

VOLUME ONE HUNDRED AND FOUR

V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



MY OLD STUDY BIBLE

Fenter D. Northern

*I picked up my old Bible,
Beside me on my bed,
As I opened its leaves so gently,
It seemed to speak and said:*

*"We've spent much time together,
I'm worn and coming apart,
I trust that what you've read in me,
Is written upon your heart.*

*"All things upon this earth,
Become worn and torn with time,
But what you have received from me,
Is eternal and sublime.*

*"Someone will dispose of outer me,
And do the same for you,
Yet, our spirits will live on and on,
The Word, the Son of God, and you."*



CHRIST AND THE BRAZEN SERPENT

14 AND AS MOSES LIFTED UP THE SERPENT IN THE WILDERNESS, EVEN SO MUST THE SON OF MAN BE LIFTED UP; 15 THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH MAY IN HIM HAVE ETERNAL LIFE... JOHN 3:14-16

Num. 21:8-9



THE OCCASION OF THE DISEASE

Psa. 106:13-15	Turning From God	Isa. 59:1-2
Deu. 8:14-15	Punishment for Sin	Rom. 6:23
People Died	Helplessness of Man	Rom. 5:8-10
Num. 21:8	Grace Extended	Joh. 3:14-16

John 3:13-14



RESEMBLANCE IN BOTH REMEDIES

Num. 21:9	Remedy for Sin Raised	John 12:32
By Serpent	Means of Death	Rom. 5:12
Serpent Raised	Means of Life	1Co. 15:21-22

BOTH REMEDIES EFFECTUAL

Num. 21:9	Only One Remedy	Acts 4:12
Obedient Faith	Demands of Faith	Obedient Faith
Num. 21:9	God's Invitation	Mat. 11:28-30

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SIGNS OF A HEALTHY CHURCH

AND HE SAID UNTO HIM, THY BROTHER IS COME; AND THY FATHER HATH KILLED THE FATTED CALF, BECAUSE HE HATH RECEIVED HIM SAFE AND SOUND. LUKE 15:27

SOUND IN DOCTRINE—• TITUS 2:1

SOUND IN LEADERSHIP—• ACTS 20:28

SOUND IN FAITH—• TITUS 1:13

SOUND IN UNITY—• JOHN 17:20-22

SOUND IN WORK—• TITUS 3:1

SOUND IN SPEECH—• TITUS 2:2

SOUND IN WORSHIP—• JOHN 4:23-24

SOUND IN TEACHING—• 2 TIMOTHY 4:1-4

SOUND IN GIVING—• 2 CORINTHIANS 9:7-8

SOUND IN ZEAL—• TITUS 2:14

MATT. 16:18
1 PE. 2:5

THE
WORD
"SOUND"
AS USED
IN LUKE 15:27
AND IN THESE
OTHER PASSAGES
MEANS "HEALTHY."

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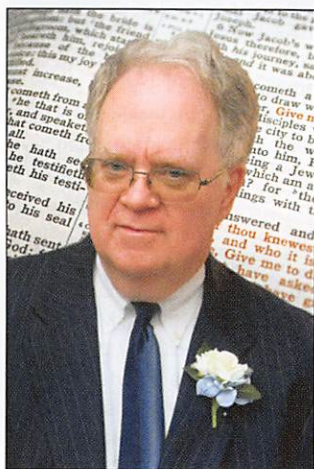
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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU

(ROMANS 16:16).

Remember Lot's Wife

Louis Rushmore



A few decades ago, I preached for a small congregation perched on the ridge and border between Virginia and North Carolina. I so loved those Blue Ridge Mountains. Apparently, the congregation was more interested than I was in the wall clock at the back of the auditorium. Hence, I hung a framed message just below the timepiece, which simply read, ***“Remember Lot’s Wife.”*** Years later after my family had moved away from there, the little sign remained just where I had placed it. I don’t know if it still complements the clock today.

The episode regarding the flight of Lot, his wife and two of their daughters ahead of the impending divine destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is well known. It also was well known in Jesus’ day so that He simply could say, ***“Remember Lot’s wife”*** (Luke 17:32 NKJV). The next verse defines His reference to Lot’s wife thusly, ***“Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.”*** In the context, Jesus contrasted the normal things people do and the possessions they cherish with spiritual pursuits. It is not wrong necessarily to be about the ordinary affairs of life (1 Timothy 5:8) and to have even many possessions or to be wealthy. Yet, especially things and wealth are often snares to even the children of God (1 Timothy 6:7-10). There is a proper sequence and estimation of importance to spiritual interests versus one’s temporal activities and possessions (Matthew 6:33-34).

Why did Lot’s wife look back? There are numerous reasons that doubtlessly contributed to Lot’s wife looking back to what she was leaving behind. Let’s identify Lot and his family so that we more easily

can envision who these people were and what was transpiring in their lives prior to the appearance of angels in Sodom.

Lot was the nephew of Abraham (Genesis 12:5). Lot, like his uncle Abraham, was a wealthy nomad, having large herds and flocks (Genesis 13:5-6). Subsequently, they parted from each other so they could provide for their animals, and Lot chose the plain of the Jordan River Valley toward Sodom (Genesis 13:11-12). Eventually, Lot moved his family into the City of Sodom (Genesis 14:12). It was ordinary for people who could live within the safety of a walled city and for their agricultural activities to occur outside of the city. Nomads didn't usually live among settled populations but resided in tents (Genesis 13:12). However, Lot departed from that norm and settled in Sodom.

Lot and his family, though, experienced consequences because they resided in Sodom. Lot maintained his godliness in an extremely wicked community, though ***“that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds”*** (2 Peter 2:8). ***“...Righteous Lot...was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked”*** (2 Peter 2:7). Furthermore, two or more of Lot's daughters married men from Sodom (Genesis 19:14), and when Lot and his family were to be evacuated from Sodom by God's angels, they did not leave with Lot, his wife and his two unmarried daughters (Genesis 19:8, 15-16).



In the span of hours, Lot's family went from wealth to poverty; whatever they could not carry with them as they were led by their hands (Genesis 19:16) out of Sodom had to be left behind. Likewise, two or more daughters, their husbands and possibly grandchildren were left behind also to their impending doom. Upon their departure and as fire and brimstone rained down from the

sky upon Sodom, Gomorrah and other cities of the plain (Genesis 19:24-25), Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26). Yes, the noise, the smell, the fire and the smoke alone would likely draw anyone's attention. However, much more than that, Lot's family left everything behind to the inferno that consumed their wealth, property and other family members.

The ungodly and worldly environment of Sodom claimed some of Lot's family who remained in Sodom. He lost all that he had, too, in the destruction. Lot lost his wife also. Later, Lot lost himself and his two remaining daughters to immorality, and Lot became grandfather to the wicked nations of Ammon and Moab (Genesis 19:30-38).

We, too, should not underestimate the ungodly influence of the world upon our families and upon ourselves (Deuteronomy 7:3-4; Judges 3:6; 2 Corinthians 6:14). ***“Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits’”*** (1 Corinthians 15:33). ***“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).

Recently, wildfires have devastated California. Lives have been lost, and real estate and personal property have been reduced to ashes as whole neighborhoods have been engulfed in raging fire. Imagine that your family—at a moment's notice—had to flee suddenly from the destructive path of an unmitigated inferno. You would have to abandon your dwelling, your things—maybe collections and mementos collected over a lifetime or even passed down from generation to generation. All gone! Irrecoverable!

Imagine further in addition to stuff, you had to leave behind two or more family members—children or parents. Unthinkable and horrific to consider, pain for their loss would far exceed the depression at the loss of things—no matter what value or sentimentality were attributed to them. Would we look back? Would our possessions warrant a parting and longing glance? Could we refrain from looking back, knowing that our loved ones were perishing even as we escaped? Things and family were the backdrop to the failure of Lot's wife to obey the instruction, ***“Do not look behind you...”*** (Genesis 19:17).

Lot and his family forgot their nomadic life as pilgrims and settled into an ungodly, worldly environment. They paid dearly for that choice. May



we never forget that we are merely pilgrims passing through this world, longing for a heavenly city, whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10). *“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation”* (1 Peter 2:11-12).

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:13-16)✝



Do You Have the Courage to Be Different?


Jerry Bates

I feel sure that everyone would agree that peer pressure is hard to resist. Most people would do just about anything in order to be accepted by whatever group with which they are associated. Most would rather be accepted than be right. Several years ago, a psychologist, Ruth Berenda, conducted an experiment to illustrate how people handled peer pressure. The experiment was simple. She brought groups of ten adolescents into a room, and they were instructed to raise their hands when she pointed to the longest line on a chart. Nine of the ten were privately instructed to always vote for the second longest line. Upon seeing everyone voting for what was plainly wrong, the one remaining student would typically glance around in confusion and slowly raise his hand to follow the group. This conformity occurred in about 75% of the cases. The age of the students did not affect the results. This simple test demonstrates that most people lack the courage to challenge the group, even when the group is obviously wrong.

Clearly, a Christian must not live that way, because in most cases, the majority will be wrong. The world continually encourages a Christian to conform. One example of that is found in the Old Testament. In 1 Kings 22, the king of Judah, Jehoshaphat, agreed to go to war with Israel against Syria. Ahab, the king of Israel, inquired of 400 prophets what they should do, and they unanimously supported the decision. For some reason, Jehoshaphat seemed not to trust their advice, so he asked if there was not

another prophet. Ahab replied that there was one man, Micaiah, but he always spoke evil concerning Ahab. Jehoshaphat wanted to inquire of him anyway, and so he was summoned to the kings. The messenger who called Micaiah spoke these words, ***“Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Please, let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement”*** (1 Kings 22:13). In other words, he was urged to follow the group and encourage the king. This was a severe test of peer pressure—400 against one. Micaiah refused to bow to the pressure and spoke the truth of God, warning them of defeat if they went into battle. Neither the kings nor the other prophets liked the words of Micaiah, and he was thrown into prison. However, his words were true, and he had the courage to speak God’s unpopular message.

The above example is only one of several biblical examples that could be cited to show that God’s people must stand against the pressures of the world. In Exodus 23:2, Moses warned the people of Israel to not follow a crowd to do evil. In the days of Noah, only eight souls were faithful to God and were saved in the ark. When God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, just Lot’s little family was saved. Only ten righteous souls would have saved the cities (Genesis 18:32), but apparently, they could not be found. Several times Paul mentioned that only a remnant of Israel would be saved (Romans 9:27). Paul admonished in Romans 12:2 not to be conformed to the world but to be transformed. We find the sad words of Jesus quoted in Matthew 7:14, ***“Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*** Notice that Jesus said only a few will find the way to life, in contrast to the ***“many”*** who are traveling the way to destruction (7:13).

This illustrates that Christians must not be influenced by the majority. It is difficult to live differently from the world around us, but if we are going to be the people God wants us to be, it is essential, because as we have seen, the majority will almost always be wrong. May we have the courage to be different and to stand for what is right, even when everyone else endorses what is wrong. ***“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong”*** (1 Corinthians 16:13). ***“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might”*** (Ephesians 6:10). 

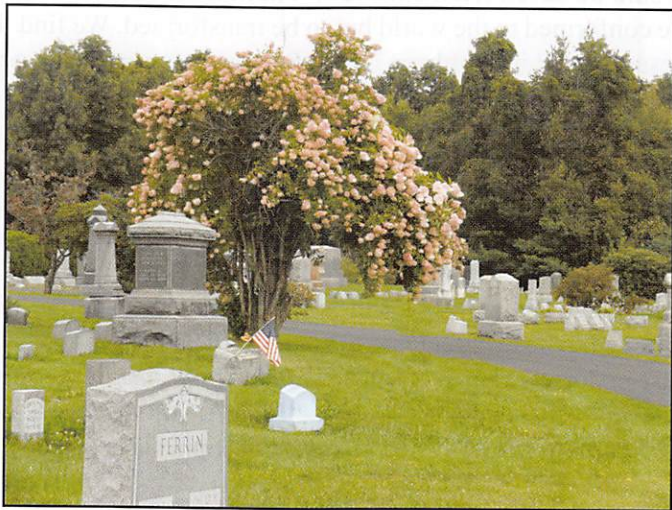


Paradoxes of Christianity: Buried, Yet Risen

Shane Fisher

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

are used frequently throughout the Bible, which help us to meditate on deeper truths. The paradox to be explored is that *a person is buried, yet risen*. How is that possible, though? For example, I think about one of my deceased family members who passed on from this life, and if I go visit the gravesite, I know that his physical body still remains buried no matter how frequently I visit it. The physical body there has not risen from the grave. So, how can it be said that a person is buried, yet risen. The Bible indicates that



we are to think about this in a *spiritual sense*.

The Life of a Sinner

Many of us live very normal lives. We get up, go to work, eat lunch, work some more, go home and then go to sleep. We go through the same routine day after day. Do we ever examine our lives? Do we ever take a second look at how we are living our lives? Do we take time to think about the *big questions*: “From where did we come? What is our purpose here on earth? Where are we going?” Many people do not ever think about these big questions. We usually think about other questions such as, “What am I going to do when I grow up?” or “Where will I live?” While these questions are important, they are not as important as the big questions. Another one of those big questions would be, “What is mankind’s greatest problem?” People in the world sense that there is something wrong with the world. They may not know exactly what it is, but the Bible gives us the answer. Mankind’s greatest problem is that we have sinned against a holy and righteous God. *Sinners are physically alive, yet spiritually dead* (Isaiah 59:1-2; Ephesians 2:1-10).

How does the Bible depict the life of a sinner? Sin is a violation of God’s law (1 John 3:4). Sin is in violation of God’s nature. Whenever we miss the target of what God wants us to be, we have sinned.

The life of a sinner is depicted with *dirty speech and thoughts*. The Bible illustrates for us the speech of sinners (Proverbs 1:10-15; Ephesians 4:29). This type of speech arises from the heart (Proverbs 23:7; Jeremiah 17:9). In the world, we hear profanity on our televisions, in movies, on the streets and sadly, even in our own homes.

The life of a sinner is depicted with *dark actions*. In the world, we see the works of the flesh practiced day after day on the news (Galatians 5:19-21; Romans 1:18-32). Jesus is the light for all men, and He came to expose the dark actions of all men (John 1:4; 3:19-21; 8:12; 11:9-10).

