

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



What has been entrusted in the hands of Christians? the entire work of the Godhead from the beginning of time: to "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature..." (Mark 16:15)

From Saul to Paul

Angela Chapman

*They laid their clothes at the feet of a
Young man named Saul
Who later became the apostle Paul
Preaching the Gospel to all.*

*Stuck in a sinful abode
Then he was blinded on the Damascus road
Of him, Jesus took hold*

*Without sight, food, water
For three days he prayed
In the city of Damascus he stayed
Until someone should show him the way*

*Ananias to him came
Saul would never be the same
He would have a brand-new name*

*"Saul, why do you wait?
It may then be too late.*

Don't let hell be your fate.

*Arise! Be baptized!
Have salvation realized
And reach for the Heavenly prize."*

*Saul washed his sins away
Salvation he did not delay
Jesus he would never betray*

*He defended the way
From the Lord he didn't stray
He was faithful from day to day*

*From Saul to Paul
He exhorted others to obey the gospel call
He gave Jesus his all*

HOPE FOR THE WORLD

EPH. 2:12-17; COL. 1:3-6

1 Peter 1:3

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..."



... THAT THEY SHOULD SEEK GOD, IF HAPPY THEY MIGHT FEEL AFTER HIM

God's Plan - Eph. 3:8-12 | Promise - Gen. 22:18
Love - 1 Jo. 4:10-11 | Grace - Heb. 2:9 | Gift - Joh. 3:16
Christ/Seed - Gal. 3:16 | Hope - 1 Ti. 1:1 | Way - Joh. 14:1-6
Sin Bearer - 1 Pe. 2:24 | Redeemer - 1 Pe. 1:18-19

AND FIND HIM, THOUGH HE IS NOT FAR FROM EACH ONE OF US... ACTS 17:27

Where? IN CHRIST
ETERNAL LIFE - 2 Ti. 1:1 | Jo. 5:11
ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS - EPH. 1:3
NEW CREATURES - 2 Co. 5:17



How? OBEY THE GOSPEL: MAR. 16:15-16
1 HEAR - MAT. 17:5 2 BELIEVE - MAR. 16:15-16
3 REPENT - ACTS 17:30 4 CONFESS - ACTS 8:37
5 BE BAPTIZED - ACTS 2:38; GAL. 3:27 6 REMAIN PURE - 1 Jo. 3:3

THE CHURCH, THE DEAR BRIDE OF OUR SAVIOR



THE BRIDE OF CHRIST IS THE CHURCH & BODY OF CHRIST (EPH. 5:22-23): Christ has only One Bride, One Church, One Body (Eph. 1:22-23). The denominations offer many.

HER BRIDEGROOM IS CHRIST (JOHN 3:29; MAT. 9:15; 25:1). The Bridegroom is none other than Christ, not Moses (Rom. 7:1-4), not the Pope (Catholicism), not Luther (Lutheran), not John Wesley (Methodist), not John Smyth (Baptist), not Joseph Smith (Mormon), not Russel (Jehovah Witness), not John Calvin (Presbyterian), nor any of the many other founders of denominational bodies.

SHE IS THE PICTURE OF UNITY (1 CO. 12:12-25): She is made up of many members (baptized Believers—vv. 12-14), individual Christians (not denominations), each with an important role to fulfill within the church (vv 12:15-25). Are you fulfilling yours?

SHE HAS BEEN ESPOUSED TO CHRIST ALONE THROUGH HIS GOSPEL ALONE (2 CO. 11:2-4): Paul warned the church at Corinth of false teachers who would teach a different christ, a different spirit, and a different gospel. When a doctrine is preached that is different from the doctrine of Christ, it is not Christ that is being preached! Denominationalism and false teachers within the church offer thousands of different “gospels”. See Gal. 1:6-10.

HER BEAUTIFUL BOUQUET IS THE GOSPEL: It is thrown out to sinners of the world as a sweet smelling invitation to become part of His pure bride, the church.
Cf. Rev. 22:17; Mar. 16:15-16.

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

STAFF:

Editor: Louis Rushmore
Associate Editors: Jerry Bates
Shane Fisher
Editor Emeritus: Byron Nichols
Founding Editor: J.C. Choate
Layout: Betty Burton Choate
Emily Fisher
Office Manager: Paula Bates
Subscriptions: Barbara Wright
Computer Consultants: Bradley S. Choate
Dennis Larson

ENGLISH EDITION IN INDIA AND BRAILLE EDITION:

Managing Editors, Philemon Rajah
and Kingsly Rajah

ENGLISH EDITION IN NIGERIA:

Managing Editor, Makinde Olefumi

ENGLISH EDITION IN GHANA:

Managing Editor, Seth Larbi

TELUGU EDITION:

Managing Editor, Translator:
Joshua Gootam

TAMIL EDITION:

Managing Editor, Translators:
Benny Martin, S. Rajanayagam

HINDI EDITION:

Managing Editor, Earnest Gill

MARATHI EDITION

Managing Editor, Amul Bansod

NEPALI EDITION:

Nepal Center for Biblical Study

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

STAFF WRITERS:

George Akpabli	Jack Harriman
Felix O. Aniamalu	Gordon Hogan
Rex Banks	Wayne Jackson
Wayne Barrier	Ancil Jenkins
Paula Bates	Jeff Jenkins
Roy Beasley	John Kachelman, Jr.
Mike Benson	Dayton Keesee
Ron Bryant	David R. Kenney
Charles Burch	Dalton Key
Kyle Butt	Michael L. King
Frank Chesser	Robert C. Lupo
Betty B. Choate	J. Randal Matheny
Glenn Colley	Cecil May, Jr.
David Conley	Wes McAdams
Lance Cordle	Colin McKee
Sunny David	Kevin L. Moore
Hans Dederscheck	Owen D. Olbricht
David Deffenbaugh	David Pharr
Clarence DeLoach, Jr.	Neal Pollard
Bill Dillon	Mark Posey
Bobby G. Dockery	Steve Reeves
Hershel Dyer	Andy Robison
Earl Edwards	Martha Rushmore
Demar Elam	Rebecca Rushmore
Raymond Elliott	David A. Sargent
Reuben Emperado	David Tarbet
David Everson	J.J. Turner
Emily Fisher	Ken Tyler
Royce Frederick	Allen Webster
Gary C. Hampton	

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

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

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

THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU

(ROMANS 16:16).

One Race and One Body

Louis Rushmore



One Race

Acts 17:26 informs us that God “...made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth...” (NKJV, KJV, YLT, etc.). Other translations of the same verse read somewhat differently but teach the same truth. “...he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth...” (ASV). “...he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth...” (ESV). “From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth...” (NIV). “...He made out of one source material every nation of mankind to inhabit the entire surface of the earth” (Wuest’s New Testament Expanded Translation). (The derived Greek text from which the KJV and similar translations were translated relies on a large **quantity** of manuscripts, while the ASV and other translations depend on a derived Greek text from three or so older manuscripts, therefore, supposedly of higher **quality**.)

Irrespective of the translation above to which one turns respecting Acts 17:26, **it ought to be obvious to every Bible-believer that actually there is only one race—the human race.** Dissimilarities of skin pigmentation, hair color, eye color, physique, ethnicity, culture, language, gender (i.e., male or female), age, economics, education, social status, habitat and such like are relatively irrelevant and do not alter the fact that every person is a part of **THE human race.** Everyone—who has ever lived, is now living or who shall ever live—has Adam and Eve as his or her first biological, ancestral parents (Genesis 1:28). We’re all related to Adam and

Eve; every human being ultimately belongs to the same extended family. We are all brothers and sisters through Adam and Eve. Later in human history and following the universal flood of Noah's day, God at that time charged Noah's family to repopulate the earth (Genesis 9:1). Therefore, every human being likewise is a descendant of those eight souls who disembarked Noah's ark (1 Peter 3:20). Once more, we emphasize that we are brothers and sisters through the expanded family of Noah.



We are all humans and equally related to our first parents—Adam and Eve—and subsequently related likewise to Noah's family. It is no wonder, then, that God is no respecter of persons (Romans 2:11; 1 Peter 1:17). That being true, the Gospel—God's plan for the redemption of humanity—is for all of mankind irrelevant of dissimilarities of skin pigmentation, hair color, eye color, physique, ethnicity, culture, language, gender, age, economics, education, social status, habitat and such like. ***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek”*** (Romans 1:16 NKJV). ***“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”*** (Mark 16:15). ***“... make disciples of all nations...”*** (Matthew 28:19). No member of the human race is exempted from the potential blessings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

One Body

When **anyone**, irrespective of dissimilarities of skin pigmentation, hair color, eye color, physique, ethnicity, culture, language, gender, age, economics, education, social status, habitat and such like, conforms to that Gospel, then, he or she is “**saved**” and added to the church of the Bible by Jesus Christ Himself (Acts 2:47). The New Testament categorizes all of humanity into two groups—Jews and non-Jews or Gentiles. Through compliance with the Gospel, people from those two groups become **one body**.

*Therefore remember that you, once **Gentiles** in the flesh—who are called **Uncircumcision** by what is called the **Circumcision** [Jews] made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise,*




*having no hope and without God in the world. But **now in Christ Jesus** you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has **made both one**, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself **one new man from the two**, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in **one body** through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you **who were afar off** [Gentiles] and to **those who were near** [Jews]. For through Him we **both have access** by one Spirit to the Father. (Ephesians 2:11-18)*

Non-Jews and Jews who obey the Gospel are “*fellow citizens...and*

members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). Non-Jews and Jews “*who do not obey the Gospel*” (2 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17) remain interrelated and equal through their biological, ancestral relationship to Adam and Eve, as well as to Noah’s family, but they **are not** family members of the household of God—the “*one body*” (Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12, 20; Ephesians 4:4; Colossians 3:15)—“*the church*” (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23; Colossians 1:18, 24). “*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 12:13). “*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:27-28). Each child of God, without distinction owing to dissimilarities of skin pigmentation, hair color, eye color, physique, ethnicity, culture, language, gender, age, economics, education, social status, habitat and such like enjoys spiritual equality—salvation. (Only **roles** differ for male and female Christians, elders, deacons, preachers, and teachers.)

Conclusion

The artificial distinctions of the dissimilarities of skin pigmentation, hair color, eye color, physique, ethnicity, culture, language, gender, age, economics, education, social status, habitat and such like do not detract from anyone’s membership in **THE one race—THE human race**. Neither do the peculiarities from one person to another reduce the spiritual equality and membership of any Christian in **the one body—the one church of the Bible**. All we are one race—the human race. All we who have believed Jesus Christ to be the Son of God or the Messiah (John 8:24), have contacted the saving blood of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:5) by being buried in baptism into the death of Christ (Romans 6:3-4) and have been resurrected therefrom to walk in newness of life with Him (Romans 6:4-5) are “*one in Christ*” (Galatians 3:28). (Repentance—Acts 2:38—and professing Jesus to be the Christ—Romans 10:9-10—go along with Gospel obedience, which leads to forgiveness of past sins.) Human beings are brothers and sisters through a common ancestry with Adam and Eve, and all Christians are “*heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ*” (Romans 8:17). 

Are You Spiritually Blind?

Jerry Bates



Being spiritually blind is a great, eternal tragedy, and I feel certain that most people reading this would immediately proclaim that they are not spiritually blind. Hopefully, that is true; however, we should not be so quick to assert such a statement.

For one thing, we must realize that at one time we were all spiritually blind.

Before we surrendered our lives in faith to Jesus, all of us were lost in sin. Paul declared in Ephesians 5:8, ***“for you were once darkness....”*** Scripture associates sin with darkness. When we are walking in physical darkness, we are in effect blind because we cannot see obstacles in our way. Similarly, when we are walking in sin, we are in darkness and are spiritually blind. All of mankind eventually chooses to sin against God and becomes spiritually blind. Paul affirmed this spiritual truth when he wrote, ***“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”*** (Romans 3:23). Yes, it is a great tragedy to be spiritually blind; however, we also need to realize that Christ came to deliver us from such a state. Part of Ephesians 5:8 was mentioned earlier, but Paul continued in the same verse, ***“... but now you are light in the Lord.”*** Yes, we were all once in darkness, but we do not have to continue in darkness. We can become light by following the light of the world, Jesus Christ (John 9:5). Jesus made that statement and then proved it by giving physical sight to a man that had been born blind. Jesus came to earth to deliver us from the power of darkness. Paul declared that Jesus came to earth ***“to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those***

who are sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:18). Only Christ can give us sight, and until we submit by faith to Him in baptism for the remission of our sins (Mark 16:16), we will remain spiritually blind.

Yet, there is one more thing we must consider. We may have done that in the past but are spiritually blind again. In Revelation 3:14-22, we find a letter written to the church in Laodicea. Verse 17 states that those Christians did not know that they were ***“wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.”*** Notice that these Christians were said to be blind. Obviously, they were not physically blind. They were not spiritually blind because they no longer believed in Jesus or were living such wicked lives. They were blind because they were lukewarm (3:16); they were no longer fully committed to Jesus. Unfortunately, I believe there are many Christians today in a similar situation. Due to the stresses and temptations of life, they are no longer fully committed to Christ and have become lukewarm and are, in effect, blind.

Sadly, multitudes of people today do not realize they are blind; yet, many others choose to remain blind. No one would choose to remain physically blind if the alternative were available. We might wonder why anyone would choose to remain blind. There might be several reasons, but briefly let us notice three.

Firstly, some choose to remain blind due to fear. The parents of the blind man in John 9 were asked why their son could now see (9:19). They knew who had made it possible for their son to see, but they were afraid to confess that because they feared the Jews (9:22). They were afraid of what the religious leaders would do to them. Thus, they remained spiritually blind due to fear. Similarly, many today believe the truth about Jesus, but they are afraid of what others may think or say about their faith, and so, they never do anything about it. Their faith is dead or worthless (James 2:26), and they remain spiritually blind.


Secondly, some choose to remain blind because of their allegiance to their religious leaders. After this blind man was healed, we would think that crowds of other sick and blind people would be brought to Jesus, but we do not read of such actions. Instead, we find that the friends and neighbors of the blind man brought him to the Pharisees (9:8, 13). Instead of rejoicing that a blind man had been made to see (something which had never happened before the coming of Jesus, 9:32), they were critical because it was done on the Sabbath Day. In effect, these people brought this man to their religious

leaders and asked them to solve the situation for them. These men had the power and were supposed to have all the answers. It seems they were not going to believe or do anything until their religious leaders approve them.

Masses of people are living in a similar situation today. They are following some religious leader or group, and they are not going to change their beliefs. Unfortunately, many attempt to justify such a lifestyle by asserting that if one is sincerely following a certain belief system, then surely God would save him despite his error. Jesus clearly pointed out the foolishness of such a life in Matthew 15:14. ***“They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”*** We must be sure we are following the true teachings of God as revealed in Scripture rather than the teachings of man (Matthew 15:7-9).

Thirdly, many people remain blind due to pride. The religious leaders of John 9 are examples of this distressing situation. They were facing a miracle that confirmed the deity of Jesus. They could not deny the miracle, but they could not accept the evident conclusion either. They claimed to be the only ones who could see, but in actuality, they were blind. Because of their pride and position in life, they refused to accept the plain truth as articulated by the blind man (John 9:30-34). They ridiculed this man and threw him out of the synagogue. They thought he could teach them nothing of a spiritual nature.

Likewise, multitudes today are living in a similar condition. Many are prideful of their education, social prominence or other things and refuse to seriously consider biblical teachings. Even in the church, some look down on others of lesser educational attainments and sometimes consider their religious views as not worthy of serious consideration. I have heard people say, “I am satisfied with my life!” They are satisfied with whatever situation in which they are and refuse to even consider an alternative belief. They are like the religious leaders of John 9 as described by Jesus in verse 41. ***“...But now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains.”*** Isaiah pictured the sad condition of such people in Isaiah 5:21, which reads, ***“Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight!”***

The miracle in John 9 reminds us of the danger of spiritual blindness. It is easy to say, “I see,” even while being blind. There is no shame in being blind; the only shame is in remaining spiritually blind. Let us always reflect on our lives and be sure that we can truly see spiritually. 



PARADOXES OF CHRISTIANITY: ALONE, YET NOT ALONE

Shane Fisher

A paradox is defined as, “a statement that seems self-contradictory or absurd, yet in fact expresses a possible truth” (www.dictionary.com). The Bible is full of paradoxes. In this article, we will see that the Bible teaches that **a Christian is alone, yet not alone.**

AN EXISTING PROBLEM: SPIRITUAL ALONENESS

God made us as social beings. He meant for our relationships to have a social aspect to them. God created us to have friends (Proverbs 17:17; 18:24; 27:17). In the beginning of the creation, God said it was not good for a man to be alone. Therefore, He made a helper for man—a woman (Genesis 2:18-24). A husband and wife are to be best friends—a picture of Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:22-33).

There is something far worse than social aloneness and that is **spiritual aloneness**. Spiritual aloneness happens to every human being who becomes accountable to the law of God when he comes to realize the difference between right and wrong (Deuteronomy 1:39; Romans 7:7-13) and chooses to sin against God’s law (1 John 3:4). He separates himself from a relationship with God (Isaiah 59:1-2).

This took place in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve had an open and special relationship with God. When Eve was tempted by the serpent, she and her husband fell into sin when they ate the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:1-6). Thereafter, they attempted to hide from God (Genesis 3:7-8). It is very clear that they once had a wonderful relationship with their Creator, but then



it horribly struck them that they were **spiritually alone**. They had separated themselves from God by sin. It only got worse after this as Cain murdered his brother Abel. The text says, “*he went out from the presence of the Lord*” (Genesis

4:16). Cain was spiritually alone without God. Every accountable human being has followed in the footsteps of Adam, Eve and Cain by choosing to sin against God. It is an ever-existing problem in our modern world.

Jesus’ famous parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–31) illustrates sinfulness. As one reads the parable carefully, he discovers that there were two lost boys. The first one that had gone away from the house realized how spiritually alone he was, and he sought to return to his father’s house. He was greeted by his father. His older brother, though, was not happy about the news. At the end of the parable, it is the older brother who was **outside** the father’s house. He was spiritually alone as he represented the Pharisees who needed to be restored to God.

Man has a **vacuum** in his heart, and it can only be filled by God Himself (Ecclesiastes 3:11). We need to realize our spiritual bankruptcy before God and that we desperately need Him (Matthew 5:8). God had begun already, before time, to initiate a plan to redeem those who were made in His image. Ultimately, God’s strategy was to send His Son Jesus Christ to die for our sins and to reconcile us back to Himself so that we would not be left alone (1 Peter 1:20; Ephesians 1:3-14). We can have a relationship with our Creator and the sin problem can be repaired by trusting in the blood of God’s dear Son, through water immersion to cleanse our sins (Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:11-12).

AN EXAMPLE OF ALONE, YET NOT ALONE

Even after we become Christians, there are times in our lives when we can feel that we are alone. Just because we trust and obey the Gospel does not mean that life is going to be convenient and easy. In fact, becoming a child of God may result in one's life becoming more difficult. If we have a strong faith, then we will realize the spiritual paradox that actually we are not alone.

Think about Joseph (Genesis 37-50). He was sold into slavery by his brothers into a foreign land. Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce him to commit adultery, and then, she falsely accused him, leading to his imprisonment. Later, the butler forgot Joseph and what he had done for him. It would have been quite easy for Joseph to think he was abandoned and he was all alone. Yet, God was actually with him! Stephen stated, "...*God was with him and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house*" (Acts 7:9-10; Genesis 39:1-2, 21).

