

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

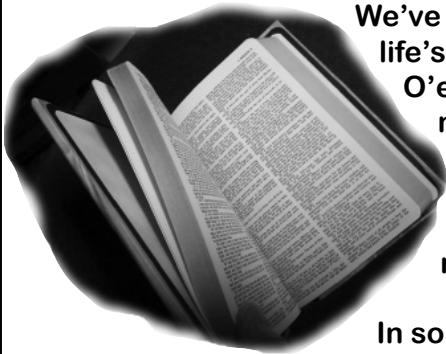


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HOMES AND HOPE FOR CHILDREN

My Bible and I

Author Unknown



**We've traveled together through
life's rugged way,
O'er land and o'er water, by
night and by day:
To travel without it I never
would try;
We keep close together,
my Bible and I.**

**In sorrow I've proved it
my comfort and joy,
When weak, my strong tower which naught can destroy;
When death comes so near me 'tis thought I will die,
We still are together, my Bible and I.**

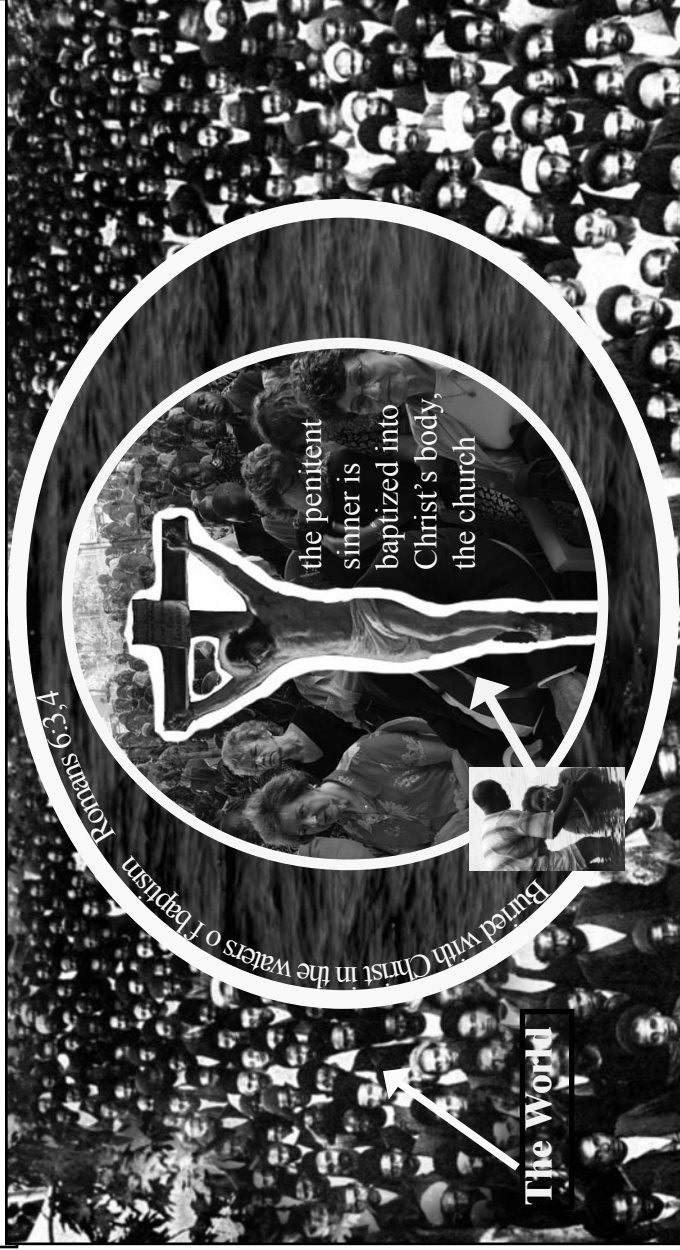
**If powers of evil against me would come,
And threaten to rob me of heaven and home,
God's Word then directs me to Him in the sky;
And nothing can part us, my Bible and I.**

**When evil temptations are brought to my view,
And I, in my weakness, know not what to do,
On Christ, as my strength, I am taught to rely;
And so we walk on together, my Bible and I.**

**When life's path is ended, if Jesus should come
And take all His blood-purchased brethren home,
Or if, in long suffering, He waits till I die,
We'll never be parted, my Bible and I.**

**And when in the glory, my Lord I behold,
With all His redeemed ones safe in the fold,
My Bible and I close companions will be,
For God's Word abides through eternity.**

Transition from the world, into the Family, is made through being buried into the death of Christ in the waters of baptism.



Buried with Christ in the waters of baptism
Romans 6:3-4

the penitent sinner is baptized into Christ's body, the church

The World

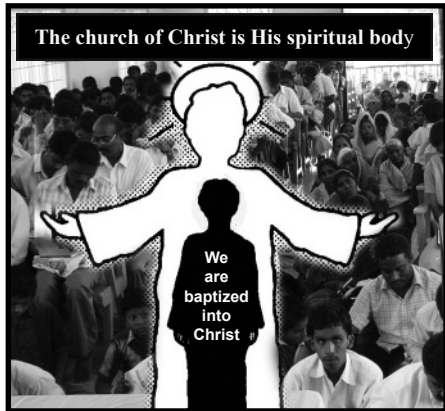
Is the church of which you are a member called by the name of Christ? (James 2:7, Romans 16:16)

In Christ

“...you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ have put on Christ**” (Galatians 3:26,27).

“...for by **one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...**” (2 Corinthians 12:13).

“...He [God] put all things under His [Christ's] feet, and gave Him to be **head over all things to the church, which is His body...**” (Ephesians 1:22,23).



What do Christians have “in Christ”?

Ephesians gives us a sweeping view of the position of Christ in the Father's eternal purposes and plans for humanity. The expression “in Christ”, or something equal to it, gives a key to the importance of our relationship with Christ in regard to one benefit after another. Notice what can be reached or obtained “in Christ”:

- “...every spiritual blessing...” IN CHRIST (1:3)
- “...redemption, the forgiveness of sins ...” IN CHRIST (1:7)
- “...gather together...all things...” IN CHRIST (1:10)
- “...His mighty power ...” IN CHRIST (1:19)
- “...sit together in heavenly places...” IN CHRIST (2:6)
- “...His kindness toward us ...” IN CHRIST (2:7)
- “...created...for good works...” IN CHRIST (2:10)
- “...have been made near...” IN CHRIST (2:13)
- “...grows into a holy temple...” IN CHRIST (2:21)
- “...partakers of His promise...” IN CHRIST (3:6)
- “...eternal purpose...accomplished...” IN CHRIST (3:11)

— Ardron Hinton

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

EDITORIAL



We must be honest and acknowledge that the devil is not an average antagonist or enemy — he is an extremely formidable foe. He is highly skilled at what he does, and he apparently never becomes weary from all of his persistent activity. On the athletic field he would be a coach’s delight — he would always be giving all of his energy in an effort to succeed. He would go above and beyond what his coaches expected from him. He would be the first one to arrive for practice and the last one to leave. He would always expect to win, and would find very little good about losing. He would be that one player that all oppo-

“The Wiles of the Devil”

Byron Nichols

nents dreaded to have to compete against. Unfortunately for all of us, the devil’s interests far exceed the realm of athletics, but rather encompass every aspect of life.

In Ephesians 6:11 Paul admonishes us to “*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*” What does Paul mean as he speaks of the “wiles” of the devil? The apostle is saying that Satan cannot be trusted at all, but he is a liar; he is quite cunning; he is full of deceit and trickery. Paul at no time indicates that the devil cannot be defeated, but he does say that in order for us to be victorious, we must make proper preparation ahead of time.

As successful as Satan is at getting us to do what we should not do, he is at least equally adept at influencing us to refrain from doing what we should

do. The inspired words of James 4:17 can have (and should have) a rather sobering effect on us: *“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”*

We talk about “sins of commission” (sins consisting of actively doing what is wrong) and “sins of omission” (sins that we become guilty of when we do nothing, or fail to do what is right). One of the “wiles” employed by the devil is convincing us that when we are guilty of not doing something that we should do we are at least not guilty of committing some sin that others would see and regard as being real bad. At least we would not be influencing others to duplicate that kind of sin in their lives. However, our failure to accept responsibility in actively doing what obviously ought to be done can likewise be a powerful influence on others. It can give them more of a reason to think that they don’t need to act just because something needs to be done. Satan always can get good use of his seed-thought that “others have a greater responsibility than I do,” or “I’m not as talented or capable in this matter as others are, so I’m excused.”

The devil sometimes uses this idea of ignoring the good that needs to be done by a Christian or by a group of Christians as he persuades men in positions of leadership and responsibility in a local congregation to become lax in leading the way in standing for truth and contesting error. Please understand, though, that while faithful leaders will in fact stand for truth and contest what is not true, that does not at all constitute the whole of what the Lord expects from elders and preachers. I have drawn attention to this problem that sometimes exists only as an example of what can happen when there is good to be done and it is ignored or “swept under the rug”.

It is evident that the teaching in James 4:17 is directed to us as individuals. However, is there not a principle inherent in this teaching that could extend to groups as well as individuals? It would appear that if it is a sin for an individual to know to do right and then not do it, if a congregation, or the leadership of a congregation, knows to do right regarding a matter and does not do it, the same sin would be committed by the group that would be committed by just one person. At any rate, hopefully we can see that Satan has a powerful tool at his disposal as he seeks to influence us as God’s people to leave undone a great many good things that would benefit the Lord’s cause if we would do them.

What a comfort it is to have the assurance that our God is so much greater and more powerful than the devil! In contrasting the world and the Godhead, John says in 1 John 4:4, *“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world (Satan).”*✠



Faith in the Operation of God

Jerry Bates

Baptism is one of the most hotly debated topics in religion. Most religious groups practice some form of baptism, but most often, it is separated from salvation. It is said that baptism is a sign of the inward grace that has already been performed on a person's heart. Several verses are used to justify this position, one of which is Colossians 2:11-13. These

verses read:

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead, and you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

The argument is sometimes made that baptism is compared to the Old Testament rite of circumcision. Circumcision was a sign of the covenant God had made with Israel, thus baptism is a sign of the new life that a person has in Christ. Let us look at these verses a little closer for a few moments.

First of all, I want to point out that baptism is not compared to circumcision. The comparison is between the fleshly circumcision of the Old Testament and spiritual circumcision, which occurs at baptism. The Old Testament rite of circumcision was fleshly in nature, performed by human hands. Frequently, the Jews

depended on this physical action as the basis for their salvation, but it was never intended to provide salvation. It was only a sign of the covenant God had made with His people. God has always wanted a heart circumcision, a change of life. *“Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer”* (Deuteronomy 10:16). A similar command is given in Jeremiah 4:4.

On the other hand, Christ’s circumcision is spiritual in nature, that is, made without hands. It is a heart circumcision, a removing of the sins of the flesh, and is wholly a work of God. This spiritual circumcision occurs at baptism. This should lead the Christian to see the superiority of his circumcision over that of the Jews. Just as a small part of the physical flesh was cut off in circumcision, our fleshly passions and practices are removed in baptism.

Secondly, Paul says three things happen to us in baptism. We are first buried with Christ. This obviously implies a death to sin, since you only bury something that is dead. Secondly, we are raised with Christ, and we are also made alive with Christ. God forgives us all our sins on the basis of our faith in God. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith...”* (Ephesians 2:8). This is not just faith in the power of God or faith in Christ’s resurrection, but faith in what God has promised to do for us, as demonstrated by raising Jesus

from the dead. The power is God, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. When did this take place? In baptism! Baptism is not the means of the change, but only the time when God works to change us.

Thirdly, notice what happens when we try to make baptism only a symbol with no actual connection to our salvation. These verses clearly declare that in baptism God is working to make us new creatures. Paul says that in baptism we have faith in the working of God (present tense), not faith in what He had already done for us. When we make baptism only a symbol, God does nothing. According to this theory, His work has already been done, and thus, in baptism, the only one doing anything is man. God becomes a mere spectator, which is contrary to the teaching of Paul, and baptism becomes only an empty ritual.

Baptism is not an empty ritual. Spiritual circumcision, which occurs in baptism, but is not baptism itself, is not like the Old Testament circumcision. Baptism does not save in itself, and certainly we do not save ourselves. God is still the saving power, and faith is still the basis of our salvation. When does God choose to work on our hearts? In baptism! Don’t relegate God to being a mere spectator. †

When we make baptism only a symbol, God does nothing.

ASSOCIATE EDITORIAL



As an elementary age child, I recall the black and white version of *The Wizard of Oz* movie annually making its way to our television, and televisions across America. It was a remarkable movie for its day — a real classic. Several scenes doubtless imprinted impressionable minds every time the movie appeared during those years. One scene in particular stands out for me. Dorothy, her dog Toto, the Tin Man, the Cowardly Lion, and the Scarecrow entered into the presence of “the great and powerful Oz”. Initially, the great booming voice, the fearsome face and the shooting fire commanded awe and inspired fear in all those who came before Oz. Of course, that was

Solemnity in Worship

Louis Rushmore

before Toto revealed the little old man behind the curtain speaking into a microphone. The point herein that I want to emphasize is the solemnity, the awe and the respect, howbeit, misplaced in the Wizard of Oz.

Until I was 18-years-old, I was at least nominally a Roman Catholic. Although I do not subscribe to the doctrinal errors that evolved over the centuries and continue to evolve away from biblical truth in Catholicism, other Catholics and I learned to have a keen awe and respect for God that led to heightened solemnity in worship of Almighty God. Assembled in the “sanctuary,” sensing that we were in the very presence of God, we worshipped with enhanced

solemnity. Granted, the Bible does not teach about a sanctuary or holy place on earth under Christianity, and Catholic worship, because it is human rather than divine in origin, is vain worship (Mark 7:7). However, what I want to emphasize is the solemnity, the awe and the respect, howbeit, misplaced in Catholicism. One of the single most attractive aspects of Catholicism to Catholics, former Catholics and would-be Catholics is the solemnity in worship of Almighty God.

Somehow, Christians need to have a sense of the very presence of God as they worship Him “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). We need to manifest our awe of and respect for Him through solemnity in worship. As Christians, we need to feel emotionally and intellectually the sentiment expressed in Psalm 33:8, which reads: “*Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.*” The word “fear” in this context means “to revere”, whereas the word “awe” here means “to shrink, fear (as in a strange place)” (Biblesoft’s). Especially sinful men, even forgiven saints (Christians), upon reflection must acknowledge that being in the very presence of God as we endeavor to worship Him is ‘a strange place’ to be. “*Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?*” (Psalm 76:7). “*For our God is a consuming fire*” (Hebrews 12:29).

Have we forgotten Who the object of our worship is? Has it escaped us that the Godhead is magnificent, all-powerful and so far superior to puny humans? How have we come to the point that in our assemblies we dare to be so easily distracted from focusing our complete attention on praising, magnifying and glorifying God? Is worship an inconsequential matter to you that interferes with your social networking and personal enjoyment? Do you show by your demeanor in the worship assembly realization that worshipping Almighty God is a serious matter and a privilege reserved today for faithful Christians? Christians, of all people, ought to be those who demonstrate solemnity in worship of God! †

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Biblesoft’s New Exhaustive Strong’s Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. CD-ROM. Seattle: Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, 2006.

Christians need to have a sense of the very presence of God as they worship Him “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).

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Oh, Those Hands!

Hershel Dyer



A little girl was once admiring her mother. She spoke of her eyes, her hair, her face, and then started to add, "But your hands..."

The mother's hands were drawn and misshapen. She felt it was time to explain to her daughter the reason for this disfigurement. She told of a fire in their house about ten years before. Her baby was upstairs in its cradle and she had rushed up the stairs and into a room which was ablaze, snatching the infant up into her arms. In doing so she suffered severe burns on her hands, leaving them scarred for life.

The little girl, listening intently to her mother's words, now looked with reflection and deep affection upon her mother's hands. Finishing her statement earlier begun, she added, "But I love your hands best of all!"

Another scene had transpired on the day of our Lord's resurrection. He appeared to His disciples behind closed doors and, at first, it greatly frightened them — thinking He was a spirit. However, when He showed them His nail-pierced hands and the

hole in His side made by the soldier's spear, they rejoiced.

One of the apostles, Thomas, was not there that evening to see the Lord. When the others told him about it, he averred that he would not believe until he saw "*in His hands the print of the nails*". A week later, Christ again appeared to the group, and this time Thomas was present. Again, as before, the resurrected Jesus appeared. He especially addressed Thomas, saying, "*Reach your finger here, and look at my hands...*" (John 20:27).

To the believer's eye, surely no set of hands could be so beautiful as those that were pierced for our redemption!

"I shall know Him, I shall know Him, and redeemed by His side I shall stand;

I shall know Him, I shall know Him, by the print of the nails in His hand." †

Hershel Dyer is a Gospel preacher living in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

GOD

Jesus: A Man of Sorrows and Acquainted with Grief

Perry N. Hall

In dealing with the problems of human suffering, it is deeply comforting to know that we have the help of One who suffered as no other, and that if we suffer with Him, we will also be glorified together (Romans 8:17).

In the Old Testament book of Isaiah, Jesus Christ is prophetically portrayed as the Suffering Servant of God (Isaiah 49:53). In Isaiah 53:3, it is said of Him that He is “*a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief...*” Twelve times within the space of nine verses of this chapter, the prophet reiterates emphatically that all the Servant’s sufferings were vicarious, borne for man, to save him from the consequences of his sins, to enable him to escape punishment. It was our transgressions and iniquities that caused the chastisement of our peace to be upon Him, filling Him with sorrow and grief. He is uniquely qualified as the “*Man of Sorrows*”. When we look at this expression, we know there is but one of our race to whom this title properly belongs. By partaking of our humanity as He did, and being made sin for us, Jesus came into the closest possible contact with the sins, pains, privation, deformities, diseases, and sorrows of mankind. He suffered with those whom He saw suffering. He knew the sorrow of rejection by those whom He loved. He experienced the sorrow of being hated by those whom He came to save. He knew sorrow as the sinless One on whom were laid the iniquities of the world. He came to know the painful and shameful sorrow of the last, long excruciating agony upon the cross, when it seemed as if even His father had forsaken Him. In His earthly sojourn He wept, groaned, and more than once was troubled. He grew weary and exhausted.

He was touched with the feelings of our infirmities and was tempted in all points as we, yet without sin; His divine sympathy enables us to come boldly to the throne of grace for help and mercy in our time of need (Hebrews 4:15,16). It was His love for man and the prospect of “*bringing many sons unto glory*” that brought, in the final analysis, joy to the heart of the Man of Sorrows (Hebrews 2:10; 12:2).

When it comes to the problem of human suffering, Jesus has left us a perfect example, that we should follow His steps (1 Peter 2:19-25). †

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

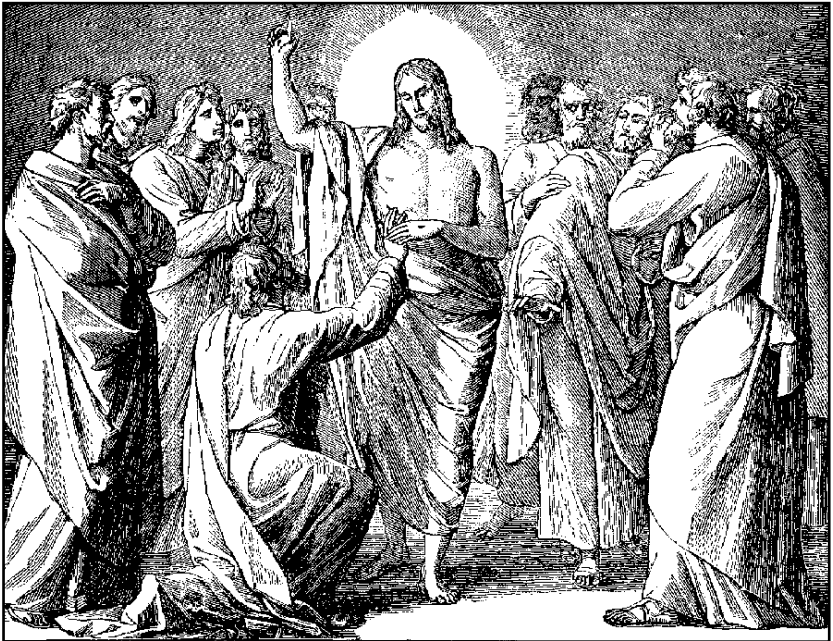
GOD

Striking Statements of Jesus Christ

David R. Kenney

What phrase of Jesus is the most striking? This was a recent question proposed to me for an answer. Imagine trying to pick just one! I could not. Jesus was the most controversial figure in the history of this world.— past, present, and future! There are three of Jesus' statements I would like to make mention of and integrate them for impact.