The life of a sinner is depicted by *degenerated relationships*. We are facing a world filled with broken marriages and broken homes. The Bible is the perfect guide to help us know how to maintain our relationships as God wants them to be (Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:1-4).

The Losses of a Sinner

If the life of a sinner is pictured in those ways, and a sinner keeps on living the way he wants, where will that lead? Are there consequences for those immoral actions? What would a sinner lose if he lets sin have dominion over him (Romans 6:12-14)?

The first loss a sinner loses is *a meaningful and satisfying relationship with his Creator*. God has built into us that our lives would be satisfied and fulfilling if we love and follow His will (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). Satan tries to show us other paths to take that lead to our own self-glorification. Therefore, we ultimately become unsatisfied (2 Corinthians 5:15; Matthew 10:37-39; 16:24-25; 1 John 2:15-17). Jesus came that we might have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10).

The second loss that a sinner experiences is *his eternal body and soul*. God placed within man something unique from the animals. He gave him a spirit that will live on past physical death (Zechariah 12:1, 7). When Jesus returns, He will reunite the spirit in all those who have physically died and raise them up from their graves (Hebrews 9:27; John 5:28-29). God will cast the resurrected bodies of the wicked into hell (Matthew 10:28-29). This is why the Bible calls it the “second death” (Revelation 21:8); it is an eternal separation from the presence of God (Matthew 16:26-27; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

The Love for a Sinner


Is the Bible's depiction of the life of a sinner the kind of life that you are continually living? Do you realize the consequences of living that way? Do you realize what great losses there will be both now and when you physically die? There is Someone who has love for you even if you were to spit in His face. There is Someone Who loves you even if you were to beat Him with a rod. Who is this person? It is Jesus Christ who bore your sins upon the cross (John 3:16-17; Ephesians 2:1-10; Romans 5:6-8). God's love for you shows what He is willing to do for you. He can deliver you from your sins. You may be walking around physically, but you are spiritually dead if you are living in sin, sinning against God. Do you desire to be separated from God? Do you want to be separated from

Him throughout eternity? You have seen what losses the life of a sinner incurs. God desires for you to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4).

The Loving Obedience of a Sinner

God predetermined a plan of redemption to save mankind from his sins by sending Jesus into the world to die for our sins (1 Peter 1:20). A sinner must respond in loving obedience to what God has instructed in order to be saved from his sins in faith (John 8:24), repentance (Acts 2:38), confession of faith (Romans 10:9-10) and being immersed for the remission of sins (Acts 22:16).

The foundation of the Gospel is that Jesus died, was buried and was resurrected from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Notice the historical accounts of Christ's burial (Matthew 27:57-66; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42). First, notice that Jesus was *removed from sight* because the stone was rolled over the tomb. Are we not to remove our old selves from sight? Should not the "old man" of sin be buried forever? For the Christian, the "old man" is to stay where it was laid—in the watery grave. God desires us to go down into the water to be buried with Christ so that our sins are washed away by His blood through faith (Colossians 2:12; Acts 8:36-39; 22:16; Revelation 1:5). So, we see that the "old man" of sin is spiritually buried, yet a "new man" arises spiritually from the dead (John 5:25-26; 2 Corinthians 5:17)!

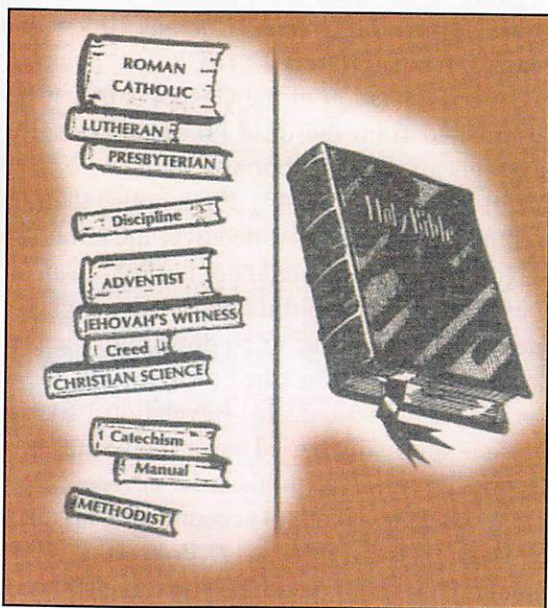
Notice the historical accounts of Christ's resurrection (Matthew 28:1-6; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-9; John 20:11-18). First, there was something uniquely different, yet the same (another paradox!) about the Lord when He resurrected from the dead. Should it not be uniquely different for us when we become Christians? Yes, we come out of the water and we look the same. Yet, we now hold a different mindset from the rest of the world (Colossians 3:1-4). Second, the Lord was the first one to be resurrected never to physically die again. He is the "firstfruits" of the harvest, and if we physically die in Christ, then we will be raised physically from the grave on the last day never to die again (John 5:28,29; 1 Corinthians 15:20-24; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). We will be with the Lord throughout the endless ages. 



1932—2008

Religious Names AND Divisions

J.C. Choate



Worldwide, there are many religions, called by many different names. Those who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the one Savior of the world are often greatly criticized for their “narrow mindedness.” To say that there is only one God, or to affirm, as Jesus said of Himself, ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”*** (John 14:6), brings on oneself the anathema of the “politically (spiritual) correct elite.” We just can’t be so judgmental and exclusive, we are told. People argue that there are many gods, many ways to God and that no one has the right to pass judgment on another person’s religion. Actually, the real belief of such people is one of three: either they at heart are unbelievers, they believe in the exclusiveness of their own religion or they believe that it is ultimately one’s own goodness that matters—not a “god” or a “savior.” Leaders in the denomina-

tional world who speak out in response to charges of bigotry, and who would defend the fact that Jesus is the only way to God, realize that the “Christian” world is coming under attack and that persecution for our faith may lie in our future. They feel the pressure from the outside world because of the exclusive doctrine they preach. Yet, realizing that Jesus boldly claimed to be the only way to God, and that He died as our Savior, they are compelled to stay with what has become a very unpopular teaching.


Did Jesus say, ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”***? If He did, and if we believe in Him, we must have the courage to stand with Him and to say with conviction, ***“He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him.”*** To make that statement makes one bigoted in the eyes of many, but so be it. What other exclusive statement did Jesus make? He said, ***“I will build My church”*** (Matthew 16:18). Again, He was very specific and exclusive. His church exists in the world, even today, because He promised that it would never be destroyed, that He will come back one day to receive it unto Himself, ***“...a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish”*** (Ephesians 5:27).

When members of the **church of Christ** make the statement, “Jesus established only one church, and we should not have all the division and confusion that exists among believers in Christ today,” they are criticized and condemned for being bigoted. Consider the parallel, though: just as we must remain firm in our affirmation that there is only one way to God—**Jesus Christ**—we must be just as adamant in our affirmation that He meant what He said when He promised to build only one church. We must not deny that truth, even though it causes anger and even hatred in the hearts of those who don’t want to hear it. ***What can we do? We can’t rewrite the Scriptures. And we can’t be honest with ourselves while denying the plain statements made by our Lord.***

Members of the denominational world have no trouble seeing that “Shintoism,” “Zoroastrianism,” “Hinduism,” “Buddhism,” “Sikhism,” “Islam” and the many other religions of the present age are just as empty as the worship of Zeus, Aphrodite, Hermes, Re, Osiris, Ptah, Apollo and Diana. Why? Because these gods and religions are not to be found in the pages

of God's Word. They are right about that. The Bible is our source book for identifying God, our Savior and His family of people who are called out of the world to live for Him and to be His bride. However, those same religious leaders have taken the "idea" of God, of Christ and of the church, and they have corrupted those teachings to the point that they have created religions just as foreign to the Scriptures as others have done with their pagan religions. After all, if men are presuming to create churches and doctrines in contradiction to the one way that has been established in Scripture, is this not **"preaching another Gospel"** and **"adding to what has been written,"** which is condemned in Galatians 1:8 and Revelation 22:18-19?

Where in Scripture do we read the religious names applied to men: *reverend, archbishop, cardinal, pope*? Where in Scripture do we read of the **Holy Roman Catholic Church**, the **Methodist Church**, the **Presbyterian Church**, the **Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints**, the **Jehovah's Witnesses**, the **Lutheran Church**, the **Salvation Army**, the **Church of the Nazarene** and all of the community churches that may be called such names as the **New Light Church**, the **Church on the Rock**, the **Saddleback Community Church** or the **Willow Creek Community Church**?

Not only do all of these names violate the claim of Scripture that *it is only in the name of Christ that salvation can be found* (Acts 4:12), but all of them represent *doctrinal division*. They vary from each other and from Scripture in what they would teach people to do to have their sins forgiven; their worship varies from one to the other; their organization is according to laws and rules they have developed; their standard of morals and values varies from one to the other. All of these differences, identified as spiritual division by the very names they have invented for themselves, are condemned by God. They show the world that these denominations deny the bold statement of the Savior they claim to follow. He said **the church is one** (Matthew 16:18), **the church is His body** (Colossians 1:18, 24), **the church is His family** (Ephesians 3:15), **the church is His bride** (Ephesians 5:27), **the church is His kingdom** (Matthew 16:18-19; 1 Timothy 6:15). Denominational religious leaders feel the pressure of disfavor in the eyes of the world when **they affirm that there is only one way to God**. Why, at the same time, are they **adamant in denying the oneness of the church**? 

J.C. Choate (deceased) was the founding editor of The Voice of Truth International.



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY Ungodly

Paula Bates

1. Blessed is the man who _____ not in the counsel of the _____, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his _____ is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he _____ day and night. Psalm 1:1-2
2. Knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the _____ and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for _____, for the unholy and the profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers. 1 Timothy 1:9
3. For the time has come for judgement to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us _____, what will be the end of those who do not _____ the gospel of God? Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the _____ and the sinner appear?" 1 Peter 4:17-18
4. For certain men have _____ in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the _____ of our God into lewdness and _____ the only Lord God and our _____. Jude 1:4
5. "To execute judgement on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of _____ their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an _____ way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have _____ against Him." Jude 1:15



Answers:

1. Walks, ungodly, delight,
2. Lawless, sinners
3. First, obey, ungodly
4. Crept, grace, deny, Lord
5. All, ungodly, spoken

GOD

The Holy Spirit Promised to the Apostles

Raymond Elliott

In an effort to understand a passage of Scripture, two questions among others should be considered, namely, who is the speaker and to whom is he speaking. This will contribute greatly to the right exegesis of a passage of Scripture. We have no problem in understanding that it was God who was speaking to Noah, instructing him to build an ark (Genesis 6). It was God Who directed Abraham to offer up his son Isaac upon an altar (Genesis 22), and it was Jesus Who required the rich young ruler to sell all that he had and give to the poor (Mark 10). This principle would be true in the study of the epistles that men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit wrote to various congregations and individuals. Some of the most misunderstood passages in the New Testament regarding the Holy Spirit are found in the Gospel according to John (chapters 14-16).

It is plain to see that the setting of these particular chapters in John is the occasion when Jesus was eating the Passover Supper with His twelve apostles (Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:17; Luke 22:14). So, Jesus was the Speaker and the twelve apostles were the ones whom Jesus was addressing when He spoke of the promise of another Comforter, who would be sent to help and assist them in the preaching of the Truth after His departure. Religious leaders of various denominations often apply what Jesus said to the apostles about the Holy Spirit to all believers in Christ.

This is the case among some teachers and writers who are members of the church, too. For example, in a devotional publication that provides wonderful inspirational thoughts for each day of the year, one writer asserted, "When Jesus went back to His Father, He sent the Holy Spirit as a Comforter and a Guide to teach us all things and to bring all things to our remembrance. We have the power on our spiritual journey. When faced

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with a mountain, don't fear or cry out. Take action! Use the power He has given us. Say, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me' (Philippians 4:13)."


While recognizing the sincerity and integrity of the Christian who wrote the preceding words, it must be brought out that this is a misunderstanding and a misuse of this passage of Scripture that is found in John 14:26. It reads, ***"But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you"*** (ASV). Also it is recorded in John 16:13, where it says, ***"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come."*** The Holy Spirit, therefore, would assist the apostles in the following. (1) He would teach them all things. (2) The Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance what Jesus wanted them to know. (3) He would guide them into all truth. (4) Also, the Holy Spirit would tell the apostles things that were to come.

In Luke 24:49, Jesus, prior to His ascension, spoke these words to His apostles: ***"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on High."*** Luke recorded basically the same instructions as recorded in Acts 1:4. In Acts 1:5, Jesus informed the apostles that they would ***"be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."*** Jesus also said, ***"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"*** (Acts 1:8). In Acts 2:1-4, we find the record of the twelve apostles being filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost as the Lord had previously promised them.

The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:10, ***"But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God."*** Paul made it very clear that what He and the other apostles taught was of the Holy Spirit as recorded in 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, which reads, ***"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but***

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the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." The apostle also said he received what he proclaimed regarding the *"mystery of Christ"* *"by revelation"* from the Lord (Ephesians 3:3-6). Concerning the Gospel that Paul preached, he wrote in Galatians 1:11-12, *"But I make known to you, brethren that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ."* The writings of both the Old and New testaments came by the *"inspiration of God"* (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

In the beginning of the church age, the inspired Word was first in men. Later, as the men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit began to write the various epistles, the inspired Word was both in men and in written form. Eventually, the time came when that *"which is perfect is come,"* and that which *"is in part shall be done away"* (1 Corinthians 13:9-10). That is to say, the revealed will of God for man was now complete and no longer partly in man and partly in written form. Eventually, Jude would write in his short epistle, *"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"* (v. 3). The system of faith was once and for all time deposited, and there is no additional revelation from God needed. The work of the Holy Spirit in revealing all the truth necessary for our salvation was completed. 

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[Editor's Note: Today, the message of the Holy Spirit is attainable solely through the inspired Word of God, which was validated by miracles (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4). Not only is the Word of God complete and the Holy Spirit no longer speaks directly to *"earthen vessels"* (2 Corinthians 4:7), but miracles no longer occur (1 Corinthians 13:8-12) either to confirm new revelation (Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19) or to distinguish between messages from God, Satan or one's own subjective emotions. Even members of the Lord's church and especially members of the Lord's church need to handle aright Scripture (2 Timothy 2:15 ASV) and refrain from exposing themselves as closet charismatics and Pentecostals. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Please, Daddy, Won't You Go?

via La Junta, Colorado

A little girl with shining eyes,
Her little face aglow,
Said, "Daddy, it is almost time
For Sunday school, let's go."
"Oh, no," said Daddy, "Not today.
I've worked hard all the week,
And I must have one day of rest.
I'm going to the creek
For there I can relax and rest,
And fishing's fine, they say,
So run along, don't bother me;
We'll go to church some day."