EXEMPLIFYING THIS PRINCIPLE: ALONE, YET NOT ALONE

Let us apply this paradox of truth to our lives today. In Matthew 14:28-31, a raging storm came roaring on the Sea of Galilee, and the disciples thought they were going to drown. Jesus was asleep during the storm. The disciples woke Him and asked a question that was filled with anxiety and worry. The disciples felt they were alone, **but they were not alone**, because Jesus was in the ship with them. Jesus is with us, too, when we are going through the storms of life. Let us neither doubt nor fear, but let us always remember that He will guide us and will help land us peacefully on the blissful shore beyond this life.

In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus gave us commandments to not worry. In fact, He stressed it three times! We sin when we allow worry to conquer our lives! Jesus stated that the Creator takes care of the birds. If He takes care of the birds, then how much more will He take care of His children? God holds the future in His hands!

Do you have difficulty facing moral choices such as fornication or drinking alcoholic beverages? Do you have that strong desire to gaze at pornography? Remember that Joseph faced some difficult choices, too. He realized that he would sin against God if he participated in those immoral

activities. Joseph was not the only one to run away that day. **In fact, the devil ran away as well because Joseph resisted him!** James 4:7,8 states, *“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”* Remember that God always provides a way of escape if we will just resist the temptation and go through the door of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13)!

CONCLUSION

Are you experiencing spiritual aloneness? Do you now feel the guilt and shame of sinning against a holy and righteous God? Do you see the spiritual chasm you created for yourself? Jesus has rebuilt the bridge over the chasm and desires for you to walk across it and to return to your Creator by being born again by obeying the Gospel of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18-20; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). You will be added to God’s family—the church. In the church, we are a community that is not alone. We can help one another and encourage one another on our journey to Heaven! †

Comfort

Have you ever noticed that the Bible notes cycles in life? Two such verses are 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, which read, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”* Notice in these two verses

that God comforts us, and because He comforts us, we are to comfort one another.

Think about how you feel when someone offers you comfort by a hug, just a listening ear or merely sitting at your side without a word. Notice the full cycle. God comforts us, and then, we comfort others just as God has comforted us. Remember, God is the God of all comfort. He comforts as no other.

Eddie Cooper is a Gospel preacher who resides in South Charleston, West Virginia, USA.





1932—2008

Evangelism! The Work of the Church

J.C. Choate

Imagine this: a person hears and understands the Gospel, he repents of his sins and is baptized into Christ. Immediately, God transforms his body into immortal substance, and he goes to his eternal home.

Wouldn't that be wonderful? No struggles. No temptations. Not one soul ever being lost! What a perfect plan!

Why didn't God think of that? Wait! If every Christian was taken to be with God the moment he was born into the family, who would be left in the world to bring that message of salvation to others? No one! So the saving power of the Gospel would have ended on the first day of the beginning of the church, and the world would have been lost in total darkness ever since then!

So, that is why we live in this alien environment, in this world whose lord is Satan—so that each one of us can be the light of Christ, shining in all the darkness of sin. Think back to your own conversion: in most cases, was it not the result of some caring Christian loving you enough to teach you the Truth? That explains why you are here, facing whatever trials and troubles Satan brings into your life. You are here to bear fruit in the form of souls saved from eternal damnation.

Jesus' farewell words to His followers included the all-important command, ***“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”*** (Mark 16:15-16). In time, as a result of their obedience to that command, great persecution occurred, and ***“...those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word”*** (Acts 8:4). Through the dedication of those first Christians, in less than one generation, the apostle Paul could write by inspiration: ***“...the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world...”*** (Colossians 1:5-6).

Even though almost 2,000 years have passed since that time, neither the command to Christians nor the work we have been left in the world to do has changed. Yet, the population has changed! How can the relatively small number of Christians take the Gospel to more than seven billion people? Is it humanly possible?

If the work was to be done solely through the efforts of humans, it would not be possible, but Jesus promised, ***“...lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”*** (Matthew 28:20). In John 14:18, He promised, ***“I will not leave you orphans.”*** What is the message? It is that this work He has entrusted in our hands is still **His work**, and that He will be with us every step of the way.

In practical terms, what does that mean? If we look back at history, we can see: In every age, God has provided the tools the church would have to have to evangelize the world, and much more has been done than history records. God does His part. He lays the tools on the table, and then, it is the decision of Christians and the church whether or not we will use the equipment He has provided.

✳ Today, to evangelize such a large population, a nucleus of Christians is vital. We have just such a nucleus in the U.S.

✳ In order to ***“go into all the world,”*** the Christians must be able to travel abroad. We have that freedom.

✳ Those Christians must have a currency that can be used wherever they go. We have that currency.

✳ English has become the world's primary language, and it is our **mother tongue**.

In these vital points, God has blessed the church here in the US with the necessary basic tools for going into all the world with His message of salvation. However, with so many souls, today, He knows that first-century tools will not be enough. So, what equipment has He laid in our hands that the early Christians did not have?

✳ The Bible is available in all major languages of the world and most of the minor ones at very little cost. Through the circulation of the printed Word, the message has gone before us and has helped to **make a highway in the desert.**

✳ The postal system is a reliable method for taking letters, Bible courses and books to every corner of the world.

✳ Radio and shortwave radio make it possible for people everywhere to hear the Gospel.

✳ Printing presses, computers and copiers mean that duplication of the message can be done inexpensively anywhere.

✳ Television has opened the world to the visual preaching of the Gospel via satellite.

✳ Cell phone service is available almost everywhere and at very reasonable cost.

✳ The Internet is increasingly available to even the most isolated people. Churches have websites with archives of thousands of lessons available to those who can access them.

✳ CDs and DVDs are inexpensive tools for recording volumes of materials—the Bible in different languages and versions, commentaries, concordances and other reference materials so that even those who have no access to religious books and libraries can study God’s Word.

✳ Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Zoom and other inventions are monumental new additions to the ways we have of communicating to people worldwide. Every day, the arsenal of tools increases. Yes, they may be used secularly, but in reality, **these are provisions supplied by God to enable His church to bring the Gospel to every creature of all the world.** Will we pick them up and use them?

What will we, as individual Christians and as congregations, do with the trust committed to us? †

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GOD

Why, God?.....	Jared Green.....	21
An Eternal Warranty.....	Robert Johnson.....	23
Always in Control.....	Terry Wheeler.....	25
Our Father.....	Betty Burton Choate.....	26

EVIDENCES

The Pink Fairy Armadillo.....	David Everson.....	29
-------------------------------	--------------------	----

THE WORD OF GOD

What Isaiah Would Preach Today.....	Hiram Kemp.....	31
Bible Commentaries and Reference Books.....	Donald R. Fox.....	34

SALVATION

When Prayer Is an Abomination.....	Ernest S. Underwood.....	37
You Must be Circumcised.....	Gary C. Hampton.....	38
The King Became Poor.....	David A. Sargent.....	40
Persecution (and the lack thereof).....	Brad Harrub.....	41

THE CHURCH

A Manmade Religion.....	T. Pierce Brown.....	46
It's Not Merely a Religion.....	Larry Martin.....	50

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

“Reverend” and “Father”.....	Royce Frederick.....	52
Do Not Believe Every Spirit.....	Sunny David.....	54

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Encouraging One Another.....	Martha Lynn Rushmore.....	58
How Deep Is the Mud?.....	Tom Baxley.....	60
A Hoary Head Is a Crown of Glory.....	Christine Berglund.....	61

WORSHIP

Bless the Lord.....	Raymond Elliott.....	63
Make Sure Our Worship Is Worship!.....	David Conley.....	64
Come Worship with Us.....	Larry Murdock.....	65

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

God's Chosen Path for You.....	Aaron Cozort.....	72
Your Speech Betrays You.....	Paul Holland.....	74
How Closely Is God Watching Us?.....	Cliff Holmes.....	76

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

The Importance of Family Prayer Time.....	Rodney Nulph.....	78
---	-------------------	----

The Challenges of Young People.....	Volois Hooper.....	80
-------------------------------------	--------------------	----

TEXTUAL STUDIES

The Fool’s Theme Song	Denny Petrillo	83
Where Two or Three Are Gathered Together.....	Louis Rushmore	84

BIBLE CHARACTERS

Paul’s Placement in the Ministry.....	Brian R. Kenyon	86
What Did You Come to See?	David R. Kenney	90

BIBLICAL HISTORY

Things I learned from Noah.....	Anonymous	92
---------------------------------	-----------------	----

CHURCH HISTORY

The Long Road to Restoration.....	Jim Dearman	93
-----------------------------------	-------------------	----

CHARTS & OUTLINES

Christ Gave Himself for Me!	Mark N. Posey	98
-----------------------------------	---------------------	----

HEY YOU KIDS

Your Fathers Tempted Me Ten Times.....	Mark McWhorter	100
--	----------------------	-----

FEATURES, POEMS AND FILLERS

From Saul to Paul.....	Angela Chapman.....	inside front cover
Brief Salvation	Robert C. Lupo	1
Brief Church.....	Robert C. Lupo	2
One Race and One Body.....	Louis Rushmore	4
Are You Spiritually Blind?	Jerry Bates.....	8
Paradoxes of Christianity: Alone, Yet Not Alone.....	Shane Fisher	11
Cooper’s Corner	Eddie Cooper.....	14
Evangelism! The Work of the Church.....	J.C. Choate.....	15
5-Minute Bible Study	Paula Bates	20
David’s Devotional.....	David Conley.....	22, 77, 108
Robison’s Rubies.....	Andy Robison.....	24, 39, 53, 85
Kenney’s Pennies.....	David R. Kenney	30, 49, 51, 59, 91
Did You Know?.....	Rebecca Rushmore.....	33, 37, 63, 96
Bible Find.....	Martha Rushmore.....	43
Verse Search.....	Jerry Bates.....	44
Quick Commentary	Betty Burton Choate.....	57
How Do You Measure Up?	Betty Burton Choate	69
Humor.....	Shane Fisher.....	70
Bible Word Scramble	Rebecca Rushmore.....	97
Scavenger Hunt.....	Rebecca Rushmore.....	101
From the Heart Of.....	Betty Burton Choate.....	102
Noting Your Bible	Emily Fisher.....	107



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Assurance in Christ

Paula Bates

1. Let us draw near with a _____ heart in full _____ of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water. Let us hold fast the _____ of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is _____. Hebrews 10:22-23
2. That their hearts may be _____, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the _____ assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of _____. Colossians 2:2
3. This hope we have as an _____ of the soul, both sure and _____, and which enters the Presence behind the veil. Hebrews 6:19
4. According to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have _____ and access with _____ through faith in Him. Ephesians 3:11-12
5. Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and he in Him. And by this we _____ that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us. 1 John 3:24



-
- Answers:**
1. true, assurance, confession, confidence
 2. encouraged, full, Christ
 3. anchor, steadfast
 4. boldness, confidence
 5. know

WHY, GOD?

Jared Green

If you have ever questioned the motives or works of God, you are not alone. The Book of Habakkuk shows a meaningful dialogue between God and His prophet, Habakkuk. Looking at the historical setting, Judah (God's covenant people) was caught up in sin. In the 620s B.C., under the reign of King Josiah, Judah had experienced spiritual reform and, in many ways, had turned back to God. Habakkuk's dialogue came after the death of Josiah and following Judah's return to its sinful ways. Habakkuk questioned God twice. First, he perceived that God was inactive in the face of wickedness, and he questioned how He could allow such egregious sin to go unpunished. Second, Habakkuk questioned how God could use a more wicked people (Babylon) as a means by which to punish a less wicked people (Judah). As we look at two things that God says in response to Habakkuk, it is my hope that we can keep them in our hearts when we find ourselves asking, "Why?"

First, **we serve a God who never ceases His works.** In response to Habakkuk's first complaint, God said, *"Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told"* (1:5). In our mortal minds, it is impossible to see the complex ways in which God is working in this world. In the ensuing verses, God explained to Habakkuk that He had not turned a blind eye to sin and injustice. In the same way today, God is not turning a blind eye to the things of this world. Our God is very much at work, in ways we could never understand.

Second, **faithfulness to God is paramount,** even in the face of tribulation and lack of understanding. After Habakkuk's second complaint, God told him, *"The righteous shall live by his faith"* (2:4). There are two things we need to understand about this statement. First, **faithful living brings God's spiritual blessing.** God's message to Habakkuk was that those who are faithful to Him through hard times will live. Those faithful to God will be blessed by God. Second, **faithfulness is not a singular action, but a way of life.** As one writer said, "The true believer, declared

GOD

righteous by God, will persevere in faith as the pattern of his life.”

In the face of uncertainty, we, as followers of God, can persevere. We do so in living by faith and understanding that God, even when we do not understand, never ceases His work on this earth. That brings me joy and hope, and I pray it does the same for you. God loves you. †

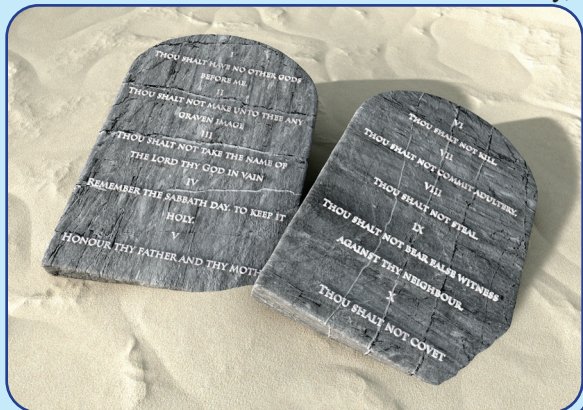
Jared Green is the associate minister at the Calvert City Church of Christ in Calvert City, Kentucky, USA.

David's Devotional

David Conley

Would you worship a stone? Most people today would answer, “Absolutely not!” However, people (like you and me) used to do it, and entire nations bowed their knees to stone! Yet, we would confidently say that we would never do that! The other day, talking about the Ten Commandments written in stone, I mused about where the actual stone tablets may be today. Doubtlessly, if those stone tablets were still around, we would probably worship them since they were written by God Himself. We would be in awe of them! Unfortunately, the principles laid out in them (that should be written in our hearts) do not give us such “awe”! Why not? †

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



GOD

An Eternal Warranty

Robert Johnson

Most people want to know about the warranty when they buy something of significant value. Will it last? What will the company's response be if something goes wrong, if it needs adjusting or if some type of repair is required? I remember years ago when the government changed the conditions of a lifetime warranty to be rephrased as a limited lifetime warranty. It didn't sound quite the same as it had previously. However, if the company that makes a product goes out of business, the warranty usually is gone as well.



It reminds me of something my dad told me years ago. "A promise is only as good as the one making it." Warranties are only good as long as companies honor them or stay in business to honor them. In like manner, a person's word is only as good as the integrity of the person. It's easy to make promises but something else to fulfill them. Many times, excuses follow promises, or the person who made the promise conveniently disappears.

Aren't you glad our God is faithful in His promises? What promises He makes to us! Peter reminds us how wonderful they are. ***"By these He has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may share in the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world because of evil desires"*** (2 Peter 1:4). Just thinking of what He promised us should cheer any heart. He has promised to be with us always (Matthew

GOD

28:20). He has promised us eternal life (1 John 2:25). He has promised His help and strength through the course of our lives (2 Thessalonians 3:3). He promises never to allow us to be tempted beyond our ability to resist (1 Corinthians 10:13). He promises that Heaven will far exceed any suffering we endure here and now (Romans 8:18). How many more could we mention? In all of them, God will be true to do what He has said.

What confidence should this give us in living the Christian life! Since we know God will do all He has said, we should be highly motivated to do our best for Him. With every expression of love His promises show us, our love should be returned in offering ourselves to Him (1 John 4:19). We should not let Satan rob us of our joy, substituting fear and doubt in place of God's promises. We can take heart because Christ has overcome the world (John 16:33), and we share His victory (1 Corinthians 15:57).

We may not know whether earthly promises will stand, but we should never doubt the promises of God. Rejoice in His love, His help, His hope and His salvation. None of these will ever fail. ***“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, His love is eternal”*** (Psalm 136:1). †

Robert Johnson preaches for the Lord's church in Longview, Texas, USA.

Robison's Rubies

It was prophesied in the Old Testament that someone would come as a prophet and prepare the way for Christ. He is called ***“Elijah”*** in Malachi 4:5-6. The New Testament records that John the Baptist came ***“in the spirit and power of Elijah”*** (Luke 1:17). Jesus said plainly of John, ***“And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come”*** (Matthew 11:14). Elijah had been a fiery prophet of the Old Testament. He challenged Israel, in a time of overwhelming idolatry, to be faithful to the Lord. In the New Testament, John did not mince any words. His message was not soft and mealy-mouthed but rather a bold and firm, ***“Repent”*** (Matthew 3:2). The day is passed for divinely inspired prophets, but Bible study might lead teachers to conclude that the best message for a culture sometimes is simply, ***“Repent.”***

GOD



Does anything get by our God? Does anything happen to catch Him off guard or threaten to defeat Him? Of course, the answer is, “No.” When we hurt or get swallowed up in circumstances beyond our control, it is real easy to think that this got past God’s control as well, but nothing could be further from the truth.

He feeds the animals, dresses the grass and runs the heavens. He supplies all His creation with everything it needs all the time. He neither sleeps nor is weary; He is not distracted, preoccupied or enfeebled. He sees everything, is everywhere and knows all. How can **anything** get past Him? The answer is, “It can’t.”

Does God use trouble and trials for our eternal benefit? Oh, yes, He always has and will continue to use them as we have need (Romans 8:28). However, will these situations ever get out of His control? Never. How could they? **He’s got the whole world in His hands.** *“The earth belongs to the Lord, and all its fulness, the world and those who dwell therein”* (Psalm 24:1).✝

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

GOD

Our Father

Betty Burton Choate

“Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?’” (James 4:5) Some have understood this Scripture to be saying that the human spirit is given over to lustful envy, not wanting to even consider the idea that the reference could be to jealousy on the part of the Holy Spirit.

First of all, this reference to “what the Scripture says” is not a direct quote from any other passage. Evidently, it is a summarizing statement of God’s deep love and concern for the hearts of His people. As far back as Exodus 20:5, He described Himself with these words: **“...I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God.”** In 2 Corinthians 11:2, we see a further declaration: **“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”**

The Holy Spirit, in inspiring the writing of Scripture, is the master of choosing the right words to convey His exact meaning with the joy or sorrow He wants us to understand. Listen to His cry of anguish over the unfaithfulness of Israel:

Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born. And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ Yes, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful. Your breasts were formed, your hair grew, but you were naked and

GOD

bare. When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine,” says the Lord GOD. Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate pastry of fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you, says the Lord GOD. But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who would have it. You took some of your garments and adorned multicolored high places for yourself, and played the harlot on them. Such things should not happen, nor be...Also My food which I gave you—the pastry of fine flour, oil, and honey which I fed you—you set it before them as sweet incense; and so it was,” says the Lord GOD. Moreover you took your sons and your daughters, whom you bore to Me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your acts of harlotry a small matter, that you have slain My children and offered them up to them by causing them to pass through the fire? And in all your abominations and acts of harlotry you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, struggling in your blood.” (Ezekiel 16:3-22)

Can we read such words—the words as of a devoted husband to a faithless wife—and fail to comprehend God’s anguish at being so heartlessly rejected by the chosen bride for whom He had done so much? Should we be surprised that the love which reached out in protectiveness and ownership would also

GOD

carry an aura of jealousy over the object of that love? Is that response not normal in the human heart, and are we not made in the image of God?

