss of essential salts, which allows them to thrive in their acidic ecosystems.

God’s ability to design biological systems that allow these fish to live in such extreme water conditions just shows His amazing creative ability. Let us always give Him praise for what He has done. ***“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse”*** (Romans 1:20). 

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Five Helpful Words for Troubled Marriages

Lanny Smith

1 Peter 3:1-7

Sadly, most modern marriages end in divorce, and many of those involve Christians! It may surprise you to know that it has not always been that way! Since marriage is **of God**, it would seem that, if we follow Him, most **troubled marriages** could be saved! Many Bible texts on Christian living can just as easily be applied to marriage. In this lesson, we will focus on five helpful words for troubled marriages.

I. Forsake

- A. The word is used in most marital vows: “and forsaking all others...”
- B. One Bible word that is used for “forsake” is “*leave*” (Matthew 19:5).
- C. When we marry, we must **leave behind** (i.e., forsake) many things!
- D. Examples: parents, old sweethearts and the single lifestyle!

II. Foresee

- A. “*A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself; the simple pass on and are punished*” (Proverbs 27:12).
- B. In the context of this sermon, we must **foresee** and **avoid** the many **pitfalls** of marriage!
- C. For example, there is the **too much time apart** pitfall (1 Corinthians 7:3-5), work, friends, in-laws.
- D. Another example is the **too little attention to personal appearance** pitfall (Song of Solomon 4:9-11; 5:10-16).

III. Forbear

- A. What Paul told the Ephesians is good advice for marriage: “*bearing with one another in love*” (Ephesians 4:2).

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- B. In modern parlance, this means we must learn to **put up with** some things that we may not like!
- C. If your spouse has some little things that bug you, remember, you have things that bug your spouse, too!
- D. Not only that, but we must also be *“swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath”* (James 1:19-20).

IV. Forfeit

- A. By this, I mean that when spouses fight, they must learn to **throw in the towel** [surrender] sometimes!
- B. Notice that I am granting as **accepted** the fact that married couples **do** sometimes fight [argue]!
- C. Must you **always** win the argument? How long will you fight? How long will you refuse to talk?
- D. The advice by the writer of Hebrews to **“pursue peace”** can easily be applied to marriage (Hebrews 12:14-15)!

V. Forgive

- A. The word “forgive” means to **let it go** (i.e., to give up the right of retaliation, Matthew 5:38-42).
- B. This is exactly the way God deals with our sins (i.e., He remembers them no more, Hebrews 8:12).
- C. Once we forgive, we must not put our spouses in **double jeopardy** (i.e., to prosecute twice).
- D. Paul’s advice for brotherly relations can easily be applied to marriage (Ephesians 4:31-32)!

If you have been married five minutes, you know that marriage is hard work. The above advice is good for many relationships, but it is especially good for marriages! If we (Christians) can’t even make our marriages work, where does that put the rest of the world? Yet, with God’s help, these five words can help to keep our marriages intact! May we all learn to use these five helpful words in our own marriages! 

Lanny Smith is the evangelist for the Fishers Church of Christ in Fishers, Indiana, USA.

CHARTS & OUTLINES

God Loves a Cheerful Giver

Mark N. Posey

Notice the words of Jesus in Acts 20:35, which reads, *“I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”* This Scripture emphasizes stewardship. A steward is a manager, overseer or caretaker. Every Christian is a steward. A steward is never the owner; he is always the manager of what is placed into his care! What areas of stewardships do we have? Stewardship of **time** (Ephesians 5:16), **treasures** (Matthew 6:21) and **talents** (1 Peter 4:10)! The matter of stewardship extends to all areas of life, such as spiritual gifts, family and all earthly possessions. Notice the blessings of being a cheerful giver!

- 1. Privilege of Giving:** God expects us to give as we have purposed and prospered (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Notice two examples: **Philippians:** *“an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God”* (Philippians 4:18). **Macedonians:** *“that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality”* (2 Corinthians 8:2). *“God loves a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- 2. Promises of Giving.** God promises we will have an abundant abundance (2 Corinthians 9:6-10). **Sowing** (v. 6): This context speaks of one seed producing many seeds as a way of referring to abundance. First, the seed must be given away (i.e., sown)! **Sufficiency** (v. 8): Christian giving affects all of life! God provides for all needs (Matthew 6:19-34). **Seed** (v. 10): Giving is the natural result of salvation. A stingy Christian is a contradiction in terms!
- 3. Practice of Giving.** God identifies giving to be **purposeful** (2 Corinthians 8:3). We give out of ability (v. 8:3a). Giving is out of what one has, not what a person does not have! We must give **sacrificially** (v. 8:3b): Giving always pinches; it is a sacrifice! We must give **willingly** (v. 8:3c): No one should give under pressure. We must give with an open heart!