Months and years have passed away
But Daddy hears that plea no more...
"Let's go to Sunday school..."
Those childish days are o'er.
Now that Daddy's growing old,
When life is almost through,
He finds the time to go to church...
But what does his daughter do?

She says, "Oh, Daddy, not today....
I stayed up almost all night
And I've got to get some sleep.
Besides, I look a fright."
Then Daddy lifts a trembling hand
To brush away the tears.
He seems to hear the pleading voice
Distinctly through the years.
He sees his small girl's little face
Upturned, with eyes aglow,
Saying, "It's time for Sunday school,
Please, Daddy, won't you go?"

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schoolhouse where the Master teacher would be waiting. Today, we call them bus drivers! The law then was a bus driver to deliver us to the Master teacher, Jesus Christ. Paul said that Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures from his youth and that those Scriptures, found in the Old Testament, were able to make men ***“wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus”*** (2 Timothy 3:15 KJV). Just as students need to go to the first grade before entering the second, or just as students need to finish High School before entering the university, so it is that people needed the instruction found in the Law and the prophets before coming to Jesus, God’s Master Teacher!

Friends, the instruction we learn from God’s law prepares us to live as Christians. Before we answer the question, “What was nailed to the cross,” let’s think about God’s law for a few minutes.

What do Christians learn from God’s law that is needed today? We need to know what the Bible calls the ***“work of the law.”*** For instance, the apostle Paul said that ***“when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to [Paul’s] gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus”*** (Romans 2:14-16 ESV). So, Paul affirmed that people who do not possess God’s law may very well be practicing the ***“work of the law.”***

What is the ***“work of the law”***? The work of the law is the kind of behavior that the law produces when people read it and obey it. That’s right! Well, Gentiles were not practicing the Israelite sacrificial system or following the priests of the tribe of Levi, nor were they keeping the Sabbath days and Jewish festivals; they were pagan Gentiles; they had a different sacrificial system and a different priesthood system than did God’s people, the Israelites. Therefore, the ***“work of the law”*** in their hearts was the right and wrong moral judgments that they were making, which were taught in God’s law. ***“The work of the law,”*** then, is the behavioral result of the law in the life of people who read it and obeyed it. There were some Gentiles who had **not** read it, but they

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were obeying it! Paul also calls this the *“righteousness of the law”* in Romans 2:26. It is also translated as the *“precepts of the law”* (ESV).

Even pagans could practice the righteousness of God in many ways. For instance, when a pagan was faithful to his wife, he was practicing the law of God. On the other hand, when a married pagan had an affair with a woman, he was breaking God’s law and committing the sin of adultery. When a pagan was honest in his business dealings, he was practicing the righteousness of God’s law. If a Jew was dishonest, his Jewishness could not make it right! Keeping the Sabbath days could not overcome his dishonesty. That’s right! By righteous behavior, such as faithfulness to a wife and honesty in business, even Gentiles could demonstrate the *“work of the law written in their hearts.”*

Now God’s law against adultery and dishonesty was not nailed to the cross so that it was no longer effective, nor binding upon people! Adultery is still adultery. Jesus did not change the law concerning adultery! Furthermore, Jesus did not change the law concerning stealing. God’s law condemns such sins as these, and the people who practice these things will be justly condemned in the Day of Judgment no matter whether one is a pagan, a Jew, a Muslim, a Hindu or a Christian.

Well what, then, does the passage mean that says that the *“handwritten ordinances...were nailed to the cross.”* The passage where this is found is Colossians 2:14. The section we will study begins with verse 1 of Colossians 2, but we will pick it up in verse 8. *“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”* Here, friends are the competing philosophies of life. These ideas compete for your allegiance and obedience. The Traditions of men handed down from those before you compete with the commands of Christ, which is the law of God.

The basic principles of the world are worldly thinking. These principles perhaps contain the best ideas of the human race, but they only pertain to this world. Christ’s commands, God’s laws, pertain to the reign of God in the hearts of men and women upon the earth. They are

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heavenly principles and godly traditions. So, the apostle warned, 'Beware lest anyone cheat you of your heavenly destiny by these worldly ideas.'

Paul went on to explain why Christ's rule in people's hearts is better than the ideas of men. ***"For in [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you [Christians] are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power"*** (Colossians 2:9-10). Friends, the true source of human tradition and human philosophy is Satan and his powerful partners. That's right! These are called principalities and powers in heavenly places. Paul said in Ephesians 6 that the Christian warfare is against these ***"principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"*** (Ephesians 6:12 KJV). These are the spiritual forces present in the traditions and the philosophies of men. They are the ones who are trying to cheat you out of your eternal inheritance!

Beware therefore lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. In Christ you Gentiles were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Jesus Christ has already defeated His competitors. He has defeated those who are competing with Him for your allegiance! That's right! He has disarmed the principalities and powers. What were their weapons? The main weapon that Jesus took out of the hands of His spiritual enemies was the death! That's right! ***"Oh death, where is your sting? Oh grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin; and the***

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strength of sin is the law!" (1 Corinthians 15:55-56 KJV). God's law requires the second death of the impenitent sinner! The second death! That's the death that separates us from the Tree of Life, which is in the paradise of God. That's the death that Christ died on the cross.

Your penalty and mine, and the penalty of every human who has ever lived, was forgiven, being carried by Jesus Christ to the cross. The ceremonial parts of God's Old Testament which were *"against"* Gentiles, which automatically condemned Gentiles...these *"handwritten ordinances"* were nailed to the cross. Paul drew the conclusion: *"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Let no one cheat you of your reward..."* (Colossians 2:8-18 NKJV.)

The ordinances that God gave the Israelites that pertained to food and drink, festivals, new moons and sabbaths were *"shadows."* Christ was the one casting those shadows. When Christ came, we no longer look at the shadows, but instead, we look into the face of Christ. We become His disciples; we follow His commandments, which never have nor never will detract from God's laws for human behavior. Our worship services in the Christian Age now follow the rules found in the New Testament. ✚

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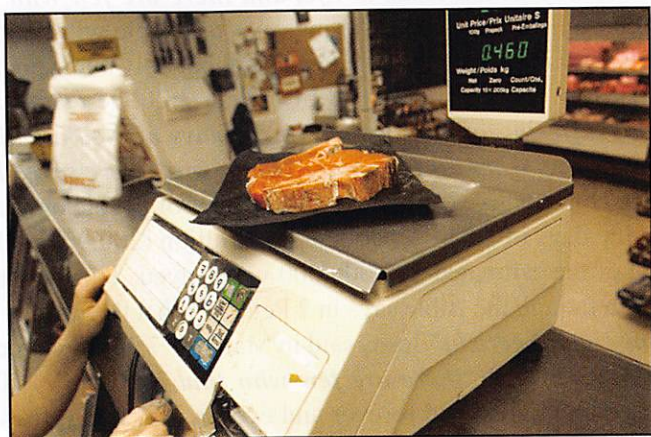
Robison's Rubies There is a lot of suffering and evil in the world. Many people go so far as to say that since this is so, a loving God does not exist. Such a God wouldn't allow such evil, they claim. I fear some people might be missing the point. God, in His Word, addressed the problem of human suffering. Instead of taking it away, He identified with man in it. He sent His Son to suffer physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually beyond measure. Now, this resurrected Son lives in Heaven to help those who go through experiences of suffering; Hebrews 2:17-18 and 4:14-16 teach this. Also, Hebrews 7:25 teaches that Jesus always lives to make intercession for those who come to God through Him. God did not eliminate suffering; He identified with it.

Honest Parents

Cecil May, Jr.

An honest young man saw the truth from the Bible that he needed to be baptized into Christ to put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). He hesitated, though. He loved and honored his honest parents, and they had never been baptized. He could not bring himself to do something that might imply they did not go to Heaven.

His parents owned a country store. The teacher suggested, "Suppose, unknown to them, their scales were not correctly calibrated. Every time they charged for a pound, absolutely incorrect, the customers received less than for which they paid.



Then, suppose a man from the State Bureau of Weights and Measures came by and showed them their scales were off. Wouldn't they immediately change them?

If they saw the truth that you now see, wouldn't they obey? Wouldn't they want you to obey the truth?"



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If they saw the truth that you now see, wouldn't they obey? Wouldn't they want you to obey the truth?


SALVATION

Our Lord's Warning

Ron Boatwright

Christ, who is all knowing, told us that many people are going to be lost in eternity. In Matthew 7:13-14 He said, ***"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it"*** (NKJV). According to the Bible, the majority of people will be lost. We must take this warning seriously. The Lord said that only a few people will be saved.

How few can be saved? In 1 Peter 3:20 we read, ***"...when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water"*** (KJV). The conservative estimate of the number of people on the face of the earth in the days of Noah is two hundred million (200,000,000). Yet, only eight (8) of the estimated 200,000,000 were saved. This is not very good odds. Even though the Bible says in 2 Peter 3:9 that the Lord is ***"not willing that any should perish,"*** Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14 concerning eternal life in Heaven that ***"there are few who find it"*** (NKJV). The vast majority of people will spend forever and ever in the eternal fires of Hell that will never be extinguished. Mankind cannot comprehend how horrible that Hell is going to be.

There are only two roads to eternity, and everyone is on one or the other. If we miss Heaven, we will be thrown into the eternal fires of Hell forever. **One of the saddest things about being thrown into Hell is the fact that it could have been avoided. The majority of people will be lost in spite of what the Lord has done.** Hell is not what God does to us, but Hell is what one does to himself. A person who ends up in Hell is his own worst enemy, and he only has himself to blame. Let us make going to Heaven our number one priority in life. 


SALVATION

Preparing for Christ

Derek Broome

In Matthew 25:1-13, we read about ten virgins waiting on a bridegroom. Five of the virgins were wise and came prepared with plenty of oil for their lamps, but five of the virgins were foolish and did not come prepared. When the bridegroom came, the five foolish virgins had gone to purchase more oil. The bridegroom and those that were ready entered the wedding, and the door was shut. When the five foolish virgins came, they were not let in, and the bridegroom said unto them, ***"I do not know you."***

Christ is going to return one day, and that leaves us with a choice to make. We can either choose to be prepared for the Second Coming of our Lord, or we can choose to sit idly by and waste the time that we have right now. ***"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming"*** (Matthew 25:13).

Preparing for Christ involves submitting to the Lord, His Word and His Will. Have we had our sins washed away in baptism? Are we living and worshipping the way that God has told us to live and to worship? Are we actively working for the Lord? We need to ask ourselves these questions and more every day as we prepare for Christ's return. One day He will return, and I hope we all will be ready for that great day of the Lord. 

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

David's Devotional

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12).

Do we really want to pray this? What if God forgave us to the extent that we forgive others? We have truly done wrong against God. I can think of a few folks who have truly done wrong to me! I want God's forgiveness, but I must be willing to forgive! Let's all pray, "Lord, give us the strength to forgive."


SALVATION

Man's Destiny

Ernest S. Underwood

Several years ago, I was watching the landing of one of the space shuttles on television. There was a station break, and an advertising of a well-known breakfast drink came on. The spokesman for the product spoke of man's destiny and how it will be attained. He said that man's destiny lay among the stars, and the way he would reach that destiny would be by a space shuttle.

The Bible has something to say about man's destiny. Jesus said that there are only two ways that lie open to man—the broad way and the strait way. He also stated that *“no one comes to the Father but by me.”*

Yes, man has a destiny. For the disobedient and the unfaithful that destiny is eternal torment. For the righteous, those who love God and keep His commandments, it is eternal happiness in Heaven. One may reach the first mentioned destiny without any effort on his part—just do nothing, believe nothing and obey nothing. The other destiny, Heaven, will not be reached by a spaceship, but through Jesus Christ and obedience to His will. What is your destiny? 

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

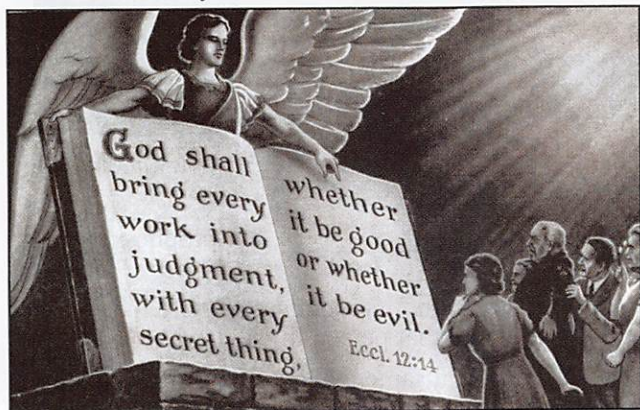


SALVATION

Swift Judgment


Denny Petrillo

“Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil” (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Parents normally prefer to discipline their children immediately. This teaches a child the principle of consequence. Yet,



God chooses to allow the sinner to go unpunished. By doing this, Solomon noted that men are more likely to sin again and to sin more often. This being the case, why does God work this way?

Peter said, *“God is patient, not wanting any to perish but for all to come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). Paul noted that God *“desires all men to be saved”* (1 Timothy 2:4). We are fortunate that God doesn’t immediately punish. If He did, we would not have the time to repent. Neither would we have the time to serve Him. The fact is, the *“wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23).

Solomon noted that most men, when given more time, are simply given more opportunity to sin. However, for those who have a heart for God, time is a gift. With that time, necessary corrections can be made (Romans 2:4). Yet, know this: *“It will be well for those who fear God”* (Ecclesiastes 8:12), but *“it will not be well for the evil man”* (Ecclesiastes 8:13). 

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

Verse Search



1 CORINTHIANS 14:20-40

Jerry Bates

1. One should be mature in _____ but in malice be like _____ (v. 20)
2. Tongues were a sign to _____, but prophesying was for those who _____? (v. 22)
3. In the first century, if a visitor came into a church where many were speaking in tongues, what would that person think? (v. 23)
4. What would have occurred to that same person if he came into an assembly where people were prophesying? (v. 24)
5. "Let all things be done for _____." (v. 26)
6. What rule did Paul give to govern speaking in tongues? (v. 27)
7. What should a tongue-speaker have done if there had been no one to interpret? (v. 28)
8. How many people should speak at once in a church assembly? (vs. 29-30)
9. "For God is not the author of _____ but of _____, as in all the churches." (v. 33)
10. What should women do in a church assembly? (v. 35)
11. To whom should they ask questions? (v. 35)
12. What were the things Paul had written? (v. 37)
13. "Let all things be done _____ and in _____." (v. 40)

(See the back cover for answers.)