The words that were given to Hosea in chapter 11 of that book are equally heartrending. In this portrayal, God is the loving Father with His toddler son:

When Israel was a child, I loved him... I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms; But they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck. I stooped and fed them... My people are bent on backsliding from Me. Though they call to the Most High, none at all exalt Him. 'How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? "My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred ..." (Hosea 11:1-4, 8-9)

Are you a parent? Have you felt the vulnerableness created by the all-pervading love in your heart for your child? Have you experienced his joy at triumphs and his anguish at defeats? Have you gently led him along the step-by-step path to maturity? Have you felt his pain when he fell? And when there was nothing you could do to save him from his own bad choices, did the cutting and bleeding in your heart seem even greater than his own suffering?

This is the choice of precise words used by God's Spirit to describe what we, as His children, are in position to do to Him. Love in any heart creates vulnerableness. It is no less true of the love God has for us. We can, in empty and meaningless words "**call Him the Most High**"—use Him — but at the same time deny Him that first position in our hearts. The end result creates a struggle within Him: His justness and righteousness demand that unfaithfulness ultimately be punished, as Admah and Zeboiim were caught up in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. On the other hand, His love for even that faithless wife and wayward child causes His heart to churn within Him with anguish and sympathetic pain because of their rejection.

Yes, His Spirit within us "yearns jealously" over us, because of His intense love (James 4:5). Never does He willingly give up one of His own. †

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, founder of this magazine. She resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

The Pink Fairy Armadillo

David Everson



On day six of creation, God created the beasts of the earth (Genesis 1:25). Among beasts that God created is one on the extreme end of its family tree, the pink fairy armadillo, also called a sand-swimmer because it is said to move through soil as fast as a fish swims in water. It is an animal that deserves a better understanding of its physical features and lifestyle. Let's look into the life and features of this *“beast of the field”* (Genesis 2:19).

The pink fairy armadillo is the smallest member of the armadillo family, only being 3.5 to 4.5 inches long and weighing about 4.2 ounces. Its life is spent in the deserts of central Argentina, and this armadillo inhabits sandy plains, dunes and scrubby grassland habitats. It gets its name from the pink color of the shell, which comes from underlying blood vessels that show up through the shell, giving it a pale rose or pink color. The pink fairy armadillos have small eyes, silky yellowish white fur and a flexible dorsal shell that is solely attached to its body by a thin dorsal membrane.

This animal is nocturnal and lives largely alone. It has a diet of mainly insects, worms, snails and various plant parts that it finds chiefly by the sense of smell and hearing. Its burrowing ability comes from its two front claws, which are extraordinarily strong and very tough.

Heavy storms and rainfall will force the pink fairy armadillos to come

EVIDENCES

out of their burrows where they spend most of their day. The reason for this is that if the tunnels flood, their fur will get wet, and with wet fur, they cannot warm their bodies back up, especially at night. This, of course, would be fatal for this small creature.

The armadillo families are well known for the leathery shells covering the majority of their backs. The pink fairy armadillo has this characteristic also, but its shell is much softer and more flexible. This protective shell of the animal, as earlier mentioned, is only attached by a thin membrane along the spinal column of the animal, which means it is very loose on the body. It can curl up to protect the vulnerable soft underside, which is covered with a dense covering of white hairs. The armored shell consists of 24 bands that allow the animal to curl up in a ball, and the armor is flattened in the back portion of the animal so that it can compress dirt behind it as it is digging. This compression strategy is thought to help prevent tunnel collapses. It is also thought that the shell can help with temperature regulation. Since the underlying blood vessels are so close to the surface, the animal can control the amount of surface area exposed to the environment in order to gain or lose heat by moving blood deeper into its body or closer to the surface.

The pink fairy armadillo is really one of the incredibly unique beasts of the field that God has created. May we always be thankful for the exceptional creatures that have been created around us. ✝

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

[Editor's Note: Like so many uncommon creatures on our planet, the pink fairy armadillo defies human imagination and can only be attributable to an omnipotent Designer and Creator (Romans 1:20). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Kenney's Pennies

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:20-22 NKJV). **I always love to see the word “sleep” used for death. They will not sleep forever, and also, our separation from our loved ones in Christ will not remain forever either. Talk about hope!**

What Isaiah Would Preach Today

Hiram Kemp

Isaiah was a prophet of God who preached in the 8th century B.C. He has been called the most majestic of the prophets as he wrote in eloquent and captivating language to his audience. He preached in Jerusalem during the reign of several kings (Isaiah 1:1). While Isaiah's preaching differed from preaching today, because his message was inspired by God, there are still many similarities. Likewise, we must base our preaching upon the inspired Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Peter 4:11). There truly is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9). Isaiah was a powerful preacher in his own era, and his messages still have application today. As we read through the Book of Isaiah, notice some of the major themes in his preaching and some of the things he would say if he were still preaching today. There is a sense in which as we read this book, apply it to our lives and share it with others that although he is dead, he is still speaking (Hebrews 11:4).

God Doesn't Accept All Worship

Sometimes people have the mistaken idea that God will accept whatever they offer to Him as worship, regardless of how it is presented. Isaiah would tell people today, just as he told them in ancient Israel, that this is not true. Isaiah rebuked people for offering up worship to God while mistreating people who are made in His image (Isaiah 1:11-15). God would not continue to accept their worship while they did not live in line with the Law in other aspects of their lives. They provoked the Lord's anger as they lived sinful lives and thought as long as they checked the box for worship that all would be well (Isaiah 1:2-9). People need to learn this lesson today. Just because we offer worship to God does not mean that He will accept it if our hearts are not right. We must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). If we offer in worship what He asked, but do not live like we should, our worship will be rejected. If we treat people properly but worship according to our own will

THE WORD OF GOD

and wishes, then our worship will be rejected (Isaiah 29:13). If Isaiah were preaching today, he would say worship is not something to take lightly, and God does not accept all worship (Amos 5:21-27).

God Is a Forgiving God

Though God's people were idolatrous and wicked, Isaiah held out hope. If they would repent, God would forgive their sins, making them as white as snow (Isaiah 1:18). God pleaded with them through Isaiah's preaching to be clean and to cease doing evil (Isaiah 1:16). He wanted them to treat the oppressed properly and to live up to their full spiritual potential (Isaiah 1:17). If they were willing to turn and to do the right thing, they would prosper. Yet, if they rebelled, they would suffer the consequences (Isaiah 1:19-20). God is known for His wrath in the Old Testament, but not enough Bible students realize the grace contained within the Old Testament as well (Exodus 34:6-7). The same God who forgives sins and extends pardon in the New Testament was offering abundant forgiveness in the Old Testament (Psalm 86:15; 103:8; 145:8). Isaiah showed a portrait of a God who does not desire to crush His people but, instead, to console them as they turn from error (Isaiah 40:1-2).

Today, Isaiah would no doubt warn people about sin and its consequences while reminding them that forgiveness is attainable (Acts 2:37-38). God does not want anyone to lose his soul. That is why He sent Jesus to be the sacrifice for the world (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). God desires to be known as the Redeemer and as the One who gives second chances to people who desire to learn from their mistakes (Isaiah 43:1). So many people give up too soon. Maybe they think they have done too many bad things or run too far from the Father's house to return, but such is not true. The blood-stained hands of Israel could be made white as snow if they repented (Psalm 51:7). The blood-stained hands of those who killed Jesus and opposed the church could be cleansed as they responded to the Gospel (Acts 22:16). Today, for those who seek the Lord, the same forgiveness is offered in Jesus Christ (Acts 13:38-39).

God Is Holy and Idolatry Is Foolish

One of the most famous passages in the Book of Isaiah is the vision

THE WORD OF GOD

the prophet had in Chapter Six. Isaiah saw the Lord who he described as high and lifted up and the one Who is sitting on the throne (Isaiah 6:1). Isaiah also saw the seraphim who cry out **“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory”** (Isaiah 6:3; cf., Revelation 4:8). More than twenty times throughout the book, Isaiah referred to God as the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 1:4; 5:19; 5:24; 30:12; 30:15; 41:14; 43:3). Isaiah would remind the people of God today that the Lord is the Holy One, and we should, in turn, be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16).

The sin that plagued Israel most often was idolatry. Isaiah preached sternly against the folly of Israel’s idolatry. Readers of his message are often tempted to chuckle as Isaiah mocked the idolatrous practices of his contemporaries (Isaiah 44:9-20). He reminded Israel then that there is only one God and there is no other God besides Him (Isaiah 45:6, 18, 22). Idolatry still exists today, and we need to be reminded that there is only One Who is worthy of our worship and devotion (Colossians 3:5). Isaiah would encourage Christians not to set their sights too low on the things of this earth but instead to lay up treasures in Heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). There are repeated warnings in the New Testament encouraging Christians to steer clear of idolatry (1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 1 John 5:21).

As we read Isaiah’s inspired message, we need to see that with which they struggled then is that with which people still struggle today. The God Who had outstretched arms to forgive then will forgive today. Furthermore, preachers and teachers of the Word of God need to be bold enough to preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:2). **Isaiah was probably not well liked by many of his fellow Israelites, but he preached the truth anyway.** We need more preaching like that done by Isaiah, believing on Jesus and willing to suffer for His sake (Philippians 1:29). Let us study Isaiah’s message and allow him to continue to speak to us today (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11). †

Hiram Kemp preaches for the South Florida Avenue Church of Christ in Lakeland, Florida, USA.

Did You Know?

Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Daniel and Ezekiel were God’s prophets to the Southern Kingdom.



THE WORD OF GOD

Bible Commentaries and Reference Books

Donald R. Fox



Some forty-five years ago, a close friend gave me *The People's New Testament* by B.W. Johnson. It has simple explanatory notes and commentary on the Scriptures. It uses both the *King James* and the *Revised* versions in conjunction with Scripture cross-references. All are easy to use, and for this, I am thankful. I am a down-to-earth man, and *The People's New Testament* was the very tool I needed as I started my studies of the Word of God. Currently, the pages are loose and in need of rebinding. I use it all the time and teach from it. Sometimes, I say that my complete brain is in this Testament; almost every page is loaded with personal

notes I have written over the years.

Although I really enjoy Johnson's, *the People's New Testament*," I always remember that the Scriptures themselves are the final standard. My notes and B.W. Johnson's explanatory remarks are just that, our view or understanding of the Scriptures. For the greater part, B.W. Johnson's notes and my own annotations are correct and in accordance with the Scriptures. The point I am

THE WORD OF GOD

making is that **the Word of God—the Bible—is the final and only true standard**. We must not go beyond what is written. *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”* (2 Timothy 3:16-17 KJV).

Mistakes & Errors Are Part of Men's Endeavors

Johnson’s explanatory notes are the work of a man, and men make mistakes. As an example, let us notice Johnson’s commentary on Acts 2:1. Scripture says, *“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.”* Johnson states, “they were all... in one place. Not only the apostles, but the hundred and twenty disciples. They probably had an intimation that the promised day had come.” With that comment, Mr. Johnson alludes that the apostles **and** the 120 disciples were all baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:2-4). The Bible does not teach this. Please note the last verse in Chapter 1, where it reads, *“And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles”* (Acts 1:26). Back to Acts 2:1; who are the “they”? Of course, it was the twelve apostles and not the 120.

Only the Apostles Could Impart a Miraculous Gift of the Holy Spirit

Let us study an example of only the apostles having the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit. The preacher Philip conducted missionary work in Samaria. The Bible says:

But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen

THE WORD OF GOD

upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. (Acts 8:12-19)

Philip confirmed his *“preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ”* (Acts 8:12) by performing *“miracles and signs”* (Acts 8:13). Why was it necessary to send for Peter and John who were at Jerusalem? Answer: Only the apostles were immersed, that is, had the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit. *“The preacher sent there was not an apostle. He had miraculous powers but could not confer them. There is no record of their impartation, save in or by apostolic presence”* (Johnson’s explanatory notes in part on Acts 8:14). We note that Mr. Johnson was correct in this case. The apostle Paul stated in Romans 1:11, *“For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established.”*

Only the apostles could impart a gift of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of their hands. Only the apostles were promised *“the Comforter”* (John 16:7). This *“Comforter,”* the Holy Spirit, would *“guide”* the apostles *“into all truth”* (John 16:13).

We all use reference books to increase our understanding and to take advantage of scholars’ knowledge of the Word of God. When a scholar or a commentator makes a mistake or misunderstands the Word of God, we don’t reject the whole reference book or the commentary, now do we? Our reference library has expanded to the World Wide Web. There are at our fingertips and clicks away a means to increase our understanding of all sorts of information. I choose to use all these facets of knowledge for good and to reject sinful or erroneous aspects of these tools. As the proverbial expression goes, *“Don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater.”* **Let us be grateful for the abundance of research material at our disposal, but let us use it cautiously and prudently.** †

Donald R. Fox worships with the Mayfield Church of Christ and resides in Saltillo, Mississippi, USA.

WHEN PRAYER IS AN ABOMINATION

Ernest S. Underwood

Quite frequently we hear false teachers tell their listeners to “Just say the sinner’s prayer and ask Jesus to come into your heart.” Of course, since there is no Scripture that teaches this, no Scripture references are given. Those who are told, and who may be inclined to believe this fantasy, need to read Solomon’s warning in Proverbs 28:9. Hear him: **“One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.”** Since in the New Testament both Jesus and His apostles give, in no uncertain words, the terms by which man accepts God’s gift of salvation, one is without excuse when he turns away his ear from the law of Christ and imbibes the babble of those who encourage him or her to say the so-called *sinner’s prayer*. These teachers are encouraging mankind to commit an abomination. Such teachers ought to be ashamed.

Friend, obey the Gospel to have the forgiveness of your sins. As you do so, the Lord will add you to His church, not to some denomination. Then, as a child of the Heavenly Father, you will have the God-given right to pray, **“My Father who art in heaven...”** Isn’t this what you yearn to do? †

Ernest S. Underwood is a preacher as well as a missionary to India. He resides in Doraville, Georgia, USA.

[Editor’s Note: Not obeying the Gospel has eternal and horrific consequences (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; 1 Peter 4:17). Obeying the Gospel involves responding to **“that form of doctrine”** (Romans 6:17)—the Gospel of Christ. Summarizing, Jesus said, **“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”** (Mark 16:16 NKJV). On the birthday of the Lord’s church in Acts 2, those who repented and were baptized (Acts 2:38, 41) were added to the church by Jesus Himself (Acts 2:47). For what are you waiting if you have not yet obeyed the Gospel? **“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord”** (Acts 22:16). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]



Did You Know? Isaiah and Micah prophesied in the Southern Kingdom at the same time Hosea and Amos prophesied in the Northern Kingdom.

SALVATION

You Must be Circumcised

Gary C. Hampton

The mention of circumcision instantly draws Bible students to the Old Testament. Circumcision was an important element of a covenant relationship with God.

God promised to multiply Abraham, make him father of many nations and give his descendants land (Genesis 17:1-8). The Almighty declared, ***“Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you”*** (Genesis 17:10-11).



God made it clear that the uncircumcised male would not remain in a covenant relationship with Him. ***“And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant”*** (Genesis 17:14). Those who wandered in the wilderness did not circumcise their boys, and so God commanded they do so as they prepared to enter the promised land (Joshua 5:2).

Circumcision was only effective if one kept the Law perfectly. No Jew, outside of our Lord, ever did that. They were thus lawbreakers, and their circumcision was made ineffective.

SALVATION

Christians are now God's circumcision (Philippians 3:3), but our circumcision is of the heart. ***“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God”*** (Romans 2:28-29).

Christians receive the cutting off of the sins of the flesh in baptism. ***“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”*** (Colossians 2:11-12).

Anyone who would enjoy the blessings of Christ's covenant must be circumcised in baptism. Failing to be baptized will result in being cut off from Heaven. †

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



Robison's Rubies

In the Old Testament, the prophet Elijah sought to do right, and was persecuted by a ruling woman named Jezebel. In the New Testament, John the Baptist stood firm about the truth of certain things and was hated by a king's wife. Herodias plotted to have John the Baptist killed. She had her daughter perform lustily in front of a bunch of drunken men, including the king, and tricked the king into ordering that John be killed (Mark 6:14-29). Sometimes, standing for truth will get one in a lot of trouble. Romans 1:18 speaks of those groups of people who ***“suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”*** So what is a fellow to do? If he knows truth—and most people, including rulers go against it—is he to capitulate [surrender] or hold to truth? Proverbs 23:23 admonishes, ***“Buy the truth, and do not sell it...”***

SALVATION

THE KING BECAME POOR

David A. Sargent

Because of God’s love and our desperate need for salvation from sin, Jesus left the glories and splendor of Heaven to come to this earth to live as a man and then to go to the cross to die for the sins of this world. Read Philippians 2:5-11, a passage that beautifully describes what He gave up in order to save us. He became “poor” so that we could be “rich”—rich with all of the spiritual blessings that are found in Him, blessings such as forgiveness from sin, peace that surpasses all understanding, and the hope of eternal life in a beautiful place called Heaven.

God will save and give eternal life to those who place their faith and trust in Jesus (Acts 16:30-31), turn from their sins in repentance (Acts 17:30-31), confess Jesus before men (Romans 10:9-10) and are baptized (immersed) into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). He will continue to cleanse from sin those who continue to walk in the light of His Word (1 John 1:7-9).

Jesus became “poor” and suffered and died so that **you** could become “rich” with spiritual, eternal blessings. He’s the Great Benefactor, and you can be the recipient of His blessings if you will only accept them on His terms. ✝

David A. Sargent works with the Creekwood Church of Christ in Mobile, Alabama, USA.



SALVATION

Persecution

(and the lack thereof)

Brad Harrub

In a Bible class recently, we discussed Romans 8:17, “*and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*” The point was well made that all of these wonderful adjectives (e.g., heirs, heirs of God, joint heirs) were conditional on us suffering with Him.

Then, we spent a few minutes in class discussing persecution. A slide was presented that revealed Christian persecution in areas like northern Africa and many communist countries. The point was made that we don’t suffer much in America, and class members gave possible reasons why (i.e., the founding fathers upheld many Christian principles, etc.). After the discussion, we moved on to verses 18 and following, but my mind stayed on verse 17.

The passage says, “*if indeed we suffer with Him,*” but the reality is in America we try really hard to avoid suffering. The honest truth is we don’t like to get out of our comfort zones, and so, we plan programs and activities that don’t require us to have hard conversations with the lost. The only time we really speak up is when people who share our beliefs and worldviews surround us. Many congregations spend a great deal of their annual budget on “internal” programs so that members don’t feel like they have to go out into the community and confront those who are lost. So, is the reason we are not suffering or being persecuted, because we have chosen an easier path?

Over and over, the Bible talks about Christians being persecuted and suffering. For instance, 2 Timothy 3:12 says, “*Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*” Jesus spoke of persecution in His famous Sermon on the Mount. “*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:10).

SALVATION

Spend a few minutes looking over passages like:

1 Peter 3:14

Romans 12:14; 17-21

John 15:18-19

Matthew 5:44

Acts 14:22


John 16:33

2 Corinthians 4:8-12

James 1:2-3

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. (1 Peter 4:12-15)

Is it possible the reason we don't suffer persecution is because we do not speak up? Is it possible we have become such friends with the world that it does not hate us for our religious beliefs? Is it possible that we have stopped identifying sin to those with whom we come in contact? Is it possible that we don't suffer because we avoid the hard conversations about the consequences of sin? Is it possible we don't suffer persecution because our pulpits no longer speak out strongly on judgment and hell, but rather, they continuously proclaim love and grace? Is it possible that we aren't persecuted because we expect the lost to come to us rather than we going out as we have been commanded?