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Conclusion:

Notice three important passages: Luke 6:38; Malachi 3:16; Job 1:20-21. Job lost all his earthly possessions, including his children. How he responded was a demonstration of his morality and integrity. *“Then Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. And he said: ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord’”* (Job 1:20-21). **Job held his possessions with an open hand and clung tightly to God.** Doing so enabled him to hold fast to his integrity and convictions. †

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Cecil's COMMENTS	There is a coin shortage in America, a serious shortage of common cents.
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Bible Word Scramble

Rebecca Rushmore

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

Genesis 1:1 10th word _____

Genesis 2:2 16th word _____

Psalms 90:2 23rd word _____

Psalms 102:25 2nd word _____

Psalms 139:14 17th word _____

Isaiah 45:18 7th word _____

John 1:3 10th word _____

Colossians 1:16 19th word _____

Bible text: New King James (NKJV)

(See the back cover for answer.)

Cast Not Your Confidence Away

Mark McWhorter

Many soldiers carried shields in ancient times. The shield was very important. It helped protect the soldier from enemy swords and javelins.

In some ancient societies, the shield was a symbol of honor. A soldier was not supposed to drop his shield. He was not supposed to return from a battle without his shield. Lacedomia [ancient city near Sparta] was one of these societies. A Lacedemonian mother gave her oldest son the shield of his father. She said these words when she gave it to him: “This shield thy father preserved, do thou preserve it also or perish. Bring it back or be brought back on it.”

Greeks who lost their shields were put to death. According to them, only cowardly soldiers threw away their shields and ran from the battle.

This symbolism is used in Hebrews 10:35. *“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.”* The word for *“confidence”* in the Greek is a word meaning “frankness and boldness of speech.” This boldness of speech acts as a shield. It is a boldness in speaking about Christ. The Christian should never be ashamed to speak about Christ. The Christian should always be ready to speak in defense of the Christian faith (1 Peter 3:15).

The confidence or boldness of speech has a great reward. If the Christian is not ashamed of Jesus, Jesus is not ashamed of the Christian (Matthew 10:32-33).

Study your Bible. Learn all about Jesus. Learn what He wants you to do. Then, have confidence in Him. If any of this is hard to understand, ask an adult to help you. 

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Noting Your Bible



Emily Fisher

Sin

In an ever-increasingly humanistic world, the reality of sin has become distorted in the minds of many individuals. Many souls do not understand what sin is; you can see it in such statements as: “He was a good person; now he is in heaven.” “The devil made me do it.” “I’m not as bad of a person as she is.” The reason for this misunderstanding of the nature of sin is due to the fact that the majority of people have drifted away from God’s Word. Indeed, now whole generations have grown up without being taught Truth. They no longer look to the Holy Scriptures for answers to man’s greatest problem. Because of this, we, along with the prophet Hosea can say, *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...”* (Hosea 4:6). Instead of letting the culture around us define sin, let’s look at what God’s Word says about this subject, because it affects all of mankind.

1. Note this topic in your Bible, and next to it write, “**1 John 3:4.**”
2. Turn to 1 John 3 and underline verse 4, noting the definition of “**sin = lawlessness (see Romans 4:15).**” If you have access to a lexicon or Bible dictionary, you will find that the Greek word for “sin” means, “to miss the mark.” Take time to read the whole book of 1 John.
3. In Romans 4:15, note: “**There is a law or else there would be nothing to break or disobey (see Romans 14:23).**” You may want to make some references in Romans and the book of Galatians, which both discuss the role of the Old Testament Law in bringing people to the Law of Christ, thus making the Old Law

fulfilled at Christ's sacrifice (Romans 3:20, 4:23-5:2; Galatians 3:21-25). Also, the fact that all people today are under the New Testament Law is important to remember in a "do what you want" world that tells us on all fronts that everything is relative.

4. Turn to Romans 14 and write next to verse 23: "**Faith in this verse is our personal belief; the context here is observing special days and eating certain things (vs. 1-6); (see James 4:17).**" Of course, our faith is to be built upon God's system of faith, the Gospel of Christ (Jude 3). Remember that our conscience can become dull if not educated by God's Word (1 Timothy 4:2).
5. In James 4:17, there are a couple of things to note: "**We can know what is good and what is evil (by knowing God's Word); sin is an action – wrong doing AND failure to do what is right (1 John 5:17). (see James 1:12-15).**" This can't be stressed enough, since many think because they don't lie, they don't murder or commit adultery then they are Heaven-bound. However, they fail to realize the things God's law commands that they have failed to do.
6. Turn back to the first chapter of James and write: "**Temptation is not sin; giving in to the temptation is when we sin (see Matthew 4).**" Note the progression in verse 15. In verse 14, underline "*own desires.*" It is not that "the devil made me do it" but that my own wants and desires led me down the path to sin. How do we remedy this? Note verses 21-22 of the same chapter in James; study God's Word and obey God's Word. Our wants should be His!
7. Turn to Matthew 4, noting, "**Jesus was tempted in the same ways we all are: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and pride of life (see Psalm 51).**" Note here also Hebrews 4:15; Jesus resisted temptation by remembering God's Word. We can, too (1 Corinthians 10:13)!
8. Turn to Psalm 51 and read the whole chapter of what was written by a penitent, inspired David. Note the different words used synonymously with sin: "transgressions" = rebellion; "iniquity" = perversion. You may want to note next to verse 5 that this is not teaching that sin is inherited, as many claim. Write down Ezekiel 18:20 and John 8:34 here, noting that we are each responsible for our own ac-