VERSE SEARCH

20 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature. 21 In the law it is written: "With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me," says the Lord.

22 Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe. 23 Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those who are uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. 25 And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.

How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. 27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. 28 But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. 30 But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. 32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. 33 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

34 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. 35 And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

36 Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached? 37 If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. 38 But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant. 39 Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. 40 Let all things be done decently and in order.

NOTES: Paul continued his discussion of spiritual gifts and closed with the comment that he did not personally invent what he had written. He boldly declares that what he wrote are the commandments of God, and that anyone who is truly spiritual would recognize that to be the truth. Therefore, one must accept what he said, since it is God's words.



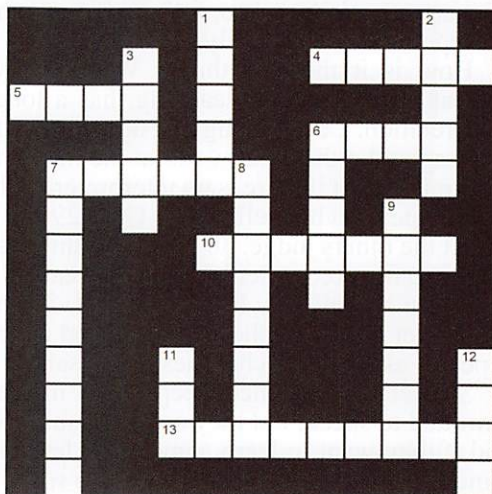
Bible Find

Martha Rushmore

JUDE

ACROSS

4. Woe to them for they perish in rebellion of whom? v. 11
5. What may be multiplied? v. 2
6. Sodom and Gomorrah suffered vengeance of eternal _____. v. 7
7. It was delivered to the _____. v. 3
10. You are to _____ for the faith. v. 3
13. Jesus did what to those who did not believe? v. 5



DOWN

1. Jesus saved people out of what land? v. 5
2. Brother of Jude. v. 1
3. Michael the archangel said to whom, "The Lord rebuke you." v. 9
6. Beloved, build yourselves up in the most holy _____. v. 20
7. Jude wanted to write about common _____. v. 3
8. Who will follow their own ungodly passions? v. 18
9. What kind of certain people crept in unnoticed? v. 4
11. Keep yourselves in the love of _____. v. 21
12. Who wrote the Book of Jude? v. 1

The Way It Was

Ronald D. Reeves

The apostle Paul related to the past in a two-fold manner. He said, ***“but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before”*** (Philippians 3:13b). He also said ***“that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief”*** (1 Timothy 1:15). With respect to his old Jewish prerogatives and attainments, he was constantly disregarding and discarding them, putting them out of his mind. With respect to his past sinful opposition to Christ, Christianity and faithful children of God, he was ever mindful of his grave though conscientious course of error. In one instance, he grew beyond the past while in the other instance the past was ever with him.


The history of specific congregations of the Lord's church and the history of individual members therein may be approached similarly. As we look to the past, either individually or congregationally, there are some things beyond which we must grow as we maintain a realistic hope of spiritual and practical growth in Christian endeavors. There are also some things of the past onto which we must maintain a firm hold and keep ever with us if we realistically hope to fulfill our golden cup of service in the vineyard of the Lord. This latter point is of special interest presently.

Many congregations have been established with humble beginnings, including limited financial resources, facilities and personnel. In time, some congregations have truly grown so that a large congregation assembles regularly in very adequate facilities as they are led by capable and numerous brethren. This spiritual, numerical and financial growth occurred as a consequence of specific positive factors that characterized the congregation, not for a brief period of time, but that permeated the congregations over a longer span of time. I fear that some congregations have reached and maintained a plateau in their ongoing efforts to prosper spiritually and numerically. Perhaps other congregations actually have been diminished both in size and spirituality as the years have passed. I, for one, do not believe that such a cycle is a necessary one. Why has this and why does this occur? Can it be avoided? I honestly believe we can understand why such

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occurs and can therefore make a stronger effort in avoiding what may be an unnecessary decline in congregations of the Lord's church.

Unto what, then, may we attribute past numerical and spiritual growth? I suggest the following for your review and consideration: **1. Faithfulness in daily Christian living.** Congregations that have grown have a membership largely characterized as living an influential life in Christ. The members are known for their everyday stand for good as they lead their families in godly service. **2. Strong dedication to the cause of Christ.** Congregations that have grown exhibit a real, personal commitment in efforts to cause the local congregation to prosper. Members take seriously the charge to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. **3. Energetic activity in the kingdom of God.** Congregations that have grown have a membership that is not content to passively sit by while a few do the needed work. The congregation has a clear majority that speak as Isaiah and say, "*Here am I, send me.*" **4. Genuine personal spiritual growth.** Congregations that have grown do so because members are making concrete efforts to be more knowledgeable and spiritually-minded. The members have an abiding hunger and thirst for righteousness. **5. Sacrificial Christian living.** Congregations that have grown have a membership that does not hesitate to make personal sacrifices for the benefit of the church. Such includes the sacrifice of time, money, use of talents and sometimes even personal relationships. **6. Love of the New Testament church.** Congregations that have grown have genuine love for the church. The members care for the church similarly as they care for their personal families. The members draw closer in fellowship as they grow in the grace and love of Christ. **7. Love for the souls of men.** Congregations that have grown have genuine love for every lost soul within their reach. Social and ethnic concerns are not allowed as barriers to seeking and saving the lost. The world is truly the scope of their evangelism.

The characteristics listed above have been an historical part of many congregations. These are the things onto which we must maintain a firm hold and keep ever with us if we realistically hope to fulfill our duties and potential in the kingdom of God. May we have a balanced view of the past. Let us grow beyond the errors of the past while we ever hold close to us what has served the body of Christ so well. May we be able to say, as Paul, "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*" (2 Timothy 4:7). 

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God Has Revealed His Will for All People Alike

Sunny David

Many people believe that the Bible is the most difficult book to understand. Yet, the truth is, the Bible is the book of God's message to man everywhere. Through the pages of the Bible, God, man's Creator, has revealed and communicated His will for all humans. God desires all people to know and to follow His will, as He wants all to be saved and to none perish in ignorance (2 Peter 3:9). He is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), and He has revealed His will for man in such a manner and in words that all should understand and follow.

On the other hand, if He is unable to do this, then how can we say that He is the Almighty God? Being God, the Creator of man, He knows man better than man himself. He knows exactly what and how much man is able to understand. Just as we humans know how to communicate with our children, so does God know how to communicate with His children. He is capable to so reveal His will to man that we can all understand it alike. What it reads to you, it also reads to me, and this is true globally. His Word—the Bible—doesn't tell people to do differently things in various places. What it says to an individual in China, Britain or America, it says the same to me here, in whatever language I want to read it.

Christ taught that God's Word is the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11). Seed produces after its own kind. It produces the same thing wherever it is sown. There is no confusion about it. Sow carrot seeds here and you will reap only carrots, not potatoes or tomatoes. The same seed if sown in another country will produce the same result.

The question is often raised, "While all claim to follow the Bible, then, why are there different kinds of churches, Christians, doctrines and worship, etc. among the followers of Christ on earth?" The simple answer is, "They do not exist by the will of God, as the Bible does not teach about them." Through the centuries, after Christ had built His church (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4), had authorized His apostles to teach and write every doctrine His church should follow (Matthew 18:18; John 14:25-26; 16:12-13), men in different ages began to change

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and add to God's Word (Acts 20:28-30; 1 Timothy 4:1-4; 2 Timothy 4:1-4). So much has been added to the Bible that today people believe many things supposedly taught in it, and yet, the Bible is completely silent about them. However, since such manmade teachings and doctrines have been repeatedly taught and observed over and over again worldwide, people everywhere have accepted them as though they were Bible truth.

From time to time when the clear teaching and doctrines from the Bible itself are brought to people's attention, often they do not want to believe them because they have never heard about them before. They are so much rooted and grounded in the lies of manmade teachings and doctrines that the Bible's truths sound to them to be lies, while at the same time, manmade teachings and doctrines have been accepted by most people as Bible truth. For example, Christ Himself taught that he who believes and is baptized will be saved (Mark 16:16). It is so simple to understand. Yet, most people today want to believe one is saved by believing alone and that baptism is not necessary for salvation. This is what they have heard all their lives.

Christ said, ***"I will build My church"*** (Matthew 16:18), and He Himself adds the saved ones to His church according to Acts 2:47. However, people today believe that one church is as good as another because there are many different kinds of churches that men have built through the years after Christ had built His church in Jerusalem in A.D. 33. Man has invented for himself diverse kinds of churches, doctrines and ways to worship. Teachings, commandments of men and creed books of denominational churches have made the Bible difficult to understand.

If all people everywhere were to leave them alone, quit believing in them and teaching from them, and turn to the Bible alone—read it and do only what it says—then there would be no confusion and no division. All would be Christians only, as it was in the beginning (Acts 11:26). Members of the church that Christ built would worship alike as Christ had taught (John 4:24). Friends, it takes more than the Bible to misunderstand it. If people today do not understand the Bible alike, then it is not God's fault, but it is the fault of man himself. God has spoken, and it is our duty to hear Him and to do His will. ☩

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Things Proper for Sound Doctrine

Wayne Barrier




Titus was encouraged and instructed concerning the things to be taught that supported the practice of sound doctrine. This short summary is recorded in Titus 2:1-15.

But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste,

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homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Likewise exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you. Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. 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. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you."

Titus was given some extremely important tasks by Paul in this letter. First, he was instructed to appoint elders in every city, then discuss their work, and finally define acceptable and sound behavior for every Christian. He was reminded that our salvation is by the grace of God and that the sacrifice of Jesus makes possible our hope, purity and privilege to serve in the Lord's kingdom. Instructions for all, young and old, as well as for masters and servants, were given these straightforward, simple, common sense instructions that must be followed for the church to be acceptable to God and successful in changing lives for good. 

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Balanced

Dean Kelly

We often hear about being “balanced.” We are told, and rightfully so, that we need to eat a balanced diet. We don’t need to eat only one kind of food; we need to have a diet filled with all the major food groups to maintain good health. We also hear about “balanced” preaching, an important concept, too. As I thought about this concept recently, several things came to mind about balance.


First, in our physical diet when someone speaks of eating a balanced diet, he means we need to eat from every food group things that are good for us to eat. He does not mean to balance one’s diet between good foods and poison. In our preaching and teaching, we must have balance. It is important, however, to understand the true balance is to *“teach the whole counsel of God”* (Acts 20). It is not to equally preach truth and error. Around 30 years ago, I sat with some elders who were meeting with the head of a religious institution. They were asking about doctrinal issues and his institution. He responded by saying, “I have a stack of letters on one side of my desk that feel one way on that, and another stack on the other side of my desk that feel the other way on that.” That is really all he said. I wish I had pushed it more and asked him if that meant that he looked at whichever stack was higher and made his doctrinal decision accordingly. **Our preaching and teaching must not be guided by popularity but by truth.**

Secondly, however, it is very possible to become those who lose balance in preaching, teaching and writing. We sometimes call it “hobby-riding.” We can become so connected to one particular theme that we forget there is more to be preached and taught besides that one thing. One of the problems in the church is when preachers fixate on one topic, such as grace, and emphasize it to the exclusion of other important matters, such as obedience. That can be turned around; we can emphasize obedience to the point that we forget the significance of the grace of God. It is not either or, but it is both. We do need to examine the *“goodness and severity”* of God. Spiritually, we need the balanced diet of truth, and if we preach or teach, our students need the same.

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We need to avoid those “hobbyhorses” upon which we can so easily climb.

Thirdly, changing gears slightly, we need to balance kindness with a refusal to compromise truth. We need to know how to answer. *“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one”* (Colossians 4:5-6). We need to know what to answer. *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear”* (1 Peter 3:15). Way too often someone has been driven away from the truth, not by the truth itself, but by the attitude displayed by the purveyor of the truth. If someone rejects the Gospel message, that is something about which we cannot do anything, and we are not responsible for that. Yet, if someone is driven away by our attitudes or poorly thought out words, that is a different story.

Fourthly, Colossians 4 speaks of our dealing with those outside of Christ, but the same principle should apply within the body. Sometimes brethren make harsh and rude comments to and about each other when there is a disagreement on some matter. Let me note here, carefully, there is only one way to understand the Scriptures; we do not “understand” them differently. The Scriptures have a meaning from God. When we disagree, one of two possibilities exist: 1. One of us is wrong and the other right or 2. Both of us are wrong. In any case, **God’s Word is right, period.** It is certainly important to establish what God meant in what He said to us. In discussing various matters, we should never resort to personal attacks and name-calling. I do not believe it is an offense to Colossians 4 to say that speech with grace, seasoned with salt, needs to be used between brethren as well. Remember the attitude of Peter, even after Paul had been forced to rebuke him publicly for his *“dissimulation”* (Galatians 2). Later Peter called him *“Our Beloved Brother Paul”* (2 Peter 3:15). Paul had called him out *“before them all,”* yet their love and kindness toward one another was never shaken. *“...speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love”* (Ephesians 4:15-16). 

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Facing Adversity

Tim Lunn

We live in a fallen world; both the Bible (Genesis 3) and personal experience make this clear. This being true, it is not surprising that all people, including God's people, are, from time to time, confronted by adversity. Sometimes, we bring this on ourselves (e.g., by poor decisions, etc.). Many times, however, seemingly through no fault of our own, we are confronted by adversity. The word "adversity" refers to difficulty, hardship, and/or suffering. We know what these words mean, don't we? We've all experienced these, some more than others. Yet, how do we deal with them while, simultaneously, remaining faithful to God? This is the challenge.

I've heard it said that while a person cannot always determine what he will have to face in life, he can always determine how he is going to respond, ultimately, to that which he faces. If this is true (and I believe that it is), what are some biblical truths that Christians need to remember and embrace when confronted by periods of adversity?