I know that one day every knee will bow down and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord. I pray that on that occasion, we don't find ourselves outside the body of Christ because we desired comfort over persecution. 

Brad Harrub works with Focus Press in Franklin, Tennessee, USA.

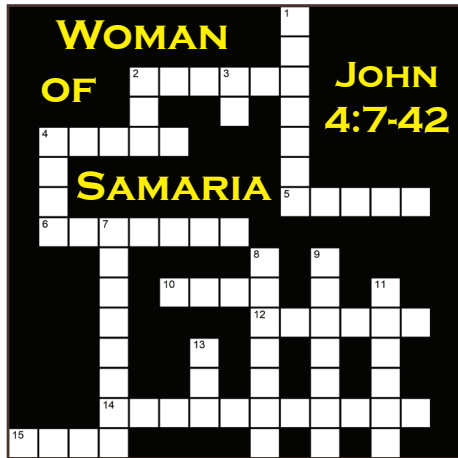


Bible Find

Martha Rushmore

Across

2. She said when Christ comes, He would tell all what? vs. 25
4. What father did she ask if Jesus was greater than? vs. 12
5. What did Jesus want from the woman? vs. 7
6. The woman to whom Jesus talked was from where? vs. 7
10. The Samaritan woman had how many husbands? vs. 18
12. God is what? vs. 24
14. What kind of life does Jesus give? vs. 14
15. What did the disciples go into the city to buy? vs. 8



Down

1. Who did Jesus tell her to bring to Him? vs. 16
2. The people asked Jesus to stay with them how many days? vs. 40
3. Did the woman understand Jesus spoke about spiritual life? vs. 15
4. The woman was surprised because who did not deal with the Samaritans? vs. 9
7. What did the disciples do when they got back from town and saw Jesus talking to the Samaritan woman? vs. 27
8. Who did the woman say was coming? vs. 25
9. Those drinking from Jacob's well will be what again? vs. 13
11. What kind of water did Jesus offer the Samaritan woman? vs. 10
13. What did the woman leave when she went to town, telling all to come to see Him who knows all things? vs. 28

Verse Search



1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-28

Jerry Bates

1. What is the natural consequence of believing that Christ has risen from the grave? (v. 12)
2. If Christ has not risen from the grave, what does our preaching and our faith accomplish? (v. 14)
3. If Christ has not risen from the grave, where does that leave us in regard to our sins? (v. 17)
4. If Christ has not risen from the grave, in what situation does that leave us? (v. 19)
5. Paul said Christ has become the _____ of those who have fallen asleep. (v. 20)
6. By man came _____ and by Man came the _____ of the dead? (v. 21)
7. When Christ comes again, what will He do to the kingdom of God? (v. 24)
8. What is the last enemy that will be destroyed? (v. 26)
9. Is Christ now reigning? (v. 25)
10. What things are now put under Christ? (v. 27)
11. Who is the one Person who is excepted from being under Christ? (v. 28)

(See the back cover for answers.)

VERSE SEARCH

12 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? **13** But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. **14** And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. **15** Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. **16** For if the dead do not rise then Christ is not risen. **17** And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! **18** Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. **19** If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. **21** For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. **22** For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. **23** But each one in his own order; Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. **24** Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. **25** For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. **26** The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. **27** For He has put all things under His feet. But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. **28** Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

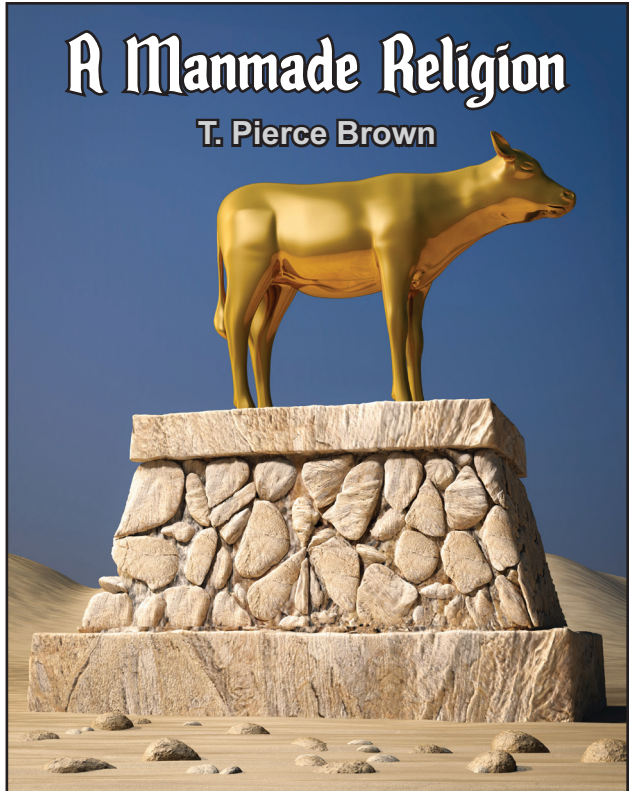
NOTES: The main point of this section is the importance of the resurrection. Without the resurrection of Christ, everything we do or believe is worthless, and we have no hope. The last paragraph touches on the same subject as Romans 5:12-19 and emphasizes the positive aspects of the resurrection. All powers and even Satan has been made subject to Christ, and one day, even death will be subject to Christ. The exception is God the Father, to whom Christ will always be subject.

THE CHURCH

Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, could have been a man of greatness, but he perverted God's way and became a ringleader in sin. We may think of the religion he began as a type of all man-made religions and get lessons that will help us to be on guard against such in every generation.

First, we may note that it had its origin in the human heart. ***“Jeroboam said in his heart”*** (1 Kings 12:26).

There are only two types of religions in the world. One has its origin in the will of God, and the other is in the will of man. Isaiah 55:8 says, ***“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways,”*** and this has always been so. Jeremiah 17:9 reads, ***“The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.”*** Out of the heart of man can never come a system of religion that meets the demands of God or the needs of the human soul. We constantly need to be aware that not only anything opposite but any deviation from or substitute for what God wants is presumptuous and rebellious. The advice of Proverbs 3:5 is still so valuable for us. ***“Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not on thy own understanding. In***



THE CHURCH

all thy ways acknowledge Him and He will direct thy paths.”

A strange question that faces us is this: **Why would a person want to worship God at all if he was not sure his worship would please Him?** Even a pagan with a false god would try to please that god. Yet, both Jews and Christians fall into the category mentioned by Jesus, *“The people worship me with their lips but their heart is far from me, for in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matthew 15:9).

Second, we note that the establishment of this false religion had something in common with many false religions of today: He set up the golden calves in Bethel and Dan for his own selfish ends. How many of us do things related primarily to our own selfish ends? **Jesus did not die for church buildings, gymnasiums and the many things for which we spend most of our resources.** He died for souls, and yet, when a program is designed primarily for salvation of souls, most of the congregations in the nation contribute very little for its implementation.

Jeroboam presented his proposal for a manmade religion as for the good of others, of course. *“It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem”* (1 Kings 12:28). It was hypocritical from the beginning, but that does not mean that every person doing it was hypocritical. We make a serious error when we speak and act as if all those who are members of false religions are hypocritical and dishonest. We are reasonably sure many of their leaders are. When we hear a man pretend to quote Acts 2:38 as “Repent, for the remission of your sins,” we know he had to know what he left out to misquote it. There are many things done in the name of expediency that are contrary to the will of God. Remember that **in order for a thing to be expedient, it must be a part of what is authorized.** If God says, “Drive this nail into this board” it may be expedient to use a hammer instead of an axe, but it is improper to classify sawing the board in two as expedient. If God said, “Sing,” it may be expedient to sing one or two songs, but it is not expedient to introduce a different kind of music.

In any case, it was contrary to the Word of God. Jeroboam said, *“Behold thy gods which brought thee up”* (1 Kings 12:28). The command of God was plain. *“Have no other gods”* (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7). There might be any number of rationalizations Jeroboam could have used. He

THE CHURCH

might have said, “These are not ‘other’ gods. When I said, ‘These be thy gods,’ I merely meant that they represented God that brought us up.” This is the sort of thing that could be said by anyone who had a false god.

Whatever rationalization may be given, the command of God was plain in Exodus 20:4, ***“Thou shalt not make any graven images.”*** The carnal mind wants to walk by sight and find excuses to do what it wants. Naaman said, ***“I thought.”*** Even Saul of Tarsus said, ***“I verily thought”*** (Acts 26:9). Yet, **the ladder to Heaven must come from Heaven.** Jesus said in John 14:6, ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me.”*** All the false religions that claim to be Christian claim to come by Jesus. However, a person cannot come to God by Jesus by disregarding the commands of Jesus and substituting, “I think.” There is a place for “I think” or “It seems to me.” That place is where God did not speak specifically about the thing. When God said “sing,” He did not tell me to sing bass or tenor. I think I can sing bass better than I can sing tenor. Baptism is commanded. I think I may baptize in a creek, a river or a baptistery because God did not specify one of those. However, I have no right to substitute, “I think sprinkling is as good as baptism (immersion)” since He specified.

As always, this false religion became a snare to others (1 Kings 12:30). It is always easier to swim with the tide and go with the flow than to stand for what is authorized in the face of popular efforts to do otherwise. It usually is the beginning of a downhill path, having no regard for purity of doctrine or life. ***“He made priests of the lowest of the people”*** (1 Kings 12:31). It is important for us to realize that **the kind of God we visualize and worship will determine the kind of life we live.**

Like all false religions, they had a form of godliness but denied the power thereof. It had the appearance of being right. There were altars, priests and the ordained feast ***“like unto the feast that is in Judah”*** (1 Kings 12:32-33). There are thousands who would say, “There is practically no difference in my church and the church of Christ. We all have approximately the same kind of service, prayer, Bible study, communion and both practice baptism.” The difference is that one was ordained of God while the other was not. It would not matter if all outward practices of a group were the same as what God ordained if they did it by the authority of some man rather than

THE CHURCH

by the authority of God; it would not be right. For example, if a person is baptized to satisfy his mother rather than **“obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine delivered”** (Romans 6:17), he would not thus be made free from sin even if he said, “I am being baptized for the remission of my sins.”

In summarizing Jeroboam’s mistakes as he formed this false religion, we may say there were at least four. First, he put **politics before righteousness**. Millions do that today. Some would vote for a man because he happened to be a Democrat or a Republican, or black or white, regardless of whether he was a confessed drug addict, a convicted criminal or anything else. Second, he put **convenience ahead of duty**. Millions also do this, even those connected with the Lord’s church. Third, **he put what he thought was expedient ahead of obedience**. Many today make success their standard. Often those connected with the false movements have said, “Our growth and success prove that God is with us.” You could prove Hinduism, Catholicism or paganism was right by that standard. Fourth, **he failed to realize that we reap what we sow**. Since Adam’s time, men have been deluded into thinking, “The end justifies the means.” “My opposition to the war is a good cause. So, I have the right to burn down a bank and shoot its president to show that I think it is wrong to be violent.” “I oppose abortion as murder; therefore, I will shoot the doctor who is performing it.” Many in the church today are acting just as irrationally, for they are **sowing tares and looking for a harvest of wheat**.

The story of Jeroboam shows both the basis and result of all false religions. We cannot emphasize too strongly **the necessity of doing what God says, the way God says do it, for the purpose God says do it, at the time and place God says do it and with the motive approved of Him.**✚

T. Pierce Brown (1923-2008) lived and preached in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.

KENNEY’S PENNIES

“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14 NKJV). May God help our nation elect more godly leaders and pray for their success!



THE CHURCH IT'S NOT MERELY A RELIGION

Larry Martin

Our Lord Jesus Christ did not merely found a religion. Rather, He established the kingdom of God. Therefore, the people who make up His kingdom or church (Matthew 16:18-19) are subject to the Lordship of Jesus. They live by the standards of righteousness of the kingdom of God. Jesus Christ is the Head, and His disciples are the members of His body (Colossians 1:18).



This body has only one Spirit—the Holy Spirit; only one heart—a new heart; only one mind—the mind of Christ; only one line of thinking—the Word of God; only one faith—a supernatural faith (in origin, Romans 10:17); only one character—God’s character; only one guidance—the guidance of the Spirit of Jesus (2 Peter 1:20-21).

THE CHURCH

Anyone who is not in the body of Christ does not belong to the Lord Jesus. There is no use confessing Jesus as Lord if you do not obey Him or calling on Him if you do not listen to Him. Jesus said, ***“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?”*** (Luke 6:46 NKJV). There is no benefit from attending a church assembly if you don’t behave as the Bible—particularly, the New Testament—teaches. For one to be in Jesus or to be a member of His body, a person must be born of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-5).

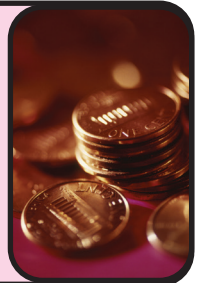
Especially Christians need to demonstrate in their behavior and speech that they abide by the Word of God. Impenitent, erring Christians ultimately will be rejected and vomited out like spoiled meat (Revelation 3:16). Sins sometimes observed even among Christians include hostility, gossip, prejudice and destructive criticism. ***“Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking”*** (1 Peter 2:1). This type of behavior corresponds to the ungodly world and ought not to be known among the children of God (Romans 12:1-2; James 4:4). The Lord’s church is supposed to be different from the world! ***“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord”*** (Ephesians 5:8-10).

To be a Christian is to be owned and led by the Spirit of Christ. ***“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His”*** (Romans 8:9). ✝

Larry Martin is a member of the Paramakatoi Church of Christ in the Amerindian mountain village of Paramakatoi, Guyana, South America.

Kenney’s Pennies

“For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s” (Romans 14:8 NKJV). Don’t forget to whom you belong. Christianity is not a spectator sport confined to the arena of a church building!



"Reverend" and "Father"

Royce Frederick

We often see religious leaders wearing such titles as “Reverend,” “Right Reverend” or “Father.” Is this practice in harmony with the teachings of the Bible?

The word “reverend” is found only once in the King James Version of the Bible. The psalmist glorified God by saying, “...*holy and reverend is His name*” (Psalm 111:9). The word “*reverend*” in that verse means that the name of God is worthy of respect, fear and awe. The New King James Version translates it, “...*holy and awesome is His name.*” “*Reverend*” is never used in the Bible as a title for a mere human.

The scribes and Pharisees loved religious titles. Jesus denounced the scribes and Pharisees for loving the “...*greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’*” “*Rabbi*” meant “Teacher” or “Master.” They loved to wear that term as an exalting title. Jesus continued by warning His disciples, “*But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren*” (Matthew 23:7-8). All who are truly Christians are equal with each other as brothers and sisters. No Christian should desire a religious title that exalts him or her above any other Christian. It should be enough of an honor to wear the name “Christian.”

Jesus forbid using “Father” as a religious title. “*Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven*” (Matthew 23:9). This command is very clear. Yet, many people use “*Father*” as a religious title today. Some also use the term “pope,” which means “papa,” which is another way of saying “father.” Jesus spoke these words many centuries ago, and the passing of time has not changed His words. Jesus still forbids the use of religious titles such as “father” and “pope.”

The apostles never used such exalting titles. They were simply called “Peter,” “Paul” and “John.” They did not want people to exalt them or to pour words of flattery upon them (Acts 10:25-26). Instead, they exalted Jesus Christ, “*But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of*

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

our Lord Jesus Christ...” (Galatians 6:14; 1 Peter 4:10-11; 5:5-7, 11).

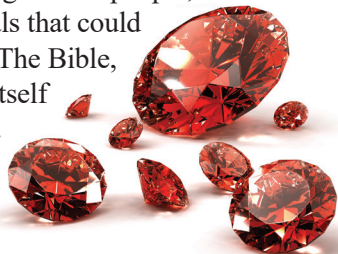
The attitude of Job is a good example for us. It perfectly agrees with the teachings of the New Testament on this subject. Job said, *“Let me not, I pray, show partiality to anyone; Nor let me flatter any man. For I do not know how to flatter, Else my Maker would soon take me away”* (Job 32:21-22). †

Royce Frederick is the Editor of International Gospel Teacher and lives in Fort Worth, Texas, USA.

[Editor’s Note: First, the Hebrew word underlying “reverend” in Psalm 111:9 appears often in the Old Testament when it could not be construed as a title. Sometimes, though, it pertains to mortals, in particular, Moses and Joshua (Joshua 4:14) or Solomon (1 Kings 1:51). Still, these instances did not constitute titles for humans comparable to the exaltation of God in Psalm 111:9. The reverence and awe owed to God (Nehemiah 1:5; Job 37:22; Psalm 89:7), though, was and is sometimes misplaced on someone or something other than on Almighty God (2 Kings 17:7). For instance, fallible men have attributed to themselves religious titles. Secondly, the reassignment of academic or professional titles such as “Doctor,” “Governor,” “Judge” or “Colonel” to brethren in religious settings amounts to the same unwarranted distinction between brethren. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Robison’s Rubies

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



DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Do Not Believe Every Spirit

Sunny David

In First Kings 13, we read about a young prophet who had honestly and resolutely refused the king's invitation, though the king promised a great reward. The prophet said, ***“If you were to give me half of your house, I would not go in with you; nor would I eat bread nor drink water in this place. For so it was commanded me by the word of the Lord, saying, ‘You shall not eat bread, nor drink water, nor return by the same way you came’”*** (1 Kings 13:8-9). What a wonderful attitude we find in this man as he respected what the Lord had told him to do. Yet, in the following verses, we read he was overpersuaded by an old prophet to come back with him and eat with him in his house—contrary to the command of God.

The old prophet, as we read, had deceived him by saying, ***“I too am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord, saying, ‘Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.’”*** The text says, ***“He was lying to him. So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house, and drank water”*** (1 Kings 13:18-19). Next, we read, ***“Now it happened, as they sat at the table, that the word of the Lord came to the prophet who had brought him back; and he cried out to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord: Because you have disobeyed the word of the Lord and have not kept the commandment which the Lord your God commanded you, but you came back, ate bread, and drank water in the place of which the Lord said to you, ‘Eat no bread and drink no water,’ your corpse shall not come to the tombs of your father’”*** (1 Kings 13:20-22). We read as he was going back to his home, a lion met him on the road and killed him. God punished him for his disobedience, just as He did Adam and Eve in the beginning and all others who disobeyed Him.

The young prophet, who had so boldly and resolutely refused the invitation of the king who promised him a reward, could not resist the insinuations of one who pretended to be a prophet or a man of God. This has always been true,

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

and it is today, too. Honest and sincere people are more in danger of being drawn into deception by plausible pretenders of divinity and sanctity than by external inducement. The apostle Paul cautioned, ***“Now I urge you, brethren, note those that cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by their smooth words and flattering speech deceive the heart of the simple”*** (Romans 16:17-18).

Therefore, we need to beware of false prophets and teachers today who are trying to mislead people everywhere by teaching things that the Bible does not teach. The apostle John said, ***“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world”*** (1 John 4:1). Further in verse 6, he noted the means by which such spirits or teachers are to be tested. ***“We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”*** The word ***“we”*** the apostle used for himself and other apostles who were the original messengers whom Christ had promised to baptize with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8; Luke 24:46-49). The Holy Spirit was promised to them to ***“teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you... He will guide you into all truth”*** (John 14:25-26; 16:12-13). The apostles were the ones who were given the authority to bind and to loose on earth, that is, to teach and to unteach by the authority of Christ (Matthew 18:18). The apostles did so while they were living and wrote for us in the New Testament all things that God wants us to know, believe and practice (2 Peter 1:20).