The first phrase that comes to my mind is in John 8:58. In this context, Jesus is explaining that Abraham longed to see Jesus' day and was glad to see it. The Jews mocked Him, saying that could not be since Jesus was not



GOD

even fifty years old and could not have lived in Abraham's day. Jesus then responded, "*Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM*" (John 8:58, NKJV). Some miss the significance of this statement. It is reminiscent of what God answered Moses when asked what name he should give for the God who sent him to deliver Israel. God responded, "*I AM WHO I AM.*' *And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you'*" (Exodus 3:14). The name "*I AM*" speaks to God's eternal divinity in all His glorious attributes. When Jesus made this statement, He was claiming to be of the same nature, thus have the same authority as God Himself. The Jews, failing to recognize Jesus' divinity, picked up stones to stone Him for blasphemy (John 8:59). This was a very striking statement to them and to many today who see Jesus as less than the Son of God.

The second striking phrase by Jesus is "*And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:32). Notice that the definite article "*the*" is utilized, which indicates there that truth exists and is exclusive. Not only does "*the truth*" exist, it is also liberating from bondage. Some fail to realize that they are enslaved to sin.

The third striking phrase by Jesus is "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*" (John 14:6). Here is probably the most striking phrase of our day. One cannot claim Jesus and maintain beliefs in other world religions outside of Christianity. Of course, they can "*claim*" such, but claiming such and obtaining such are two different matters entirely.

When you combine these three phrases, it delivers a coup de grâce to universalism, pluralism, ecumenicalism, post modernism, and a whole host of other -isms. Contrary to popular philosophy...

- the truth exists
- the truth is exclusive
- the truth is definable
- the truth is discernible
- the truth will set us free IF we know the truth
- the truth will cause us to be lost IF we refuse to know it

Jesus is the only way to the Father, Jesus' word is the only truth, and outside of His word is spiritual death. These three statements probably would rank at the top of the list as offensive to today's world. †

David R. Kenney preaches for the church of Christ in Wadsworth, Ohio.

“They Refuse to Know Me”

(Jeremiah 9:6)

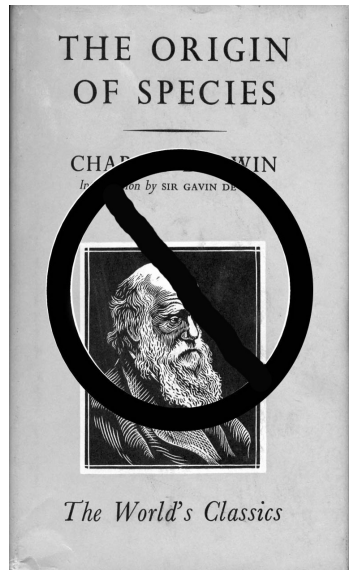
Rex Banks

More than two and a half millenia ago, Jeremiah wept over a people who “*refused to be ashamed*” of their wickedness and who “*did not know how to blush*” even in the midst of their adulteries, lies, slander, and treachery (Jeremiah 3:3; 8:12; 9:1ff). And just how had this happened to the children of Abraham? Basically, because they had “*changed their glory, for that which does not profit*” (2:11). In a word, they had traded in their God, “*the fountain of living waters*” for idols, which the prophet describes as “*broken cisterns that can hold no water*” (2:11,13). As a society, we’ve done the same. By and large, we have “*exchanged the truth of God for a lie*” (Romans 1:25); but in our case, we have been seduced, not by idols of wood and stone, but by a world view which seeks to dispense with God and to place man at the centre of the universe. It didn’t happen over night, but the rise of humanism in the west has been remorseless, and its effects upon our society terribly, terribly destructive.

Following the Renaissance with its man-centred focus, the 18th century saw the rapid spread of Deism among many of the most influential thinkers of the age. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* has the following:

(Deism is the) Philosophical belief in a god established by reason and evidence (notably by the design argument) without acceptance of the special information supposedly revealed in, for example, the Bible or Koran. Hence deism involves belief in a Creator who has established the universe and its processes but does not respond to human prayer.

Men still saw the need for a prime mover to get the universe going, but they wanted a remote, distant figure who made



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no demands upon themselves and who did not interfere with man's autonomy. Now, clearly, deism was very fertile soil for the theory of evolution, because Darwinism provided the means of dispensing with God altogether, a very welcome development for those who wanted man to be an independent, self-governing being. Just a few years after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, David Strauss wrote these words:

Vainly did we philosophers and critical theologians over and over again decree the extermination of miracles; our ineffectual sentence died away, because we could neither dispense with miraculous agency, nor point to any natural force able to supply it, where had hitherto seemed most indispensable. Darwin has demonstrated this force, this process of nature; he has opened the door by which a happier coming race will cast out miracles, never to return. Everyone who knows what miracles imply will praise him in consequence, as one of the greatest benefactors of the human race.

Like many others, Strauss welcomed any means of cutting humanity adrift from the notion of a God who was intimately connected with the affairs of men. But we have paid a dreadful price for that freedom. Influenced by his evolutionary views, one leading philosopher of science has described ethics as "an illusion fobbed off on us by our genes to get us to cooperate" (Michael Ruse). He adds that "the way our biology forces its ends is by making us think that there is an objective higher code to which we are all subject." So you and I may think that it is wrong to cheat, lie, steal, murder, and rape, but Ruse is here to tell us that such thinking is illusory. Like many others, Ruse recognises that in the absence of a Divine Lawgiver, concepts of good and evil, right and wrong, moral and immoral are meaningless.

Brethren, we simply must equip ourselves to be able to teach our children the important truth that "[b]y the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host" (Psalm 33:6). We are not evolved pond scum, but rather creatures who bear the image of God, who have been called to holiness by One who is Himself perfectly holy. We are human beings, with souls, who have the hope of heaven before our eyes. **It really does matter what we believe about our origins because ultimately this belief will affect our eternal destiny.** †

Rex Banks is a preacher of the Gospel, living and working in New Zealand.

Can Life Come from Non-life?

Mike Hinton

After a hiatus of more than thirty years, I have resumed my college education. I was only a few credits shy of an associates degree when Cupid derailed my lackadaisical quest for an education. As the years passed, it nagged at me like a bit of unfinished business. So, with the advantage of online classes, this “old dog” is attempting to learn some new tricks.

The class I’m taking this semester is biology. I have thus far proven one scientific theory; the alarming mortality rate of brain cells after age thirty. Owing to the sad fact that my brain cells have been dying off for more than two decades, Bio 1113 has been quite a challenge. My only salvation is that self discipline (woefully absent during my earlier college career) has enabled me to compensate.

Believe it or not, this biology course has actually been a “faith building” exercise for me. In Psalm 139:13-16, David praised God for His awesome power and craftsmanship as revealed in the human body. Yet,

David didn’t know the half of it. The human body indeed seems marvelous and complex to the naked eye. However, that spectacle almost pales in comparison to the marvels that must be observed through a microscope.

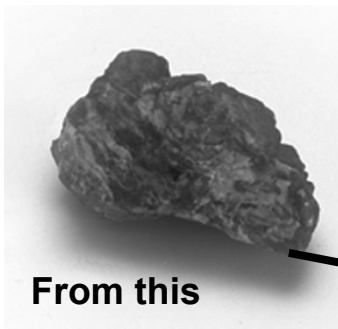
The complexity of the human body on a cellular level defies any explanation for its existence except that of a Creator. My biology textbook however, pointedly considers only one theory for the diversity and complexity of life: evolution. Yet, by the book’s own admission, that theory fails to account for the original spark of life. Consider the following quote from the text. “Every cell comes from a cell. Human beings are incapable of producing cells from scratch in a laboratory, and so far as we can tell, nature has fashioned cells from simple molecules only once: back when life on earth got started.” (*Biology: A Guide to the Natural World* 64)

According to prevailing scientific theory, life has come only from life for the last 3.5 billion years. Such

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an astounding preponderance of evidence would seem sufficient to settle the issue according to the principles of scientific method. Yet, most in the scientific community still cling tenaciously to their “faith” in that spontaneous leap of matter from non-living to living.

The Law of Biogenesis states that all life must arise from pre-existing life. The theory of evolution violates this accepted scientific law, to which there has never been a known exception.



My “faith” lies in the confirmed hypothesis that life indeed comes only from life. Life on earth began when the “living God” breathed life into His marvelous creation (Genesis 2:7). All cellular respiration since has been but an echo of that powerful blast. †



Mike Hinton lives and works in Blanchard, Oklahoma, USA.

The Silence of the Scriptures

Miles Peeples

In the New Testament, some things are required and some things are prohibited. Everything else falls into the realm of the things which are permitted. As one focuses more closely on the things that are permitted, the silence of the Scriptures soon becomes a major concern. What about the silence of the Scriptures? Is it the case the silence of the Scriptures gives us permission to do whatever we think is best? That is, are we free to do anything which God has not specifically condemned? On the other hand, is the silence of the Scriptures prohibitive?

Which is it? Does the silence of the Scriptures give us permission to act as we think best? Or does the silence of the Scriptures forbid us to act? The answer: the silence of the Scriptures does both. Sometimes it allows us to act in keeping with our best judgment, and sometimes it forbids us to act. Does this sound confusing? Of course, it does, and, in fact, it can be confusing. Yet, it does not have to be. It takes effort on our part to discern correctly whether the silence of the Scriptures allows us to act or forbids us to act. Those who really and truly desire to walk in the light of God's Word can come to a biblical understanding with respect to the silence of the Scriptures.

In 1 Corinthians, the apostle Paul wrote as he was guided by the Holy Spirit. He said, "*Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other*" (1 Corinthians 4:6). The American Standard Version translates the latter part of this verse as follows: "...*that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up one against the other*". The verb translated "might learn" means to gain knowledge. Paul wanted the Corinthians to have knowledge that they were not to go beyond what had been written, not even to think beyond what the Scriptures say. In dealing with a problem facing the church in Corinth, Paul stated a very important principle: we are not to go beyond what is written. Since we must not go beyond what is written, what about the silence of the Scriptures? Sometimes it forbids us to act, but this is not the case in every situation where the Bible is silent. Sometimes we are permitted to choose to do what we think is best.

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The key to making sense of this difficulty is the Rule of Specification. This rule may be stated as follows: When God specifies a particular object or action in a stated or implied classification, then all the unspecified things in that category are thereby excluded. To state the Rule of Specification in a less technical way, we are forbidden to do anything other than what God has specified in those instances where He has spoken. When God stipulates anything, we are to do only the thing stipulated, and we must not do anything else which falls within the designated category.

For example, when God commanded Noah to build the ark, He specified that Noah was to build the ark out of gopher wood (Genesis 6:14). Since God specified the type of wood to be used in building the ark, was Noah permitted to use oak, pine, or walnut? Would Noah have been obedient to what God had specified if he had used some type of wood other than gopher? No, of course not! When God specified gopher wood, then that excluded all other types of wood. This concept is not hard to understand. It was not necessary for God to specifically forbid all other types of wood, for when He designated gopher wood, all other types of wood were logically excluded.

Yet again, when the Lord specified that bread and fruit of the vine are the elements to be used in observing the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), He excluded the use of steak, fried chicken, mashed potatoes, pinto beans, etc. I am not acquainted with anyone who misunderstands this principle as it relates to the Lord's Supper.



In addition, in Hebrews 7, the inspired writer used the fact Moses had said nothing about anyone from the tribe of Judah serving as a priest to show that Jesus could not have been a priest under the law of

Moses. Hebrews 7:12-14 says, *“For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.”* Moses had specified the tribe of Levi to be the tribe from which the priests were to come, and he had said nothing about the

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priesthood and the tribe of Judah. In this case, the silence of the Scriptures prohibited Jesus from being a priest under the Old Testament law. Silence can be prohibitive.

At other times, the silence of the Scriptures allows us to choose what we think is best. For example, the Bible tells us to go into all the world and preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15). But the Bible does not specify any method of our going. We can go by car, plane, boat, bicycle, or any other means of travel. God allows us to choose the method we think is best. In such cases, the silence of the Scriptures is permissive rather than being prohibitive. †

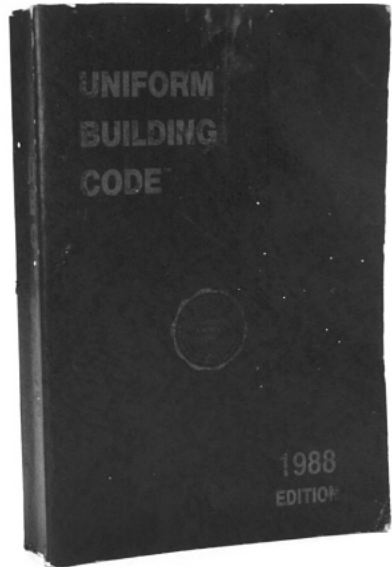
Miles H. Peeples preaches for the Lord's church in Claxton, Georgia, USA.

The Code Book

John Stacy

Time is running out. The seconds are ticking away towards midnight. The human race is about to take the fatal plunge. Which way shall we turn? Is there any authority left? Is there a path that we can follow? Can we find a code book that will give us a key to our dilemmas? Have we just been placed here by some unknown Creator or force without any clue as to where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going?

We do have a key, a code book, a source of authority. It is the Bible! It has survived all of its enemies. It will be around to judge all men who failed to live by its contents (John 12:48). †



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HOW MUCH IS A SERMON WORTH?

Bobby Dockery

At his death, Jonathan Edwards, the celebrated colonial preacher, left an estate valued at 900 pounds. Included was a collection of 30 manuscripts and 1,074 sermons which were assigned a total value of just six pounds by the appraiser. In modern terms, that works out to less than 14 cents each for the sermons of one of the greatest religious thinkers in the history of America!

Tragically, many in our world would agree with that low assessment of the value of a sermon. It has been widely concluded that preaching is useless, powerless, and irrelevant. In U.T. Holmes' book, *The Future Shape of Ministry*, the charge is made that preaching is "futile" when "relied upon as a major communication tool" (p. 142).

But is it so? Is preaching really so meaningless and ineffective? How much IS a sermon really worth?

1. A Sermon Can Change the Course of History. The preaching of Micah postponed the destruction of Judah for more than a century (Jeremiah 26:18,19)! Jonah preached a sermon in Nineveh which produced such deep penitence that God spared that doomed city (Jonah 3:4-10)! The sermons of Luther, Hus, and Zwingli stirred the conscience of a continent and turned the history of Europe into new channels.

2. A Sermon Can Change the Hearts and Lives of Men. So powerful was Peter's Pentecost sermon that 3,000 people were pricked in their hearts and submitted to the Lordship of Christ in baptism (Acts 2:37,38,41). Girolomo Savanarola was walking in the country one Sunday when he came upon a small rural church. He wandered in without any awareness that he had embarked upon a course which would eventually lead him to the stake for his outspoken opposition to the Papacy. His biographer describes what happened: "The sermon, or rather, one single sentence of it, changed Girolomo's life. The preacher's words went ringing into his head and into his heart and overpowered him. He was a prisoner of the word of God from that moment until the end of his life" (Pierre Van Passen, *A Crown of Fire*, p. 43).

3. A Sermon Can Change the Destiny of Souls. Paul knew that the Gospel was "*the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth*" (Romans 1:16). There is no salvation without the proclamation of God's Word. Preaching occupies a central place in God's plan for the redemption of

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lost souls. Only when we recognize what the soul is worth will we begin to understand what a sermon can be worth!

Many people (and churches, too!) are no longer interested in preaching. Pulpits are being filled with psychologists, performers, and publicists, while real sermons have become few and far between. Many have lost faith in the power of God's Word, and so they tell us that preaching is outmoded and ineffectual. But it is not true! It never has been true, and it never will be true, because "*it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*" (1 Corinthians 1:21). †

Bobby Dockery is a writer and preacher in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.

The Power of Example

Ken Tyler

A fine lad entered the army. On the first night in the barracks when he went to bed, he faced a real test. At home, he had the habit of reading the Bible and kneeling down to pray before retiring. In the barracks, he was entirely surrounded by rough fellows. Many of them were cursing and joking loudly. The lad thought it might be wise to go to bed and read his Bible where nobody would notice him.

Then, he thought and boldly decided, "I'm a Christian! I ought to be an example for Jesus before the fellows. I will not pull down my colors. I will do here like I always did at home." So, he took out his Bible and read it. Then, he knelt down to pray. The barracks became quiet. After a while the talk began again, but it was more subdued. No one said anything about the young soldier's unusual behavior. The next night when he got out his Bible, eight other soldiers got out their Bibles.

Within a month every soldier in the barracks would have fought for the lad. They came to him with their questions and their troubles. May you and I have the same type of dedication and courage as this young soldier. Jesus said, "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*" (Matthew 5:16). †

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After Matthew 24

Betty Burton Choate

“So you, likewise, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things are fulfilled” (Luke 21:31,32).

The parallels to this passage are: *“So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near, at the very doors. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled” (Matthew 24:33,34).*

“So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near, at the very door. Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place” (Mark 13:29,30).

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Luke 21:28 is another wording of the same event: “*Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because **your redemption** draws near.*”

What was the promise? That “*it is near.*” But what was “it”? Further identification says: “***your redemption** draws near.*” And Luke 21:31 rings out with clarity: “***the kingdom of God** is near.*”

Matthew, Mark, and Luke had recorded Christ speaking of **certain signs**, certain things that must surely come to pass within *that generation*, and he said that when the disciples saw these things happening they would know that **their redemption** was drawing near, that **the kingdom of God** was at hand.

When we read in the Scriptures of the coming of the kingdom of God, to what time and place do our minds automatically shift? When Daniel said, “*In the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom*”, how do we identify that kingdom? We think, immediately, “The church, Pentecost, AD 33, Acts 2.”

When John preached, “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,*” we think, “The church, Pentecost, Acts 2”.

The Scriptures make these statements concerning the kingdom:

“...be called great in the kingdom...” (Matthew 5:19).

“...enter the kingdom...” (Matthew 5:20).

“...Your kingdom come...” (Matthew 6:10).

“...Yours is the kingdom...” (Matthew 6:13).

“...Seek ye first the kingdom...” (Matthew 6:33).

“...shall enter the kingdom...” (Matthew 7:21).

“...preaching the gospel of the kingdom...” (Matthew 9:35).

“...the kingdom of heaven is at hand...” (Matthew 0:7).

“...the least in the kingdom is greater than he...” (Matthew 11:11).

“...the mysteries of the kingdom...” Matthew 13:11).

“...the word of the kingdom...” (Matthew 13:19).

“...gather out of His kingdom...” (Matthew 13:41).

“...the keys of the kingdom...” (Matthew 16:19).

“...until I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom...”
(Matthew 26:29).

“...some standing here who will not taste death till they see kingdom of God present with power” (Mark 9:1).

“...some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:27).

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What do we automatically and always think when we read such statements? “The church ... Pentecost, AD 33 ... Acts 2” All of these thoughts are one and the same in our minds; we have no trouble identifying the kingdom that was “*near at hand*”. It was the church, and reference was being made to its beginning in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2. All of these verses, and many others that speak of the coming kingdom, would be readily explained as fulfilled in the establishment of the church.

So, when Luke 21:31 says, “...*the kingdom of God is near,*” is it not also having reference to the establishment of the church on Pentecost, in Acts 2? Surely, this one verse would not be a deviation from the admitted pattern.

But if Luke 21:31 is speaking of Pentecost as the cutoff date for its fulfillment, then the signs Jesus gave just prior to that verse must have occurred between the day He spoke and the day of Pentecost — a span of less than 60 days.