Christians serve an unchanging God. Hear Malachi: ***"For I am the LORD, I change not..."*** (3:6). This sentiment is echoed in the New Testament: ***"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever"*** (Hebrews 13:8). This is important to remember, especially when facing adversity.

When confronted by periods of adversity, God's people may experience a wide range of emotions. These include, but are not limited to, doubt, fear and discouragement. All of these can have a negative impact upon one's faith in and devotion to God. They can hurt our relationship with God and threaten our eternal salvation.

Doubt

When going through periods of adversity, God's people may wonder if God has forgotten about us and/or whether He is available and able to help us. This is doubt. To help counteract doubt (which, if allowed to fester, gives rise to many other negative emotions and actions), there are Bible

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passages that we need to remember. One of these is as follows: **“...I have formed you, you are My servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me!”** (Isaiah 44:21). While this promise originally was made to the people of God who lived on the other side of the cross, it is just as true for God’s people today. **“For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister”** (Hebrews 6:10). This passage reminds Christians that God will not forget the good that we have done and continue to do; and therefore, God does not forget Christians themselves.

When God’s people are tired, when strength to go on is failing, when one feels like giving up, the child of God needs to remember that the God whom we serve is standing by us, and each Christian needs to believe that God can and will empower us to keep moving forward, keep being faithful. Faith is not always easy to come by. There are, from time to time, obstacles to faith. There always have been. However, there have been and continue to be realities that help the people of God overcome those obstacles.

Sometimes our faith is not as strong as it ought to be, and we may feel a little like the suffering father who came to Jesus with a request for help and heard Him say, **“...If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes”** (Mark 9:23). In response to these words, this suffering and knowingly inadequate person said **“...Lord, I believe; help my unbelief”** (Mark 9:24). This person realized that on this occasion, his faith wasn’t as strong as it ought to have been. It was, however, strong enough to bring him to Jesus. That made it strong enough. It still does.

God’s people need to remember that while we sometimes get tired, the God whom we serve does not. Listen to the Prophet Isaiah. **“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength”** (Isaiah 40:28-29). The God of the Bible, our God, is greater than any trial, any adversity and any suffering that can beset His people. That was true in the days of Isaiah and it continues to be true.

During the days of King Hezekiah, he and the people of God in Judah

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were confronted by a harsh and terrifying enemy (i.e., the Assyrian Empire). In order to strengthen the faith of the citizens, this godly king sent out a message (reminding them of the God whom they served). ***“Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid nor dismayed before the king of Assyria, nor before all the multitude that is with him; for there are more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles”*** (2 Chronicles 32:7-8). The truth affirmed in these two verses may sound familiar. It should. They are echoed throughout the pages of God’s Word. Do you remember what Paul said to the Christians in Rome? ***“...If God is for us, who shall be against us?”*** (8:31). This, we must believe.

Fear

While it is natural to experience fear when confronted by periods of adversity, Christians do not have to be dominated by it. We do not have to let it paralyze us or destroy us (i.e., our faith in and devotion to our God). Why? Because we serve the unchangeable God who has promised to stand by our side and provide us with whatever help we need when confronted by adversity (in its multiplicity of forms). Listen to the Bible. ***“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee...”*** (Isaiah 41:10). Similarly, the prophet wrote, ***“For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee”*** (v. 13). The truth concerning God’s abiding presence and help is echoed in the New Testament. Just before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He left His disciples with the greatest challenge of their lives (Matthew 28:19-20a). However, in addition, He left them with a promise that would help to sustain them going forward. ***“...I am with you always, even to the end of the age”*** (Matthew 28:20b).

Listen to what else the Bible says. ***“...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me”*** (Hebrews 13:5-6). If these words sound familiar, they should. They were some of the promises made to Joshua after having just taken over for Moses (Joshua 1:5). Undoubtedly, Joshua was very apprehensive; however, the promise of God’s abiding

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presence (and faith in this promise) went a long way to minimize and/or dispel his fear. Faith in this promise (which belongs to all of God's adopted sons and daughters) still has this power.

On one occasion, a man named Jairus came to Jesus. He was desperate, sad and afraid because his daughter was extremely ill and close to death. Indeed, before Jesus arrived at this person's house, people came to Jairus with catastrophic news, **"...Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"** (Mark 5:35). In response to this news, Jesus told the bereaved father **"... Do not be afraid; only believe"** (Mark 5:36). Fear cannot destroy God's people, so long as we continue to believe in, trust and lean upon our God. Oh, by the way, Jairus' request ultimately was answered by Jesus.

Discouragement


The word "discouragement" means "a loss of confidence or enthusiasm; dispiritedness." It is possible for Christians to become disheartened when confronted by adversity. Even people with great faith can, in the face of adversity, become discouraged. On one occasion, Moses allowed the great responsibilities that he was bearing get the best of him and he prayed to God. ***"So Moses said to the LORD, 'Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You have laid the burden of these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I beget them, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a guardian carries a nursing child,' to the land which You swore to their fathers?"*** (Numbers 11:11-12). Moses was so discouraged at this point that shortly after uttering these words he prayed, ***"I am not able to bear all these people alone, because the burden is too heavy for me. If You treat me like this, please kill me here and now..."*** (Numbers 11: 14-15). On another occasion, the prophet Elijah became so discouraged that he prayed, ***"...It is enough! Now LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers"*** (1 Kings. 19:4). This man of faith had been facing many hardships (for taking a stand for what was right), and he was tired and felt like he was the only faithful person left. God did not chastise Moses or Elijah, but He did hear their prayers and provided them with the help they needed. God knew that these people of faith (and countless

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others before and since) were hurting and provided them with what they needed when they needed it. He still does this today.

How does God do these things? How does He enable us not to be overcome by doubt, fear and discouragement (when confronted by difficulties of one kind or another)? I don't know if anyone can fully answer this question. I know that I can't. Having said that, it certainly is true that God, in and through the pages of His Word, the Bible (as we have already seen), provides hurting Christians with help. The Bible is filled with many promises, and God's people need to regularly read, reflect upon and embrace these promises, for they belong to us.

Furthermore, God uses other believers to help. Listen to what Paul penned. *"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"* (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). Paul also instructed Christians to *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2). One of our prayers ought to be, "God, use me as an instrument to comfort those who are hurting and to help them bear whatever burdens that they may be carrying." Through our prayers, words of encouragement and godly example, we can provide help to our brothers and sisters in Christ who are facing adversity and are struggling to remain faithful in the face of hardship.

As I said, I cannot fully answer the question, "How does God help Christians who are confronted by adversity?" Perhaps it is sufficient to say that God will, in His own good time and in His own good way, stand by His adopted sons and daughters. He will provide us what we need, when we need it. Simply, trust God that He will keep His Word. Or, as Jesus said, **"...Do not be afraid; only believe"** (Mark 5:36). 

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Even God's people, from time to time, are confronted by adversity.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses **[Proverbs 13:1; 23:13, 22; Ephesians 6:1-4]**

A wise son heeds his father's instruction,
But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke. (Proverbs 13:1)
Do not withhold correction from a child,
For if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. (23:13)
Listen to your father who begot you,
And do not despise your mother when she is old. (23:22)

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
"Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

Should children be disciplined?

Sadly, for many years the "experts" in our culture have vetoed the very idea of physical discipline for disobedient children. There is even the possibility of being sued if one paddles a child, and there is the actual possibility of having the children taken away from the parents. The results of the lack of discipline have been devastating, though.

No, I am not advocating extreme physical abuse, done in anger. No real parent would approve of beating and bruising a child. That isn't the kind of discipline the Scriptures encourage, nor is it the kind my parents and I practiced. Yes, having one's favorite things taken away for a period of time as punishment for disobedience, sitting in the corner or having to write "I am sorry" 500 times can be sufficient correction in some cases. Yet, a flyswatter or a keen little switch properly used can not only correct a defiant attitude, but it can so retrain the thinking so that most future confrontations will be eliminated!

My children knew that I kept a little switch on top of the refrigerator. Yes, they sometimes felt its sting, but usually all I had to do in response to a smart tongue or a defiant expression was to catch their eye and then look in the direction of the switch. Confrontation ended! That's how you raise some of the sweetest adult children in the world!

Activity or Accomplishment?

Robert Johnson

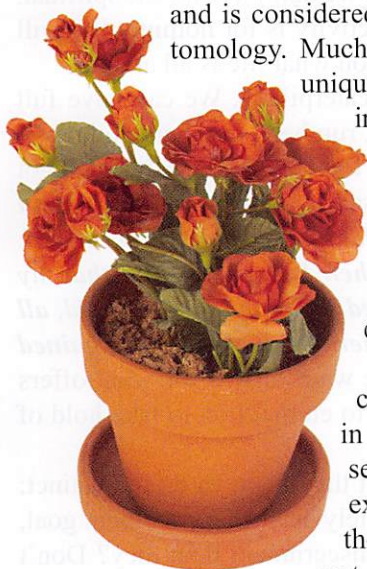
John Henry Fabre was a French entomologist and author who lived from 1823 to 1915. He is probably best known for his study of insects and is considered by many to be the father of modern entomology. Much of his enduring popularity is due to his unique teaching ability and his manner of writing about the lives of insects in biographical

form, which he preferred to a clinically detached, journalistic mode of recording. In doing so he combined what he called “my passion for scientific truth” with keen observations and an engaging, colloquial style of writing.

Fabre studied the habit of processionary caterpillars, so named because they move in columns, resembling a procession, in search of food. He conducted an unusual experiment with them, carefully arranging them in a circle around the rim of a flower pot, so that the lead caterpillar actually touched

the last one, making a complete circle. In the center of the pot he put pine needles, their natural food source. The caterpillars started around the circular flower pot. Around and around they went, hour after hour, day after day, for seven full days. Finally, they dropped dead. With an abundance of food less than six inches away, they literally starved to death. They were engaged in constant activity, but were unable to accomplish the most essential of goals necessary for their existence.


In many ways, these processionary caterpillars mimic many people's lives. It's so easy to get caught up in a routine, going around and around in life, engaged in constant activity. The question is, where are we really



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going and what is it we're really doing? Too many confuse activity with accomplishment, with being busy to fulfilling our purpose. We must be concerned, not only with what it is we do in life, but where it takes us. Like those caterpillars, some people go around and around, but they miss what is important and die without understanding the goal. For the Christian, life is Christ (Philippians 1:21), and our goal in living is to live for eternity (Philippians 3:20). Whatever we do in life, if we don't live for the spiritual, if God doesn't come first, then all of our activity is for nothing. We will have found ourselves busy, but missing out on what life is all about.

We need to learn a lesson from these caterpillars. We can have full schedules, be busy in all kinds of activities, run here and there and never have a minute to rest, but yet find out it only took up precious time and got us nowhere. Perhaps Solomon best expressed it when he wrote, *"I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun"* (Ecclesiastes 2:10-11). We want to live for what offers promise beyond today, for that which leads to eternal life, to take hold of *"that which is truly life"* (1 Timothy 6:19).

Those caterpillars were only doing what they knew to do by instinct; they thought trudging along would ultimately lead them to their goal, but it didn't. Are we not more capable of discernment than they? Don't confuse activity with accomplishment, with doing something for doing what's right. *"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him"* (Colossians 3:17). 

[Editor's Note: Even *church work*, if we are not careful, can amount to no more than *busy work* with no real fruitful outcome that benefits our souls, the souls of others or actually serves our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:21-23). Each of us must *give an account* of ourselves "before the judgment seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10-12). Therefore, let's *count for something* (Matthew 25:21).

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A Holy Kiss

George McNulty

In his letter to the church at Rome, Paul wrote, ***“Salute one another with a holy kiss”*** (Romans 10:16). This was to be a salute, a greeting that expressed a longing for the wellbeing of the other Christians in this world and in eternity, similar to the deeper meaning of the word of “shalom” in Hebrew. This word, “shalom,” according to *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, means “completeness, soundness, welfare and peace.” Within the word, as in the giving of a holy kiss, the giver is expressing all these things to the other person in both the physical and the spiritual realms. This kiss, however, is much more than the everyday kiss of greeting.

This kiss is separate in its application, for it is to be a ***“holy kiss,”*** not the run-of-the-mill peck on the cheek or the passionate kiss between lovers. This kiss is a kiss of respect and true regard for the other person. In western society, the thought of one man kissing another is usually greeted, unless it is a son to a father or vice versa, as an unthinkable and unwanted occurrence. Men and women who are friends may kiss each other on the cheek, but that is the limit of what is considered “proper behavior” in our society. Yet, that is not so in other parts of the world, and certainly not so in the ancient Middle East where the custom was normal. Any omission of the custom was considered a deep and telling insult. Such was the case when our Lord visited Simon the Pharisee. Jesus was not offered water or oil and was not kissed upon entry to the home. When our Lord was not offered a welcome that any host was expected to offer a guest, Jesus said, ***“Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet”*** (Luke 7:45.) By not kissing our Lord, Simon made a very strong statement of disrespect toward Christ, one that did not go without notice.

The Holy Bible makes strong contrasts between holy and unholy kisses. In 2 Samuel 20:9, we read of how Joab, who was so full of vengeance for the brother who had been killed in battle, that he grabbed the beard of Amasa, the

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man who had slain Joab's brother, while he kissed him in greeting. The most wellknown kiss was the one given by Judas Iscariot to Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane. The kiss Judas gave was one of betrayal, a kiss that mocked the true meaning of the gesture of respect. In our western culture, it would be like shaking another's hand while having the wickedest of motivations behind it.



Although many misinterpret the writings of Paul, we must remember the motivation behind his words. We, as Christians, should show respect for our brothers and sisters in Christ. We should seek to encourage each other and to show our delight at being in the presence of another servant of our Lord. When we do greet other Christians, what we are doing is wishing all the blessings of God upon them, just as was customary in the early church. We in the western world do not kiss each other in this manner, but we do share the same sentiment and expression of the deeper meaning of the action with the shaking of hands or with a friendly, warm embrace. ✝

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WORSHIP

PSALM 95

David Conley

Vs. 1-3 *"O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods."* God is **worthy** to be worshipped! The more we recognize how great God is, the more we realize how sinful we are! We should be ever so **thankful** for Who He is and what He has done for us!