Yet, there is no dearth of preachers and teachers today who are telling people things that the apostles never taught, and many simple and sincere people believe their teachings as though they were the Word of God, without investigating what the Bible actually says. Had the young prophet checked with God what the old prophet had told him to do, he would not have perished. He simply believed the old prophet, thinking he was telling him the truth. This is the same mistake many are making today. It was said of the people who lived at a place called Berea, ***“These were more fair-minded than those at Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so”*** (Acts

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

17:11). They just didn't believe what they were taught, but they checked in the Scriptures whether they were taught God's Word or man's teaching.

The Bible clearly says, for instance, that no one knows when Christ will come back as He has promised (John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11). Speaking about the day of His Second Coming, He plainly said, ***“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father”*** (Mark 13:32). Yet, there have been many false prophets in the past several years who have deceived countless people by telling them they know exactly in which year and on what date Christ was going to come. Many gullible people believed them and were disappointed.

To be saved from sin, Christ taught, ***“He who believes and is baptized will be saved”*** (Mark 16:16). The apostle Peter told people to ***“repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”*** (Acts 2:38). Yet, most preachers are telling people today to simply “accept Jesus Christ your personal Savior” or to pray “the sinners’ prayer” to be saved. Again, Acts 2:47 says Christ Himself adds the saved ones to the church He Himself built (Matthew 16:18), of which He is the Head (Colossians 1:18) and which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Yet, preachers today are telling people to join the church of their own choice and that one church is as good as another. Many false prophets have built hundreds of churches of different names and brands in the last few hundred years after Christ had built His church in the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 33.

As we look around us and witness the many religious doctrines that are being taught in the name of the Bible today by many men and even women—who are forbidden to teach and preach men publicly (1 Timothy 2:11-12)—we must realize that there are many lying prophets who are teaching things that are contrary to what God has said in the Bible. Their conflicting false doctrines and teachings have led a great number of people to believe and to accept their errors. They have caused the religious world to be badly divided, which is contrary to the prayer of Christ (John 17:21-25). ***“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world”*** (1 John 4:1 NKJV). 

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

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses [Romans 8:26-28]

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

What a beautiful mental picture this creates for us: As **I**, through His **Spirit**, reach out to **Christ** Who takes my prayer to **God**, then **God** reaches down to His lowly **human child** to supply the need that is crying out from my heart! What love and care!

The Circle of Communion

God knows that humans, left alone in this world that is strongly dominated by Satan's power and influence, cannot survive without His help. Romans 8:9-11 says that the Spirit of God dwells in us. In Romans 5:5, we are told that the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. The apostle Peter, when before the Sanhedrin, referred to "...*the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him*" (Acts 5:32).

Romans 8:26 acknowledges that often in the weakness of humanity, we don't even have the words to properly express our needs, so the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us, pouring out our hearts' cries to our Lord Who, in turn, takes the groanings to our Father. Happily, "...*this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us*" (1 John 5:14).

Will every prayer be answered with "Yes"?

God also knows that humans cannot see the entirety of our lives, so when He sees that something for which we are praying will, ultimately, not be good for us, He doesn't grant that desire. His plan for each one of us is that "...*All things work together for good...*" (Romans 8:28). We should be very careful to have the desire in our hearts that God's will be done, not ours, and so we must pray with a submissive spirit, wanting only what He sees is best. Never try to PERSUADE God to do what you want done!

Encouraging One Another During This Trying Time

Martha Lynn Rushmore

What can we do to encourage one another during this time of the coronavirus pandemic? We can call, write notes, send cards or postcards, etc. What have you done to be an encourager?

One sister in Christ sent postcards to every member of her congregation since the lockdown because of the virus as encouragement to her brothers and sisters in Christ. I am not sure how many are in attendance there, but I am sure this was not cheap. Glory be to God for her thoughtfulness.

There have been a lot of women from churches making masks for those of us who do not sew. In our congregation, we had at least two ladies making masks for anyone who needed them. This was thoughtful. They did not take any money for doing this good deed. Others provided the material. This was their part as they do not or cannot sew. So, you see these are encouraging things that can be done.

You can take food to older people or to those who are sick. You do not have to go into their houses. Just knock and leave the food on the porch. Then, they can come out without any contact. If you do not want to take the food, you can call a restaurant that delivers in their area and have a meal delivered to them.

What else can we do to encourage each other? How about the use of Facebook? This is a very good way to keep in contact with one another. Most people today have a computer and are on Facebook.

There are a lot of preachers using the Internet to preach sermons or to give 5-minute talks, etc. Many congregations are leading worship services online at least once a week so we can fellowship this way. Some congregations are doing Sunday morning, Sunday evening and Wednesday Bible Study. We have many choices for sound Gospel preaching over the Internet.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION



Some congregations are handing out communion in packages already prepared so we can worship together on Sunday morning. Handing out these items is done as safely as possible. Our members drive to the church building to pick up what is needed and do not get out of the vehicle. Those handing out the communion, the bulletin and anything else pass the items through the car windows. Those passing out these items have on gloves and masks. They also use sanitizer and put on a new pair of gloves between each car. They sit in the drive-through, 6-feet apart. This is what my home congregation is doing to help fellowship and also to be safe as possible during this trying time of the coronavirus. God bless and stay safe. ✝

Martha Lynn Rushmore is a Staff Writer for The Voice of Truth International and Gospel Gazette Online. She and her husband teach extensively stateside and abroad. They reside in Ocala, Florida, USA.

Kennedy's Pennies *"I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments"* (Psalm 119:60 NKJV).

The sands of time are running. If you have always thought about becoming a Christian or returning to the church after forsaking her, then now is the time to make haste and do not further delay. The sands of time are running.




CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

How Deep Is the Mud?

Tom Baxley

There is a video of a man and woman walking outside after a rain, and they come upon some puddles. The man jumps in the puddle in front of him and makes a splash. The woman jumps into her puddle and winds up chest deep in a hole! Another picture shows two dogs who have been walking through mud. One little dog had mud up to his chest, and another much bigger dog had mud barely up his legs; the caption for the photo says, “How deep is the mud? Depends on who you ask.”

The video is more humorous than the photo, but both teach a very important lesson. While it might look like we all go through the same things, beneath the surface, there may be more with which someone is dealing than with which you had to contend. On the other hand, even if someone is going through the exact same thing as you, you might be better equipped to handle it. Whatever the case, let us always be slow to judge and quick to offer aid and comfort when we can. 

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



CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION



**Christine
Berglund**

**A Hoary
Head Is
a Crown
of Glory**

October already! One of the distinguishing marks of autumn is aging plants with their browning edges and **age spots** on the leaves. They show the marks of survivorship, but no one admires these badges of courage. The bug-bitten, missing chunks of leaves; the dry, bent stems and the faded blooms are never met with appreciation for what the poor plant may have experienced. Inside each of these seemingly ugly old specimens is a story of its life in the garden. Sometimes, it also holds a seed, bulb or rhizome of a new plant that will strike wonder in our hearts next spring. We rarely look beyond the homely surface, though.

A few of my irises developed a disease and had to undergo surgery to remove the diseased parts. Then, they were left to dry completely. A couple weeks ago, I found some of the dried-out roots and planted them in pots. Later, I almost mistook them for empty pots before I saw the sad little iris root near the top of the soil.

As with the elderly, these shriveled roots hold a beautiful life within, but they sure don't exhibit this at first glance. A young lady of my acquaintance insists that she does not like being around old people. "They

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION


smell. They look strange. They dress weird.”

Those flamingo pink polyester elastic-waist pants paired with the teal shirt may not make it onto the cover of Vogue, but underneath that peculiar exterior may reside a soul that has grown from her fashion-plate days to this. She may have now adopted the notion that economizing on clothing is a good way to save money for mission works. How could we guess this, unless we ask her about her younger years? The man with the strange odor may have contracted jungle rot fungus in the swamps of Southeast Asia as he served in our military forces. How can we thank him properly if we are so repulsed by that old person smell that we won't get near enough to know his story?

“A hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the ways of righteousness” (Proverbs 16:31). One friend tells me that, at the time of her dear husband's passing, her daughter, granddaughters and their children made a commitment to have lunch with her once a week. This gives Mrs. McLemore something wonderful toward which to look and brightens her days.

How do we honor the *“hoary head”*? It's not as easy when dementia or Alzheimer's takes over, causing a person to say things that would never pass their lips in an earlier time. This condition is the cruelest trick of all. It makes people even harder to love. Yet really, it's just a disguise! Don't let that gruff exterior make you forget the precious person that it houses.

Nursing homes should post a picture of each resident on his or her door—not a current picture—but one taken while they were young and in their prime. It would be a great reminder to the caregivers and families that this person was not always the cantankerous or withdrawn person that houses his or her soul. No, this elderly resident had quite a different life before being relegated to a warehouse for distributing pills and sponge baths.

They are every bit as full of life inside as my dried-out iris rhizomes. *“Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD”* (Leviticus 19:32). 

Christine Berglund is a Christian writer and lives in Nashville, Tennessee, USA.

Bless the Lord

Raymond Elliott

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefit...” (Psalm 103:1-2). For whatever reason that David had experienced in his life, he was moved to write this beautiful Psalm (of course, guided by the Holy Spirit). His heart was overflowing with the need of blessing the Lord for all that God had done for him. Should we not possess the same kind of heart as David? Consider all that the Lord has done for us physically and especially spiritually. All the perfect and good gifts come from God (James 1:18). His Son, Jesus Christ, died for us on Calvary’s cross so that we could be forgiven by His precious blood (John 3:16; Ephesians 1:7).

I want to encourage our brethren who lead our minds in prayers during our worship assemblies to include expressions of praise and gratitude for all that God has done and is doing for us. It is sad to note there are times when prayers are led wherein brethren fail to express thanks for God’s grace, mercy, love, lovingkindness and His longsuffering. How can this be? Petitions, supplications and intercessions are expressed; however, there is a great need of our expressions of gratitude (1 Timothy 2:1; Philippians 4:6) in our prayers! Let us *“enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name, For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations”* (Psalm 100:4-5). †

Raymond Elliott is a semi-retired preacher who lives in Prattville, Alabama, USA.



Did You Know?

All Jewish males were required to attend three yearly feasts at the Temple in Jerusalem (Exodus 23:14-19). They were the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Harvest and the Feast of Ingathering.

WORSHIP

Make Sure Our Worship Is Worship!

David Conley

Not only is the Bible a guideline on how God expects us to live, it also gives us insights on how God thinks about things. In Amos Chapter 4, God revealed how He thinks about worshiping inappropriately. ***“Come to Bethel and transgress...”*** (v. 4)! Bethel was a place of worship, yet God told them that even though they were at the right place, they were transgressing or sinning! They weren’t really worshiping! He went on to say in verse 4, ***“... at Gilgal multiply your transgression...”*** God was showing them that they were making their sin worse by worshiping inappropriately!

In verse 5, God explained that they loved to go through the ceremonies of worship, but they were not really worshiping! God responded to this kind of **worship** by trying to get them to repent and return to Him.

How did God try to get their attention? In verse 6, He took away their food. In verse 7, He took away the rain! In verse 9, He ruined their crops. In verse 10, He sent pestilences like those of Egypt. In verse 11, He allowed them to be defeated. Yet, in every case, God noted, ***“yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.”***

After doing so much to try to get them to really worship Him, God said in verse 12, ***“... prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.”*** In other words, **“I am coming in Judgment!”**

Let’s be sure our worship really is worship!



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

[Editor’s Note: True worship, which is acceptable to God, corresponds to what God has specified as proper worship of Him (Colossians 2:23), and it must be heartfelt as well (John 4:24). Furthermore, true worship is directed **to God**, rather than **for us** whereby we may be pleased. Though we may be edified and gratified through worship of God, nevertheless, true worship is not about us, but it is primarily devotion and homage directed toward Almighty God—our Creator and ultimately our Judge. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

WORSHIP

COME WORSHIP WITH US

Larry Murdock

Signs in the front yards of churches may read, “Come Worship with Us.” Advertisements in a local paper may conclude with the phrase, “Come Worship with Us.” Think of the implications of this invitation.

This invitation to “Come Worship with Us” implies that “worship” is important to the church that is issuing the invitation. Hopefully, it will also be important to those invited. Usually, the church worships when it gathers. Of course, it may be that a church comes together at times for other purposes, such as workdays that result in the maintenance of the building and grounds or perhaps for benevolent purposes of feeding the hungry or clothing the ill clad. Yet, most of the time, worship is the reason for a church gathering. Without this worshipful gathering, the group does not qualify as a “church.” That’s right!

When worshippers come, they unite their voices and send forth praise to God; they commune with God, Christ and the Holy Spirit by studying God’s Word—the Bible, and the personal accumulative effect of worship will be the glorification of God and the edification of individual members. Praise, commune and learn are verbs of worship.

The invitation to “come worship with us” also implies that the hosts are confident that they have learned how to worship. The Holy Spirit teaches us that **“ignorant”** (1 Corinthians 14:38) worship is possible. We read in Acts 17:23 that the apostle Paul had come to the Grecian city of Athens. As he was passing down a street, he noticed an altar with the inscription, **“to the unknown God.”** Some Athenians were fearful that they were overlooking a god who should be worshiped; therefore, they erected an altar to the unknown god. Paul said, **“Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you”** (Acts 17:23 KJV). Ignorant worship of God will never be acceptable to God.

“Vain” worship is also a danger. When our worship behavior is according to human tradition and not God’s Word, then, it is called “vain.” Jesus taught this in Matthew 15. Jesus quoted Isaiah’s prophesy when he said, **“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and**

WORSHIP

honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:8-9). Their human traditions kept them from worshipping God acceptably. Hence, their worship was “vain.”

Misdirected worship also fails. When the apostle John saw a glorious angel delivering a message to him, he fell down to worship the angel. The angel immediately responded, *“See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God”* (Revelation 22:9). John’s worship was directed toward the wrong person.

Furthermore, Jesus taught the Samaritan woman that the Father seeks worshipers who worship *“in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:23). The word *“spirit”* indicates the location of worship, and the word *“truth”* indicates the behavior in which worship is expressed. To qualify for having successfully worshiped, an individual must have worshiped *“in spirit,”* that is, in the human heart. We may gather in a building, but the worship must happen in the heart of each person. That’s right! When we invite someone to “come worship with us,” we are inviting them to come together with others to exercise their hearts by worship.

In addition to an individual worshipping in the heart, in order to worship God acceptably, an individual must also have worshiped *“in truth,”* that is according to the truth found in God’s Word. Jesus showed that this *“truth”* has a sanctifying effect upon people. John 17:17 records that He asked God to *“sanctify”* His disciples—*“sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth.”* To sanctify something is to set it apart for a special purpose. **Jesus’ truth sets people apart as true worshipers who are following a set of specified activities.** These worshipful behaviors are known to be acceptable to God. How do we know if worship behavior is acceptable? We know by the Truth—the Word of God—the Bible. **Only when we practice these authorized activities are we worshipping in “truth.”**

The apostle Paul was standing before the Roman governor Felix when he said, *“...this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which*

WORSHIP

are written in the law and in the prophets...” (Acts 24:14-15). Paul was worshiping God differently than the Jews (his former practice) because of the truth of Jesus being the Christ as witnessed by the law and the prophets. That truth made a difference in Paul’s way of worship. It is imperative that Christians who extend invitations to “worship” make sure that the way of worship to which they invite people will be according to the truth in God’s Word. God teaches us in His Word, His truth, what actions are acceptable to Him. **If we pattern our worship after God’s Word, then our worship activities will be acceptable to God.**

Consider the benefits of a scripturally authorized way of worship. Scriptural worship engages every worshiper in a God-approved activity. God has granted us freedom to express our heartfelt praise of Him in different words of different songs, different keys, different cadences and different voices. Even the deaf can follow the words and make melody in their hearts. Even the blind can hear the words and be taught and warned. Even the deaf-and-blind can be taught and warned by a song in Braille. Yet, we all join in expressing our hearts’ joy by singing; we glorify God and teach and warn each other with poetry that is rooted in truth (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), and we have our hearts edified by the praise of God in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

When a prayer leader leads us in prayer, we can all join in the thoughts of that common prayer. At one point, the apostle Paul assembled a collection for benevolent purposes; there were some destitute Christians in Jerusalem who needed the help. Interestingly, though, Paul collected these contributions from Gentile Christians! The needy Christians in Jerusalem were Jewish. So, Paul was worried whether the gift would be accepted with thanksgiving. Therefore, he asked the Corinthians to pray... ***“You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many”*** (2 Corinthians 1:11 ESV). This verse teaches that even Paul’s collection was an answer to many prayers. The church prayed when they came together for worship. Likewise, even today in worship services around the world, prayer leaders will invite the providential care of God into our lives and into the lives of even strangers.

When a preacher or teacher speaks, we can all join in the same meditations


WORSHIP

and contemplations of God's Word and have our hearts opened and renewed. Lydia's heart was opened when she heard the preaching of Christ (Acts 16:14). Titus 3:5 says, ***“he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit...”*** (Titus 3:5 ESV). Ah, that renewal of the Holy Spirit comes through the Spirit's words, as recorded in the Bible.

With a common Supper on the Lord's Day, we can all commune with God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, millions of believers around the world and each other (Matthew 26:29) and have our hearts knit in a common love. Together, we remember the Lord's death until He comes.

Will a church so arrange and so define its way of worship so as to cut off the authorized common ground found in the Scriptures? For instance, those who use mechanical musical instruments in worship do so without New Testament authorization. Those who withhold the ***“cup”*** from the worshipers do so without authorization. Those who withhold the whole Supper on the Lord's Day do so without authorization. Yet, many say, “Come worship with us.”

Friends, when churches of Christ say, “Come worship with us,” we are inviting you to a common, simple worship service where authorized worshipful activities will take place. Who among the population can refuse that invitation on biblical grounds?

It behooves churches of Christ to continue to invite people to a way of worship that is simply rooted in the common ground of the truth of the New Testament. Peter, Barnabas and other Jews separated themselves from Gentile brethren! Paul condemned this practice to Peter's face and said what they were doing was not ***“according to the truth of the gospel”*** (Galatians 2:11-14 KJV). Paul was correct in contending for the way of truth that enabled both Jewish and Gentile Christians to commune as well as to worship together. Churches of Christ should continue contending for and providing worship services that are according to the truth of the Gospel [for all, irrespective of ethnic, racial or cultural differences ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]. Yes, the churches of Christ salute you and issue an invitation to “come worship with us.” 

Larry Murdock writes, records and produces Gospel messages for local and international radio. He preaches at the Gandy Church of Christ in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, USA.

How Do You Measure Up?

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 1:28-32

PROVERBS 17:22



Mabel never went to church. She always promised to go but never did. The preacher was astounded when she suddenly showed up for Sunday service. Thereafter, she was there for every Sunday service.

Three months later, after a Sunday service, the preacher asked her, “What happened to you? You always dodged church and now it looks like you can’t get enough of it?”

She replied, “It’s this new car of mine; they told me the warranty will lapse if I miss even one service!”