As is the case with many prophecies, there may be debate and discussion about the exact meanings of some of the statements made in Luke 21:25-27 and Matthew 24:29-31, but surely the statement about the coming of the kingdom demands that we admit that these verses were describing events that happened before the establishment of the church, events which Jesus said the disciples would be able to recognize and which they could use as indicators that the kingdom was “*near at hand*”.

Had Peter recognized those signs when he asked Jesus in Acts 1, “*Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom...?*”

In Acts 2, Peter told the audience that they were witnessing the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy concerning “*the great and notable day of the Lord*”, when people would be able to call on the name of the Lord and be saved. He reminded them that God had said, “*I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the coming of the great and notable day of the Lord.*”

Were not these words the same as Jesus had used describing the signs He said the disciples would see between the time He spoke and the day of the establishment of the church? Jesus pointed forward. Peter pointed backward.

When, during that short period of time that these two identifying statements were made, was “*the sun turned into darkness*” (Luke 23:44,45)? †

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, founder and Editor of *The Voice of Truth International*.

THE WORD OF GOD

The Books of the New Testament

Allen Webster



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completes the New
Testament in a year.

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to finish four times a year.

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I. BIOGRAPHIES OF CHRIST (4)

Matthew — Christ is the King of the Jews (written to Jews)

Key verses: 2:2; 21:5; 25:34,40; 27:11,29,37; 27:42

Mark — Christ is the Servant of God (written to Romans)

Key verses: 10:43,45

Luke — Christ is the Son of Man (written to Gentiles)

“Son of Man” used 26 times

Key verses: 5:24; 6:5; 9:22, 26,44, 56,58; 19:10

John — Christ is the Son of God (written to all men)

Key verses: 1:34,43; 3:18; 9:35; 11:4,27; 19:7; 20:30,31

II. HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST (1)

Acts — Conversions to Christ

Key verses: 2:38-41; 8:35-40; 9:1ff; 10:1ff; 16:1ff; 18:8; 19:1-6

III. LETTERS ON LIVING FOR CHRIST (21)

Romans — Righteousness in Christ; “Righteousness” used 31 times

Key verses: 1:16,17; 3:22, 25,26; 10:3-6,10; 14:17

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1 Corinthians — Handling Problems in the Church of Christ

Key verses: 1:10-12

2 Corinthians — Examine Yourself in Christ; Key verse: 13:5

Galatians — Don't Leave the Gospel of Christ; Key verses: 1:6-9

Ephesians — Be Unified in the Body of Christ; Key verses: 4:1-3

Philippians — Rejoice in Christ; “Joy,” “rejoice” used 18 times

Key verses: 1:26; 3:1; 4:4

Colossians — Submit to Christ, the Head of the Church; Key verse: 1:18

1 Thessalonians — Christ Is Coming Back; Key verses: 4:13-18

2 Thessalonians — Be Patient as You Follow Christ; Key verse: 3:5

1 Timothy — Fight the Good Fight of Christ; Key verse: 6:12

2 Timothy — Preach the Word of Christ; Key verses: 4:1-2

Titus — Maintain Good Works for Christ; Key verses: 2:7, 14; 3:8, 4

Philemon — Accept One Another in Christ; Key verses: 1:12, 15, 17

Hebrews — Christ Is Better; “Better” used 12 times

Key verses: 1:4; 7:19; 8:6; 11:16

James — Practical Living for Christ; Key verses: 1:26, 27

1 Peter — Persecuted for Christ; “Suffer” used 13 times

Key verses: 2:19-23; 3:14, 17, 18; 4:15, 16, 19

2 Peter — Add to Your Faith as a Follower of Christ

Key verses: 1:5-10

1 John — Love Your Brother in Christ; “Love” used 37 times

Key verses: 3:11, 14, 16-18; 4:7, 8

2 John — Abide in the Doctrine of Christ; Key verses: 1:9-11

3 John — Be a Fellow Helper with Christ; Key verses: 1:5, 8

Jude — Contend for the Faith of Christ; Key verse: 1:3

IV. PROPHECY (1)

Revelation — Victory in Christ; Key verses: 12:11; 15:2

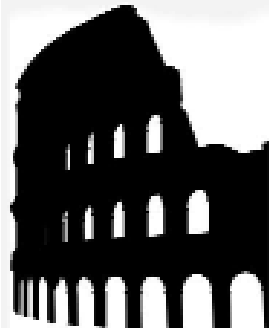
Endnote:

¹Analytical Greek New Testament



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“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).



Romans 9:1-13

Jerry Bates

1. Who are the three witness that Paul invokes in 9:1 to prove the truthfulness of what he is about to say?
2. What did Paul say he wished would happen if it would mean the salvation of the Jews? (v. 3)
3. Name some of the blessings that pertain to the Isralites. (v. 4)
4. What was the greatest blessing? (v. 5)
5. Had the fact that all of Israel were not saved mean that God's Word had failed? (v. 6)
6. Why was the above true? (v. 6)
7. What historical fact did Paul use to show that merely being a fleshly descendant of Abraham did not mean one was not automatically a part of spiritual Israel? (v. 7)
8. Through what descendant was spiritual Israel descended? (v. 8,9).
9. Who are the children of the flesh that Paul mentions? (v. 8)
10. What was the promise to which Paul was referring? (v. 9)
11. Who were the two sons of Rebecca?
12. What son of Rebecca was the son of promise? (v. 10)
13. When did God make His choice of the two sons? (v. 11)
14. What factors did God not consider when making His choice? (v. 11)
15. "The older shall serve the younger" is a quote from _____ (v. 13)
16. "Jacob I have _____, but _____ I have hated." (v. 13)

(see the back cover for answer)

1 I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart, 3 for I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises, 5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

6 But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, 7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.” 8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, those are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. 9 For this is the word of promise; “At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.”

10 And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac 11 (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to the election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), 12 it was said to her, “The older shall serve the younger.” 13 As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”

Note: Paul clearly states his sorrow over the spiritual state of Israel. They were lost because they refused to accept Christ. However, that fact did not mean God had been unfaithful to His promise. They had enjoyed several privileges as the children of God, the chief of which was that Christ descended from them according to the flesh. Thus, God had been faithful to His promise even though they as a nation were lost. This calling was a call to service, not to salvation.

National origin has nothing to do with salvation. Apparently, some Jews were saying that God did not have the right to make such a distinction between fleshly kinsmen. Thus, Paul uses two Old Testament quotes to support the contention that God did have the right. He made distinctions even when He established fleshly Israel in the first place. God’s choice was not based on birth order or works, but God’s choosing, and this calling was not for salvation. Notice some other examples of God’s calling for a purpose other than salvation (Matthew 4:21; Romans 1:1; Hebrews 5:4; 11:8).

Baptism, Can We Agree?

Owen D. Olbricht

The general conclusion within the religious world is that we cannot agree on the subject of baptism. The attitude is, “You have your opinion and I have mine. We do not need to discuss baptism because we cannot agree.”

This seems a strange conclusion because this was not true concerning Peter, Ananias, and Paul. If they agreed with Jesus, we should also be able to agree with Him, and thus agree with each other.

Peter Agreed with Jesus

Jesus taught that when the Gospel is preached that those who believe the Gospel and are baptized will be saved (Mark 16:15,16). Peter agreed when he wrote, *“In which [the ark] a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism, ... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 3:20b,21).

Paul Agreed with Jesus

Jesus taught that a person must be born of water and the Spirit in order to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5). Paul agreed concerning a new birth for he taught that a person is to be raised from baptism to live a new life (Romans 6:4), and that the person who is dead in sin is made alive when he is baptized (Colossians 2:11-13).

Peter, Ananias, and Paul Agreed

Jesus taught that the Gospel is to be believed by the person being baptized (Mark 16:15,16). The Gospel includes that Jesus died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:1-3), thus to believe the Gospel, when being baptized, includes believing that ones’ sins are being forgiven. Peter agreed. He told those who with wicked hands had crucified Jesus (Acts 2:23b,36,37,41), *“Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins”* (Acts 2:38). Jesus’ messenger, Ananias, agreed. Jesus sent him to Saul to tell him what he must do (Acts 9:6,10-16). Ananias told Saul [also known as Paul (Acts 13:9)] to be baptized to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16). Paul agreed, for he wrote that because of faith in the working of God, a person is forgiven of all his trespasses when he is baptized (Colossians 2:12,13).

SALVATION

Conclusion

If we agree with Jesus, as did His faithful apostles and other teachers of the first century, we will all agree with each other concerning the controversial topic of baptism. A sinner who wants his sins washed away by the blood Jesus must believe in Him and accept Him as Lord when he is baptized so that his sins may be washed away. †

Owen Olbricht is a Gospel preacher residing in Sherwood, AR, USA.

Is There One, or Are There Many?

Tim Childs

- There is one God, the Father, who is above all.
- There is one Jesus, the only begotten Son of the Father.
- There is one Holy Spirit.
- There is one Bible, not to be tampered with.
- There is one faith, which has been revealed from heaven.
- There is one body, the spiritual family of God.
- There is one Head, which governs the body.
- There is one Lawgiver.
- There is one hope unto which Jesus' disciples are called.
- There is one baptism, the baptism of the Great Commission.
- There is one Gospel, the power of God unto salvation.
- There is one cross around which all men must gather.
- There is one Judge of all men.
- There is one fountain of love, which is God.
- There is one Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.
- There is one mind, the spirit of unity, unto which Jesus' disciples are called to embrace the doctrine of Christ.
- There is one strait gate and one narrow path that lead unto eternal life.
- There is one wide gate and one broad way that lead unto destruction.

God has words of caution for us living in this modern, pluralistic society. He has words of rebuke for the false prophets and teachers who advocate there are many ways to heaven. Jesus says to all of us, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). †

SALVATION

There Is a Problem, But What Is It?

Hollis Miller

No rational person needs to be told that among men something terribly out of harmony with decency and common sense is gnawing away at us. Evidence in support of it is too overwhelming to be seriously questioned. But what is it?

The problem of humanity failing to live up to what reasonable men know ought to be has plagued conscientious men throughout the ages. Is the problem ignorance? Modern men can hardly plead ignorance, yet the problem persists. Is the problem a leftover from a former bestial existence? Again, such an explanation doesn't seem satisfactory. Often the most terrible of crimes and anti-human actions are committed and perpetuated by those who, according to evolutionary standards, should be at the top of the goodness scale.

The one personality in history, who has done more to benefit the welfare of mankind than any other, called the problem "sin". But what is that? After all, isn't sin just another word among words? Yes, but it is a special word, special because it signifies a condition among men that is different from all other conditions. Sin is a word that says: "You are missing the object for which you ought to be striving; you have gotten off the path that is meant to lead you to where you need to go."

The word *sin* is loaded with moral and spiritual meaning. Men are simply not morally and spiritually moving in the right direction. And that is the situation, not because of ignorance or some leftover beastly trait that is yet to work itself out of our system. *Sin* is a matter of choice. It is choice of impurity over purity, of hate over love, and stupor over sobriety.

Until the choice of *sin* over righteousness changes, *sin* will continue to dominate. No one has known this truth more fully than Jesus. He worked diligently with what the New Testament calls the heart. "*Out of the heart,*" said Jesus, "*comes evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man...*" (Matthew 15:19f). Until the heart is changed, *sin* will continue its cruel march across one's life.

But Jesus did more than pinpoint the problem which plagues men; He provided the remedy by freely dying, that *sin* might not only cease being practiced, but that it might be forgiven. †

Hollis Miller is an evangelist living in Murray, Kentucky, USA.

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT THE COMMISSION?

David Deffenbaugh

Sometimes familiarity does, as the saying goes, breed contempt. Sometimes it's worse — it breeds neglect. I know of no Scripture more familiar to Christians than the Great Commission: *“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned’”* (Mark 16:15,16).

That designation “great” is as well deserved as it is well used. It is as appropriate as it is familiar. But how long has it been since we have considered why? What makes the commission so great?

- 1. Who said it.** Sometimes when certain people talk, people listen. When Bill Gates has something to say about computers, folks perk up. When Ben Bernanke comments on the economy, people pay attention. When John Grisham writes, people read. While it is true one could live successfully without even knowing of Bill, Ben, or John, the same certainly is not true with Jesus. As Peter noted, He has *“the words of eternal life”* (John 6:68). His having said it makes it great.
- 2. Whom it concerns.** The above examples are limited because not everyone cares about computers, the economy, or novels. Each of those segments of society, no matter how large, is still just a segment. Jesus' words, on the other hand, concern *“every creature”* (KJV). There is no difference in interests, nationality, gender, economic status, race, or any other thing that makes a person an exception to what Jesus said. The commission's greatness resides in the sheer volume of humanity to whom it applies.

SALVATION

3. **What it's about.** Certain subjects get certain people's attention. If one were to read the word "golf", for instance, some people's interest would be immediately piqued, while others would register no reaction whatever. One's interest determines his reaction. But interest is not equivalent to importance. Great interest ought not to be confused with great importance. Yet, there is no more vital subject than eternal salvation, even though many people could show no more apathy regarding it if they tried. The day is coming when every person's dominating concern will be eternal salvation. There simply is no greater subject than that with which the commission is concerned.

Indeed, Jesus' commission is great.



David Deffenbaugh is the preacher for the Center Hill congregation in Paragould, Arkansas, USA.

The Joy of Gathering with the Saints

Paul Clements

What a privilege it is to gather together with the saints. There is much joy and many blessings that are to be had each time we assemble as the church. Those who share the precious faith in Christ Jesus can be a great encouragement to each other. The weak are made strong and all are better each time we meet.

In our day-to-day struggles, we all need help as we deal with the adversities of life. God knew our needs would be met when we gather with the saints. We come with uncertainties; we leave with greater faith. We come "down and out"; we leave edified and built up. We come in sorrow and leave with joy in our hearts. Paul told the Philippian saints to "*rejoice in the Lord*" (Philippians 1:1; 4:4). In dealing with the topic of salvation, Peter said believers "*rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable*" (1 Peter 1:8). Remember our "*light affliction is but for a moment*" (2 Corinthians 4:17).

What are some of the joys and blessings of faithfulness? God's Word admonishes that we not forsake the assembly of the saints (Hebrews 10:25). So when we come together as the church, we take joy in the fact that the Lord's admonition is heeded. When we gather in His name, we enjoy His presence (Matthew 18:20). When we assemble regularly, we in joy follow the example of the early church (Acts 2:42; 20:7). When we worship faithfully, we rejoice in proclaiming the Lord's atoning death till He comes (1 Corinthians 11:26). When we gather with the saints, we find joy in anticipation of the final reward for the faithful (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10; 22:14).



I Fear for the Church Today

J.C. Choate

To know what is going on in the church today will bring about a great concern for it. Many congregations have poor and often unqualified leadership. Some of our preachers fill a position but neither *preach* much nor *do* much. Goals of growth and evangelism are seldom being set, so the members are bored because they are not kept busy. Our young people are entertained but not involved in the work, nor schooled in the definitiveness of the Gospel and the church. Statistics say that 70% are eventually lost.

In many instances, our worship services are pathetic. Christians who are commanded to sing, in worship to God, sit in the pew without opening their mouths. Others are hesitant to sing out, lest they seem to be singing a solo. Too many partake of the Lord's Supper like robots. Our giving is not what it should be because our programs of work are not what they should be. We want our sermons to be professional and short, so that we can be dismissed within the hour.

Too often our young men are ignored, being given no opportunity to participate in the work or worship leadership. Our women are not challenged and used in the work of the church. Plans or goals for congregational growth are weak or non-existent. Many times we resemble a club or a social work group more than the Lord's church. Being paralyzed by apathy, it is amazing that we are able to hold together under such circumstances. Too many who call themselves Christians don't really have time for the Lord, but somehow "the club" continues to go on with these minor activities, these "forms" of Christianity.

Whatever mission work we do is only a token effort that can be used as an excuse for not doing more. We have ignored the real work of the church so long that we think we are doing His work by just assembling for worship. That is counted as being "faithful". Most congregations have stopped having Gospel meetings, or else they are kept so short they are more of a type of entertainment than anything else, allowing us the diversion of occasionally hearing another preacher. We have so few outsiders — and even the local membership — to attend our meetings that we have almost dispensed with giving the Lord's invitation. And so few obey the Gospel in a year's time that we have almost forgotten what it is like to see one being baptized into Christ. Some members don't like to have missionaries visit because they don't want to be bothered with the sad stories of the needs of others.

THE CHURCH

Brethren, how long will we go on like this? Who will say they have had enough? Who will wake up and get up, and go to work for the Lord? I don't know what it is going to take to move us and to get us back to putting first things first, but I do know that unless we soon find ourselves and come back to the Lord, we will be lost and worlds of other people are going to be lost, too. Will it be necessary for us, as it was for Israel of old, to suffer painful correction, if we are to be awakened from our spiritual stupor? Would the Lord warn us, as He did the churches in Revelation 2 and 3, that if we do not correct ourselves, He will remove our candlesticks from the fellowship of the faithful?

I don't want to be negative, but at the same time I don't want to close my eyes to reality. There are some exceptions to the things that I have pointed out, but many congregations and individual members fall into these categories. I know this is true because of the comparative little we are doing at home and away from home to evangelize the world.

If what I have said is not true of you or the congregation of which you are a part, then that is wonderful and I congratulate you! You must surely be a growing group! If these things do not apply in your case, ignore them, and be thankful. But what about all of those around you and across the brotherhood? Have you seen and heard what is going on, or perhaps I should say, the little that is going on? No, I am not down on the church. I do not believe that it is dead. And neither have I given up on the church, nor will I ever give up on it. I do know, however, that we are at a low point, shrinking in numbers, that we have many problems before us, and that we must be honest with ourselves and recognize these, seeking solutions, before anything will get better.

Perhaps not all of our brethren will do this, and perhaps many congregations will continue in indifference, on the road to apostasy. But where does that leave us, you and me? It leaves us with the fact that, whether anyone else does anything or not, we must not succumb and be like them. Rather, as individuals and as congregations, we must make up our minds that we are going to be faithful to God and do the work He has left us in the world to do. If we will, perhaps we can encourage our brethren around us to follow our examples, and we can also be instrumental in carrying the Gospel to the rest of the world. Remember, the Lord has never looked to the majority to carry out His will but to the few who have decided to put Him first in their lives and in the work that He has given them to do. †

J.C. Choate was founder and Editor of *The Voice of Truth International* until his death in 2008.

THE CHURCH

“The Glorious Church”

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

In a time when many view the church as unimportant, it is refreshing to view it as God sees it. The place and purpose of the church as God views it is the theme of the little six-chapter book of Ephesians. Note these six significant facts:

Christ is the head of it (Ephesians 1:22,23). That should forever settle the matter of authority. He is the life of the church. The church is to glorify Him in all that it does. Apart from the head, the body is dead. Christ loved it and gave Himself for it! It is important to Christ.

Our salvation is in it. We have been called “from afar” and through the blood of Christ reconciled unto God in one body, the church (Ephesians 2:13-16). Many have asserted that the church has no relationship to our salvation, but the Bible says the saved “are added to it” (Acts 2:47).

It is according to God’s eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:9-12). It was not an accidental appendage attached on to God’s plan. It fulfilled His eternal purpose! The promises, pictures, and prophecies of the Old Testament pointed toward it!

It is fundamentally and essentially one. Denominationalism was never God’s intention for the church. “There is one body,” Paul affirmed (Ephesians 4:4). Sectarianism is sinful! Division is wrong! Such disregards the prayer of Jesus, “that they be one” (John 17:21,22).

It is pure as the chaste bride of Christ. Chapter 5 directs us to “walk in love,” and “walk in light” (Ephesians 5:2,8). We are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11). The church is “called out” to be a separate people.

It is to be militant, as God’s army (Ephesians 6:10-18). We are in a struggle! The church cannot afford passivity. God has given us defensive and offensive weapons. We must know the enemy! Be prepared, ready, armed, and committed to battle.

Ephesians, what a great book! It exalts the place and purpose of the church in God’s mind. May we always be alert to these significant facts. †

Clarence DeLoach, Jr. preaches for the Willow Avenue Church of Christ in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.

Giving Satan the Advantage

Glenn Colley

Under what circumstances can you imagine Paul using this warning: “*Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices*”? The sentence is found in 2 Corinthians 2:11 as Paul writes the second time to the church about withdrawing themselves from a brother who was living in the sin of adultery and who was refusing to repent. The first time, in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul gives strong, pointed instructions: “*Ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken from among you... deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh...not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator...put away from among yourselves that wicked person.*”

How should the church react to the repentance of an erring brother?