Vs. 4-6 *"In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. O come, **let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.**"* God made **everything**! Nothing is ours! **Nothing**! Are we willing to **bow down** before Him? Are we willing to **kneel** before the Lord? The only way we will ever **bow** and **kneel** is if we **humble ourselves**! No one who feels that he is worthy can be humble. Only the one who **knows** that he is **unworthy** can **kneel** and **bow**!

Vs. 7-11 *"For he is our God; and we are the sheep of his hand. Today if ye will hear his voice, **Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.**"*

When Moses led the people out of Egypt, they saw the powerful works of God, and yet they **hardened their hearts**. **They were not humbled**. We may ask, "How could that happen?" These people witnessed God send the ten plagues and part the Red Sea. They saw God come down on Mount Sinai in the form of a cloud, and they **heard His voice speak**! How could they harden their hearts and not believe they could conquer Canaan Land with God's help? They were punished for their disbelief!

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Jesus said, *“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you **rest**”* (Matthew 11:28). Today, the same question can be asked. “How can people harden their hearts when they **know** that Jesus is coming back? People are still the same! God is also still the same! He still says, *“I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my **rest**.”*†

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Kenney's Pennies “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight!” (Isaiah 5:20-21 NKJV). Can there be any doubt that this is happening in our beloved land to our own destruction as a nation? Doing this destroyed the nations of Israel and Judah. Think it cannot happen now? Think again!

WORSHIP

Pray Persistently

D.A. Adenugba

“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2). Christians are to pray always for themselves and for others, including rulers. They pray for other Christians and non-Christians, too. The apostle Paul prayed for the Colossian Christians thusly, ***“We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you”*** (Colossians 1:3).

People in authority must not be left out of our prayers. Indeed, we must always remember them in our prayers, so ***“that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence”*** (1 Timothy 2:2).

Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit *do not pray* for anyone, but they *intercede* on our behalf according to our prayers (Romans 8:26, 34). Prayer is directed **to** God the Father, **through** Christ Jesus and not through the Holy Spirit (John 16:23) or any mortal living or dead. In reading, we do not ask (pray), but rather, in prayer, we ask, we seek and we knock (Matthew 7:7; 1 John 5:14-15).

Jesus devoted a whole parable in Luke 18:1-8 to teach ***“that men always ought to pray and not lose heart.”*** This shows that a single occasion of prayer may not fetch man’s desires, and therefore, he needs to continually pray to God through the Son, Jesus Christ, in faith (John 16:23-24). ***“And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive”*** (Matthew 21:22). Prayer brings amazing results.

Through persistent prayer, uncommon blessings are obtained. The judge in this parable resembles people in authority (rulers) who should not only execute justice but do so timely. Unfortunately, many of them have no fear of God and do not regard man and justice. They oppress the widows, poor, needy, orphan and strangers that God asked to be helped, cared for and loved (Exodus 22:22; Deuteronomy 10:18; 14:29). One of the curses pronounced from Mount Ebal is this: ***“Cursed is the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow...”*** (Deuteronomy 27:19). [For


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the purpose of the teaching about prayer, the judge in the parable herein mentioned represents God, to whom His children ought to pray tirelessly. God, of course, is not “unjust” (Luke 18:6). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor.]

Through unceasing petitions to God, the down-trodden are vindicated. If we faint not in prayer, we shall receive. Writing to the Romans, the apostle Paul taught, ***“Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer”*** (Romans 12:12). Be thankful to God in all your prayers. Make your requests known to God through Jesus Christ (Colossians 4:2). ***“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints”*** (Ephesians 6:18).

All prayers must have direction. That is, they must have focus. As we pray, we make our petitions or requests known to God (Philippians 4:6), and not by noise or drama by dancing and beating objects around us. Neither should one’s prayers be vain repetitions, such as rote prayers (i.e., mechanical, routine memorizations that lack intelligent reflection). ***“And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him”*** (Matthew 6:7-8).

The requests of Paul for prayer from brethren have **directions** as seen in 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2, which reads, ***“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.”*** The Word of God can be hindered and disdained by unreasonable and wicked men, so the requests of Paul were appropriate for his needs. Our prayers also must be specific, well-defined for our needs. Epaphras prayed fervently that the Colossian Christians might ***“stand perfect and complete in all the will of God”*** (Colossians 4:12). The prayer of Epaphras had focus; do always make sure your prayers are focused, too!

Pray always; do not be discouraged and wearied. Let your prayer be focused. Pray for other brethren, non-Christians and even rulers. ***“Pray without ceasing”*** (1 Thessalonians 5:17). 

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A Very Special Day


Dalton Key

Just whose day is it anyway? Sunday should be more than another busy, pleasure-filled, weekend play day. It ought to be more than another excuse for sleeping late and lounging about the house. It must be seen as more than another opportunity to water the grass or wash the family car. Sunday, the first day of the week, is special. It is the Lord's Day—a day for worship.

The apostle Paul tarried seven days in Troas, until *"the first day of the week,"* when he met with the saints of that city in worship (Acts 20:6-7). John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," wrote, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" (Revelation 1:10). Is it any wonder why? Our Lord arose from the dead on the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1-6). The church was established on Pentecost Day, the first day of the week (Acts 2). This day, the Lord's Day, is more than ordinary. It is special.

Justin Martyr, one of the recognized historians of the early church, wrote near the beginning of the second century. "On Sunday a meeting is held of all who live in the cities and villages... They rise together and send up prayers."

Early disciples faced terrible persecution in gathering together for worship on the Lord's Day, and yet, they assembled and worshipped in spite of their adversities. According to John Foxe in his *Book of Martyrs*, many early Christians were burnt alive, others were dragged by their feet through the streets naked until they expired, many were stoned and a great number had their brains beaten out with clubs. Nero is said to have dressed Christians in shirts made stiff with wax, fixed them to axletrees and then set them on fire to light up his gardens at night.

What of us? We have great difficulty convincing more modern saints, with no fear of physical oppression, to drive the new car down a four-lane, paved highway to a comfortable, climate-controlled building. By the way, what will you be doing this Sunday? 

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A Senior's Version of FACEBOOK

(For those of my generation who do not, and cannot, comprehend why Facebook exists)

I am trying to make friends outside of Facebook while applying the same principles. Therefore, every day I walk down the street and tell passersby what I have eaten, how I feel at the moment, what I have done the night before, and what I will do later and with whom. I give them pictures of my family, my dog, of me gardening, taking things apart in the garage, watering the lawn, standing in front of landmarks, driving around town, having lunch, and doing what anybody and everybody does every day. I also listen to their conversations, give them “thumbs up” and tell them I “like” them.

And it works just like Facebook. I already have 4 people following me: 2 police officers, a private investigator and a psychiatrist.



A young lady visited a computer dating service and requested, “I’m looking for a spouse. Can you please help me to find a suitable one?”

The matchmaker said, “What exactly are you looking for?”

“Well, let me see. Needs to be good looking, polite, humorous, sporty, knowledgeable, good at singing and dancing. Willing to accompany me the whole day at home during my leisure hours if I don’t go out. Be able to tell me interesting stories when I need a companion for conversation and be silent when I want to rest.”

The matchmaker entered the information into the computer and, in a matter of moments, handed the results to the woman: “Buy a television.”



One sunny day a man decided to go jump from an airplane. When he jumped, there was good and bad news.

Good news: He had a parachute.

Bad News: It didn’t work.

Good News: There was a haystack down below.

Bad news: There was a pitchfork in the haystack.

Good News: He missed the pitchfork.

Bad News: He missed the haystack.

PROVERBS 17:22



I was observing two men who were working for the public works department. One would dig a hole, and the other would follow behind him and fill in the hole.

After a while I had to ask, "Why do you dig a hole, only to have your partner follow behind and fill it up again?"

The hole digger wiped his brow and sighed, "Well, I suppose it probably looks odd because we're normally a three-person team. But today the lad who plants the trees called in sick."



Three seniors were out for a stroll. One of them remarked, "It's windy." Another replied, "No way. It's Thursday." The last one says, "Me too. Let's have a soda."



What is the difference between man and pig?
A pig can never be a man.



Taking great pains to be specific, the new auto shop teacher on our staff

explained to three of his students that he wanted them to clean a car that was parked outside. He gave them two extension cords, the vacuum cleaner, a bucket, rags and the car keys. He mentioned that the car was one to be used in his class.

Later, he went out and discovered them sitting in the car, feet up on the dashboard, listening to the stereo. "Why aren't you vacuuming the car?" he asked.

"Because the extension cord wouldn't reach," was the reply.

Exasperated, the teacher stated, "That's why I gave you two."

"We tried the other one," a student said, "but it wouldn't reach either."



A soccer hooligan was charged with disorderly conduct and assault after a match. The arresting officer stated that the accused had thrown something into the river not far from the stadium.


"What exactly did the accused throw into the river?" the judge asked.

"Stones, sir," the officer replied.

The judge was confused. "Well, that's hardly an offense, officer."

"It was in this case, Sir," the officer explained. "Stones was the name of the referee."

How Do You Measure Up?

- 
1. A wise son heeds his father's instruction,
But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.
 4. The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing;
But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.
 5. A righteous man hates lying,
But a wicked man is loathsome and comes to shame.
 6. Righteousness guards him whose way is blameless,
But wickedness overthrows the sinner.
 7. There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing;
And one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches.
 9. The light of the righteous rejoices,
But the lamp of the wicked will be put out.
 10. By pride comes nothing but strife,
But with the well-advised is wisdom.
 11. Wealth gained by dishonesty will
be diminished,
But he who gathers by labor will
increase.
 12. Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
But when the desire comes, it is a
tree of life.
 13. He who despises the word will be
destroyed,
But he who fears the commandment will
be rewarded.
 14. The law of the wise is a fountain of life,
To turn one away from
the snares of death.

4 Prayers to Pray Every Single Day

Jack Wilkie

One quick Google search would be all I would need to tell you about George Washington. I could tell you his date of birth, place of birth, his parents' names, his wife's name, his major accomplishments, etc.

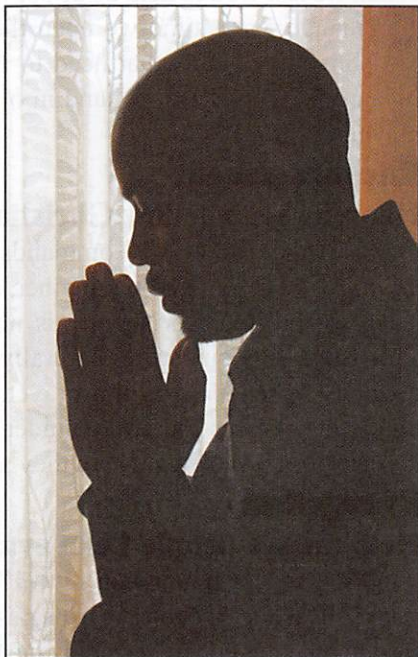
Yet, you wouldn't say I really know George Washington, would you? Instead, I would just know *about* him.

On the other hand, I can recite all of the same information about my wife, but nobody would doubt that I actually know her. Why? Because I can tell you about her personality, what she's like from day to day, how she responds in various situations, etc.

Too often, though, it's easy to *know about* God without actually *knowing* God.

It's possible to read the Bible and pray every day and still not really know God or feel His presence in our lives from day to day. Maybe you've felt that distance. Maybe, like me, God has at times seemed incredibly impersonal and distant to you.

I believe one of the primary reasons is that often we don't see God at work in our day to day lives. That may be because too often we're not living our day to day lives for Him.



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We want God to play a role in *our* purposes, but the Bible promises us an opportunity to play a role in *His* purpose.

Praying these four prayers each day will help plant the **S.E.E.D.** of growth in your relationship with God.

Secret sins

Help me see the sins I'm committing but of which I'm unaware.

Praying as David did in Psalm 19:12 and 139:23-24 does several things for our walk with our Father. It helps us stay humble, reminding us that we will never be perfect here and always have room to grow. It reminds us of Jesus' grace and how we're dependent on it every day. It helps us to be dependent on God every day for our growth. His goal for us isn't just to make it to Heaven, it's for us to become like Christ (Romans 8:29). When we ask God to help us do so, we start to see opportunities for growth and change every time we open the Word. We start to be conscientious of habits and actions that need to be replaced as we go about our days. In short, we'll see God's hand in our lives over and over as we pray this prayer.

Encouragement

Help me see a fellow Christian I can encourage.

The "one another" commands ("*Love one another,*" "*serve one another,*" 'encourage one another,' etc.) throughout the New Testament teach us that our Christianity is not an individual pursuit. The love of Christ that fills our hearts naturally leads us to love the family God has given us. When we pray this prayer, it keeps our family on our hearts and minds. It gives us a daily reminder of our responsibility toward them. It invites God to show us where they are weak and in need of strengthening.

Evangelism

Help me see people I can evangelize.

The Great Commission's "*Go*" in Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15 teaches that God's people are to be mission minded! Everywhere we go, we're carrying the mission of spreading the message of Jesus Christ. When we pray

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this prayer, we're acknowledging that duty and asking for help to carry it out.

Because evangelism is difficult, it's terribly easy for us to let it slip to the back burner. Like Moses, we can be quick to make excuses while forgetting that it is God who made our tongues, God who gave us the message and God whose power will be shown in the end. Praying this prayer helps us keep each of those things in mind, along with a regular reminder of the need to be active in evangelism.


Better yet, pray for specific people by name. Doing so leads us to pursue occasions to share Christ with them and to be constantly attentive for open doors of opportunity. When we pray this way, we're asking God to remind us that their souls are too precious and their eternity is too important to be neglected.

Dependence

Do whatever it takes to draw me closer to You.

This might be the most difficult prayer a person can pray. When we ask God this, we should be prepared to have our idols smashed and our comfort zones pulled right out from under us. It's a full acknowledgment of what Paul realized in talking about his thorn in the flesh in 2 Corinthians 12—whatever weakness, persecution or difficulty draws me closer to Christ is a good thing.

No matter how true we know it is, that's a hard statement to accept. However, if we truly want to walk closely to God, and we're willing to lose whatever it may cost us to do so, this request will be a regular feature of our prayers. Yes, we'll probably lose some of our comforts in the meantime, but we'll gain a closeness with God that nothing in the world can replace.