A very successful businessman had a meeting with his new son-in-law. “I welcome you into the family!” said the man. “To show you how much we care for you, I am making you a 50-50 partner in my business. All you have to do is go to the factory every day and learn the operation.”

The son-in-law interrupted. “I

hate factories. I can’t stand the noise.”

“I see,” replied the father-in-law. “Well, then you’ll work in the office and take charge of some of the operations.”

“I hate office work,” said the son-in-law. “I can’t stand being stuck behind a desk.”

“Wait a minute,” said the father-in-law. “I just made you half owner of a money-making industry, but you don’t like factories and won’t work in an office. What am I going to do with you?”

“Easy,” said the son-in-law. “Buy me out.”



A man said to his neighbor, “I have an extraordinary dog. He brings me the newspaper every morning.”

The neighbor responded by saying, “That’s nothing special. Lots of dogs do that.”

The man said, “Sure, but I don’t have a subscription.”



An author wrote a novel and sent it off to a publisher. The publisher held on to the hard copy so long that termites got into it. In the final analysis, the book was

PROVERBS 17:22

rejected. The story line had too many holes in it.



An old man was a witness in a burglary case. The defense lawyer asked Richard, “Did you see my client commit this burglary?”

“Yes,” said Richard, “I saw him plainly take the goods.”

The lawyer asked Richard again, “Richard, this happened at night. Are you sure you saw my client commit this crime?”

“Yes,” says Richard, “I saw him do it.”

Then the lawyer asked Richard, “Richard listen, you are 80 years old and your eye sight is probably bad. Just how far can you see at night?”

Richard said, “I can see the moon. How far is that?”



Late for work already, I was annoyed to find a strange car in my reserved parking space again. After locating a spot far away, I stormed into my office, determined to have the car towed. As the morning wore on, however, my anger cooled, and I decided to give the driver another chance.

During lunchtime, I went outside and left this note on the driver’s windshield: “Please don’t take my parking space. If you do, and your car disappears, don’t say I never towed you!”



A man was very sick. Doctors feared the worst. He was at home one day, resting in his bed. He looked up and said, “Is my wife here?”

His wife replied, “Yes, dear, I’m here, next to you.”

The man said, “Are my children here?”

“Yes, Daddy, we are all here,” said the children.

“Are my other relatives also here?”

They said, “Yes, we are all here.”

The man sat up and said, “Then why in the world is the light on in the kitchen?”



Alarm clocks are maybe the only device that make you mad in both scenarios, whether they work or not.



I’ve changed my mind a dozen times. It seems to work better now.

GOD'S CHOSEN PATH FOR YOU

Aaron Cozort

Your path is dark. Your hope is almost gone. You look ahead and see only blackness. You struggle with making the right choices. You consider giving up. It's not easy. Is this all you have to which to look forward? Is the life of a Christian a bleak, dark walk through a world of despair, never knowing the right way to go?

“And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night” (Exodus 13:21). In this text, Moses was not the one who chose

when it was time for Israel to depart from Egypt. When he was a young man, Moses believed he would be the deliverer of Israel, but God disagreed about the timing. Moses thought God would deliver



Israel quickly, but He did not. God chose His time for Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

When God led Israel out of Egypt, the Israelites could not go any direction they desired. Moses didn't sit down with a map and plot a course. Israel did not vote on an acceptable route and then travel down it. Instead, God presented a pillar of clouds in the sky by day and a pillar of fire by night. Moses and Israel moved by following God's manifestation of His presence.

Jeshua, the High Priest in Nehemiah's day, declared to the people concerning God's actions, *“You showed signs and wonders against*


Pharaoh, Against all his servants, And against all the people of his land. For You knew that they acted proudly against them. So You made a name for Yourself, as it is this day... Moreover, You led them by day with a cloudy pillar, And by night with a pillar of fire, To give them light on the road Which they should travel” (Nehemiah 9:10, 12).

Centuries after Israel came out of Egypt, Solomon encouraged his son with the following words. ***“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil”*** (Proverbs 3:5-7).

Jeremiah cried out to the Lord and declared:

“O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps. O LORD, correct me, but with justice; Not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing. Pour out Your fury on the Gentiles, who do not know You, And on the families who do not call on Your name; For they have eaten up Jacob, Devoured him and consumed him, And made his dwelling place desolate” (Jeremiah 10:23-25).

All these passages teach a single and clear lesson from the Old Testament that is still true today. We should not rely upon our own wisdom to determine our paths. If you are a faithful Christian, are you one who seeks God’s chosen path for you?

We will not determine God’s chosen path for us by voting on a path. We will not resolve the chosen path by reading man’s wisdom. We will not determine the right path for our feet when we select the most natural path in life. Israel’s path led them to the Red Sea and a guaranteed defeat at the hand of Pharaoh’s armies. When you see God’s chosen path for you, and you realize that it means a sure defeat for you, will you turn back, will you give up? Let us continue, trusting in the Lord with all our heart and never leaning on our own understanding. ***“Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path”*** (Psalm 119:105). 

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

Your Speech Betrays You

Paul Holland

We were at an elder's house for a New Year's Eve party with others, and the teens and college-age young people were poking fun at me for my southern English. Ask any one of the teens and they'll give you a list of words I say "wrong." At that party, it made me laugh when one of our college students asked if I had "fixed" my pronunciation of "humble." I'm not sure who died and left her in charge of the English language! Leaving off the "h" on humble is a southern pronunciation, not necessarily wrong.

Clearly, though, our speech betrays us — similar to the test given by the Gileadites to the Ephraimites, recorded in Judges 12:1-7. The Ephraimites could not pronounce "Shibboleth." It came out "Sibboleth." Romanians, we learned, have a difficult time pronouncing the "th" sound. Americans have trouble rolling our r's. Our speech betrays us!

It is not just *how* we pronounce words, either. Often, it is the way we say things. While we lived in Romania, our team donated toys and fruit to a children's hospital. We put them in small bags and left them on the beds, if the child was not in the room. One time, I left one on the bed, and in the hall way, was asked about it. I responded, in Romanian, "I left it on the bed." That's how we would say it in English. A little way down the hall, the same thing happened, but I overheard a nurse tell a mom that I left it "at the bed." I did not say anything grammatically or syntactically wrong. It just wasn't the way Romanians would say it. Our speech betrays us!

What does your speech say about you? Do you show by your speech that you love and respect your spouse? Are you rude? Critical? Sarcastic? Snarky? Impatient? Sharp? Insulting? Do you show by your speech that you love and respect your children? Does your speech show you are patient? Loving? Joyful? Peaceful? Kind?

What does your speech say about you? Does it show that you love Jesus? That you follow Him? Is He not far from your lips at any given time? If He dwells in your heart and motivates your life, how can you constantly be rude, critical, sarcastic, etc.?

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

Consider these proverbs: *“The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom”* (Proverbs 10:31). *“The tongue of the wise brings healing”* (Proverbs 12:18). *“The tongue of the wise commends knowledge”* (Proverbs 15:2). *“A gentle tongue is a tree of life”* (Proverbs 15:4). *“Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble”* (Proverbs 21:23). *“The teaching of kindness is on her tongue”* (Proverbs 31:26).



“...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:34-37).

Remember, your speech betrays you. What is it saying?



Paul Holland, a preacher of the Gospel, works with the Swartz Creek Church of Christ in Swartz Creek, Michigan, USA.

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

How Closely Is God Watching Us?

Cliff Holmes



“Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause’” (Job 2:3 NKJV). It may seem that with so many people living on this earth today we are so small and insignificant that God might not care to observe our day-to-day actions. If this were true, we might be able to hide our sometime sinful actions from the Almighty Creator of the universe. That is not now, nor has it ever been, a possibility. God created the universe of stars, planets, comets and moons. He made the human body with all of its functioning systems to make us live, breathe, walk and talk. Then, He placed us exactly

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

where He wanted us, in an environment perfect for our ability to sustain life and to grow. Consequently, He has an eye on each of us as His creation.

The proof of that is evident when God conversed with Satan concerning His servant Job. God knew the very heart of the man Job. He knew there was no other man like him on the earth, blameless, upright, always fearing God and always turning away from evil. Job was a man holding his integrity even in the face of Satan's onslaught to do total evil to him. Satan's goal was to get Job to curse God to His own face. Thus, Job would have become hated by God, and Job would have suffered eternal punishment.

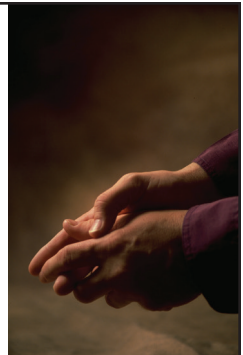
Today, there are millions more people alive and walking this earth than ever before. Is it possible that God cannot keep track of all of His creation and His creatures? Certainly not, because our God Who created all that now exists is **all wise, all powerful and all knowing**. He sees our every action whether good or bad. He knows our every thought, and He feels our joys and our despairs. He knows when we are weak in our service to Him. He knows the thoughts of our hearts for good or for bad. He knows if we lose our integrity.

Allow me to leave you with the same admonition that I have given to many young Bible class students, and to my own children and grandchildren. **“Never do anything that you would not do if you knew God was standing beside you and watching you. For to tell the truth, He is with us and knows what we think and do.”** †

Cliff Holmes has served variously over the years as a minister, a deacon and a song leader. He resides in Decatur, Alabama, USA.

David's Devotional

If we could ask God for one thing, what would it be? A million dollars? World peace? Happiness? King David said that he desired *“one thing.”* *“One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple”* (Psalm 27:4). He wanted to get to know God better! God, help us all to want that *“one thing”!*



The Importance of Family Prayer Time

Rodney Nulph

Communication is the key to the success in any human connection. In fact, communication is a basic building block in relationships between individuals. Because that is true, it should not come as a surprise that in order for families to have a strong faith, talking to God together is essential. Most families pray at the **appointed** times such as bedtimes and mealtimes. However, setting aside some special opportunities through the week to pray together can have lasting, positive, eternal effects for your family. While there are many more benefits to family prayer time than I can list in this article, consider the following for motivation to begin or to continue to pray together in your family.

Firstly, family prayer time **initiates appreciation**. Part of prayer is praising and thanking God for His manifold blessings that He gives each day (Psalm 105:1-3; 138:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18; James 1:17). Sadly, we live in what has been labeled a **thankless society**. Yet, praying together causes families to stop and think about the blessings they have been given. Someone has correctly said, “He who thinks, thanks.” Interestingly, a heart filled with gratitude causes us to be happier and much more optimistic. When your family joins together in prayer, discuss some of the many blessings that God has given, noting some blessings that are extra special personally to family members. Surely, the very fact that we can pray with our families is a reason to thank God!

Secondly, family prayer time **inspires agreement**. When a family sets precious time aside from all of life’s activities to pray, it brings each one closer to God and to each other. It gives individuals an opportunity to share together the ups and the downs that life sometimes brings. By bringing God into our family communication, the Lord becomes part of the very core of

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

the family. Each one can learn to express his or her emotions, which in turn will strengthen the family and the spiritual bond. “The family that prays together, stays together!” Of course, the opposite is often true as well. Interestingly, praying together also helps



individuals to forgive and to understand each other better in the family, and what family does not need forgiveness and understanding?

Thirdly, family prayer time **instills awareness**. Sadly, many children grow up with little awareness of Who the God of Heaven really is. In fact, many young people are growing up today with doubt that God even exists. Moses of old reminded Israel’s parents of their responsibility to teach their children to know God (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). By knowing God and His Word, our families are less likely to go astray and to become unfaithful (Psalm 119:9-11). What is the greatest combatant against atheism? Raising a generation to know God! As a family joins together to pray, it creates a legacy of faith and conviction for spiritual things.

So often, parents think about making memories for their children, so that when those children are grown, they can look back on their upbringing and have good recollections. No greater memories can be intertwined into the minds of our children than those times when, as a family, we sought the counsel of Almighty God. Take time today to pray with your family and to watch as God strengthens and sustains your faith and the faith of those with whom you have been entrusted. In the final analysis, it will be the spiritual things a family did together that really matters! ✝

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

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

The Challenges of Young People

Volois Hooper

Today's young people are overwhelmed by the humongous number of choices before them. What is one of those choices? Sin, in its various forms, is a serious choice confronting young people (Galatians 5:19-21).

Youth is a time of explosive exploration, and thus young people must be given the right guidance and tools in order for them to be successful at overcoming temptations that may ultimately lead to sin (1 Timothy 4:12). Technology has and is continuing to advance, and the average child is hooked on it.

We are all well aware that there are always advantages and disadvantages to things. If you give your child an electronic device from the time he or she can walk and talk without proper management and supervision, most likely 13 years later, it would be practically impossible for you to get that child to put away that device. ***“The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother”*** (Proverbs 29:15 NKJV). Parents must exercise their duties in a timely and trustworthy manner. Children should not be exposed to toys, habits and situations that would cloud the choices they make later in life. ***“Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it”*** (Proverbs 22:6).

The pivotal role of parents becomes strategic in the lives of youths, specifically teenagers. Ecclesiastes 12:1 reinforces that turning to God when one is young is more beneficial and advantageous compared to later in a person's life; ***“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them.’”*** Young people must be taught to love God and how important it is for God to be active in their lives.

Parents must become proactive in the lives of their young ones so that they can be left with a heritage like Timothy. ***“When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also”*** (2 Timothy 1:5). Parents, if needs be, must enlist the help of others so that young people are given the best opportunities to live for God. Godliness must start with the simple things. It can never be stressed enough how important family

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

devotions, Sunday School classes, VBS and such like are, because they give children a spiritual platform on which to stand as they continue to grow.

In addition to the Scriptures, young people must have visible examples who they would want to emulate. In Acts 10:1-2, Cornelius, even though not yet a Christian, was practicing Christian principles. Parents of young people and fellow members of the church must be observed by youths as generous, kind, hospitable and compassionate, whether it is to members or non-members. Not only must they see the examples of adults around them, but it is important that they are encouraged and given the resources and opportunities to do likewise.

The guardians of the young should be able to say what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1—*“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”* Today’s young people want to be noticed, to feel worthy and appreciated. What better way to satisfy these needs than to teach them to have the Good Samaritan attitude? We know that what we do can never be compared to what the Lord has done for us (Psalm 105:2), but we need to imitate Him anyway. One of the mistakes parents make today is **telling** their children what to do instead of making provisions where the child can **see** what they ought to do by observing their parents. Parents, what are you really laying up for your children? Material things are only for a time (Matthew 6:19-20).

Parents, are you truly cognizant of the company to which your children cling? As an adult, you can guide your children in choosing the kind of friends with whom you would like them to associate. You can do this by your good influence. This necessitates constant interaction with your children.

Children are smart, and sometimes they think they are smarter than you. That’s why it’s imperative that a line must be drawn between you being a parent and doing your duties as a parent. The reason Timothy was such a strong, faithful Christian stems from his godly mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5). Paul knew that Timothy was a young man of moral and godly substance. Therefore, parents, we too can raise children who are trustworthy, faithful and dependable.

Your children’s friends should share morally and biblically suitable interests in recreation, faith, social events, etc. because they are going to influence and to guide each other. Today’s children are interconnected because of technology. Therefore, monitoring friends and activities is an uphill task. Thus, the inherent influence of godliness ought to be foremost in

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

the minds of parents, especially when their children start to associate with friends. ***“There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death”*** (Proverbs 14:12).

Young people, God wants everyone in His kingdom, and, yes, that includes you. You’re the greatest asset He has to continue the work of His Son, which is to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). You have everything going for you with God right at the helm. You can do every suitable thing you want to do, and yet, you can also do the work of the Lord. It will bring you joy, accomplishment and fulfillment amidst this world that is filled with uncertainty and sinfulness.

There are so many painfully high statistics concerning young people today—statistics that could have been a lot lower or not at all if young people would but for a moment put God first, think about Him or strive to live godly. ***“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God”*** (Romans 12:1-2).

Alcohol, illicit drugs, lewd music and all kinds of ungodly sexual activities are the going things of the day. However, there is a much better and eternal beneficial course to follow. ***“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works”*** (Titus 2:11-14).

God is pleading with you. Don’t imitate your worldly friends! Your life would exhibit hypocrisy if you as a child of God were to do as they do. They may think they are having a good time now, but what about their lot in eternity—and yours if you follow their sinful ways? Their worldly living will harm your soul if you act as they do. Their riotous conduct mocks you as a Christian. Look to God! He’s the only one Who counts and by Whom you ought to be guided. God is waiting for your service. Give it to Him, **now!** ✝

Volois Hooper hosts a weekly children’s TV program. She lives in Guyana, South America.

The Fool's Theme Song

Denny Petrillo

Solomon said much about the fool. The Book of Ecclesiastes has dozens of references to him. Yet, in Ecclesiastes 10:19, Solomon sums up the life philosophy of the fool. This philosophy is described in three statements.

1. **Men prepare a meal for enjoyment.** While enjoying food is not a sin (Ecclesiastes 2:24; 5:18), the fool's selfish, self-gratifying perspective is described here. He has the "it's all about me" philosophy. Maybe he is even guilty of the sin of gluttony. Solomon noted that we "*eat for strength*" (10:17). Paul said that we should receive food with prayer and gratitude (1 Timothy 4:3-5).
2. **Wine makes life merry.** Only the fool would operate on this shallow, self-seeking perspective. "Happiness at all costs" is his theme. Yet, Solomon pointed out in Chapter 7 that going to a house of mourning was a better choice than going to the house of feasting (Ecclesiastes 7:2, 4). The Bible is filled with warnings about alcohol (Proverbs 20:1). The wise man knows he should avoid drinking it. It will not bring happiness, but instead it will increase one's sorrow.
3. **Money is the answer to everything.** This serves as a fitting wrap-up to the fool's theme song. Riches are deceptive and cannot provide genuine happiness and satisfaction (Ecclesiastes 5:13-17). The fool here is certainly being deceived. Sadly, how many today are deceived with this same foolish belief? The rich fool was (Luke 12:13-21). The rich young ruler was (Matthew 19:16-26). Paul warned that the love of money is a root (or a source) of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:9). History is replete with stories of men and women who had tremendous wealth but died miserable, lonely and godless deaths. Some even committed suicide. Obviously, money will not answer many of life's troubles.

Have we learned anything? We live in a world that has these same warped views. It is a world that embraces the warped philosophy of the "good life." Money, food and alcohol continue to plague us when not viewed correctly. †

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

TEXTUAL STUDIES

Where Two or Three Are Gathered Together

Louis Rushmore

Curiously, some in a congregation have evidently construed something Jesus said to mean that congregations of the church ought to be small, rather than grow in number. The Scripture at the center of this inquiry is, ***“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them”*** (Matthew 18:20). I must profess that I have never heard of such an interpretation of that verse.


Part of the context in which that the phrase ***“where two or three are gather together”*** is as follows. ***“Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them”*** (Matthew 18:18-20 NKJV). Enough of the context appears here to show that our Lord was speaking **exclusively** to His apostles. Verse 18 pertains to Christ’s authorization of the apostles to speak doctrinally on behalf of God. Elsewhere, the result of



TEXTUAL STUDIES

their decisions on behalf of God and directed by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21) was called *“the apostles’ doctrine”* (Acts 2:42).

Usually, even members of the church lift Matthew 18:20 from its context (which they should not do) to teach about the presence of our Lord as Christians assemble to worship. Yes, Jesus, Who possesses all of the qualities of the Godhead, is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10; Matthew 28:20), and Jesus further said that He would be present during Christian worship (Matthew 26:29).