Then happily, the man repents. How should the church react to the repentance of this same man?

The answer is in 2 Corinthians 2. Paul says that what was done (he calls it punishment, 2:6) to bring that man back to a saved condition was sufficient. Now that he has turned from his sin, here is the commandment of Paul: “*...forgive him...comfort him...confirm your love toward him*” (verses 6-10). Why? Because this man has done all he can to make his life right with God and the church. To not warmly take him back into the fold — to hold some sort of grudge over his head — could be so discouraging to him that he would give up and fall back into the world. That awful possibility is the opposite of the goal. Church discipline is not designed to open a door of opportunity for the devil, but to keep the church pure and bring impenitent members back to their first love in Christ.

On the occasions the church family must withdraw from a brother or sister, let us prayerfully remember not to give Satan the advantage. †

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Trust and Grace

Frank Chesser

Sin separates man from God. This gulf cannot be bridged by man's own efforts. It is the "*grace of God that brings salvation*" (Titus 2:11), and the "*precious blood of Christ*" (1 Peter 1:19) that procures redemption for man's sin-sick soul.

In the appropriation of the provisions of grace, man's role is active, not passive. The hearing by a good heart produces faith, for "*Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God*" (Romans 10:17). Saving faith is obedient faith. Thus, Paul speaks of the "*work of faith*" (1 Thessalonians 1:3), "*faith which worketh by love*" (Galatians 5:6), and the "*obedience of faith*" (Romans 16:26).

Three times in the same text, James described faith only, or faith apart from works, as "*dead*" (James 2:14-26). Saving faith does not argue with God over the essentiality of divinely ordained conditions for appropriating the gifts of grace to one's soul. Bible faith does not sit in judgment by use of human reasoning on what God says. Obedient faith does not exalt human feelings, personal experiences, what some respected

preacher says, or some long-standing practice above what the Bible teaches. Submissive faith does not insist on having its own way.

The Hebrews writer describes the responsive, yielding nature of faith to the will of God. Abel's faith offered the sacrifice that God demanded (Hebrews 11:4). Enoch's faith walked with God in harmony with His will (Hebrews 11:5). Noah's faith built the ark just like God instructed (Hebrews 11:7). Abraham's faith pitched its tent toward Canaan as God commanded (Hebrews 11:8). Israel's faith marched through the Red Sea and around the walls of Jericho, just as God directed (Hebrews 11:29,30).

Unlike those of whom Jesus spoke who "*trusted in themselves*" (Luke 18:9), the trust of these ancients was in God and in His grace. For instance, the trust of Abel's faith was in God, and not in the sacrifice itself, nor in his obedience in the offering thereof. Likewise, when a man expresses his faith by complying with the conditions of the Gospel, his trust is in God, grace, and blood, and not in himself and his own act of obedience. "*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding*" (Proverbs 3:5). †

Frank Chesser is the preacher for the Panama Street Church of Christ in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

A

Threefold Cord

Albert Gardner

“A threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

1. **A CHRISTIAN HOME** is the first, most important, and the most effective force in building character and setting values in our children. God intended that parents love and train their children. Children deserve to have two parents who set the right example and who will teach them and show them the right way. This duty must not be shirked by parents and must not be turned over to others (Ephesians 6:4).
2. **THE CHURCH** should reinforce the true teaching given in the home. Sermons and classes should support godly parents, and provide for a deeper knowledge of the Bible, which encourages faithfulness to God.
It is sometimes said, “The church is losing the young people.” It is not the church that is losing the young people. The home is losing the young people. If the home will do the work it is supposed to do, the church will help the home by stressing and impressing those very same lessons.
3. **THE SCHOOL** is a strong force in the life of our children and should support the moral foundation laid down in the home. Sadly, this is often not the case, for the school may even work against the home.

When the theory of evolution is taught as a fact, but the account of creation given in Genesis 1 is forbidden, maybe called unscientific and said to be accepted only by the uneducated, there is a major problem. This view rejects faith in God, and therefore removes the standard by which actions are measured.

When the **home**, the **church**, and the **school** support each other — a threefold cord will not be easily broken! †

Albert Gardner is a preacher living in Kennett, Missouri, USA.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

According to the Pattern

Greg Tidwell

God has revealed the pattern for His church within the pages of the Bible. Restoring New Testament Christianity requires faithful adherence to this pattern:

- Because the early church honored the Scriptures as the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16,17), we hold both Old and New Testaments to be free from error. We emphasize the teaching of the Bible in our classes and in our worship, looking to Scripture for God's plan of salvation and every point of doctrine.
- Because the early church was devoted to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42), we look to apostolic teaching and example to determine the forms of church government and worship. Because the early church was commanded by Christ to be as salt and light to the world (Matthew 5:13,14), we seek to proclaim the saving message of God's Word to those outside the church.
- Because the early church was commanded to do good to all people whenever possible (Galatians 6:10), we seek to address the spiritual, social, and physical needs of those around us at every opportunity.
- Because the early church practiced edification (Romans 14:19), we seek to develop every member of the church to his or her fullest potential.
- Because the early church shared a common life (Acts 2:44), we place a premium on Christian fellowship in every area of life.

We must seek to do all these things to the best of our ability, recognizing our accountability as stewards before God in judgment (1 Corinthians 4:2). †

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BIBLE FIND

Judges

Bonnie Rushmore

Across

1. Killed 600 Philistines with an ox-goad
2. Lived in the tabernacle; was a prophet
4. Had 30 sons that rode 30 donkeys and owned 30 cities
6. A Zebulunite
8. Dwelt in Shamir and judged for 23 years
10. First judge
11. Killed his 70 brothers so he could be judge
13. Had 30 sons and thirty daughters

Down

1. Told riddles
3. Left handed judge

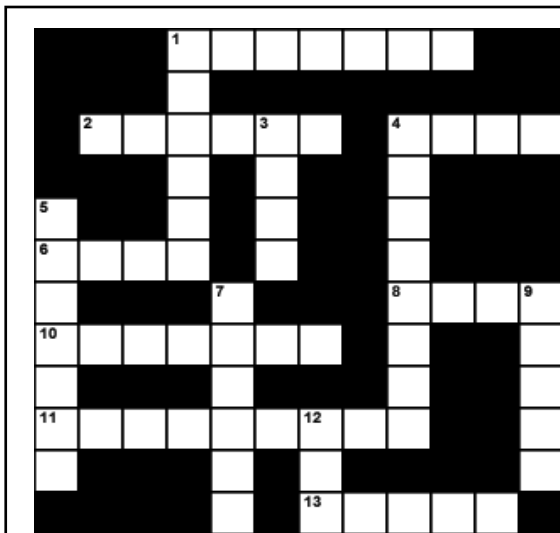
4. Made a foolish vow

5. Only woman judge

7. His army lapped water like dogs

9. Had 40 sons, 30 grandsons that rode 70 donkeys

12. Had two evil sons; was a prophet



Believe It or Not

Bob Plunket

Ripley's Believe It Or Not reports of a man who won the bait and fly casting award. He was the best in the land; yet he never caught a fish. He was known for his great distance and accuracy. You see, he had done most of his casting in his own back yard. He was not really interested in catching fish. He was interested in being the best bait caster. After all, fishing is a little messy. You have to take them off the hook, you know. And it calls for great patience and bearing with the elements.

Believe it or not, there are people who have been in the church for forty or fifty years who have never won a soul; yet they pray the finest prayers. They sing with great enthusiasm. They know more Bible verses than almost anyone.

My point is this: We have to be very careful that distance and accuracy are not our goals as Christians.

This is not a performance in which we play a role on a stage. It is not about records or being better than someone else. Many times, fighters, before going into the ring, simulate a fight. They punch a bag that does not punch back. They are great shadow boxers, yet they have never won a fight.

God has called us to use our skills, energy, and knowledge to teach, to love, and hopefully save others. It is said of Andrew when he had been with Christ, "*He first*

findeth his own brother" (John 1:41). His goal was sharing this Jesus with someone he loved. The wise man said, "*He that winneth souls is wise*" (Proverbs 11:30). The amazing growth of the early church was due, not to their performance or distance or accuracy, but sharing Christ with people with whom they walked. ✠

Bob Plunket preaches for the Lord's church in Oxford, Alabama, USA.





On Being a Good Sower

Jack Harriman

The teacher of the Word is often referred to in Scripture as a sower. The classic example of this is the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8).

There must be sowers. Christianity is a sowed (taught) religion. The great commission can be reduced to three little words, “go and sow” (Mark 16:15). Luke recorded an example of this when he said, *“those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word”* (Acts 8:4). In every case of conversion, there is first the sowing of the seed. There must be sowers.

The better we are at sowing, the better the harvest will be. Of Paul and Barnabas it is said, *“Now it happened in Iconium that they went into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed”* (Acts 14:1). Note the phrase “so spoke”. This has reference to the quality of their sowing.

The bigger the field and the more

seed sowed, the better the harvest. *“And daily in the temple and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ”* (Acts 5:42). The Jewish council accurately accused them of *“filling all Jerusalem with your doctrine”* (Acts 5:28). They sowed the seed every day and in every place.

Two things motivate sowing. One of those is summed up in this statement: *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith, one baptism: one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in you all”* (Ephesians 4:4-6). The other is summed up in this statement: *“But when he saw the multitude, he was moved with compassion for them because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd”* (Matthew 9:36). †

Jack Harriman is a Gospel preacher living in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.

Proclaiming Christ

Gary C. Hampton

The apostle to the Gentiles laid out the purpose and product of proclaiming the Gospel in 2 Corinthians 4. While it might be said that false teachers proclaimed themselves, Paul saw himself as a servant for Jesus' sake. He only reflected the glory of the Savior. To proclaim Jesus as Lord is to tell others that He is Master, Ruler, and Savior. Those who knew the Word of God should have remembered that He gave light to a newly created world (Genesis 1:3). In much the same way, the Father sent Jesus to be the Light of the world (Isaiah 60:1,2; John 1:1-5). Jesus reflected God's light and gave man knowledge of God, that he might give to others (2 Corinthians 4:5,6).

While those who proclaim Christ could be described as clay pots with no intrinsic value, the message of the Gospel is a priceless treasure God has placed inside Christians. Because the body is weak, the greatness of the message it carries is better seen. It is easy to see that such a frail body is not the source of such a powerful message (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Paul also pictured Gospel proclaimers as soldiers fighting for the

Gospel treasure. He knew the enemy might move in on all sides at close quarters. However, the apostle said that God's soldier would still have room to wield his sword and defend himself with his shield. Though he might be greatly troubled by the close fighting, he should not lose hope. In the thick of the battle, the soldier might seek safety by running. Even then, Paul said God would not leave him in a helpless state. In fact, the apostle said God would not allow His soldier to be defeated, even if he was overtaken by the enemy and knocked down (2 Corinthians 4:8,9).

Paul and other proclaimers of the Good News suffered persecution like Jesus and died, as it were, because of it (1 Corinthians 15:31; Romans 8:36; Philippians 3:10; Colossians 1:24; Galatians 6:17). Paul's sufferings caused the selfish man to be dead and Christ to be seen in Paul's response to that suffering (Galatians 2:20). That death, brought about by suffering for Christ, also brings eternal life through the Gospel, for those who hear us proclaim despite trials. Despite affliction, which might have caused

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Paul to give up, he took the attitude of the Psalmist, who was compelled to speak because he believed in God (2 Corinthians 4:10-13; Psalm 116:10).

which in turn, would cause them to glorify God (2 Corinthians 4:14,15).

So, let us all notice the value of the Gospel we carry inside our hearts



The ultimate source of the proclaimers' belief and hope rested in the resurrection. It was the knowledge that all believers, including the bearer of good news, would one day overcome the grave and be taken home to be with the Lord that kept them strong and faithful. Everything done in the service of the Gospel is done for the believer. They were taught that they might receive God's grace, and in turn, that grace received by them might produce thankfulness,

and resolve to tell others of its worth. May our goal be to display Christ to all with whom we come in contact. Our prayer should be that our efforts will result in many coming to obey God's simple plan and be set free from their sins. Such will result in thanksgiving being made to the Father and the glorification of His name. †

Gary C. Hampton is the Director of East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions in Knoxville, Tennessee, USA.

*Worship — Coming Into
the Presence of God*

Ronald D. Bryant

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23,24)

An assembly of God’s people for the purpose of worship is no common or ordinary gathering. The worship assembly may look like an audience sitting in a theater waiting for a performance, yet it is not. While it is easy for us to think in terms of performers and audiences, such is not the nature of worship. We have attended “performances” and we have enjoyed and applauded the performers. We go as spectators, observers,

friends, and also as critics. We go to such events to enjoy the program. We pay an admission price and we expect our “money’s worth”. We have come to regard it as our right to evaluate the event and voice our approval or disapproval. We have learned to vote with our feet, by attending, or going away...not to return.

A disturbing trend of the past few years is the number of “performing Christian groups” and the number of

WORSHIP

“churches” that offer performers and performances as worship. While there is a legitimate place for entertainment and the enjoyment of the same, this question demands an answer: Is entertainment worship? It is readily admitted that performances can be rightfully enjoyed and can be evaluated, and that performers can and do receive applause and accolades. Additionally, stages and staging are a legitimate part of theatre, but is the worship assembly simply a theatrical and entertainment presentation? Is a performance presented by artists for an audience of people in any sense worship?

It is to be insisted that in “the worship assembly” all of the worshippers are participants (not actors). It is also to be insisted that in true worship of God, God is the only audience. Jesus stated the fact simply and clearly. God seeks “*true worshippers*” (John 4:24). What Jesus said suggests that not all worship is “true worship”. God is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth. In true worship God is the object, reverence and adoration are the acceptable attitude, or spirit, and the will of God is the standard that guides.

It is wise to ask, what are we endeavoring to do? What are we endeavoring to do in the worship assembly? Are we observers or participants? Are we forgetful of self and lost in the adoration of God, or are we self-serving and full of the impression we may be making on others? There is a vast difference between playing a role, observing a performance, and the worship of God.

The call to worship God presents the greatest challenge each of us will ever face. Anyone can sing, but how many of us offer genuine praise and adoration to His name?

Worship is a high and holy occasion. It is ruled by deep reverence for God, a reverence that is manifest in both the preparation and the participation that is demanded in worship. Worship grows out of convictions about God and is expressive of those convictions. Worship embraces God and delights in His presence. In worship, man is privileged to commune with God. In worship, man listens to God and is privileged to speak to God. In worship, man draws near to God — comes before the throne of God. God alone is worthy of our worship, and it is He who calls us to draw near in worship.

The great need is that the people of God learn how to give themselves to God in wholehearted worship, bowing down before Him in true and sincere worship. †

Ronald D. Bryant preaches for the Central Church of Christ in Gadsden, Alabama, USA.

Praising God

Rick Cunningham

God is worthy of our praise because He is righteous, wise, living, patient, compassionate, merciful, and willing to save men's souls. God is deserving of our praise because He cares for widows and orphans, for the sick and needy, for the weak and helpless, and for those who are lost in sin. God ought to be praised for His greatness, His omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, and for His absolute perfection. God should be praised for His providential care, His judgments against wickedness, His concern for justice, and His promise to seek revenge against those who are unjust. God is to be praised for creating and sustaining this world, for setting up and taking down kings, for the "Days of the Lord" when He intervenes in the affairs of men to put an end to lawlessness. God is praiseworthy for all those things and more.

But beware of those whose praise of God is disingenuous. Jesus condemned the Pharisees and teach-

ers of the law for offering up words of praise with their lips, without any real respect for God at all. He said, "*These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men*" (Matthew 15:8,9). Jesus pointed out that praise is more than words. Praise must be backed by obedience to God's Word, without the substitution of man's rules. Disobedient praise does not honor God, but only angers Him.

It is our responsibility to praise God. He is certainly praiseworthy. We must do so, however, as people who genuinely love God, evidenced by our obedience to His Word. If our lives do not match our words of praise, then the Lord will condemn us just as He condemned the Pharisees and teachers of the law.

Praise God!



Rick Cunningham is the preacher for the Main Street congregation in Big Spring, Texas, USA.

Somewhere

Copied

(Editor's note — we seldom use material that we are unable to credit the writer for, but I believe that you will agree that this article merits such an exception.)

- ⇒ A mother is trying to make up her mind whether to let a surgeon do an operation on her only child that may take her life.
- ⇒ A man whose son didn't come home last night is walking through a door marked "City Morgue".
- ⇒ A wife whose marriage has "gone on the rocks" is on a street corner flirting with a man she knows will destroy her fidelity.
- ⇒ A man is sitting on his bed, toying with a pistol, while his wife is shrieking at him from the bottom of the stairs to come down and explain his recent whereabouts.
- ⇒ A young woman is being wheeled into the delivery room from which she knows that mother **or** child, not mother **and** child, will be wheeled out.
- ⇒ A tired doctor is shaking his head and saying, "terminal cancer".
- ⇒ A woman is wondering how she is going to tell her son that she knows he is the criminal the police are looking for.
- ⇒ **AND...** a contented "Christian" is staying at home, deciding against going to worship services because, after all, he doesn't really have anything to be thankful for. †

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Music From the Heart Is a Melody to God

Jason Fox

Acts 16:25: *“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them...”*

Romans 15:9: *“... and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: “For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name.”*

1 Corinthians 14:15: *“What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.”*

James 5:13: *“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.”*

Ephesians 5:18-21: *“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms*

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and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Colossians 3:16: *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”*

Hebrews 2:11,12: *“For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: “I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”*

Hebrews 13:15: *“Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.”*

Everything we do is to be done *“in the name of the Lord Jesus”* (with His authority, Colossians 3:17). If there is authority, there must likewise be instruction to govern. Silence is not permissive and the Bible is very clear on that. As an example, why was Jesus not permitted to be a Levitical priest? To start, there was specific instruction given on who could be a priest. As for Jesus, Hebrews 7:14 says, *“For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.”* Silence is clearly prohibitive not permissive.

Although Ephesians 5:18-21 is not dealing specifically with music within a worship setting, it is helpful to note these passages. The command is found in verse 18, we are to *“be filled with the Spirit”*, the verses that follow contain 5 participle phrases. A participle phrase is the manner in which the command is to be carried out. Verse 18 tells us *what* we are to do, verses 19-21 tell us *how* we are to do it. In these verses music has a strong emphasis, but inherent within these participle phrases are limits on what constitutes acceptable music. Singing is the clear example, with the melody being made only within the heart.

Under the Old Testament, singing and the playing of musical instruments in worship are clearly handled as separate and distinct activities, and the use of one is not inherent within, or authorized by the other (2 Chronicles 29:27,28). Before the time of King David, instruments of music were never used in the worship to God. It was David himself who introduced this innovation into the worship. It is not clear from Scripture that the introduction of musical instruments into the worship was *condoned* by God, even though it was

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afterwards *commanded* by Him (2 Chronicles 29:25). Even though God commands something to be, that does not necessitate that such is condoned. In response to Israel's desire to have an earthly ruler, God *commanded* the very office of king that David occupied, yet He clearly did not *condone* it; He commanded the office of king to be established as a punishment to Israel:

And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day — with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods — so they are doing to you also. Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them (1 Samuel 8:7-9).

It is without doubt that instruments played a major role in the Old Testament temple worship. Their absence within New Testament worship is striking. Both Scripture and secular sources make no mention of instrumental music within the worship of the early church. All reference to music within the church during this time, and for hundreds of years afterward, mention singing only, which is a regulated activity. That is, even though we can sing, we cannot sing whatever we want. We are to sing "...*psalms and hymns and spiritual songs....*" Not only is there no mention of instruments of music made within Christian worship, there are no guidelines to govern their use.

It is clear that salvation was not to be found under that Old Testament system; it took the blood of Jesus to bring salvation to mankind. Likewise, the music of the church has been moved from what the apostle Paul describes as "lifeless instruments" (1 Corinthians 14:7) under a covenant that could not give life, to living hearts (Ephesians 5:19).