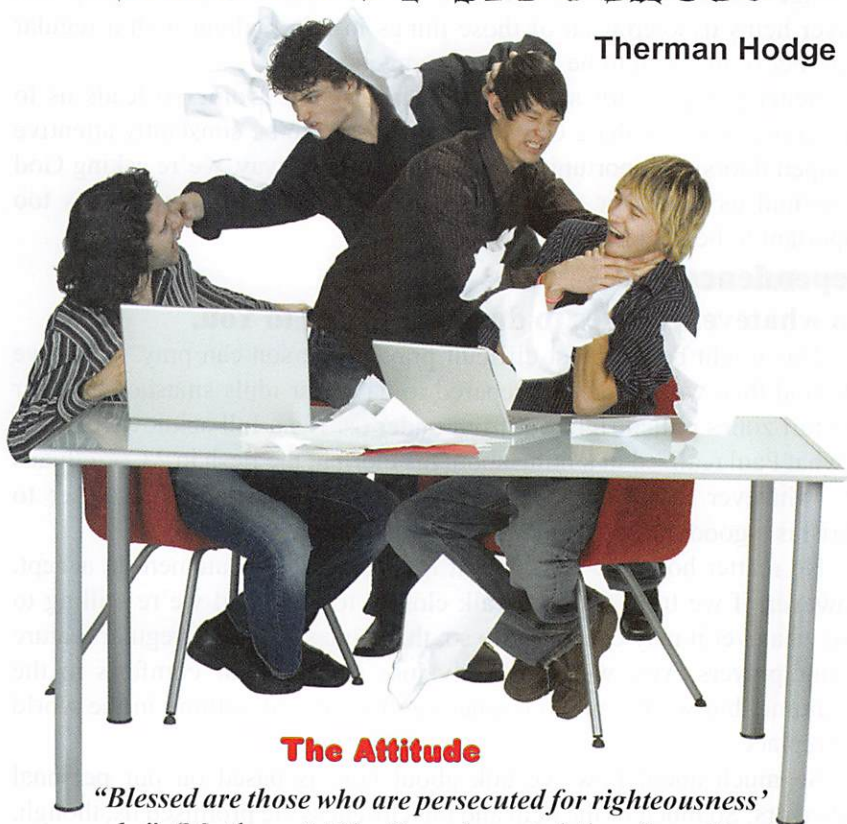
So much about how we talk about God is based on our personal endeavors. So much of the help and the closeness He promised us, though, is related to our efforts to live for Him. If we truly want to know God and see His hand in our lives, the best way to do so is to submit and to let Him start calling the shots (i.e., directing our lives). 

Jack Wilkie is Editor of *Think Magazine*: www.focuspress.org

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Blessed Are They Who Are Persecuted

Therman Hodge



The Attitude

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake" (Matthew 5:10). One characteristic of a citizen of the kingdom of God is that one must be ready and willing to endure persecutions (2 Timothy 3:12). This follows closely to the attitude of the peacemaker. In order to keep peace, one must be ready and willing to endure persecutions. The work of a peacemaker is not a light and easy


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one; it often carries with it persecutions of the world, even from those who should be restored to God.

The blessing is received by those who are *“persecuted for righteousness sake”* and not by those who are persecuted for their opinions or their evil doings. Jesus was bitterly hated and reviled because He was seeking to please God (Mark 3:6; Luke 6:7, 11).

Persecutions can manifest themselves in different ways: by misrepresenting a person, by slandering a person's character, by trying to make a person's motives look bad or by taking a person's property. Persecutions are usually the result of hatred of God (John 15:20-23), ignorance of God (John 16:1-3), hatred for Christ (1 Thessalonians 2:14-15), for preaching the cross of Jesus (Galatians 5:11; 6:12) or for one's godly living (2 Timothy 3:12). Yet, what should be the Christian's attitude when persecutions come? A Christian should pray (Matthew 5:44), be patient (1 Corinthians 4:12), glorify God (1 Peter 4:16) and flee from it (Matthew 10:23).

The Reward

“For theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:10). We are to rejoice and be very happy that we are counted worthy to suffer for the kingdom of Heaven (Acts 5:41). Jesus knew that those who would enter His kingdom and prove faithful would be persecuted. Therefore, He prepared us for this by telling us of the prophets, and then, He promised us that *“we shall reign with Him”* (2 Timothy 2:12). 

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[Editor's Note: Christians win even when it appears by the world's standards and from consideration of material prosperity that they lose. What the children of God have to gain more than compensates for any and all earthly losses. *“So Jesus said to them, ‘Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life’”* (Matthew 19:28-29). *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Romans 8:18). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

GENERATIONS

Rebecca Rushmore

Several weeks ago, as the Sunday morning Bible class I was teaching was about to begin, the door opened to admit a visitor. Realizing the age range of my class, the adult bringing the child to class left to bring the young girl's brother. The young visitors were escorted to class by their grandmother, who was no stranger to me. Over a decade ago, this grandmother (with her husband and two children) was a member of my congregation before her family moved to another state. For several years, while members of the same congregation, I taught this woman's daughter in Bible class. Now, I was going to teach her daughter's children.

After class, I was able to greet the children's mother and discover the reason for the visit. The great-grandparents of the children live in town and are fellow members of the congregation. The visitors were traveling through the area and decided to spend the night in town the previous evening to surprise the oldest generation at services on Sunday morning. The travelers would continue the journey home later in the afternoon. The family settled several rows in front of me for the morning worship service. As the announcements were read, I observed **four generations of one family gathered to worship God**. Since I frequently read on social media about happenings in the lives of the three younger generations, I am aware that this is a family of faithful Christians three generations strong, with a fourth generation in training. This fact brought several things to mind from the Bible.

GENERATIONS DOING IT RIGHT

In Genesis 18:19, God spoke concerning Abraham, ***"For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."*** Abraham was faithful to God (Hebrews 11:8-10; James 2:23) and taught his household to be faithful as well (see Genesis 24 for an example of faith in the servant of Abraham). Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob obeyed God and received the same promise He made to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 26:1-7; 28:12-15).

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In Deuteronomy 6:1-3, Moses wrote that the people were to teach and to keep God's commandments, "*you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life*" (v. 2). A few verses later, Moses continued:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

God wanted the lives of His people to revolve around teaching and obeying His commandments.

Paul wrote to Timothy, commending his faith, "*which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also*" (2 Timothy 1:5). Here is a New Testament example of faithfulness to God passed down through multiple generations by the teaching of God's Word.

Notice that in each example cited above, faithfulness from generation to generation resulted from the direct teaching of God's commandments. The wisdom of Proverbs 22:6 reminds us, "*Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.*" According to Strong's Greek/Hebrew Definitions, the word for "*child*" in this passage refers to someone "from the age of infancy to adolescence" (*Biblesoft's*). God expects parents to actively teach His commands to children from birth through the teenage years. However, teaching is not enough. Parents must live faithfully, thus teaching by example as well. Note how many times in Matthew 23 that Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy in not living the things they taught. Hypocritical parents will earn the same condemnation (Colossians 3:21, 25; Ephesians 6:4).

GENERATIONS DOING IT WRONG

Lot was a man who tried to do God's will (2 Peter 2:7-8), but he lost his children to the world. Genesis 19 describes the tragic end to his children who

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chose to stay behind in Sodom. The latter part of the same chapter details the sinful choices made by Lot's two daughters who escaped the destruction of their former home. The Bible does not explain why Lot's children failed to follow his righteousness. Perhaps the wickedness of the people around them became more influential in their lives than their father. Whatever the reason, Lot was not the first of many faithful generations in his family tree.

Whole generations of the children of Israel repeatedly turned from the Lord. After the death of Joshua and his generation, the people left the Lord (Judges 2:7-11). This began a long cycle of oppression, repentance, deliverance, faithfulness and disobedience. Each period of disobedience followed the death of a judge (Judges 2:12-19). Whole generations failed to learn from the previous generation. Later, the prophet Hosea recorded the words of God, ***"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"*** (4:6). Generations failed to instruct future generations.

Eli, a priest of the Lord, had two sons. His sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were also priests (1 Samuel 1:3), but ***"the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the LORD"*** (1 Samuel 2:12; see also 2:13-17, 22-25). God revealed to a young Samuel that Eli would be harshly judged. ***"For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them"*** (1 Samuel 3:13). Again, the Bible does not explain why Hophni and Phinehas turned to evil. The Scriptures do tell us that Eli was at least partly responsible because he failed as a parent to ***"restrain"*** or discipline his children. Eli became the last old man of his family, and future faithful generations did not come from his family tree (1 Samuel 2:31-33).

CHOICES


Each generation has choices to make. First, individuals must choose to learn and to obey God's commands. Today, those commands are found in the New Testament. One must study God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15), keep His commandments (John 14:15) and live faithfully (Revelation 2:10). ***"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him"*** (Ezekiel 18:20); every individual must choose to follow God. No one can obey God in another's place.

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Second, each individual must choose to instruct future generations. Jesus gave the Great Commission as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-16. Here, all Christians are instructed to spread the Gospel. Additionally, Paul instructed Timothy to teach others, who could also teach others, thus perpetuating the spread of the Gospel through the world, including to future generations (2 Timothy 2:2).

GENERATIONS WORSHIPPING TOGETHER

Looking around any group of Christians assembled for worship, one may find a mix of generations. Some families may have several generations together for worship. Others may have faithful generations worshipping in congregations somewhere else in the world. Still other families may have faithful generations missing from the family tree. Individuals who became Christians later in life, after children left home, may be the explanation of some missing generations. In other cases, Christian parents who were unfaithful to the Lord while the children were young may have lost their adult children to the world. Many of these parents have returned to the Lord and are now trying to influence and instruct grandchildren in spiritual matters. Another group of parents remained faithful to the Lord while the children were young and did their best to ***“bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord”*** (Ephesians 6:4). However, some of those children exercised their free will and chose not to obey God. These parents are praying that someday those children, like the prodigal son of Luke 15:11-24, will return in penitent obedience.

No matter the reason for missing generations today, the past cannot be changed. Only the present matters. **It is the responsibility of every Christian today to teach the current and future generations about the will of the Lord.** Are you part of the generation doing it right? 

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A Failure to Correct

Aaron J. Cozort

The life of David, the King of Israel, was often filled with difficulty—the affairs of state, the continual wars and unrest, and threats against his kingdom. To further complicate the matter, David had a weakness for women and would, in turn, father many children. Still, they would not receive adequate attention from their father because of the previously mentioned difficulties. As a result, there was not always a good relationship between David and his sons. Surrounding David were many power-hungry advisors and political leaders who influenced his sons in the wrong direction (Jonadab, 2 Samuel 13:4; Ahithophel, 2 Samuel 15:12).

Amid all these struggles, what can often happen in the life of a family is that one child begins to do wrong, and no one corrects him. According to 1 Kings 1:5-6, this is precisely what happened with Adonijah, the brother of Absalom.

*Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, “**I will be king**”; and he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. (And his father had not rebuked him at any time by saying, ‘Why have you done so?’ He was*




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also very good-looking. His mother had borne him after Absalom)."

Solomon, a son of David who observed his brothers' attempts to overthrow David, would write this wisdom to his son: **"Chasten your son while there is hope, And do not set your heart on his destruction"** (Proverbs 19:18). There is importance in expeditiously handling wrongdoing. The correction postponed can become an encouragement to further bad behavior instead of being a deterrent. There comes a time when it is too late to hope for turning a child from wickedness because he or she has plotted a course into iniquity and its untimely end. Adonijah ultimately reached the end of his life at the order of his brother, Solomon, when seeking to usurp the throne once more.

*Then King Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, "May God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah has not **spoken this word against his own life!** Now therefore, as the LORD lives, who has confirmed me and set me on the throne of David my father, and who has established a house for me, as He promised, Adonijah shall be put to death today!" So King Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and **he struck him down, and he died.**" (1 Kings 2:23-25)*

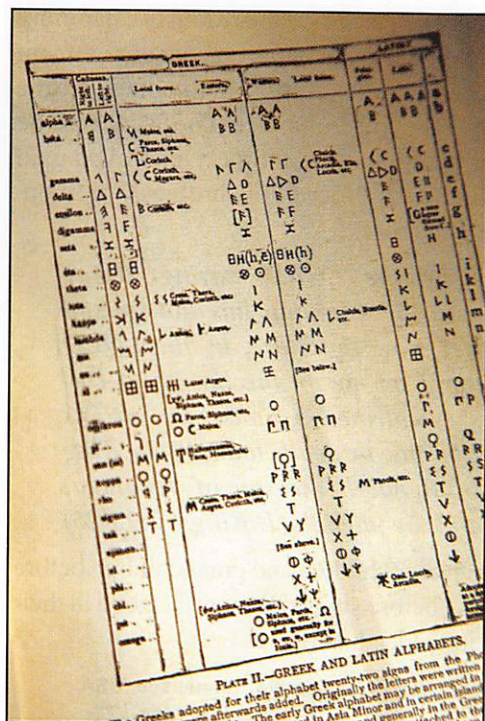
Parents and Grandparents, correct your children and grandchildren before it is too late—while there is still hope—before sin overthrows the good in their lives and brings its ultimate conclusion—death (Romans 6:23). 

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

Robison's Rubies Hebrews 4:12 reminds us, **"The word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."** When God's Word is taught, it affects the mind—the spiritual heart. Some people are cut to the heart and obey, such as those on Pentecost (Acts 2:37-41). Some people are cut to the heart and react angrily against the preacher, such as those who stoned Stephen (Acts 7:54-60). The Word of God challenges our lives, but the response is up to us.

Lexicons and Defining Words

David R. Kenney



Dictionaries have been around for a long time, some sources state as far back as 2300 B.C. So, the concept of a dictionary that defines a word has proven itself in the crucible of time! A dictionary is a collection of words that are generally arranged in alphabetical order. The treatment of the word may vary from dictionary to dictionary. However, it is common to find a phonetic spelling, some history of the word's meaning (called etymology) and a description of how the term is used.

What is the difference between a dictionary and a lexicon? First of all, one should keep in mind that a Bible

Dictionary does not function in the same way as a Greek or Hebrew Lexicon. Bible Dictionaries tend to define people, places and things in the Bible, but lexicons deal more with linguistics.

So, what is a lexicon? Some may answer this question differently. A lexicon is similar to a dictionary but involves two languages with an effort to bridge a gap in the user's understanding. The words are listed in alphabetical order by the language being defined. Then, the phonetics, definitions, etc. are provided in the other language in order to learn the meaning of the referent

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term in the other language. For example, a Greek lexicon will have Greek terms listed in order of the Greek alphabet, then have information relating to the term's meaning in English. Some lexicons provide more information about the term's form, meaning and usage in the New Testament.