Matthew 18:20, though, does not teach that truth. Neither does Matthew 18:20 say anything at all about the size of a local congregation of the Lord’s church. On the contrary, occasionally thousands of early Christians assembled together at least sometimes (Acts 2:41; 4:4). The number of disciples assembling were called a *“multitude”* (Acts 4:32; 5:14; 6:2, 5; 15:12, 30). 

Louis Rushmore is the Editor of *The Voice of Truth International* and *Gospel Gazette Online*. He is the author of several books and tracts in several languages and resides in Ocala, Florida, USA.

Robison’s Rubies

Proverbs 22:1 states, *“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold.”* **Notice**

the challenge of the statement. Culture might tempt people to sacrifice character and integrity in order to get ahead financially. A godly challenge is to hold onto character first. **Notice the blessing of the statement.** In a good name is often found *“loving favor,”* at least by some. While some people hate the truth and its speakers, loving favor will be found in the sight of God and others who follow God’s will. **Notice the definition of the statement.** What makes a good name? Not monetary success. Not riches. Not a good name among men but a good name with the Maker of men. A good name is given one who strives to be right with God. That name will be found in the Book of Life (Philippians 4:3).



Paul's Placement in the Ministry

Brian R. Kenyon

One of the greatest aspects about which Paul marveled in his own life was the fact that he, “*chief*” of all sinners, received forgiveness and ministry through Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 1:15-16). In the paragraph that contains these verses, Paul briefly departed from his warning about false teachers (1 Timothy 10b-11) and exclaimed thankfulness to God for what He had done for him.

And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. (1 Timothy 1:12-16)

Jesus Transforms

The words “*has enabled...counted...putting*” (1 Timothy 1:12) point to a specific time when this reality for Paul occurred. The specific time goes back to the appearance of Jesus to Paul while on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:15-16; 22:14; 26:16-18) and his subsequent conversion in Damascus (Acts 9:6; 22:10, 16; 26:19). Paul mentioned three specific truths for which he was thankful. First, Jesus Christ gave him strength (1 Timothy 1:12a). The word translated “*enabled*” [“*strengthened*” NAS] means to strengthen or to make strong. The word describes Abraham, who was “*strengthened in faith*” (Romans 4:20) and the Christian who is to

BIBLE CHARACTERS

“be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Ephesians 6:10). Paul acknowledged, ***“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”*** (Philippians 4:13). This enabling of the Lord sustained Paul, even toward the end of his life when he wrote from his final imprisonment, ***“At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me...But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear”*** (2 Timothy 4:16-17). Do we draw strength from the Lord?

Second, Paul was thankful that Jesus Christ ***“counted...[him] faithful.”*** The term ***“faithful”*** can mean believing but also carries the idea of being trustworthy and reliable. Faithfulness can describe God, as in the case of Sarah, who ***“received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised”*** (Hebrews 11:11). Even Jesus, who was God in human flesh (John 1:1-3, 14), was said to be ***“faithful to Him [the Father] who appointed Him [the Son]”*** (Hebrews 3:2).

Faithfulness can also describe people. Paul described Timothy as ***“my beloved and faithful son in the Lord”*** (1 Corinthians 4:17). In First Timothy 1:12, Paul was extremely thankful that Jesus was the One who counted him faithful! This echoes Paul’s statement earlier about ***“the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust”*** (1 Timothy 1:11). Jesus knew Paul to be trustworthy and reliable with the Gospel. Can the Lord say that about us? Are we reliable to Him?

Third, Paul was thankful that ***“Jesus Christ”*** put him ***“into the ministry”*** (1 Timothy 1:12c). The word translated ***“putting”*** generally means to place or put but can also carry the sense of making someone something, appointing or assigning one a place (Luke 12:46). Paul used an exact form of this word when he wrote that God ***“has committed”*** [***“entrusting”*** ESV] ***“to us the word of reconciliation”*** (2 Corinthians 5:19). God’s placing Paul into ***“the ministry”*** takes us back to his experience on the Damascus Road and subsequent conversion in Damascus (Acts 9:1-18). He was blinded by a manifestation of the Lord. During that encounter, Paul asked two great questions, ***“Who are You, Lord?”*** (Acts 9:5) and ***“Lord, what do You want***

BIBLE CHARACTERS

me to do?” (Acts 9:6a). He, of course, was told, *“Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do”* (Acts 9:6b).

Along the way, the Lord told Ananias in a vision to seek Saul of Tarsus and teach him (Acts 9:10-12). In response to Ananias’ concerns about Saul’s reputation, the Lord said, *“Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake”* (Acts 9:15-16). God had a plan! God’s placing Paul into *“the ministry”* also emphasized that Paul was not a **self-appointed** apostle who was in a position to arrogantly brag. It is also interesting to note that Paul spoke of his appointment to *“ministry”* [*“service”* ASV] rather than to apostleship. Yes, Paul was an apostle, just as legitimate as the rest (Galatians 1:10-2:14), but here he emphasized the service aspect of his work. Are you a servant of the Most High God?

All Christians have been transformed by the will of God and the blood of Jesus Christ. Although our conversion and ministry are obviously not like Paul’s in every way, we should still be thankful for the transformation of life God effected through our obedience to the Gospel. This new status for Paul was all the more remarkable when considering who he was before conversion.

Jesus Targets

Jesus is able to reach even the vilest of sinners (1 Timothy 1:13). Paul was a *“blasphemer”* not only by speaking against Christ and His church, but also by forcing others to do the same (Acts 26:11). Paul as a persecutor is well documented in Acts (8:3; 9:1-2; 22:4-5; 26:9-11; cf. Galatians 1:13) and serves as the reason why many in the early church were hesitant in receiving him as a brother in Christ (Acts 9:13-14, 26). *“An insolent man”* [*“injurious”* KJV; *“a violent aggressor”* NAS] refers to one who is violent with the idea of being boldly disrespectful and impudent (Bauer 832). Paul not only opposed Christianity, but he did so violently! However, Paul’s former life was targeted with the super-abundant grace that was poured upon him that resulted in his present standing before God! He *“obtained mercy”*! This is not teaching some form of unconditional election, but as Paul elsewhere confirmed, obtaining


BIBLE CHARACTERS

mercy from God only comes as a result of being faithful in Him (Romans 11:30-31; 1 Corinthians 7:25; 2 Corinthians 4:1).

Additionally, Paul received mercy because he *“did it ignorantly in unbelief”* (1 Timothy 1:13). This clause is often taken out of context to teach false theories about amenability. This verse does not support the *unaccountable for sin theory* of a sincere sinner outside of Christ! The statement alludes to Numbers 15:23-31, where Moses compared *“unintentionally committed”* [*“committed by ignorance”* KJV] sin and *“presumptuously”* committed sin.

In Judaism, as well as in the New Covenant, there was no atonement for presumptuous sin (Numbers 15:23-31; cf. Hebrews 10:26). Paul mentioned the fact to explain how his life prior to conversion became the object of God’s mercy rather than His wrath. Paul acted in *“good conscience”* while he sinned against Christ (Acts 23:1; 2 Timothy 1:3). Although he was lost, Paul at least thought he was serving God. His main problem was that he did not believe that Jesus was truly the Son of God. Paul changed his view about Christ on the Damascus Road, and this change of mind ultimately resulted in his obedience to the Gospel. Had Paul been in *“presumptuous”* sin while persecuting the church of Christ, he never would have come to repentance. No one can have *“godly sorrow”* while at the same time willfully resisting God (2 Corinthians 7:8-11).

Conclusion

One reason Christ saved Paul was to set him as a *template* for others to follow (1 Timothy 1:16). The word translated *“pattern”* refers to a prototype, standard or example. God’s *“longsuffering”* is His willingness to forebear the sins of people (Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:8). This willingness has been clearly manifested through the sending of His Son to save even the worst of sinners. If God can save a sinner like Paul and place him in the ministry, then He can save and place into His service any sinner who, like Paul, gives himself or herself over to the Lord! Have we allowed the Gospel of Jesus Christ to target and transform our lives? 

Brian R. Kenyon is the Director of the Florida School of Preaching in Lakeland, Florida, USA.

BIBLE CHARACTERS

What Did You Come to See?

David R. Kenney

Sometimes our expectations are not met, which can be discouraging. When we examine what has happened, it may be that our expectations were off. Take for example what Jesus said of John the Baptist.

What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings' courts. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You." For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. (Luke 7:24-28 NKJV)



BIBLE CHARACTERS

John was none of the things that people might have expected.

Instead, he was a unique individual with a unique role. John was considered the greatest among the prophets, but he was lesser than the least in the kingdom. How could this be? The prophets' messages included a forward-looking view to the coming of the Messiah, but John was the appointed harbinger of the Messiah's arrival (Matthew 3:1-4). Since John died before the Messiah's kingdom was established, he was not in the kingdom. So, the reference to *“least”* and *“greatest”* was one of chronology. Jesus certainly gave John high praise!

An interesting observation about both Jesus and John is that neither of them appeared to be the kind of messiah or herald the people were anticipating. This did not keep Jesus and John from fulfilling their missions, even though people's expectations were not realized.

Could it be that our expectations are the issue rather than some other solution to meet our expectations? The fact is that many of the preachers of the New Testament would not be welcomed in our pulpits today because they do not fit the profile of what we sometimes expect a preacher ought to be. The apostle Paul is nearly the exact opposite of what I read in the preacher-search ads—**he was unmarried and imprisoned!** †

David R. Kenney preaches for the church of Christ in Wadsworth, Ohio, USA. His “Kenney's Pennies” also appear in The Voice of Truth International.

Kenney's Pennies

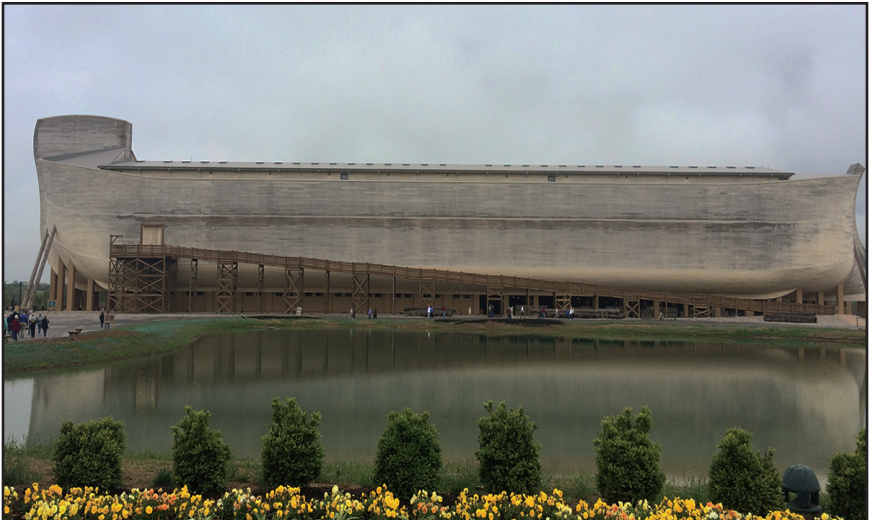
“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one” (John 10:28-30 NKJV). It is sad when those who had put themselves into the hands of God decide to abandon Him. God will not forsake His children, but we can forsake Him. Oh, how tragic when that happens!



BIBLICAL HISTORY

Things I learned from Noah

1. Don't miss the boat.
 2. Remember that we are all in the same boat.
 3. Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.
 4. Stay fit. When you are 600-years-old, someone may ask you to do something really big!
 5. Don't listen to critics. Just get on with the job that needs to be done.
 6. Build your future on high ground.
 7. Speed isn't everything. The snails were on the boat with the cheetahs.
 8. When you're stressed, float awhile.
 9. Remember the ark was built by amateurs. The Titanic was built by professionals.
 10. No matter what the storm, when you are with God, there's always a rainbow waiting.
- Author Unknown



The Long Road to Restoration

Jim Dearman

Introduction

The church of Christ did not come into existence by accident or as an afterthought in the mind of God. The blessed body over which Christ is Head was promised and prophesied long before the first penitent believers were added to the church on Pentecost. The preciousness of the church is seen in the purchase price, the blood of the sinless Son of God, who loved His spiritual bride supremely, and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:25).

Not only was the church purchased with the precious blood of the Lamb, but it came with a pattern or a blueprint. The pattern for the church was as specific as those given for the tabernacle and the temple, institutions that were but shadows of God's present and permanent house, the church of the living God. The early church worked and worshipped according to the pattern revealed in the New Testament. However, as predicted in Scripture, departures came, first in the area of the organization of the church. Departures resulted in the establishment of Roman Catholicism. The very evil that Paul had predicted reared its ugly and divisive head (1 Timothy 4:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4).

[This does not mean that remnants of true Christianity failed to persist through the centuries, though largely ignored by popular historical records. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

There were men in the sixteenth century who rose up in opposition to the spiritual decadence brought on by Catholicism. However, their goals were to reform that existing apostate institution, rather than to restore the church from which the apostate body had digressed. The sincere but misguided efforts of Martin Luther and others resulted in further divisions as new denominations arose in which adherents pledged their allegiance to manmade creeds and traditions.

Seed Versus Succession

Just as the road to ruination for the church in many places did not occur overnight, the road to restoration would be a long one, indeed. It would begin with a belief in the valid biblical principle that *“the seed is the word of God”*

CHURCH HISTORY

(Luke 8:11). Successfully tracing the church's existence back to Pentecost Day is not necessary when one recognizes this crucial truth. Planting the seed of the kingdom in the present age produces a crop of Christians identical to what sprang up on Pentecost when the Gospel was first preached. It was this realization, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, that led honest men and women down the long road to restoration.

From Ecumenism to Exclusivism

In the late summer of 1801, Calvinism dominated the religious scene as thousands of worshippers converged on Cane Ridge in Kentucky for a revival that would become a turning point in the Restoration Movement in America. It was at Cane Ridge that Barton W. Stone publicly expressed his conviction that the Gospel was for all, an affront to the Calvinistic thinking so prevalent in that day. Stone's declaration ultimately led to his departure from the Presbyterian Synod of Kentucky and to the establishment of the Springfield Presbytery. However, Stone and the others who began the new presbytery soon realized that it had no more scriptural authority to exist than their former one. So, in 1804, Stone, along with the other organizers of the new association, published *The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery*, vowing to abandon human creeds and to follow only the Bible.

It is significant to note that such sentiments were not being expressed exclusively by Barton Stone and those associated with him. Simultaneous movements toward a return to New Testament authority were occurring independently in other parts of America and beyond her borders. Men like James O'Kelly, Elias Smith and Abner Jones were initiating efforts that would help lead to a return to the New Testament pattern, and in Ireland and Scotland independent movements toward a return to the primitive order were underway. While both Thomas and Alexander Campbell would emerge as great leaders in the movement, theirs were not the first efforts made toward restoration. Yes, it would be a long journey to a complete return to the pure pattern of the New Testament, but the journey had surely begun!

The fact that several independent movements toward restoration occurred around this time is reassuring. It proves conclusively that a pattern could be perceived by honest seekers of truth who had never met

CHURCH HISTORY

each other but who could recognize the specific teachings of Scripture and who could appreciate the principle stated earlier: *“The seed is the word of God.”* Their dedication to that truth ultimately led to the restoration of the one church for which Jesus died.



It is a long road from ecumenism [indiscriminately inclusive] to exclusivism. It is a journey many in the past were willing to make but which many today will not begin. Most people scoff at the idea of an exclusive body of saved believers who must remain in that body to be saved ultimately in Heaven. While the New Testament church has been restored, the divisive and destructive influence of denominationalism is still powerful and pervasive. It seeks to lead us back down the road to ruination, a road well-traveled by the early apostates who corrupted the church in former days. Even from within the body of Christ, there are those now rising up to ridicule the **exclusivism** that they define as too narrow and overly restrictive.


However, let us remember that the church described in the New Testament is exclusive. There is one body with one Head, Jesus Christ

CHURCH HISTORY

(Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4). Only those who are obedient to the exclusive terms of admission are added to the body (Acts 2:37-38, 41, 47). The saved are in the body and nowhere else (Ephesians 5:23). It is the one body, also called the kingdom, that will be delivered up to the Father one day by the Lord Himself (1 Corinthians 15:24). These great truths about the church prompted people to question the ecumenical thinking and practice of their time and to begin their return to the exclusive teaching of the New Testament.

Movement and Maintenance

As others have well said, we do not reverence the restorers, but we respect them for their courage and determination to travel a road fraught with dangers and discouragement. While we benefit in this generation from their sacrifices, we do not owe our existence to the so-called *American Restoration Movement*. **Christians of every generation owe their existence to the gracious God of Heaven Who has preserved the seed throughout time so that honest men might seek it and obey it.**

If by “movement,” we mean progress toward a goal, then the Restoration Movement, in a sense, is over for some. The restoration goal has become reality for those who are part of the restored New Testament church. Such are members of the kingdom that will never be destroyed and which will always exist, in seed form at least, until the end of time. However, the maintenance must be ongoing, and disciples must diligently preserve and protect the restored pattern. Since proper maintenance of the New Testament pattern involves the responsibility to “*make disciples*” (Matthew 28:19), we must continue to plead with those around us to return to the pure pattern that they might know the singular blessings of undenominational Christianity. Ours is not only a charge to protect the Gospel but to “*preach the gospel to every creature*” on earth (Mark 16:15-16)! 

Jim Dearman is a Gospel preacher and media evangelist (television, radio and Internet). He is the host of the Internet program Good News Today and resides in Dunlap, Tennessee, USA.

Did You Know?

Methuselah died the year of the flood. The Bible does not say if he died in the flood or before the flood occurred.



Bible Word Scramble

Rebecca Rushmore

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

Sub-Theme: Origin

2 Timothy 3:16 6th word ____

2 Peter 1:21 5th word ____

Sub-Theme: Purpose

2 Timothy 3:17 10th word ____

John 17:17 5th word ____

Sub-Theme: Complete

2 Peter 1:3 8th word ____

Jude 3 33rd word ____

Sub-Theme: Indestructible

Matthew 24:35 7th word ____

1 Peter 1:25 6th word ____

Sub-Theme: Warnings

Proverbs 30:6 9th word ____

Revelation 22:18 7th word ____

Revelation 22:19 2nd word ____

Galatians 1:8 7th word ____

Sub-Theme: Responsibility

2 Timothy 2:15 5th word ____

Acts 5:29 16th word ____

Bible text: New King James (NKJV)

(See the back cover for answer.)

CHRIST GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME!

Mark N. Posey

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20 NKJV)

The ancient Persians invented crucifixion about 300-400 B.C. It is probably the most painful death ever invented by humans. The English word “*excruciating*” is derived from crucifixion, acknowledging it as a form of slow, painful suffering. Paul spoke of crucifixion many times in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 1:18, 21, 23). The cross is the central event in the history of time!

- **Christ gave His back to be scourged for me (John 19:1).** The brutal act of scourging had three purposes. First, it was used to beat the prisoner as a form of punishment. Second, it was used to extract a confession from the prisoner. Finally, in cases of crucifixion, it was used to weaken the victim so he would die more quickly on the cross. Historically, it was when a person was whipped as punishment.
- **Christ gave His head to wear a crown of thorns for me (John 19:2).** While a crown of thorns was exceedingly painful, it was more about mockery than it was about pain. The Roman soldiers used it as a symbol of royalty and turned it into something painful and degrading. The thorn plant that was used to make the “crown of thorns” that was placed upon Jesus’ head is believed to be a plant called the “*Euphorbia milii*.”
- **Christ gave His face to be slapped for me (John 19:3).** Isaiah foretold of the Chosen One being slapped and the hairs of His beard being pulled out of His face (Isaiah 50:6). Christ taught, “*turn the other cheek,*” and He practiced perfectly what He preached (John 18:19-34)!