The contrast between the physical elements of the Old Testament, e.g. the temple worship, animal sacrifices, the playing of lifeless instruments, burning of incense, etc., can be contrasted with the New Testament where Christians are the temple of God (2 Corinthians 6:16), musical melody is made within the living heart (Ephesians 5:19), and the fruit of the lips as a sacrifice emanates as praise to God (Hebrews 13:15). Christian music is no longer in the lifeless instruments of old, but in the living hearts of those who are the temple of God. †

Jason Fox is a member of the New Plymouth Church of Christ in New Zealand.



How Do You Measure Up?

17. Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me:

18. When I say to the wicked, "You shall surely die," and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.

19. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but you have delivered your soul.

20. Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.

21. Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul. **Ezekiel 3:17-21**

T^o Tell the Truth

Dalton Key



Does anyone tell the truth these days? Is there anyone left with even a semblance of regard for what is fast becoming the scarcest of societal commodities? Politicians bend the truth; advertisers stretch it; actors elicit both laughter and applause as they routinely sidestep it, ignore it, or overtly trample it. And it seems, by the silence of most of us, and the shocking complicity on the part of too many of us, that we, apparently, “love to have it so”.

Yes, ours is a world bombarded with daily doses of subterfuge, sin control, and deliberate disinformation. Trust is forced to take a back seat to more subjective matters of personality and performance; whether a thing is true or not seems to be seen as less important than the entertainment value or the cleverness of the account in question.

No wonder today’s young people have become so cynical. They have no idea who, if anyone, is telling the truth. They hear the news, and hear lies; they hear their favorite television and movie characters, and hear lies; and, sadly, they too often overhear the conversations and business dealings of many of us — their parents, teachers, and role models — and, again, they hear lies.

Friedrich Hebbell was on target in observing, “One lie does not cost you one truth, but the truth.”

No wonder Scripture enjoins, “*Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor*” (Ephesians 4:25).

The elements of darkness will no doubt continue their long-standing love affair with dishonesty and deceit, but we, as God’s people, as children of light, must speak truth. If we don’t, who will? †

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

The Old Settin' Hen

Bobby Key

My maternal grandmother, Eliza Jane Haggard Ray, was born August 21, 1870, on a farm north of Carthage, Missouri. She had some very unusual sayings. Some had a sharp point. I thought this was due to her grandfather, Andrew McKelvy, who had been born in Ireland in 1816.

A favorite saying of my grandmother involved a setting hen, and was occasionally directed at me. She would say, "If you don't do as I say, I will be as mad as an old settin' hen and flog you good." Fortunately, her bark was worse than her bite. I never recall her flogging any of her twenty-five grandchildren!

The setting hen, along with her sour disposition, was well-known to all farm children. As a young lad, I was sent to the hen house to gather eggs. Things were going great until I came to the nest of a hen sitting on her eggs waiting for them to hatch. The hen warned me, by her clucking, not to come close, but not knowing any better, I reached my hand under her to retrieve the eggs. At that point, I got a lesson concerning her ill temper! Off the nest she came, pecking and flogging. I dropped the basket of eggs and ran to the house, the hen pecking me every step of the way. Things got worse as I attempted to crawl through the barbed wire fence – didn't have time to open the gate. I was caught in the fence, with a mad old setting hen right on top of me, letting me know to stay away from her and her nest. Mother heard my screams, and came running with a broom. She took me into the house and discovered that I had some hide missing. However, I did learn a valuable lesson.

We may have lost our sense of humor. Too many are as sour and testy as the old setting hen. We are easily offended. Most soon learn not to cross some people, lest they be pecked or flogged! Some have their temperature just below the boiling point all the time.

We are taught to rejoice in the Lord (Philippians 4:4). A sense of humor is not contrary to Christianity. So many hurt feelings could be avoided and we could have greater love and appreciation for each other, if we could only learn to laugh with each other and at ourselves. †

Bobby Key was the long-time preacher for the Lord's church in Miami, Oklahoma, USA, where he continues to live.

From Woman to Woman

Kerstin Allison

My mind started to wander during a mandatory store meeting at David's Bridal. I started to think about how tired I was and how I was going to go to bed early that night. To say the least, I was not thinking about work until the management team started to pass around pictures. They discussed what was appropriate to wear at work now that spring is here. As the management team continued to talk, a question came to my mind: If the corporate world is concerned about dressing appropriately, how much more should I, as a Christian woman, be concerned about dressing godly?



First Timothy 2:9 states, *“Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness”* (NASV). Paul wrote that a woman is to dress in proper clothing. Clothing that is modest and discreet is proper. He also said that Christian women make a claim to godliness by doing good works and not by how they look.

The Greek word to describe “modesty” is defined as a sense of shame or bashfulness, and the Greek word to describe “discreetly” means to be sober and have self-control. Peter confirmed Paul’s teaching, saying, *“Your adornment must not be merely external — braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God”* (1 Peter 3:3,4, NASV). Therefore, as a Christian woman I am to

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dress with a sense of shame, bashfulness, sobriety, and self control, claiming godliness by doing good works.

To some it may seem difficult at times to know what is appropriate and pleasing to God, and not to become complacent, since women are portrayed to look a certain way, whether on billboards, in display windows, or in magazines. A woman of the world may dress to impress and bring attention to herself by having the wrong intentions. Nevertheless, as a Christian woman, I am to dress so that I am pleasing to God. I am to dress differently from the women of the world. My heart and my intentions reflect in what I wear. I have to ask myself, “Why am I wearing what I am wearing, and am I making a claim to godliness by what I am wearing?” I have to remind myself daily to dress the way God wants me to dress and not how I or anyone else might desire.

Wayne Jackson, founder of the *Christian Courier* states, “Modern immodesty has not liberated women; rather, it has enslaved them to lifestyles that have only degraded them, and marred the glorious image their Creator intended them to enjoy”. As a Christian, I am liberated from the bondage of trying to look a certain way if I am willing to apply what God says and not live by the standards of the world, but by His Word. †

Two Wolves

Author Unknown

One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, “My son, the battle is between two wolves inside us all. One is EVIL — It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

“The other is GOOD — It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.”



The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, “Which wolf wins?”

The old Cherokee simply replied, “The one you feed.”

I Really Do Not Want to Write This

Dawn Weaver

I really do not want to write this. I really do not want to face this problem again. I would like to just go along and be able to smile at everyone and feel good about the way things are. Yet, my heart and mind cannot let me do that. I feel compelled to do this because my love for those in the world makes it so that I want to see them, and everyone they might influence, get to heaven. So, please know that if we truly love each other, we will try to be the people that God expects us to be. If that means we have to remind or correct each other along the way, then that is a very minor price to pay. I want any of you to come to me to correct me for things I say or do that will harm the cause of Christ; if you truly love me and want to see me get to heaven, you will help me get there.

So, here I am facing the truth that every year as it turns from the cold, shivering season to the warm, sunshiny season, we are faced once again with the problem of how

little people want to get away with wearing. Ladies, we are responsible to God for what we wear. We are responsible to God for what we allow our children, both male and female, to wear. Gentlemen, you are responsible to God for what you, your wives, and your children wear; it is that simple! I have noticed too many who want to walk that line as close to the world as they can. **Remember that Satan owns the fence!**

No, we do not have to go around in burlap sacks, but we have to realize some facts. Just because something covers the skin does not mean it is modest. How tight are those jeans or that shirt? Just because you are swimming does not exempt you from God's law. If you would not be comfortable meeting Christ at your front door in it, it is not appropriate, and just because you may feel comfortable in a bikini or one-piece (or no shirt for you guys out there) does not make it appropriate. It must be compared to God's Word. Just

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because you cannot see down your shirt when you are standing up in front of your mirror does not mean that people cannot see your attributes when you bend over; you check it and see, and then ask yourself how much you are stumbling or tempting others. Just because you have lost weight does not give you the freedom to dress in things that are too low, too short, or too tight; good for you for taking care of yourself, but you cannot use the excuse, “I have nothing to wear” to choose things that are not appropriate.

Just because you are male does not give you the excuse to remove your shirt, no matter what you are doing. Please, let us remember that God is always watching what we are doing. As surely as you can wear a shirt advertising a particular brand of athletic shoe, your mode of dress advertises whose team you are playing on. So, who is your coach, God or Satan? May God be able to look at us and recognize His team uniform, both inside and out! †

Dawn Weaver is a Gospel preacher's wife as well as the mother of two boys and three girls. She resides in Vermilion, Ohio, USA.



**As surely as you
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So, who is your coach,
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COURAGE

Bill Dillon

In the year 404, a monk by the name Telemachus traveled to Rome and was shocked beyond measure at the cruelty of the gladiatorial contests. Telemachus leaped over the railing of the Coliseum and tried to stop the gladiators from hacking themselves to pieces by repeated cries of “In the name of Christ, stop”! The little monk stood his ground and refused to move. Shortly, he was slain by the gladiators who continued their fight, standing over his dead body. But the little monk’s sacrifice was not in vain, as the consciences of the Roman populace were stirred, and Emperor Honorius soon decreed the bloody combat games be forever abolished.

The spirit of courage, exemplified by Telemachus, needs to be alive today as modern Christians struggle against deeply entrenched evils such as injustice, indifference, and immorality.

The Lord’s church is a fellowship of courageous souls who have banded together to grapple with wickedness and all unrighteousness. The church of Christ was not established by cowards, nor has it been preserved by cowards. Let God’s people be lionhearted and bold, neither fearing the frowns nor courting the favors of the world. Severe trials and tribulations will only serve to increase our fortitude. God *“hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind”* (2 Timothy 1:7).

Only by being courageous can we swim against the world’s current and move in the direction of God. †

Bill Dillon is the Editor of *Gospel Gleaner* and preaches for the church of Christ in Hickory Ridge, Arkansas, USA.

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needs to be alive today
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When Tomorrow Starts Without Me

Author Unknown

When tomorrow starts without me
and I'm not there to see,
If the sun should rise and find your eyes
all filled with tears for me,
I wish so much you wouldn't cry
the way you did today,
While thinking of the many things
we didn't get to say.

I know how much you love me —
as much as I love you —
And every time you think of me,
I know you'll miss me too;
But when tomorrow starts without me,
please try to understand,
An angel came and called my name,
and took me by the hand,
And said my place was ready,
in Heaven far above,
And that I'd have to leave behind,
all those I dearly love.

But as I turned to walk away,
a tear fell from my eye,
For all of life, I'd always thought,
I didn't want to die.
I had so much to live for,
and so much yet to do,
It seemed almost impossible,
that I was leaving you.
I thought of all the yesterdays,
the good ones and the bad,
I thought of all the love we shared,
and all the fun we had.

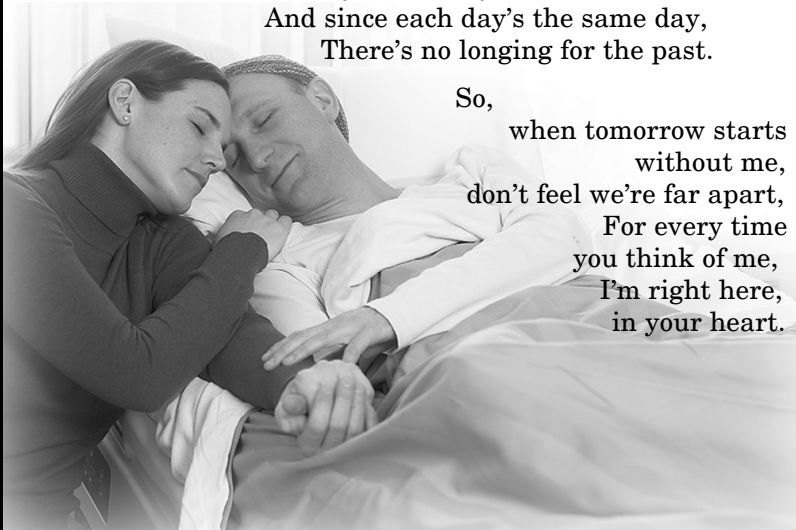
If I could turn to yesterday,
just even for awhile,
I'd say goodbye and kiss you,
and maybe see you smile,
But then I realized,
that this could never be,
For emptiness and memories
would take the place of me.

And when I thought of worldly things,
I'll be missing, come tomorrow,
I thought of you, and when I did,
my heart was filled with sorrow.
But when I walked through Heaven's gates,
I felt so much at home
When God looked down and smiled at me,
from His great golden throne.

He said, "This is eternity,
and all I've promised you.
Today your life on earth is past,
but here it starts anew.

I promise no tomorrow,
But today will always last,
And since each day's the same day,
There's no longing for the past.

So,
when tomorrow starts
without me,
don't feel we're far apart,
For every time
you think of me,
I'm right here,
in your heart.



How Shall the Young Secure Their Hearts?

Bonnie Rushmore

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 emphasizes the necessity of teaching our children the laws of God. Moses instructed the Israelites to learn the laws of God before conquering the Promised Land **and** to teach those same laws to their children and grandchildren. He further admonished them to teach the children when they walk, when they sit to rest, when they go to bed, and when they get up in the morning — thus to use every opportunity to teach their children.

This principle is still applicable today. Just as Moses instructed the Israelites to ground their children in the knowledge of God's laws, we must firmly plant in our children the knowledge of God's laws applicable to modern mankind. Ephesians 6:4 states, "*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*" Fathers have the God-given task of not only teaching God's commandments to their children, but the responsibility of instructing them how to use this knowledge. Training our children must be more than teaching them to recite Bible verses and retelling Bible events. We must instill in them the ability to study the Scriptures for themselves and not just repeat what they have been told, to discern right from wrong, and most importantly, to make God's Word a living part of their individual lives. When we do this, our children should be well on their way to securing their hearts to God! Many of us know this; however, the difficult part is putting it into practice.

Every parent needs to remember the biblical account of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1-2. She earnestly prayed to God for a son and promised that if God fulfilled her request that she would dedicate him to the Lord. God answered Hannah's prayer, and she kept her promise. As soon as she weaned Samuel, she left him in the hands of Eli, the high priest, so that he could serve God in the Temple. Many expectant parents pray to God that their child will be healthy, but we should also pray that we will rear them to accept and live by God's commands. God does not want us to leave our children in the Temple to serve Him as Hannah did with young Samuel, yet we need to begin from birth

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to instruct them in God's Word, to live by it, and to always place God first in their lives. We should continue to pray throughout the life of our children for God's help in training and that God will watch over them. Our children need to know that we remember them daily in our prayers.

As our children mature, we must teach them that God is first, and all other aspects of life must take second place (Matthew 10:36; 22:37,38; Luke 14:26,27; Philippians 3:7-9). This means that Bible lessons come before homework, worship and Bible class attendance precedes school activities (band, sports, field trips, etc.), and church activities take priority over parties and get-togethers with friends. We should teach our children to choose their friends carefully, emphasizing that they should spend the majority of their time with those who will help them get to heaven, not tempt them to turn away from God. In order for this to happen, as parents, we must provide ample fun-filled activities for our children and their God-focused friends. All this should begin at a very young age and must continue throughout their teen years.

We need to instruct our children to serve God from preschool through adulthood. All children want to please and be recognized for their accomplishments. Encourage your little ones to help bake and take cookies to the shut-ins. Most young children love to draw and color, so use their creative minds for cards for the sick, shut-ins and the lonely. Older children can help the elderly with their yard work (especially after a storm) and household chores.

We must never forget to encourage our children to reach out to the lost with the Gospel of Christ. Parents should be willing to fill their cars with the acquaintances of their children, providing these young minds with opportunities to hear messages from God's Word at Bible class, VBS, Gospel meetings, church camps, and youthful activities sponsored by local congregations. Children are willing and able to knock doors, inviting families to worship services or to leave a flyer with information about the church or to announce an upcoming event; they only need help and encouragement from adults.

Throughout the life of a child, parents should seize every opportunity to teach God's Word. Daily activities provide ample examples of teaching about the great Creator and learning a Christ-like attitude as we interact with others. Traveling from point A to point B can be time used to learn memory verses and Bible facts. We should take time each day for Bible reading and devotionals with our children. **We cannot deceive ourselves into thinking that the two to three hours per week of Bible instruction in Bible classes and worship services will adequately ground our children in God's Holy Word!**

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These instructions are worthless when we fail to teach by example. We cannot live by the old adage, “Do as I say, not as I do.” Our children must see us putting God first in our lives. Christian living and Christian service must be seen as top priority, before our jobs, families, and pleasurable activities. Our children should see a Christ-like attitude from us as we interact with others; they should see us reaching out to the lost souls of this world; they should hear us pray for them and others; and they should see us study our Bibles in preparation for Bible class and to attain personal knowledge.

As a parent of three grown children, I can look back and see areas of improvement I would make if I had the opportunity to start over in rearing my children. I am sure many of you could say the same. When our grown children leave the church or are not as strong as they ought to be, often we can console ourselves with the knowledge that we did the best we knew how at the time, and each individual has the responsibility to save himself. My children cannot blame me for their sins and weaknesses, nor can I blame my parents for my failures.

How can we secure our children’s hearts for the Lord? By living a godly life in accordance with God’s will and teaching our children to love and obey God. †

Bonnie Rushmore lives and works in the World Evangelism office in Winona, Mississippi, USA

A Quote of Note

Dan Winkler

If we want our children to return home as faithful Christians, they need to grow up in a home of faithful Christians.

If we want our children to return home with grandchildren that are learning about Jesus, they need to grow up in a home with Jesus.

Next to our faith, nothing is more important than our families. That is all the more reason to share our faith with our families. †

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

AT YOUR HOUSE

Wendell Winkler

What priorities will be established in your children when...

- ☆ You are early for their ball game, but late for worship?
- ☆ You check on their homework regularly, but never check on their Bible class lessons?
- ☆ You won't let them stay up late on school nights, but let them stay up late on Saturday night?
- ☆ You won't let them miss school even though they don't want to go, but let them miss church worship services?
- ☆ You know the names of all their school teachers, but do not know who is teaching their Bible classes, or what they are studying?
- ☆ You will serve as a room mother or volunteer at school, but will not help with classes, activities, or programs which involve spiritual matters?
- ☆ You attend open house at their school, but do not visit their classroom of Bible school, or even know where the class meets?
- ☆ You support, attend, or even participate in their sports activities (baseball, softball, basketball, volleyball, etc.), but regularly miss activities involving the church?
- ☆ You will not go on vacation during school days, but go on vacation during VBS, a lectureship, or a Gospel meeting?
- ☆ You go to work even though you do not feel like it, but stay home on Sunday in the same condition?

Yes, with such situations prevailing, what priorities are being established in the hearts of our children? †

Wendell Winkler (1931-2005) was a highly respected Gospel preacher and served several years as the Chairman of the Bible Department at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

My Mother Was Ahead of the Times

Bob Plunket

I saw a young man pull up the other day in a nice sports car that probably cost well over \$20,000. He had on a pair of old, faded jeans with holes in the knees. My first thought was that he must have stolen the car, but somebody told me, “No, that’s the style.” And I thought I wore old jeans with patches and holes because we were poor. My mother was just a little ahead of the times. She tried to tell us how nice we looked, but I never believed her. If I were in school today, I would be the best dressed boy. The old look in my pants came from somebody else using them first.

Can you believe it? Most of my life, we ate vegetables and corn bread. Now, how in the world did my mother know about cholesterol and red meats? We were vegetarians before it was popular. And I had the strange notion it was because we were poor, but my mother was way ahead of the times.

I thought she spanked us because she didn’t have time to sit down and reason with us. One of the best sellers today in parenting is *Love Must Be Tough*. My Mother knew that. She did not have time to read all the books on reasoning with children.

We hear a lot today about exercise and the value that it brings to the cardiovascular system. When we were growing up, you didn’t see people walking around the block for exercise. They were too tired from working hard all day. They didn’t have to take pills to go to sleep at night either. Mother kept us exercising most of the time, and I thought it was because there was so much to be done. Mother knew an idle mind was the devil’s workshop.

We are told now that young people need role models to look to, someone they can believe in for goals, inspiration, and hope for their lives. My mother knew that. She showed us Jesus and taught us of Him. We worshipped together, we read the Bible together, and we prayed together.