tions. Write next to Psalm 51:17, **“God wants me to see sin as He sees it, confess and repent of my sins (see Isaiah 59:2).”**

9. In Isaiah 59, note, **“Sin separates us from the Holy God (1 Peter 1:16). (see Isaiah 6:5).”**

10. Isaiah 6 is a portrait of God, and you should take the time to study it fully in its context. When we, by faith, see what Isaiah was privileged to



view – the holiness and glory of God – we too will say, **“be merciful to me a sinner”** (Luke 18:13). Somewhere in this chapter write, **“see Genesis 3.”**

11. Note in Genesis 3 the origin of sin on earth. God had given the commandment (Genesis 2:16-17). Adam and Eve made the choice to break God’s law (3:6). Write next to verse 6, **“We all, like Adam and Eve, have chosen to sin (Romans 3:23, 5:12). (see 1 John 2:16).”**

12. We are going to end where we started in the book of 1 John. Chapter 2:15-17 lists the ‘categories’ of sin, and the Holy Spirit makes it plain that these are **“not of the Father.”** Underline these verses, and may we put them in our hearts to recall the next time we are tempted by the passing pleasures of sin (Hebrews 11:25). Also highlight 1 John 1:7, **“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”** †

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

HYMNS

Jesus All Day

Words and Music
by: Paul Mays

1. Did you know the stor-y of Je - sus who loves you? Je - sus, who died for you? Je - sus can save you!
2. Did you know that there is a tomb that is emp - ty? Death could not hold the King, Je - sus is liv - ing!
3. Did you know that Je - sus made one way to save you? An - swer the Gos - pel call, Go in the wa - ter!
4. Af - ter you o - bey it is time to get bu - sy. Now let us work for Him, Go make di - sci - ples!

Did you know that He's the one Son of the one God? Son of the liv - ing God, Je - sus can save you!
Did you know that He was seen af - ter God raised Him? Then He as - cen - ded up, Je - sus is liv - ing!
It is in the wa - ter where we are u - ni - ted, In death with Christ the King, Go in the wa - ter!
Help us teach the world and then bap - tize the will - ing, Teach them all to ob - serve, all He's com - man - ded!

Je - sus all day, Je - sus ev - ry day, Je - sus when I go to bed, Je - sus when I wake.

I wan - na live a life so I hear Him say,

"Well done My child, en - ter in." En - ter sweet rest."

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

HYMNS

Look Ye Saints

Thomas Kelly, 1806
Arr. Paul Clements, 2020

Paul Clements, 2020

1. Look, ye saints, the sight is glo - rious! See the man of sor - rows now;
2. Sin - ners in de - ris - ion crowned Him, mock - ing thus the Sav - ior's claim;
3. Hark the bursts of ac - clam - a - tion! Hark those loud tri - umph - ant chords;

From the fight re - turn vic - tor - ious, Ev - 'ry knee to Him shall bow.
See the an - gels crowd a - round Him, Own His ti - tle, praise His name.
Je - sus takes the high - est sta - tion, O what joy this sight af - fords!

rit.
Crown Him, crown Him Lord of all, Crown the Sav - ior King of Kings.
Lord of all,

Paul Clements has been preaching for many years.

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”.

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Delicate, Fragile Treasures

Betty Burton Choate

Have you seen them?
Those fragile,
 minutely designed,
 exquisitely colored flowers
 God created?

Some are so tiny,
 so thin of fabric,
 so easy to be broken,
If I had made such fragility
I would have built around them
 thick glass cases,
Protecting them day and night
From nature's harsh
 and careless touch.

But God had different thoughts:
He planted treasures
 — delicate, fragile treasures —
In the desert's heat and barrenness,
In the tundra's cold and wasted wilds,
In the jungle's wet and monstrous growth.
And everywhere
God's jewels
 survive and thrive,
and seem doubly, triply precious
 because they live
 where fragile gems should never grow.

And in those wild and barren soils
They speak of God.