CHARTS & OUTLINES

- **Christ gave His **shoulders** to carry the cross for me (John 19:17).** He carried the instrument of His own punishment. The cross, which weighed 300-400 pounds, would have been too heavy for anyone to carry or drag any distance. Even in His weakened condition, Jesus carried it as far as He could. Each step He took, He took for us!
- **Christ gave His **hands and feet** to be nailed for me (Psalm 22:16).** In 1968, scientists for the first time discovered the remains of a man crucified in Jesus' era.

The victim was nailed to the cross in a sitting position, both legs over sideways, with the nail penetrating the sides of both feet just below the heel. The arms were stretched out, each



stabbed by a nail in the forearm. Jesus hung on the cross on Friday for six hours (9 a.m.-3 p.m.).

- **Christ gave His **body** to be crucified for me (1 Peter 2:24).** As Jesus hung on the cross, the weight of His body pulled down on the diaphragm, and the air moved into His lungs and remained there. He had to push up on His nailed feet (causing more pain) to exhale. In order to speak, air must pass over the vocal cords during exhalation. The Gospel records note that Jesus spoke seven times from the cross. It is amazing that despite His pain, He pushed up to say, “*Forgive them*” (Luke 23:34). He loved until the end!
- **Christ gave His **side** to be stabbed for me (John 19:34).** A soldier pierced Jesus' side to assure that He was dead, and “*blood and water came out*” (John 19:34), referring to the watery fluid surrounding the heart and lungs. This was a cruel act by a cruel man. †

Mark N. Posey is the preacher for the church of Christ in Winfield, Alabama, USA.


YOUR FATHERS TEMPTED ME TEN TIMES

Mark McWhorter

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews encouraged Jewish Christians to remain faithful to Christ. They were being influenced to go back to the Old Law. The writer warned Christians that disobedience brings negative judgment from God.

Hebrews 3:8-9 reads, *“Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.”* The specific reference is to Exodus 17 and is a quote of the Septuagint of Psalm 95:8. It describes one of the times after the Israelites came out of Egypt that they complained to God.

In Numbers 14:22, God told the Israelites they had tempted Him ten times. Because of the ten times (which is the same number of plagues that God had brought on the Egyptians), God would make them wander for a total of 40 years. (Deuteronomy 2:14 says it was 38 more years from the time God made His statement of condemnation.)

God does not specifically mention the ten incidents. However, there are ten incidents recorded (Exodus 6:9-12; 14:10-12; 15: 23-26; 16; 17:1-7; 32; Numbers 11:1, 4-33; 12:1-15; 14). We do not know if these are the exact ones that God meant, but it is curious that Moses recorded these. The point is still true: God is patient but will bring negative judgment on those who disobey. He did so under the Old Covenant, and He will do so under the New Covenant. Study your Bible. Learn all you can about God. Make sure you obey Him. If any of this is hard to understand, ask an adult to help you. 

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

[Editor’s Note: “Ten times” may or may not refer to specific occasions. The number 10 represents the idea of something that is complete. In any case, the Israelites wandering in the Sinai Peninsula following their exodus from Egypt completely exhausted God’s patience with them. Our continual disobedience today will likewise exhaust God’s patience with us (2 Peter 3:9-12). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]



Scavenger Hunt

through Exodus

Rebecca Rushmore

(answers inside back cover)

1. Name the two Egyptian supply cities built by Israelite slaves.
2. Where did Moses hide the Egyptian he killed?
3. What was the seventh plague?
4. In what condition were the Israelites to eat the Pass-over?
5. Who was to be consecrated to the Lord?
6. How much bread (manna) was to be gathered per person?
7. In the battle with Amalek, when did Israel prevail?
8. How long after the Israelites left Egypt did they arrive at Mount Sinai?
9. Under the Law of Moses, what was the penalty for hitting a parent?
10. Name the three yearly feasts God commanded the Israelites to keep.

Will Foreign Mission Methods Work in the United States?

Betty Burton Choate

According to a recent article, 80% of all churches number 100 or less in attendance. Certainly this would be true of the Lord's church, if the figures in *Where the Saints Meet* are reliable.

This means that many Christians have a home situation where the church is small and often inadequate to meet the local spiritual needs. The leadership may not be dynamic. The preacher may be young and inexperienced and perhaps less effective in his work than those employed by the larger congregations. The program of activities may include little more than the basic worship services. A wide range of ages may be lumped together in classes for lack of teachers. Because of spiritual inactivity, there may be bickering, lukewarmness and worldliness, making the congregation a poor example of Christianity in the community.

In short, the local situation may leave many Christians totally discouraged about the future of their home congregation. Must such a negative picture continue? Must the church remain small? Is it possible to overcome the inadequacies and to grow?

Look at a foreign setting for a minute. A family goes into a pagan country where the church doesn't exist. There is no large body of believers to attract newcomers. There are no exciting activities to offer. There is no range of well-organized and well-attended classes to draw others. The group may even meet in the missionary's home or in some temporary rental place.

Nothing about the situation seems designed for the actual building of a nucleus of believers, yet it happens. Why is the missionary able to do what seems so difficult for already established congregations here at home?

FROM THE HEART OF

I suggest that at least part of the answer lies in basic and often subtle differences in outlook. It doesn't take much—a little here and a little there—to add up to a completely different total.

Why can people be converted in mission areas?

❁ Because the missionary has staked his life's work on the belief that the Truth he is offering is needed and wanted, and so he goes out, asking God's help in locating those who are looking for Him, and he *expects* to make converts.

❁ Because he focuses the attention of his students (as well as his own) on God and the Truth they must have rather than the fellowship they may lack as they become new Christians.

❁ Because the missionary knows that **diligent and persistent outreach** is necessary to contact the unreached souls who will be responsive.

How do these attitudes differ from the typical outlook of American Christians in a discouraging local setting?

❁ We are convinced that religious pleas are not wanted these days. We don't expect positive response to our spiritual overtures.

❁ We compare ourselves, congregationally, with local denominations and feel that we have too little to offer.

❁ We, ourselves, listen to our negative reasoning, and so we don't go out diligently and persistently, *prayerfully* looking for those who want to learn.

Must such a negative picture continue? No. The picture will change when our own attitudes change. Part of the problem that prevents us from teaching and winning the lost is *our mind-set*, not their refusal to hear.

Recent surveys confirm that more than half of the American people don't regularly participate in any church. A Gallup Poll study says that 54% of the "unchurched" would be willing to be members of a church. What they lack is the teaching and the encouragement offered by someone who already has spiritual commitment.

FROM THE HEART OF

Putting these figures together,
do we realize what they are saying?

❁ The “churched” may be *satisfied*, even *polarized*, where they are.

❁ American society has grown steadily away from spiritual anchors since the 60’s. A whole generation has grown up without those strengths or those biases for or against truth. That generation’s children have grown up with the pendulum ready to begin swinging back, and many of them are open to teaching. This doesn’t mean that *masses* can be *quickly* and *easily* converted, but it does mean that, one by one, conversions can be made.

❁ If one-half of the population is “unchurched,” and if one-half of that number is willing to be “churched,” then, potentially, one out of every four people might be won to Christ!

❁ As I have conversed with various ones during the past week, three different parents have told me of their teenagers initiating a return to religion for the whole family. One lady said, “My daughter is really searching. She told me the other day, ‘Mother, it doesn’t matter to me where we go, but I want us to start going to worship somewhere together.’” Yesterday a man said, “I was brought up going to church but the teachers in my high school years talked more about sports than the Bible, and so I dropped out. My son is a teenager now, and last year he started going to Bible School and joined the church. He kept after me, and so I went back a few weeks ago.” Another lady said, “Our boys just insisted that they wanted to be in classes somewhere. We are going with them some now.”

❁ The times are changing always, and we need to keep ourselves aware of those changes. The negative response to truth that seemed widely characteristic during the 60’s and 70’s is not necessarily what we will see today. Of course, our Lord’s statement that the way is narrow and that there will be few to find it will always be true. Yet, another of His observations is true also: ***“the fields...are...white for harvest.”*** In its own way, the era of a-spirituality has served to create in some hearts a new realization of the need for God, largely free of pre-established biases. We must open our eyes to these facts and seize the opportunities that are before us now.

FROM THE HEART OF

❁ There are cycles in human behavior. Because of the divisions among believers in Christ, because of indifference on the part of too many Christians, because of humanistic and atheistic teachings from every direction, because of affluence and materialism, much of the developed world is not greatly concerned about religion. Yet, in spite of these factors, religious groups that are out actively teaching are growing. Even Middle Eastern and Eastern mystical religions are mushrooming in growth among Americans. The spiritual vacuum is being felt in lives—the problem is that it is being filled with garbage instead of the righteousness of God.

How can we go about reversing the negative trends in the church?

❁ **Pray. Work. Pray. Work. Pray. Work. Pray. Work.** There is no substitute for these two essentials for success.

❁ **Take inventory of the activities of the congregation.** Listen to the announcements. Do they concern—bottom line—“play” activities for the youth and teens, and “busy work” involvement for adults? “Playing” will not assure spiritual maturing and faithfulness, but bearing fruit through teaching and converting others, and through nourishing weak or new Christians will invariably strengthen the workers as well.

❁ **Encourage individual fellowship with Christians** in their homes and yours, praying and planning together. Let your conversation be about spiritual things rather than sports, work or school. Suggest ideas and work that can be done; talk them up and set about getting others involved. Develop training sessions for those who lack confidence in their ability to teach. Remember, if you are working and you get one other person started working, you have doubled the work force! Develop a close spiritual relationship in the church in these ways, and watch for the good changes to come.

❁ **Realize that we don't have to be the largest group to have something to offer.** If community people can see a caring quality about Christianity, a Christ-like love and oneness, if they can be taught to recognize truth, then negative factors will not be the deciding factors.

❁ **Use all scriptural methods in your hands to improve the local**

FROM THE HEART OF

congregation. Keep your eye on God and on the goal; persevere, and be always prayerful about God's work through you and about any changes in methods that need to be made.

✿ **Ask God to help you find those who are looking for the truth,** and then make the formal commitment to keep yourself regularly involved in a study with some non-Christian.

✿ In conversations, **look for spiritual openings,** and then follow through on them.

✿ When the setting seems right, just **take the plunge and ask the person for a regular weekly study time** so that the two of you can learn together.

✿ **Be concerned with the personal and emotional needs around you.** Too often we want to work with those whose only needed change in life is baptism and, presto, we have "instant Christians"! If we are looking only for that type of person to teach, we won't find many opportunities. Jesus said He came to call sinners to repentance, and He was accused of associating with people who would contaminate Him. He didn't have a lot of time for the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the *most righteous* people in the religious world, because most of them didn't have time for Him.

Today, the world is full of problems, and people really need the solutions given in God's Word. We, standing in Christ's stead, must involve ourselves with those who need us. We must be willing to use our homes, our food, our cars, our money, our abilities, our families, our time and our everything in God's service. With this attitude, we will have continual opportunities to teach. Our problem will be lack of time and strength, not lack of students.

Do we really want to reverse the negative trends in the church? Do we really want individual Christians and the church to grow? It can happen. The trend can be turned around. Working with God, we can do it. The choice is ours, and the resulting unspeakable happiness will also be ours when we get up and get involved. ✕

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, founder of this magazine. She resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

Noting Your Bible



God's Will

What is the will of God? Second Peter 1:3 tells us that we have *“all things that pertain to life and godliness.”* God has given us His complete Word, *“the faith, once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jude 3). Therein, we find God’s will for mankind. Open your Bible and begin by writing somewhere in the front: “God’s Will,” and let’s explore this topic further.

1. In the front of your Bible, next to, **“God’s Will,”** write: **“Ephesians 1:3-12.”** Turn to Ephesians 1 and next to these verses, note: **“God has made known His will in Christ (see Matthew 7:21).”**
2. Turn to Matthew 7:21, and note: **“Jesus said one must do the will of God in order to enter the kingdom (see John 5:30).”**
3. In John 5:30, note here: **“Jesus did God’s will in everything and expects me to do the same (see Hebrews 10:36).”**
4. Turn to Hebrews 10:36 and in the context of verses 35–39 write: **“endure in doing God’s will to receive salvation (see 13:21).”**
5. Go to Hebrews 13:21 noting: **“God helps us through Jesus to be complete in His will (also Colossians 4:12) (see 1 John 2:17).”**
6. In 1 John 2:17, write: **“Doing God’s will = eternal life; Praise God! (see 1 Thessalonians 5:18).”**
7. Turn to 1 Thessalonians 5:18 and note: **“God wants me to be thankful in all things (see 4:3).”**
8. In 1 Thessalonians 4:3, write: **“God’s will is sexual purity in my life (see 1 Peter 4:2).”**
9. Go to 1 Peter 4:2 and note: **“Live for the will of God, not for the lust of the flesh (see Ephesians 6:6).”**

10. In Ephesians 6:6, write: **“Seeking God’s will starts with the heart/ mind (see Romans 12:2).”**
11. Next to Romans 12:2, note: **“Doing God’s will leads to a transformed life (see Luke 7:30).”**
12. Turn to Luke 7:30 and write: **“Don’t reject God’s will (see 2 Corinthians 8:5).”** Also, note in the context of Luke 7, if rejecting John’s baptism proved spiritually fatal for those at that time, then what of rejecting Christ’s now (Mark 16:16)?
13. In 2 Corinthians 8:5, note: **“Give yourself to the Lord by following His will (see 1 Peter 2:15).”**
14. In the context of 1 Peter 2:13-17, write: **“Submitting to my country’s government is God’s will (see 4:19).”**
15. Next to 1 Peter 4:19, in the context of verses 12-17, write: **“I may suffer for doing God’s will; remember He is faithful (also 3:17) (see 1 John 5:14).”** You may want to circle or highlight verses 13-16 of 1 Peter 4 as it gives us the reason for remaining faithful through suffering.
16. Turn to 1 John 5:14 and note: **“He hears my petitions as I pray according to His will; walking in His light (1 John 1:7).”** Let us always proclaim in word and deed: **“Your will be done, Father; not mine.”** ✝

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

David’s Devotional



Stay Focused An old preacher stepped into the pulpit one Sunday morning and announced that it was time for him to retire. “I wear two hearing aids” he explained, “and I wear trifocal glasses; I have a partial plate, and I have to walk with a cane. It seems to me that the Lord is telling me that it is time to retire.” After the service, a white-haired lady, who was a few years older than the preacher, told him, “Brother, you have misunderstood what the Lord is telling you! He’s not telling you that it’s time to retire; He’s telling you that if you keep going, He will keep you patched up!” It’s never time to retire from serving the Lord! Sure, we may have to change what we do or slow down a bit, but we can always serve God! We serve him unto the end! Satan is trying to remove or cloud our focus! What is really important! When our focus is removed, we will always fall. The old preacher began to focus on what he could not do instead of what he could do! Stay focused on what we can do for God!

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

Magnolia Messenger is a superb quarterly, 24-page, full color religious journal. Its layout is modern and appealing to the eye. Inside, the *Magnolia Messenger* is packed with religious articles on a variety of subjects by Christian men and women, with news and with events. Though it especially caters to the State of Mississippi, its appeal reaches nationwide and even addresses items of interest worldwide. Single subscriptions are without charge and made possible by donations from individuals and congregations of the churches of Christ. For further information, write or email: Magnolia Messenger, P.O. Box 1578, Kosciusko, MS 39090 or glenfranks@yahoo.com.

House to House Heart to Heart

www.housetohouse.com

256-435-9356; email: info@jvillecoc.org; Website: www.HousetoHouse.com.

For pennies per household you can spread the Gospel in your city through this doctrinally-sound bimonthly paper. It will even be personalized with the local church's address and news. Phone:



World Bible School teachers have that opportunity. Why not call the WBS office (512-345-8190) or email wbsinfo@wbschool.org for full information.

Are you looking for an opportunity to be a branch, bearing fruit to God?

Make your time count for souls!



IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY®

Phil Sander's **Search TV** programs are on **80 broadcast TV stations, 23 broadcast radio stations, 130 public and cable access systems, and 2 satellite systems (Dish and DirecTV)**. Benefit from the lessons, support the preaching of the Gospel. **Phone: 800-321-8633; email: search@searchtv.org; Website: www.searchtv.org.**

Free
ONLINE
Courses



World Video Bible School produces and distributes excellent quality, scripturally sound, inexpensively priced Bible study material in a wide variety of formats, including DVDs, CDs, MP3s, Posters, Books, eBooks, Notebooks, Electronic Notebooks, and Websites. **www.wvbs.org; 25 Lantana Lane, Maxwell, TX 78656; Phone: (512) 398-5211**

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

Gospel Gazette Online

Serving an international readership with the old Jerusalem Gospel via the internet

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**)

Apologetics Press has been the voice in churches of Christ for many years, speaking clearly and biblically on subjects pertaining to **Creation/Evolution, the Godhead, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and other vital questions of faith**. A new line of Bible class curriculum, **Exploring God's Word**, is available online, and much of it can be downloaded free of charge. Dave Miller has produced excellent DVDs on **The Silencing of God in America** and **The Quran**. **Phone: 800-234-8558; Website: www.ApologeticsPress.org.**



What Can You Do to Help Spread the Word?

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

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

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

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

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL
P.O. Box 72, Winona, MS 38967

To speed up your announcement that you want to help,
call us at 662-283-1192 or send your email to

Choate@WorldEvangelism.org
Website: WorldEvangelism.org

Dear Brethren:

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

◆ I want to order the complete set of volumes in print (106 issues) for the reduced price of \$2.00 per copy. My address is given below.

◆ Please send special prices for WBS teachers and their students.

◆ I want to MAKE A GIFT subscription of ***The Voice of Truth International***. Enclosed is my check for \$15.00 for four issues, or \$25.00 for eight issues, starting with Volume _____. The address is given below.

◆ I want to send \$30.00 per month (or a multiple), for a box of 35 copies (or multiples) of each issue of the magazine as they are printed. Churches are also urged to use boxes in this way. Or you may send one payment of \$350.00 per year for four issues. This will help us to send more copies to the mission fields.

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

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

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

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

P.O. Box 72

Winona, MS 38967

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE NUMBER _____

ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (page 44)

1. There will be a general resurrection of the dead.
2. Nothing. It is empty or worthless.
3. We are still in our sins.
4. We are the pitiable of all humans.
5. Firstfruits.
6. Death, resurrection.
7. Deliver the kingdom to God.
8. Death.
9. Yes.
10. All things.
11. God the Father.

Bible Word Scramble (page 97)

Bible Authority

Bible Find (page 43)



Scavenger Hunt (page 101)

1. Pithom and Raamses (1:8-11)
2. in the sand (2:11-12)
3. hail (9:22)
4. "with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand...eat it in haste" (12:11)
5. all firstborn of "man and beast" (13:1-2)
6. one omer (16:15-16)
7. when Moses held up his hands (17:8-13)
8. 3 months (19:1-2)
9. death (21:15)
10. Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Harvest, Feast of Ingathering (23:14-16)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

A Prayer for Every Christian

Psalm 51:1-4, 10-13

***Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude
of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin is always before me.
Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done this evil in Your sight—
That You may be found just
when You speak, And
blameless when You judge.***

***Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,
And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,
And sinners shall be converted to You.***