I am kidding, of course, when I say that Mother knew about cholesterol and such things, but I am not kidding when I say that Christian mothers are ahead of their times because they are in tune with God, and they have a wonderful book of instructions from Him. Paul could have had this in mind when he said, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honor thy father and mother which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee and that thou mayest live long on the earth*” (Ephesians 6:1). †

Bob Plunket is the preacher for the Church of Christ in Oxford, Alabama, USA.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

The Home in Crisis

Dennis Gulledge

You have heard the old adage, “As goes the home, so goes the nation”. This is a truism that is understood by Christian and non-Christian alike. Solomon said, “*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people*” (Proverbs 14:34).

We live in an especially critical time for the home and family. Society seems bent on dismantling, destroying, and redefining the home as we know it. Should we care? We didn’t just wake up yesterday and find the home in crisis. Since the sexual revolution of the radical 1960s, a new world view has emerged telling people that they are better off with no restrictions on their behavior. This world view is at the heart of Supreme Court decisions: *Roe v. Wade* is about more than abortion — it’s the idea that we can do what we want with no strings attached. *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) said that homosexual conduct cannot be restricted by law.

The home begins with the joining together of a man and woman in marriage (Genesis 2:18-25). Jesus repeated this divine plan for the home in Matthew 19:4-6. We are hearing a lot these days about “same sex” marriages. Marriage may mean nothing more than “an intimate or close union” (Webster). By this definition same sex marriage might be allowed. In this connection Barbara Streissand recently said, “When two people form a deep bond there is usually a soul connection and the soul has no gender.” But, God (not Streisand or Webster) is our moral and spiritual governor.

The marital bond is basically (not solely) for the purpose of procreation (Genesis 1:28). Apparently homosexual and lesbian couples seek to fulfill this basic need by adopting children. Homosexual “marriage” is therefore, an oxymoron — no such thing in the eyes of God. Cultures have degenerated in the past, but not like the current American scene. Ancient Greece and Rome, at their moral worst, never legalized sodomy. No western civilization prior to today ever recognized it. But, currently in this country it is being decided that homosexual couples have a right to marry.

Why are we seeing the push to legalize homosexual unions? Basically, it is so that these people can feel good about their immoral behavior (Romans 1:26-32). Their wish is to have the law on their side saying “you can’t legislate morality”, and that only bigotry and hatred would raise a voice against it.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

The only aspect of God's creation that was "not good" was man alone (Genesis 2:18). Adam was not incomplete simply because he lacked human companionship. He lacked female human companionship (Genesis 2:19-23). The Word of God categorically condemns homosexual behavior, period (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26ff; 1 Corinthians 6:9ff). What was sin and unnatural 2,000 years ago remains so today. All the toleration, laws, declarations, sitcoms, celebrities, music, and news stories promoting it will not make it any less wrong. †

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

“HOW SHALL WE LIVE?”

Clinton Storm

The GRACE OF GOD has brought us salvation and, in addition, has also taught us how to live. Read this beautiful passage: *“For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world”* (Titus 2:11,12).

First, there are two negatives. We are to renounce two things:

1. “Ungodliness”, that is, all that stands in opposition to what is godly; making a stand against evil.

2. “Worldly lusts.” Sometimes, the word “lust” is used in a good sense, as in Philippians 1:23, “my desire...” In the current context “lust” is “evil desire”.

Next, there are three positive requirements regarding our life-style:

1. Live “soberly”. Christians are to be serious minded, self-controlled; practicing “self-restraint”.

2. Live “righteously”. We are to live upright lives, conforming to God's laws. Timothy was instructed, *“So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness...”* (2 Timothy 2:22).

3. Live “godly”, a pious, reverent life.

While living the Christian life, we are *“looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ”* (Titus 2:13).

Thank God for His AMAZING GRACE!

†

PROVERBS 17:22



At Hebrew School, the Rabbi finished the day's lesson and began the usual question period. Little Melvin started by saying, "Rabbi, there's something I need to know."

"What's that, my child?" asked the Rabbi.

"Well, according to the Scriptures, the Children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, right?"

"Right."

"And the Children of Israel beat up the Philistines, right?"

"Uh...right."

"And the children of Israel built the Temple, right?"

"Again you are correct."

"And the Children of Israel fought the Egyptians, and the Children of Israel fought the Romans, and the Children of Israel were always doing something important, right?"

"All that is correct," agreed the Rabbi. "So what's your question?"

"What I need to know is this," Melvin stated. "What were all the grown-ups doing?"



William's mother came into her son's room and said, "William, it's Sunday. Time to get up! Time to get up and go to church!"

From under the covers came, "I don't want to go!"

"What do you mean?" she said. "That's silly! Now get up and get dressed and go to church!"

"No!" he shot back. "I'll give you two reasons. I don't like them, and they don't like me!"

"Nonsense," she told him. "I'll give YOU two reasons to GO. First, you are 42 years old, and second, you are the PREACHER!"



Mike drove down from Chicago to go sports fishing off the Florida coast. On the very first day he cap-sized his boat. He could swim, but his fear of alligators kept him clinging to the overturned boat. Spotting an old beachcomber standing on the shore, Mike hollered, "Are there any 'gators around here?"

"Naw," the man shouted. "They ain't been around for years!"

Feeling safe, Mike started swim-

PROVERBS 17:22

ming leisurely toward the shore. About halfway there he asked the guy, “How’d you get rid of the ‘gators?”

“We didn’t do nothin’,” the beachcomber said. “The sharks got ‘em.”



RESTRICTED AREA: Only DEEP THINKERS Are Allowed.

(1) What happens if you get scared half to death, twice?

(2) Why do psychics have to ask you for your name?

(3) Would acupuncture be considered a jab well done?

(4) Should the police be called if a three-year-old is resisting a rest?

(5) Can you cry underwater?



A woman of the blonde persuasion needed to make some extra money, so she decided to hire out as a “handy-woman” to do odd jobs. She started walking through a neighborhood, knocked on the door of the first house she came to, and asked the man if he had any odd jobs that she might do.

“Well, I could use somebody to paint my porch,” he said. “How much will you charge me?”

The blonde said, “How about \$50?”

The man agreed and told her that the paint and everything she would

need was in the garage.

A short time later the blonde came to the door to collect her money.

“Are you finished already?” the man asked.

The blonde answered, “Yes, and I had paint left over, so I gave it two coats – no extra charge.”

The man was impressed, reached into his pocket for the \$50 and handed it to her.

“And by the way,” the blonde added, “it’s not a Porch — it’s a BMW.”



Life is full of lessons, some of which are extremely useful. Here are five that are critical: (1) Always remember that you are unique...just like everyone else. (2) If at first you don’t succeed, skydiving is not for you. (3) There are two theories to arguing with a woman – neither one works. (4) A closed mouth gathers no foot. (5) Some days you’re the bug, and some days you’re the windshield.



Darrell Porter was a major league baseball player for several years, and he once concluded that the Bible tells about the first baseball game. He said, “Eve stole first, Adam stole second...and God threw them both out.”

Distractions

SPC Alex Gibson

Have you ever wondered what Jesus meant when He said, “*He who has ears to hear let him hear*” (Matthew 11:15)? Well, one way of looking at that could very easily be, “Hey, this message is for everyone!” But another good way to put it would be, “Those of you who will actually listen to what I’ve got to say, and not just let it go in one ear and out the other, gather round.” I bring up that gem because of the subject I want to talk about today.



Distractions. They’re everywhere in life, aren’t they? If I could just finish up this project, or get the house cleaned, or if work would stop piling up, then I would... then I could... Let me ask you a few questions. When was the last time you noticed your breathing? Like, actually *enjoyed* taking a breath? How about when you actually looked around you in the morning and enjoyed God’s handiwork in the skies? How about, even the last time you honestly looked around your home and saw all the things there, not just glancing over them?

The point I’m trying to get at is how much we as people are focused on *getting things done* and not on *the creation and God-given blessings around us*. Meaning, we are distracted from *the glory of the creation by the things to be done* in that creation, to the point where we no longer see the creation itself and so miss out on big parts of the gifts God gave us.

And, consider this: if our minds are unable to focus on the *tangible* created things around us, how much less do we think on the God who created them?

But how does focusing on the creation help us to better know the Creator, and to save us from trivial distractions? Well, if you want to get to know God, why wouldn’t you look at His creation, realizing that it is His work? Space is huge, without limits. So is God. He has made useful, beneficial things. We can use them for good, or we can turn them into destructive forces. Fire in its right places can be used for heat and light or for the cleansing of things (i.e., overgrown forests or for purifying metals), but in the wrong places, it can kill

HEY YOU KIDS!

and destroy. Consider the desires God gave us (the very same ones that Jesus had, too, by the way). Food provides nourishment and comfort to our bodies, just as spiritual food — a relationship with God — brings health to our souls. The point is to look around at the world God has created and to enjoy it and to see His provision and presence in everything.

Is that to say that all things are good? I don't think so; cancer is an example of spoiled goodness. Just as a normal healthy cell in your body is the work of God, a cancerous cell is the healthy cell that has been spoiled and is no longer what God wanted it to be. It's part of living in a fallen world. So, in cases where you see sickness and pain, we can know that is not what God planned from the beginning. When you see health and happiness, you know that's part of God's original plan, before sin wrecked the world.

To wrap up my entire point for this article is to take a look around and see the amazing creation of God and to consider what it says about Him. We need to guard against being distracted by the concerns of the world and by unimportant things, and to focus instead on our relationship with God. It's always a good thing to do as a Christian because it helps to keep things in perspective. Doesn't it strengthen your faith when you stop to think of what man is, that the Creator of the heavens is mindful of him? †

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Slanderous Speech

Tom Kelton



How does God feel about a slanderer? Let's read Proverbs 10:18: "*He who spreads slander is a fool.*" Maybe God is blunt because of the disastrous effect slander has on relationships: "*A slanderer separates intimate friends*" (16:28).

In checking a dictionary, you get the idea that slander refers only to false oral statements which ruin a person's reputation. It appears to be a specific form of lying that mars a third party's image. *Webster's Dictionary* isn't our inspired source, Proverbs is. The biblical word we translate as "slander" has a different shade of meaning. The Hebrew word includes *true* as well as *false* remarks.

In the Old Testament, the word "slander" was used for bad reports in general. The word meaning "to defame or strip one of his positive reputation" was used in the account of Joseph's true but bad report to his father concerning the wickedness of his brothers (Genesis 37:2).

The same word was used in Numbers 13:32, the account of the ten

spies who brought back a negative report about the Promised Land.

In the New Testament, the word for slander is comprised of two words, one meaning "against" and the other meaning "to speak". A slanderer, then, is simply one who speaks against another. Slander is the open, intentional sharing of damaging information and is characterized by base reports that blemish or defame a person's reputation, whether they are true or not.

Just because it's true doesn't mean we should announce it over a public address system. Before we add juicy tidbits to a conversation about somebody, let's apply the guidelines of Ephesians 4:29: "*Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.*" Unless we have those conversational criteria, our gossip chat becomes nothing more than slander. †

Before his death, Tom Kelton was a writer and preacher at Pharr, Texas, USA.

The Precious Ointment

Owen Cosgrove

It was a very touching scene. The chief priests, scribes, and elders of the people had gathered in the palace of Caiaphas the high priest and worked out their plans to take Jesus “*by subtlety*” and kill Him. This was a dirty, political, hateful escapade full of deception and cruelty. Little did these schemers realize that their chicanery had been prophesied for centuries and that God and His Son Jesus were fully aware of every cruel and pitiless word and deed being said and done by these supposedly virtuous religious leaders.

Jesus knew that in a couple of days He would be the victim of the most dishonorable and despicable deed in the history of mankind. As He met with His disciples in the house of Simon, a leper who lived in Bethany, a woman came with a very precious alabaster box of spikenard, an expensive ointment, and anointed His head. The apostle John tells how she wiped Christ’s feet with her hair, and the fragrance filled the room. It was a beautiful gesture of honor and devotion, and the sweet smell of that perfume was one of the few physical comforts that would accompany the horrendous crucifixion scene.

There have been various estimates of the financial value of the ointment. The inspired writer Mark placed its worth at three hundred pence, and a pence is sometimes descriptive of a day’s earnings, so it is possible that it represented several hundred or even thousands of dollars



spikenard

in terms of our modern money. Some of the disciples complained at the supposed extravagance of the gift, but Jesus commended the woman by saying that she had done what she could and that she had anointed Him for His burial. He proclaimed that everywhere the Gospel would be preached, her thoughtfulness would be told as a memorial to her. She fulfilled the

TEXTUAL STUDIES

spirit of the poem that urges people to “give flowers while people are living rather than after they are dead.”

for improvement in dealing with the indigents and impoverished people of our society.

Mark placed its worth at three hundred pence, and a pence represented a day’s earnings, so the spikenard cost hundreds or thousands of dollars in modern money.

Those who complained said that the ointment could have been sold and that the money could have been used to feed the poor. No one in the history of mankind has done more to alleviate poverty than Jesus and His faithful disciples. The apostle John wrote that it was Mary, apparently the sister of Lazarus and Martha, who had done this beautiful anointing. He also notes that Judas was the one leading the complaints, and that he, as treasurer of the group, wanted access to the funds so that he could steal them. John wrote that Judas “*did not care for the poor.*” Judas loved money. It has been well said that Judas did not sell Jesus for thirty pieces of silver — he sold himself for thirty pieces of silver.

Jesus also noted that we will always have the poor with us. We are touched by the pictures of soup lines during the Great Depression, and we tend to think that we have largely conquered the problem of poverty in America. But pictures of over-filled homeless shelters in our big cities remind us that we have much room

“*You will always have the poor with you*”, Jesus said. We do not have to go far to find needy and distressed people. While we seek to alleviate the suffering of mankind, we still remember the kindness of Mary while Jesus was in the throes of agony and dread. She did what she could, and her thoughtfulness and love live on as a memorial of her faith and devotion.✠

Owen Cosgrove is involved in printed evangelism in many countries and lives in Waxahachie, Texas, USA.

Spikenard

It is the root of an Indian plant, the *Nardostachys jatamansi*, of the family of Valeriance, growing on the Himalaya mountains. It is distinguished by its having many hairy spikes shooting out from one root.

Easton’s Bible Dictionary

TEXTUAL STUDIES

“To the Third and Fourth Generations”

David Tarbet

I have puzzled over the statement found in Exodus 20:5 that God visits “*the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations*”. There must be significance to the fact that God limits His wrath to the “third and fourth” generations, rather than extending it to the fifth, sixth, or tenth. I have decided that the significance lies in this: three or four generations live simultaneously, each influencing and affecting the other. The sinful behavior of one generation is reproduced in all generations contemporary with it. Children look to their parents, grandchildren look to their grandparents, and great-grandchildren look to their great-grandparents as role models. Each generation picks up the bad behavior patterns of the previous generation. Thus, God is justified in bringing His wrath upon the third and fourth generation because these generations imitate each other, participating in the same sins.

It appears to me that if *sinful* behavior has such an ongoing and powerful influence upon children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, *righteous* behavior can also have a powerful influence. It is a serious mistake for parents to think their spiritual influence is limited to the formative years when their children are living at home. The truth is, parents never stop having an influence for good in their lives of their children — even after they become adults. Have you stopped to think that grandparents have important godly influence over their grandchildren, too? And great-grandparents as well!

That is why all of us simply must continue to be faithful to the Lord and His church! The example we set will likely determine whether our children, our grandchildren, and our great-grandchildren are involved in the kingdom. In other words, a parent’s job is never finished. He just keeps on making an impact for good or for evil, long after his children have left home. The adult children ask themselves, “Was Dad’s faith deeply held — was it real? Or did he only “play church” while we were young? His faithful example after the “nest is empty” is witnessed by his adult children, his grandchildren, and his great-grandchildren. That’s the example that will be imitated.

So, be faithful to the very end — the lessons you teach by your faithfulness will be felt for a long, long time after you are gone! †

David Tarbet is a Gospel preacher working with the White Rock Church of Christ in Dallas, Texas, USA.

Deborah, a Prophetess and a Judge

Charles Box

The story of Deborah begins with the Children of Israel doing evil (Judges 4:1). God allowed Jabin, king of Canaan, with his captain Sisera, to bring a severe oppression on His people. Deborah shows that both men and women are useful to God.

The Useful Are Faithful — Those who are truly useful to God must be faithful. Deborah served faithfully as a prophet and a judge in Israel (Judges 4:4,5). She heard God’s Word and was faithful to it. *“Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded...?”* (Judges 4:6,7).

The Useful Help Others Become Useful — Deborah assisted Barak in his becoming useful and powerful in God’s service. Deborah promised victory to the army of ten thousand led by Barak (Judges 4:7).

The Useful Are Willing to Go for God — Barak would go, but only with Deborah going also. She knew this was God’s work, so she said, *“I will surely go with you”* (Judges 4:9). Deborah had complete confidence that the Lord would go before them (Judges 4:9-14).

The Useful Recognize the Victory God Gives — Even before the battle, Deborah knew victory was certain with God. *“Then Deborah said to Barak, Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the Lord gone out before you?’ So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him”* (Judges 4:14). Christians should also enjoy the victory of faith. *“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith”* (1 John 5:4).

The Useful Do What They Can, but They Praise God for the Victory — Deborah gave praise to God through her song (Judges 5). In beautiful verse form, Deborah sang praise to God as she described the victory in a powerful song. She closed by saying, *“Thus let all Your enemies perish, O Lord! But let those who love Him be like the sun when it comes out in full strength...”* (Judges 5:31).

Deborah shows us how to be useful to God. The Judges provide many forceful lessons. Christians can learn much from: (1) Othniel, (2) Ehud, (3) Shamgar, (4) Deborah, (5) Barak, (6) Gideon, (7) Abimelech, (8) Tola, (9) Jair, (10) Jephthah, (11) Ibzan, (12) Elon, (13) Abdon, (14) Samson, (15) Eli, and (16) Samuel. These were the sixteen Judges in Israel. †

Charles Box preaches for the Walnut Street church in Greenville, Alabama, USA.

Which Moses?

Charles R. Rose

If you were said to be “like Moses,” would you be tempted to ask, “Which Moses?” No doubt we all recognize Moses as a great leader of God’s people, and the great lawgiver who received the Ten Commandments from God. It would be a great honor to be compared to that Moses. But do we all remember his former life before his going before Pharaoh to plead for the freedom of the people? Of course we recall his being reared by Pharaoh’s daughter after his mother had him set among the bulrushes in the Nile River. We also recall that his sister convinced the princess to allow Moses’ own mother to be his nursemaid.

It would be humbling to know that we were brought up under similar circumstances. But how many do you personally know who were? And we know about the time Moses killed a man while protecting a fellow Israelite. We dream of such heroics, but few people with whom I have been acquainted ever experience such.

No, that is not the Moses I have in mind. This Moses had the same upbringing, same parents, same sister and brother, same experiences as mentioned above, yet a very different

personality. This Moses with whom I can compare many Christians today was a man who thought he could do nothing for God’s people. Perhaps the experience with the taskmaster whom he had killed had frightened him so badly that he became afraid to advance himself into the affairs of others. Whatever the cause, this Moses had become convinced that he must simply live life in the background or on the sidelines, allowing others to do the really important things.

When he was eighty years old, he was still working for his father-in-law, and not in the “front office” of the family business. His was about as lowly a job as one could have — relegated to “...*the backside of the desert*” (Exodus 3:1). It was here that his personality comes to bear. God has chosen him for a task that must take the strength of heaven itself to complete, but this Moses has no intention of helping. “*The Lord said. I have seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt...I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians...come now therefore, and I will send thee to Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people out of Egypt*” (Exodus 3:7,8,10).

BIBLE CHARACTERS

“Not me” is the basic answer Moses gave.

His arguments are exactly as those given by many today when asked to do some needed work in the church: “Why me?” (Exodus 3:11), “*Who do I say sent me?*” (3:13), “They won’t listen” (4:1), “I have this speech problem” (4:10), “Lord, just send someone else” (4:13).

Aren’t we glad that Moses did decide to lead the Israelites out of Egypt! Still, the Lord had to get mad at him before he would finally do what only he could do (Exodus 4:14). Do you suppose the Lord ever gets angry with you when you refuse to use your talents in His service? “*Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always...*” doing what? (1 Corinthians 15:58). †

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Watch the Power One

Mike Benson

- One good Samaritan rescued a wounded man on the Jericho Road (Luke 10).
- One aged man (Noah) was instrumental in saving mankind from extinction (Genesis 6; Hebrews 11:7).
- One man (Moses) who felt unqualified confronted a Pharaoh and led the Exodus (Exodus 3).
- One woman (Esther) broke long-standing tradition, walked into the king’s throne room, and saved an entire nation from genocide (Esther 4).
- One boy (David) faced a nine-foot giant and saved the Israelites from slavery (1 Samuel 17).
- One boy’s lunch of five loaves and two fish fed thousands (John 6).
- One slave girl was instrumental in healing a world military leader (2 Kings 5).
- One vote gave Oliver Cromwell control of England in 1645.
- One vote gave America the English language instead of the German language in 1776.
- One vote saved Andrew Jackson from impeachment in 1868.
- One vote gave Adolf Hitler control of the Nazi party in 1941.

“But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?’” (Exodus 3:11).

BIBLE CHARACTERS

APOLLOS —

A Man Who Used Criticism to His and the Lord's Advantage Kent O'Donnell

Apollos was obviously a man of great learning and knowledge, being very familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures and also with the life of Christ (Acts 18:24-25). He did not, though, let his knowledge get to his head or think himself above the instruction of others. He had been taught the way of the Lord, yet his teaching was incomplete, in that he knew only of the baptism of John (Acts 18:25). For this reason, when Aquila and Priscilla heard him speak in the synagogue, they took him aside and explained to him more accurately the way of God (Acts 18:26).

Later, in Achaia "... when he [Apollos] arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 18:27,28).

Apollos did not act defensively or abusively toward Aquila and Priscilla, but rather, he gladly took their instruction and used it, continuing to teach with enthusiasm. He became a real asset to the church through his teaching in Achaia (Acts 18:27-28), and his work in both Corinth and Crete (1 Corinthians 16:12; Titus 3:13). Some even believe he may have been the

human writer of the book of Hebrews.

I think we can learn a valuable lesson from Apollos. Too often we look at *constructive* criticism as *destructive* criticism and fail to see the good intention behind it. As the name suggests, constructive criticism is designed to build upon our good points so we can improve them and use them more effectively. Sometimes improvement might require that we change the view we have on a certain Bible subject, sometimes improvement might require us to deal with people differently. Sometimes improvement might require us to stop doing something in the way we have always done it.

The key is humility. "*You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another; for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble*" (1 Peter 5:5). Let us be humble enough to accept constructive criticism, to be thankful for it, and to grow from it.

"Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase his learning" (Proverbs 9:9). †

Kent O'Donnell works with the church in Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Who Am I ?

Rebecca Rushmore

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word.

1. I was from the tribe of Judah (Numbers 13:6).
2. I was a slave in Egypt for about the first 40 years of my life (Joshua 14:7).
3. At eighty-five years of age I was still a mighty man of war (Joshua 14:11).
4. At eighty-five years of age I asked for my inheritance when I said, "Give me this mountain" (Joshua 14:10,12).
5. Hebron was given to me as my inheritance (Joshua 14:13).
6. I gave my daughter, Achsah, to Othniel for his wife when he conquered a city for me (Joshua 15:16,17).
7. I drove the three sons of Anak from the land of my inheritance (Joshua 15:14).
8. I was one of two adults to leave Egypt, wander in the wilderness, and then live in the Promised Land (Numbers 16:65).
9. I was a spy who delivered a good report (Numbers 13:30).
10. I did not replace Moses as the leader of the Israelites.



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

Where Am I ?

Rebecca Rushmore

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of Scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's Word.

1. I am mentioned 4 times in the Old Testament, but two of those times my name is translated a little differently.
2. One time my name refers to a region to which Sennacherib's sons ran after they murdered their father (2 Kings 19:37; Isaiah 37:38).
3. Another time my name refers to one of the nations the prophet Jeremiah calls to help fight against Babylon (Jeremiah 51:27).
4. Streams flow from me to form the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.
5. I was the ending place of an event both tragic and wonderful (Genesis 6-8).
6. Originally my name referred to a whole mountain range, but now usually refers to one location in the range.
7. Today, I am part of the borders of Turkey.
8. Here Noah worshiped God, who promised never again to destroy the world with water (Genesis 8:20-21).
9. From me, Noah's family and all the animals replenished the earth (Genesis 9:1,19).
10. Noah's ark rested on me (Genesis 8:4).



See answer on inside back cover

My Score: _____

BIBLE QUESTIONS

What About Dying Before Being Baptized?

A.L. Franks

“Baptism is not essential to salvation because a believer could die on his way to the creek.”

Argument: In all sincerity, many have asked, “What if a penitent believer is on his way to be immersed and dies before he is baptized?” In view of such a possibility, some have concluded, “Surely baptism cannot really be essential to salvation.”

Response: A Bible teacher’s responsibility is to proclaim a *“thus saith the Lord”*. His job is to teach what the Bible teaches. A careful and prayerful study of Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15,16, Acts 2:38; 22:16, and 1 Peter 3:21 makes very clear the will of the Lord. To obey the Lord requires baptism. “To be saved” one must be baptized. Baptism is *“for (unto) the remission of sins”*. Baptism *“washes away sins”*. *“Baptism doth also save us.”* I cannot teach otherwise. Nor can anyone else. Not with scriptural authority!

What if? What if a penitent believer is accidentally killed or suddenly dies while in the process of obeying the Lord’s command for baptism? Answer: The Lord will take care of that matter. He is the judge. Yet, according to inspired Scripture, there is no promise of salvation to sinners who are not baptized.

Another “What if?” What if a dying person, who had no knowledge of Jesus, asked what he needed to do to be saved? And, what if, before he could be taught about Jesus the Savior, he suddenly died? What if he died before he believed? Answer: Again, the Lord will take care of that matter. He is the judge. Yet, according to inspired Scripture, Jesus has not promised salvation to those who are not believers.

Remember: It was the Jesus, the Savior, who promised, *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”*. I do not have the authority to promise salvation to any person who has not yet believed, nor do I have the authority to promise salvation to anyone who has not yet been baptized.

Something else: In New Testament times, believers were baptized immediately. For instance, the Philippian jailer was baptized *“the same hour of the night”* (Acts 16:33). Saul of Tarsus was asked, *“Why tarriest thou, Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins...”* (Acts 22:16). In the first century, there was no unnecessary delay. We need to follow the example of those who believed the words of Jesus and taught the necessity of both faith and baptism. †

A.L. Franks is the Editor of *Magnolia Messenger* and lives in Kosciusko, Mississippi, USA.

Is Baptism Essential?

Rodney Nulph

Is baptism really necessary for the salvation of one's soul? This seems to be a question that is discussed frequently in the religious world. To answer such a question one must appeal to the Bible and to the Bible only. The inspired writer Luke states, *"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). The word "name" as used in this passage refers to authority. We are saved by submitting to the authority of Jesus Christ. Submitting to the authority of Jesus Christ means obeying what He has commanded. Jesus said, *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:15,16). Baptism is required by the Lord in order to be saved. Yet, many in the religious world say there is nothing for one to do to be saved, only believe.

Consider what Saul of Tarsus asked Jesus on the road to Damascus. *"And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do"* (Acts 9:6). If belief was all that was necessary, why did Jesus tell him to go into the city and it would be told what he must do? Upon entering the city and the passing of three days, Ananias came to Saul and told him what he must do. *"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord"* (Acts 22:16). Baptism and washing sins away are inseparable. Paul taught that baptism is where we come in contact with the precious blood of Jesus (Romans 6:3-5). Peter affirmed, *"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us ..."* (1 Peter 3:21). Peter plainly stated that baptism saves us!

So then, is baptism really necessary for the salvation of one's soul? The Scriptures plainly teach that baptism is essential and necessary for the salvation of one's soul. We cannot allow man's words or opinions to mislead us; the Word of God must be our guide in all spiritual matters. †

BIBLE QUESTIONS

Where Are the Dead?

Ken Tyler

This is a question that is of great interest to many people. The state of the soul after death is given in Luke 16:19-31. Read this passage carefully.

These verses point out that, after death, Lazarus was comforted and the rich man was tormented. We also learn there is a great gulf between the two places so no one can pass from one side to the other. We know from the statement of Jesus in Luke 23:43 to one of the thieves that was crucified with Him, that the saved state is called "*paradise*". He said to the thief, "*Today shalt thou be with me in paradise*". Both Jesus and this thief died that day, and their souls went to paradise, the place mentioned in Luke 16 as the abode of Lazarus when he died.

In 2 Peter 2:4, a reference is made to the lost state where the rich man went when he died. In verses 4-6 of this chapter, Peter shows that judgment against the wicked is inevitable by citing three well-known instances.

The first instance he cites will shed some light on our study. Notice carefully verse 4, "*For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment...*" The word translated "*hell*" (Tartarus) in this verse does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. Thayer, in his Greek-English lexicon, says the following about the word: "The name of a subterranean region, doleful and dark, regarded by the ancient Greeks as the abode of the wicked dead, where they suffer punishment for their evil deeds" (p. 615). Therefore, we conclude that this verse has reference to the same place as that of the rich man in Luke 16.

The abode of our souls after death is given clearly and plainly in Luke 16:19-31. May you and I make sure we go to paradise when we die and not to the place of the rich man. Remember, if you go there, there will be no opportunity to change. It will be too late. You will not be able to cross over into paradise. The horribleness of this place should cause us to do some serious thinking. Remember the anguished words of the rich man, "*Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.*"

I do not want to go to a place like that. Do you?



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What's Right With the Church?

Ephesians 5:22-32

Curtis Camp

INTRODUCTION:

- A. If asked, "What's wrong with the church?" we would get a variety of answers from many people.
 - 1. Easiest thing in world is to criticize the church
 - 2. But, must remember that criticism is the poorest substitute in the world for service
 - 3. We know we are guilty of neglect – not living up to our responsibilities, we try to excuse ourselves by finding fault with the church
 - 4. Of course church is not perfect – made up of human beings – but we must admit there is more that is right with the church than is wrong. We criticize the 2% that is wrong and forget the 98% that is right.
- B. Would an auto salesman talk down his car to a prospect? Realtor criticize house he is trying to sell? Insurance salesman point out weaknesses of his company? We Christians are salesman, too.
 - 1. So, instead of running down the church, let us see what is right with the church.

I. THE CHURCH IS BUILT ON THE RIGHT FOUNDATION.

- A. What is it, 1 Corinthians 3:11?
 - 1. He never wrote a book, never printed a picture, never wrote a score of music, never founded a university, never erected a skyscraper, but, He did the ONE great thing – He built His church, Matthew 16:18.
 - 2. Never built upon a man – weak one like Peter
 - a. Psalmist sang of God as his "rock and salvation"
 - b. Paul, 1 Corinthians 10:4, says "that rock was Christ".
 - c. Then, 1 Corinthians 3:11
- B. No building stronger than its foundation
 - 1. No power on earth can defeat a thing that has Christ as its founda-

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tion, Ephesians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 3:10,11.

II. CHURCH HAS THE RIGHT PERSON AS ITS HEAD

A. Ephesians 1:22,23; Colossians 1:18

III. THE CHURCH IS RIGHT IN ITS MESSAGE.

A. What is it?

1. Message of redemption and hope. Directed to one who is in sin — lost for this world with no hope for the next and saves him and gives him hope

B. The Gospel of Salvation, Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46,47

1. Not a “social” Gospel

a. Not to march, demonstrate, riot, legislate to take a person out of the slums, but to take the slums out of the person

IV. THE CHURCH IS RIGHT IN ITS MEMBERSHIP.

A. It is more than an institution, an organization, or a building – it is all the saved, Acts 2:47.

1. No one is excluded – all races, colors, cultures, men, women, young people of all positions, who in humble submission to Lord’s will concerning salvation

B. No absolute perfection in any of us

1. Too often we judge the church by its sorriest members.

a. World never looks at finest Christians in church and says, “What a wonderful person! Christianity must be a fine thing.” No, look at some sorry member and say, “See! There is a product of Christianity. Nothing to it”

2. Places great responsibility upon us, doesn’t it? Must live each day so that when the world looks at us, it will be forced to say, “Christianity has done something for him”

3. Proposition: Let me choose first 100 members on any church roll and you choose 100 people you meet outside church. When everything is added up, will find church members far outweigh outsiders in good living and good works

C. Yes, Lord’s church the grandest in all the world. You and I are fortunate to be members of it. The highest privilege you and I will ever have – being members of it

1. Now, shall we just let it go at that? Shall we drink in all the bless-

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ings of God like a sponge and do nothing about it? God forbid!
With every privilege there goes an obligation.

V. WHAT IS OUR OBLIGATION TO THE CHURCH?

- A. First thing – “Line up with it”
 - 1. If a Christian, then in the church of course. But not to think lightly of church by saying, “Doesn’t matter about being a member of the local church”
 - a. Did Christ make a mistake when He founded the local church? Gave it as an anchor and as an opportunity for service and fellowship
- B. Pray for the church.
 - 1. We can criticize it and tear it down or can pray for it and boost it up. What do you think God wants you to do?
- C. Be faithful to all of its services
 - 1. Body needs food, drink, and sleep. Flowers in the field need sunshine and rain. And my soul needs instruction, exhortation, and encouragement which is furnished by the church and its ministry. I am a poorer man when I neglect its services
- D. Support its work
 - 1. It is a worldwide work. Begins where we live and extends to the ends of the earth
 - 2. Who is the happy man when the year ends? The one who has had a part in God’s great redemptive program for the whole world
- E. Invite others to share the blessings in the church.
 - 1. Be evangelistic. Invite, tracts, make calls, encourage, etc.
 - 2. Do you have hope? Give it to someone else. Have you found the way to heaven? Then point out the way to someone else

CONCLUSION:

- A. Are you still out of Christ?
 - 1. Illustration: Little boy to go to well in darkness of night. Asked his father to go with him. “Why do you want me to do with you?” “It is too dark to be out without a father”
 - 2. So, friend, the future and even the present is too dark for you to try it without a Father. †

Curtis Camp was a preacher for many years, primarily in the state of Texas, USA.

Feet of Clay

Daniel 2:31-35

Louis Rushmore

Thesis: As fallible creatures, mankind must be ever vigilant to ensure one's continued salvation and must be ever aware that fallible men, though esteemed, can falter, too.

Introduction:

- A. The image of Daniel Two, the subject of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, is an outstanding prophecy, which is key to the establishment of the Lord's church.
- B. Today, though, we turn to this image with the feet of clay to use it as an illustration.
- C. Obviously, the image, with feet of clay, was flawed.
- D. The focal point for the destruction of this image was its feet of clay.
- E. From this modest beginning, permit me to emphasize that all human beings also have 'feet of clay'.

Body:

I. From Bible history one can observe that it is unwise to place too much confidence in even outstanding servants of God, for they also can falter (i.e., sin).

- A. Noah saved himself and seven other souls alone from the universal flood, yet he was not always a noble example, Genesis 9:20,21.
- B. Even Abraham, the "friend of God," James 2:23, and the father of the faithful, Romans 4:16, sometimes sinned, Genesis 12:11-20; 20:1-6.
- C. King David was "a man after mine own heart", Acts 13:22, God said, but David committed adultery and murder, 2 Samuel 11:2-24.
- D. The apostle Peter denied Christ three times, Matthew 26:69-75.

II. The children of God must follow Jesus Christ foremost.

- A. Even family members must not be allowed to come between a Christian and his Lord, Luke 14:26.
- B. Christians must not allow the pursuit of earthly things to obscure our spiritual goals, Matthew 6:33.

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- C. The preservation of our lives is not more important than being faithful Christians, Luke 12:4; Revelation 2:10.
- D. We dare not trust in ourselves (be self-guides), Proverbs 3:5-7; Romans 12:3.
- E. Further, we must follow others only as they faithfully follow Christ (and thereby lead us to Christ), 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17-19.

III. Outstanding Christians today fall (or were they to fall away) and lead many to destruction.

- A. In our lifetime, preachers and elders led a prominent congregation of the Lord's church in Nashville into Pentecostalism.
- B. In recent decades, preachers led tens of thousands into "multiplying ministries" and ultimately out of the church into a new denomination called the International Churches of Christ.
- C. The director of a school of preaching, the speaker for a popular radio program, preachers and elders have committed adultery and have been found out, resulting in much hurt to the church and members in particular.
- D. Many years ago, I attended a debate in which the opponent of brother Guy N. Woods was a Pentecostal preacher. As the debate opened, the Pentecostal preacher boldly affirmed that by the conclusion of the debate brother Woods would be won over to the Pentecostal position. Of course, it never happened; brother Woods did not abandon the Gospel in favor of the Pentecostal error. However, I shuddered when the Pentecostal preacher made his audacious remark — because I was certain (and am equally certain today) that had brother Woods fallen as the Pentecostal predicted, a large, ignorant body of Christians would have blindly followed brother Woods to their eternal doom.

Conclusion:

- A. Sometimes, preachers follow their teachers, school director, or the school itself to a fault. Misplaced reverence allows someone at a great distance and outside of the autonomous congregation of which one is a member to "call the shots". Misplaced reverence can also lead one into doctrinal errors or other sins. All Christians must serve God and be true to the Book.
- B. Bible history amply demonstrates the futility of revering too much even outstanding servants of God.
- C. Contemporary history reinforces the danger of trusting in even the renowned Gospel preachers in the brotherhood.
- D. We all have 'feet of clay'!



Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

Ezekiel 18:19,20

Yet you say, 'Why should the son not bear the guilt of the father?' Because the son has done what is lawful and right, and has kept all My statutes and observed them, he shall surely live.

The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

No son is condemned by God for the sins of his father; and neither is the righteousness of one soul transmitted to another. Each one of us must stand before God in judgment for what we have done in our own lives. *"So then each of us shall give account of himself to God"* (Romans 14:12).

There is the belief among many in denominations that all humans are guilty of "Original sin" — Adam's sin — and that even babies are full of the nature and consequences of sin from birth. The passage used to validate this doctrine is Psalm 51:5 *"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me."* If David had said, "I was brought forth in rain, and in jubilation my mother conceived me"; would we think that he was full of rain and jubilation, within himself, from birth? Of course not. This verse describes the condition of David's mother at his conception and birth, not his own.

Our "Crucial Verses" explain God's view of humanity: each person, of accountable age, bears the guilt of his own sins.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

Rebecca Rushmore

Bible archaeology studies things as they relate to the Scriptures and the times in which the Bible was written (Vos 9). In the last fifty years, archaeology has continually brought forth new contributions to the study of ancient times and has gradually grown in significance (Unger 18). The purpose of this article is to show, through archaeology, that the Bible is historically accurate. Proof of its accurateness will lend credence to the claim that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. To establish the claim of historical accuracy, the journeys of Paul (from the New Testament) will be discussed.

New Testament archaeology centers around the Mediterranean Sea and closely follows the journeys of the apostle Paul (Wiseman and Yamauchi 65). Focus is placed on the areas of Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Greece, and Italy. Items under study are those which relate to the Bible in language, message, or meaning (Unger 13).

Several things mentioned by Luke in his account of Paul's journeys have been subject to criticism over the years. Many of these objections to Luke's words have been defended in light of archaeological findings. One such instance is the use of "*proconsul*" (ASV or NKJV).

Paul visited the island of Cyprus on his first missionary journey. In Acts 13:7,8 and 12, Luke used the word "*proconsul*" in reference to Sergius Paulus. Many scholars believed this to be a mistake on Luke's part. An inscription was found north of Paphos; it is believed to have been carved around A.D. 52 or 53. The inscription "under Paulus the proconsul" proves Luke was correct (Unger 185).

Luke's locations of cities have been the cause of some debate. Acts 13:14 tells of Paul's arrival in Pisidian Antioch for the first time. A Phrygian inscription was found here that can be translated "Antioch toward Pisidia" or "Pisidian Antioch". It is now known that Antioch was at one time the capital

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of the new province of Phrygia. Both districts were in the province of Galatia (Unger 190). Inscriptions found during excavations by William Ramsay have also shown the city of Iconium to be Phrygian. Historians like Cicero and Strabo placed the city in the district of Lycaonia (Unger 195-196; Ramsay 78).

The city of Thessalonica has not been excavated very extensively because the modern city is built over the ancient one (Thompson 396). In Acts 17:6 and 8, Luke refers to the rulers of the city as “politarchs” (in the Greek). As classical writers did not use this term, critics of Luke claimed this wording was a mistake. Seventeen inscriptions found around Thessalonica, including one on an arch, prove that Luke was correct in his choice of words (Wiseman and Yamauchi 91). He has also been proven correct in his use of the term “Asiarch” (Acts 19) in reference to officials at Ephesus (Wight 169).



Acts 16:12-40 records the visit of Paul to Philippi. Scholars believed for many years that Luke made two mistakes in this passage. In verse twelve, he used the Greek word “meris” to mean “region”. Until Egyptian papyri were found proving this a Macedonian idiom, this was a highly criticized verse (Wiseman and Yamauchi 90). It has also been discovered that the term “politarch” in this passage is not technically correct, but in Paul’s time it was used as a title of respect in Roman colonies (Wight 174). Discoveries along

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the paths Paul traveled have shown that Luke used current phraseology and vocabulary for his time. It is evident that Luke's account of Paul and his work for the church is true in all respects.

The items mentioned above are but a few evidences for the accurateness of the Bible in the New Testament. Numerous books and articles have been written in much greater detail confirming biblical truths through archaeology. Men such as Sir William Ramsay were convinced of the accurateness and trustworthiness of the Bible as a result of archaeological findings (Wiseman and Yamauchi 64). General New Testament archaeology, as well as the archaeology of Paul's missionary journeys, proves that "both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established" (Vos 106). **There is no doubt that archaeology proves that the Bible is accurate, and it credits the Bible to be an inspired revelation from God.** †

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Bible Archaeology is external to the Bible and a secular science that in every instance when it is applied objectively to Bible times, Bible places, Bible events, or Bible characters it validates the Bible. Since the Bible is credible in every case where it can be evaluated by the sciences, the Bible is equally credible in areas that cannot be examined by the sciences — religious teaching. ~ Louis Rushmore, Associate Editor

Defending the Faith

Bruce Daugherty

Among the earliest Christian writings appearing after the New Testament are writings responding to attacks on Christianity by pagan and Jewish authors. These writings had a two-fold aim. On one hand, they wanted to prove Christians innocent of false accusations made against them. On the other, their purpose was evangelistic: they wanted to lead others out of error and into truth. In Church History, these writings are known as the Apologists.

The Apologists took their cue from the New Testament (Gamble 84). The apostle Paul stated that he “*was appointed for the defense of the gospel*” (Philippians 1:17 NKJV). This word for de-

fense in Greek was *apologia*, meaning “verbal defense, answer, reply”. To preach Christ included a defense of the truth. The Apologists followed the spirit of Peter as he said, “*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*” (1 Peter 3:15).



By the second century, Christianity was winning converts from the upper levels of Greco-Roman society. Some of these converts were educated in the philosophical schools of their day and were taught the rhetorical skills of formal debate. They put their learning to good use as they answered the crit-

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ics of Christianity. They were firm believers that the “pen is mightier than the sword”, and they utilized writing as a way to make public defense of their beliefs and practices. Among these writers were Aristides, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras, and the great 3rd century apologists, Tertullian and Origen (Ferguson 17).

The Apologists proclaimed their innocence of criminal, social, and political charges. They wrote that Christians were law abiding and peaceful. They prayed for the well-being of the emperor so that he might govern the Empire in peace. The Apologists also boldly asserted the universality of the Christian religion. They affirmed that Christianity supplied the answer to the searching of the pagan religions and philosophies (cf. Acts 17:27,28).

The Apologists recognized the importance of a life that matched their doctrine. “Let it be understood that those who are not found living as He taught are not Christians — even though they profess with the lips the teachings of Christ” (Martyr qtd. in Bercot 128). In fact, it was this manner of life, which included how Christians faced persecution and martyrdom, that would eventually lead to the triumph of Christianity over the pagan world. Tertullian boldly affirmed, “The more often we are mown down by you, the more

in number we grow. The blood of Christians is seed” (428).

As we live in a world that is becoming increasingly hostile to Christianity, the writings of the Apologists can serve to inspire and stimulate Christians today to a clear and cohesive defense of beliefs and practices, if we will prepare ourselves for the task. †

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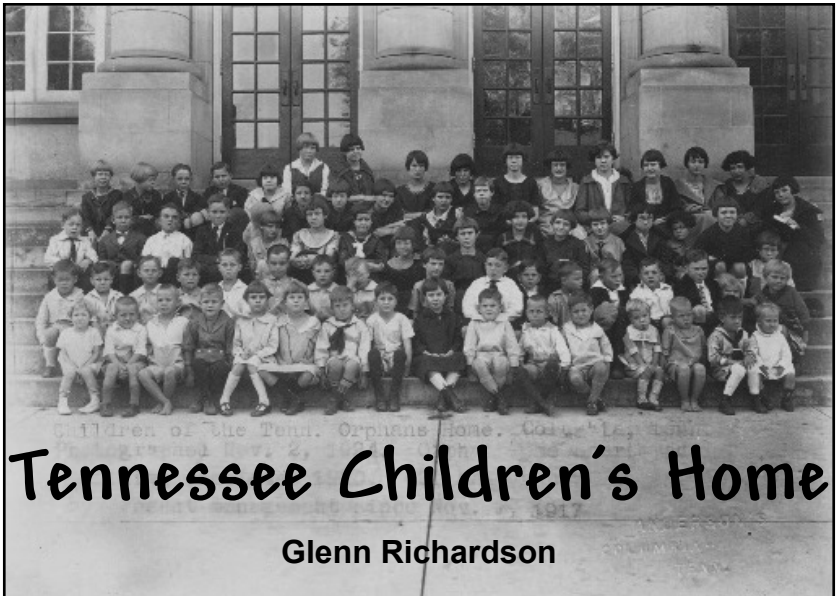
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Christianity is not merely a psychological crutch for the uneducated, but its truths have been discernible from the Bible throughout the centuries by anyone willing to consider its evidences objectively.

FROM THE HEART OF...

There are children's homes affiliated with the churches of Christ at least in these states: Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia. In addition, there are children's homes affiliated with the churches of Christ aplenty in many nations across the globe. Divine tender sentiment toward children is evident in the attitude of Jesus Christ toward them (Matthew 19:14) as well as in the New Testament epistles (James 1:27). Consequently, individual Christians and the Lord's church likewise need to reflect a comparable disposition especially toward children. The following articles concerning Tennessee Children's Home and Potter Children's Home are representative of similar efforts by the Lord's people on the behalf of children in this country and in other nations. ~ Louis Rushmore, Associate Editor



Tennessee Children's Home began in 1909 as the Tennessee Orphan Home. The West 7th Church of Christ of Columbia, Tennessee, saw an im-

FROM THE HEART OF...

mediate need to care for three children by the last name of Scotten, who had lost both of their parents. This mission has now continued for over 100 years, caring for the needs of over 18,000 children and youth! Throughout all those years, lives have been and continue to be blessed not only physically, but also spiritually as they are able to attend worship services of the Church of Christ. As a result, many have been baptized and have gone on to become more productive citizens all over the country. Many have become elders, deacons, preachers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, etc. and have expressed tremendous gratitude to Tennessee Orphan's/Children's Home for the difference that has been made, not only in their lives, but also in the lives of their families!

Tennessee Orphans' Home was incorporated on September 14, 1909 for the purpose of "supporting and educating orphan children regardless of sect, creed, or denomination". Its operations consisted primarily in the care of children who, for various reasons brought about by the country's economic depression and World Wars I and II, no longer had a family able to take care of them. During that time, TOH served, on any given day, over 200 children, from infants through early adulthood. In April 1947, TOH received not-for-profit 501(c)(3) recognition by the Internal Revenue Service.



As society changed, so did this organization. In September 1982, it changed its name to Tennessee Children's Home. It expanded its services to include foster care, group home residential treatment, child and family counseling, and independent living programs.



The purposes of TCH became to support, educate and provide Christian out-of-home care for children who are victims of abuse, dependent neglected, orphaned, and/or exploited, making all reasonable and practical efforts to provide services to meet their intellectual, emo-

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tional, physical, and spiritual needs. A further purpose is to provide family intervention that is intended to prevent or reverse family disintegration through a series of community based and family based intervention strategies.

With four campuses located across the state, Tennessee Children's Home is able to offer

a variety of services to children and their families. These include residential care for children placed by the Department of Children's Services and/or juvenile justice and classified as needing Level II services. TCH also offers mentoring, adoption, habilitated services for young adult women with special needs, A&D programs and foster care. The group home residences are family oriented — serving no more than eight children per house under the guidance of house parents. Each campus offers supervised recreational facilities

such as gymnasiums, lakes for fishing and boating, swimming pools, low and high ropes course, nature trails, softball fields, volleyball, exercise and weight-lifting equipment, games rooms, and other activities.

Frequently, loving parents privately place their children at TCH when the parents and children need professional assistance in overcoming

family problems. All the children in our care, regardless of the program, receive professional counseling. For some privately placed children, those classified as Level II, TCH offers on-campus and highly structured, therapeutic educational facilities. TCH also provides a minimum 3-month monitoring program to assist children and their families in the transition back into home, school, and work environments.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Level II residential care program is designed for children who may



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be abused or neglected and who may exhibit runaway or delinquent behavior. They may have problems with their families, local law enforcement, school environments, or with their own personal behavior. The children served are between 13- and 18-years-old. The children receive individual and group counseling, assistance with individual problems, and behavior modification instruction designed to help them become responsible adults. They live in group homes designed to be as family integrated as possible.

The Cornerstone School in Spring Hill and New Heights in West Tennessee are the on-campus schools that provide for the educational needs of children in Level II programs and private placements. Most of these children are academically behind and/or have special learning needs. The school offers a structured and treatment-oriented environment, a 6:1 student-teacher ratio, tutoring, and special education classes. Students take courses in Math, Science, English, Reading, Life Skills, Physical Education, and Bible.

As the Tennessee Children's Home works with children who have been victims of abuse, neglect, orphaned and/or exploited, all reasonable and practical efforts are made to provide services to meet their intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual needs. This program has already proven successful as we observe the changes in students' behaviors. The children become more self-confident, have less personal behavioral problems, and are more productive as members of their community. We are providing the highest quality program promising the overall growth and success of each child in our care. †

Glenn Richardson is the Coordinator of Annual Campaigns for the Tennessee Children's Home Spring Hill, Tennessee, USA



FROM THE HEART OF...



Potter Children's Home and Family Ministries

Ron McDole

Potter Children's Home and Family Ministries' primary reason for existence is to extend the compassion of Jesus to needy children and families. As an instrument in God's hands, Potter provides physical, emotional, and spiritual stability.

It was in 1901 that C.C. and Mary J. Potter opened the doors of Potter Bible College in Bowling Green, Kentucky, in memory of their son Eldon S. Potter. Their friend, James A. Harding, was president of the college until he retired.

In 1914, the decision was made to begin a children's home on the 87 acre campus. Since that time, more than 7,000 have been served; given shelter, guidance, support, vision, and love. The influence of each of these children, after their time at Potter, no doubt reaches into the hundreds of thousands.

Though the name has changed, the mission remains the same — to deliver God's justice and mercy to children and families in need. Potter Children's Home and Family Ministries daily is giving hope to those who have known little but hopelessness. This is accomplished by offering a warm bed, a hot meal, loving foster parents, educational support, and guidance, as well as by giving single mothers the opportunity to get on their feet, train for a career, and provide a secure home for their children, and by providing counseling and spiritual support to the families of children who are in crisis.



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Potter Children's Home and Family Ministries extends care through several programs. The on campus foster care ministry is for school-age children who will live in a family environment on the Potter campus with a dedicated Christian couple who serve as full-time foster parents, who give them a sense of



home and security. This ministry serves abused, neglected, and other at-risk youth. Children are educated through the public school system. Educational tutoring and other educational services are available throughout the year. Each child has a counselor to help him deal with his individual and family issues.

The Single Parent Alliance for Raising Kids (SPARK) is a ministry that meets a great need in our society. Divorce, desertion, and death have left many of our society (approximately 28% of all families) as single parents. They are often under financial and emotional stress and are in need of significant assistance. The SPARK ministry allows the existing family to stay together while changes are made to make the family cohesive as it learns to become financially independent and emotionally sound. The SPARK ministry allows



the single parent to attend school or vocational training while maintaining focus on faith and family. The old dormitory building has been converted into apartments for the SPARK program.

The "Molding the Future" capitol campaign's main thrust is to bring awareness to the need of struggling single parent families and to raise the needed funding to expand the SPARK ministry through the construction of triplex units. A triplex unit will provide housing for a single parent family living on each end and a mentoring couple living in the center apartment. The mentoring couple offers support and guidance to the single parents living beside them.

Individuals, families, church leaders, teachers, or others who know of a child or single parent family in need refer them to Potter Children's Home and Family Ministries. Children under eighteen are privately placed. Children in state custody are not placed at Potter. Potter Children's Home and Family

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Ministry relies on gifts from individuals and churches for annual care of the children.

This is an article written by a child who has called Potter home. Her story is just an example of how God can work through this ministry.

When I view my life from here, I honestly don't understand it. I know that this doesn't make sense but it will. This is my story, a confusing life of a young teen-age girl. For this to make sense, I will start at the beginning. I was born to an African father and an American mother, (with three kids, ages 6, 7, and 8). My birth to my parents made me a biracial child. This is not always easy, even in today's world. My parents were married, but they divorced for reasons unknown to me.

My father returned to Nigeria because he couldn't find work here in America. My mom struggled with being a single mom and having three kids, plus a new baby. She suffered depression. Subsequently, she heard of Potter Children's Home in Bowling Green, Kentucky. At the mere age of six months old, I moved here and forgot the man who was my father completely. The only remnants I have of him are his Nigerian name, his features and a few pictures.

Mom was still struggling with her life, and she gave temporary custody of my white half-siblings to Nancy, a Potter employee. Mom was able to keep me until I was three. Nancy took me in after having known me since I first arrived at Potter. At three, I started preschool for the next few years. During that time, I learned to read. I later grew to love reading (still do), but that comes later. At age four, I began playing soccer (another of my passions). I developed a talent for writing during elementary school. With that ability and my love of reading and speed, I flew through my early school years. I began receiving letter grades in fifth grade, never making anything short of an "A".

I entered middle school with ease and continued excellence in many aspects of my life: school, church, friends, and family. Although, I must admit some aspects of my life are not as I wished they'd be. Many nights I lie awake and wonder what my life would be like if I hadn't been "rescued" as an infant by Potter. I also wonder truly why my father left and if any of it was my fault. I wondered several times

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if there was something wrong with me. I know now that's ridiculous, but I cling to a childish hope of my father returning to my life.

I know my life has been this way for a reason, all in God's plan for me. I truly don't want to know what might have happened to me if my mother had not made all the right choices in seeking help. Or perhaps what would have happened if my dad had stuck around. I do know this; I do not need my father now. I discovered the only father I need is God, and He blessed my life by allowing me to survive. I am grateful to my heavenly Father and am forever in His debt. I am also eternally thankful to you, Nancy. You made room not only in your home but also in your heart. I am who I am because of you. You helped me when I needed it most. I know now what I didn't know then: Family isn't just about blood; it runs deep into acceptance and love. I am a Christian also and receive family love from my spiritual brothers and sisters.

In conclusion, my life from here still has its struggles. Now, I'm equipped with what I need to fight until the end. That's what I am, a fighter and survivor. Any girl in a situation without a father should know this: seek God and he will be all the Father you need. Perhaps you need to be "rescued" or find a place to belong as I did at Potter. By the way, I would like to thank the wonderful ministry and people at Potter for all you've done for me. You built a foundation for God's plan in me. I will continue to build it into the Christian adult I know I can become. My life from here is filled with love because of all of you have given it. Thanks guys, I love you and you know who you are.

Dedicated scores of churches of Christ and Christian individuals have come together in support of Potter for almost 100 years. The plan for the next 100 years is for Potter Children's Home and Family Ministries to continue the legacy that C.C. and Mary Potter began in 1914 by extending the compassion of Jesus to needy children and families. †



Ron McDole works for Potter Children's Home & Family Ministries located in Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA.

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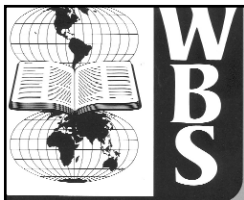
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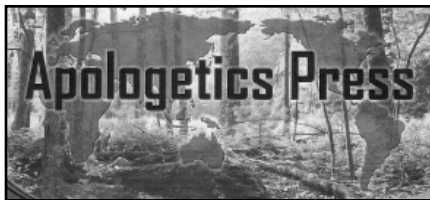
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Gospel Gazette Online is a monthly Gospel magazine on the Internet, begun by Louis and Bonnie Rushmore in 1999. Thousands of articles, written by faithful Christians, are archived and selectable through the onsite search engine. GGO is free to users throughout the world, and it is visited regularly even in parts of the world that remain virtually inaccessible to missionaries. (**www.gospelgazette.com**)

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What Can You Do to Help Spread the Word?

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

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

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

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- We want to give \$_____ each month to help send this magazine to mission fields of the world, including the USA.
- As a congregation we want to help print and circulate 100,000 copies of each issue of this magazine by making a special contribution to this effort. We can specify where the copies we pay for will be used, whether in our personal work, in jail ministry, overseas, or . . .

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

Attn: Byron Nichols

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (page 30)

1. Paul's conscience, Christ, Holy Spirit.
2. He himself would be accursed.
3. Adoption, glory, covenant, giving of the law, the service of God, the promises.
4. The coming of Christ, according to the flesh.
5. No.
6. Not all of fleshly Israel was part of spiritual Israel, or the children of promise.
7. Being a fleshly descendant of Abraham never automatically meant you were part of God's promise to Israel.
8. Isaac.
9. Descendants of Ishmael.
10. The promise that established Israel as a nation.
11. Esau and Jacob.
12. Jacob.
13. Before they were born.
14. Birth order and anything they had done.
15. Genesis 25:23.
16. Love, Esau.

Who Am I? (page 85)

Answer: Caleb

Where Am I? (page 86)

Answer: Ararat

Bible Find (page 44)



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

**The Lord's church aids children all over the world.
This is the story of one child in India:**

IMAGINE IF YOU WERE REUBEN. . .

Imagine for a moment that you were not born in the United States, but in a third-world country. At five-years-old you wander daily from door-to-door begging food from the people of Pothanur village, a city in south India. Because you live in a predominantly Hindu country, most of the children are not allowed to associate with you. Their parents fear that your bad "karma" will rub off on their children and bring bad fortune to their family. Because you have no home, there is no place to shower, and your appearance and smell are repelling to most.

You exist because ungodly men raped your mentally challenged (retarded) mother, who also roams the streets, homeless, helpless. What will your tomorrow be like? Do you want to be a doctor, policeman, or lawyer? You can't worry about that and the necessary education. You only have time to think about tonight, as your stomach growls from hunger, and which house might possibly provide your breakfast in the morning.

One day, your life took a different direction. A social worker brought you to live at Deva Anbu Illam. Immediately, you were introduced to 120 other children who will not look down on you or be prejudiced toward you because you are an orphan. They know how you feel.

As you approach the cottage that will be your new home, you see for the first time your smiling new house mother and the five other children who will grow to be your brothers and sisters. How will you get food? This is so far from the Pothanur houses where you have always begged. Meet Devanesan and Dorisami, our cooks at DAI. From this day onward you can have all of the food you want to eat.

Curiously, you observe your first worship service, and a young man stands to lead singing, and one of your friends leans to explain that this is Paul, and he is going to school to be an attorney. Imagine if you were Reuben.

Reuben is with us now. He couldn't help where or to whom he was born. He needed someone who cared, and he found just that. The Lord willing, he will spend his life praising God for His mercy and grace to the fatherless. Before long, he will likely be the one leading the songs, the prayers, the preaching, just like all of the others who have come. God is great! Reuben's clothing, food and housing will cost \$35 per month. A commitment to take on the support of one of these children could be the best resolution you ever made.

**Contact us at the Banner Elk Church of Christ;
doniverson@juno.com**