A note of caution—be careful about accepting without verifying a lexicon's definition relating to the New Testament. Just because a person is writing about linguistics does not exempt him from theological bias! Greek lexicons have been around for a long time, too. One source states that the first Greek lexicon, *Clavis Novi Testament* by Eilhard Lubin, was printed in 1614.

Defining a word can be a real challenge. First, one should have a clear understanding of the word's form, how it is written and how it is pronounced. The meaning of the word is generally what people have in mind when consulting a dictionary, and to help accomplish this, the term's usage in various contexts is supplied. Words have different meanings in different contexts, including cultural contexts. Just because a word's form may be in the same language does not mean its meaning and usage are identical across cultures. For example, the word "casket" has the same form in both the United States and England, but in England, it has the meaning of a jewelry box. (I don't recommend telling your wife you bought her a casket for Christmas.) While Koine Greek may not change, English continues to change, which is why newer translations are readily accepted.

The amount of work that goes into creating an excellent dictionary is mind boggling and even *more* work goes into making a lexicon! It is a shame that more people do not take advantage of these great tools for the benefit of themselves and others in which scholars have poured hours or even lifetimes into making available such information at our fingertips. ✚

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Scavenger Hunt

through Numbers

Rebecca Rushmore

(answers inside back cover)

1. What was the youngest age to be counted in the census of the men of war?
2. Which tribe did God command Moses not to number with the men of war?
3. At what age was Moses to start counting males when he numbered the Levites?
4. What covered the tabernacle by day and by night?
5. What was used to call the children of Israel and direct their movements?
6. Who was described as more humble than all men on earth?
7. Which two men returned from spying out the land of Canaan with a positive report?
8. What was the penalty for violating the Sabbath?
9. How did Moses disobey God at Kadesh?
10. What animal did God cause to speak to Balaam?

Zacchaeus, the “Wee Little Man”

Kabita Gootam

We know the story of Zacchaeus from childhood. We tell this story to our children. Jesus and followers were travelling to Jerusalem (for the last time) through the beautiful and low-lying city of Jericho. First, we read about this city's destruction by the Israelites in chapter 16 of the Book of Joshua. It was cursed but rebuilt in the reign of the evil king of Israel, Ahab (1 King 16:24). Today, there is no old Jericho city.

Zacchaeus was rich and famous, chief of the tax collectors. We read about two more tax collectors in the New Testament. The apostle Matthew left everything and became the disciple of Jesus (Matthew 9:9). We read about another tax collector whose humble prayer was accepted, and he returned home justified (Luke 18:14).

Zacchaeus ***“sought to see Jesus”*** (Luke 19:3). During Christ's life on earth, many people wanted to see Him for different reasons. The wise men of the east came to Jerusalem to worship the King (Matthew 2:1-6). Simeon, a righteous man who lived in Jerusalem, had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he saw the Lord Jesus. The Shepherds came to Bethlehem to see Baby Jesus (Luke 2:25-35). During Jesus' ministry, the news of His teachings and miracles spread far and wide, and as a result, some Jews who had traveled from Greece for the Passover wanted to see Him (John 12:20). King Herod also wanted to see Jesus. ***“And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad, for he was desirous to see Him a long season because he had heard many things of Him, hoping to have seen more miracles done by Him”*** (Luke 23:8). A multitude of people followed Him whenever He went.

Why were they interested in seeing Jesus? They had heard about His teaching, His miraculous works, His healing the sick, casting out demons, feeding the multitude, walking on water, calming the storm etc. Zacchaeus, too, had heard many things about Jesus, probably including the healing of

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a blind man from Jericho (Luke 18:35-43).

Zacchaeus sought to see Jesus, but there were obstacles: He was 'little of stature' and the crowd was big. The Scriptures tell us how he overcame the obstacles. ***"And he ran before and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him"*** (Luke 19:4). A proverb says, "Where there is a will, there is a way." To overcome his inability, Zacchaeus climbed a tree and looked down on the Lord as He was passing by.

Our Father in Heaven wants all of His children to come to Him. ***"Lo! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.... Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near"*** (Isaiah 55:1, 6). Jesus said, ***"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"*** (Matthew 11:28). ***"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you"*** (James 4:8). ***"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely"*** (Revelation 22:17).

Jesus said to him, ***"Zacchaeus make haste..."*** (Luke 19:5). He might have thought that Jesus would not know his name or identify him in the crowd, but Jesus knows the name and the heart of each individual, from the beginning until the end. God the Lord says, ***"For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me"*** (Isaiah 45:4). ***"But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine'"*** (Isaiah 43:1). God even knows the innumerable stars in the sky. He calls them by their names (Psalm 147:4; Isaiah 40:26). He knows everything about every individual. The Psalmist wrote, ***"O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways"*** (Psalm 139:1-3). Jesus searched Zacchaeus' heart, and He knew his sitting down and rising up, and He was acquainted with all his ways from far off! He knows ***our*** names and all ***our*** activity, and He understands ***our*** thoughts.


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Jesus said to Zacchaeus, ***“Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house”*** (Luke 19:5). Zacchaeus readily received Jesus into his house. Jesus once entered the house of Peter, and He healed his mother-in-law. He entered Jairus’ house and raised his dead daughter to life (Mark 5:35). He entered the house of Mary and Martha and taught them (Luke 10:38). He will abide in our homes if we give Him first place in our lives (Matthew 6:33). To have a good relationship with Him, we have to regularly talk to God our Father through prayers. Like Mary and Martha, we should listen to Jesus through His word written in the Scripture. The Psalmist penned, ***“The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous”*** (Psalm 118:15).

Though Zacchaeus was a rich man and of a high status, he ran through the street and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus. We have to overcome the hindrances that come between Jesus and us. We should prepare ourselves to receive Him gladly, no matter what it costs.

Lastly, Zacchaeus offered to give away half of his property to the poor. In Matthew 19:16-22, Mark 10:17-22 and Luke 18:18-25, we read about a rich young ruler. He was eager to have eternal life, but he refused to part with his possessions in order to put Jesus first. Jesus said, ***“...where your treasure is, there your heart will be also... No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon”*** (Matthew 6:21, 24). Many Christians in the early church sold their possessions to help each other. The apostles left their homes and their possessions to follow Jesus (Luke 18:28-30).

Zacchaeus heard about Jesus and believed in Him. ***“If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold,”*** shows his repentance. Jesus said, ***“...This day is salvation come to this house.”***

The writer of Hebrews said of Christ, ***“And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him...”*** (Hebrew 5:9). In this age of grace, we obtain salvation by obeying our Lord’s commandments. 

Kabita Gootam is the wife of Joshua Gootam, longtime preacher of the Gospel in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh, India.

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Moses' Excuses, God's Answers

Gary C. Hampton

God told Moses He wanted to send him to deliver His people. He responded, *"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"* God took away the excuse by promising to be with him. **Anyone is someone with Almighty God on his side** (Exodus 3:9-12; Romans 8:31).

Moses asked who he should say had sent him. God said to say, *"I Am has sent me,"* or the One who exists by His Own power (Exodus 3:13-14; Revelation 1:4)! Moses was to tell the Israelite elders that God had seen their suffering, would deliver them and take them to the Promised Land. Moses and the elders were to ask Pharaoh to let them go three days' journey into the wilderness to worship their God. He foretold that Pharaoh would not let them go, even by a powerful hand. The Almighty would send them out with abundance as if Egypt had been plundered (Exodus 3:13-22; Genesis 15:14)!

Moses said the people would not believe him. God gave him three miracles designed to convince the elders that he was God's chosen messenger. His rod would become a serpent and turn back into a rod. His hand would be leprous and then whole again. Water from the river would turn to blood when poured out on the ground (Exodus 4:1-9).

Moses next said he was not an eloquent public speaker, either before God began speaking or at that very moment. This excuse borders on being an accusation against God. It is tacitly false, as Deuteronomy demonstrates. God did not remedy this supposed problem, but He said He had made man's mouth and could strengthen Moses (Exodus 4:10-12).

Moses finally asked God to send anyone but him. God was angry because He had promised all necessary aid. He gave to Moses his brother Aaron as his mouthpiece. The ultimate power would come from God as He gave Moses the words to speak (Exodus 4:13-17).

The futility of making excuses to God is evident. He made us. He knows us. He will not ask us to do anything we are unable to do. ✝

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PAUL


Tom Baxley

Acts 7 gives the account of the stoning of Stephen, one of the original deacons chosen in the previous chapter. At the end of the chapter, there is a passing reference to a man named Saul, who was present at the stoning. He was holding the coats of those stoning Stephen and watched with approval.



Saul then continued to persecute the church, which led him to the high priest to request official authority to persecute Christians (Acts 8-9).

Saul was on the road to Damascus when he encountered Jesus, after which his life changed forever. He immediately began proclaiming Christ in the synagogues, and then Saul began traveling throughout the Mediterranean world preaching Christ and Him crucified. In so doing, he endured countless hardships and dangers along the way. **Saul went from being Christianity's biggest enemy to its biggest envoy, which serves as a powerful apologetic point.**

His education in Tarsus and Jerusalem as well as his status as both a Jew and a Roman made him the perfect missionary to carry the message of the Messiah to the world, both to Jews and to Gentiles. His influence is still with us to this day because of his contribution of several New Testament epistles as the apostle Paul. 

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

What about "Tongues"?

Betty Burton Choate

In today's denominational world, especially in those groups that believe in miracles and "Holy Ghost" revelations, a great deal of emphasis is placed on the importance of "tongue speaking." The explanation is made that the "tongue speaker" is being moved by the Holy Ghost to say whatever is being said, speaking a "heavenly" language that only God understands.

Do the New Testament Scriptures speak of "tongues"? Yes, and numerous passages can be referenced. When we turn to Acts 2:4, we read, *"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."*

Were the apostles speaking a "heavenly tongue" that only God could understand? No, because we read further in verses 6-8, *"And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, 'Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?'"*

Verses 9-11 list seventeen different groups; so, the languages being spoken were numerous. Yet, they were human languages, words and messages that were readily understood.

Further information on the subject is given in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, which states that individual spiritual gifts were given to select Christians in order to aid the new congregations and Christians who did not yet have the complete Word of God for guidance. Among these gifts were *"to one is given...different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues."*

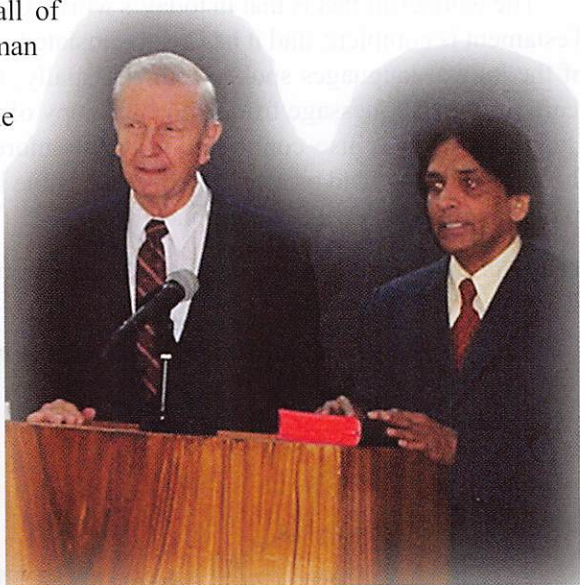
How were the gifts given to Christians? If we turn back to Acts 8:14-20, we will see that **only the apostles** were empowered by God to lay their hands on Christians and give them a miraculous measure of the Holy

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Spirit—the ability to perform miracles. As was shown in the reading of 1 Corinthians 12, various ones were chosen to receive a particular gift. Only the apostles had the power to perform *all* the miraculous signs.

Looking further in 1 Corinthians 14, we read of situations that evidently developed as persecution caused the scattering of the Christians, so that they were thrust into situations where various ones speaking various languages would come together in a worship assembly. It seems obvious from the text that an individual Christian had been given the miraculous ability to speak in a particular language he had never studied, **not that he could speak in any language common to whatever people he might be among.** In a mixed assembly, perhaps his gift of language would not be understood by everybody. Therefore, the admonition was given that the messages spoken in other languages would be limited to two, or at the most, three, and no speaking was to be done in a language not understood by the people unless there was an interpreter present who could convey the message!

It is obvious from all of these passages that human—known—languages were the subject of the discussion, not some “unknown” tongue. In today’s world, we often have similar situations. In India, there are more than twenty major languages and about seven hundred dialects! Speakers of these various languages may be understood by some in the audience, but others must have the lesson




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translated. At times, there may be two or three speakers using their “mother tongue,” with translation, and sometimes the message is translated into two additional languages after the speaker has completed his sentence! It can get to be a drawn-out procedure, which is obviously why Paul, by inspiration, limited the number allowed to speak in a foreign language!

Two additional commands are often broken by the “tongue speakers” of today. In verse 28, it is clearly stated that if there is no one present who can translate, the man is to keep silent. His thoughts in that foreign language would be only between himself and God, and would therefore not be of a spiritual benefit to his audience. This would eliminate the temptation to show off his gift, purely for the purpose of impressing the audience with the fact that he had been given a miraculous ability by God.

The second command often disobeyed among “tongue speaker” denominations is stated in verse 34. *“Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak...”* How often are these Pentecostal and Holiness denominations led by women?

The wonderful fact is that in today’s world, God’s message in the New Testament is complete, and it has been translated and printed in 99 percent of the known languages spoken today! Usually, those who can read can learn the Gospel message from their own copy of the Bible.

Technology is also continuing to enable more wonderful things. For those who cannot read or who are blind, the Bible is available in numerous major languages on MP3 Audio players. 

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



BIBLE QUESTIONS

What about Salvation Issues?

Brian R. Kenyon

Recently, while discussing whether handclapping is an authorized avenue of worship, the question was asked, “Is that a salvation issue?” Of course, the answer is yes! Worship as a “salvation issue” is confirmed beyond doubt by Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-2) and by Jesus’ statement about the scribes and Pharisees: *“in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matthew 15:8)? If God has regulated worship, then He determines how He is to be worshiped. If God has not regulated worship, then anything goes! This question, however, does force some serious thought about the term “salvation issue.” This term is sometimes brought up by those studying questionable practices.

What Are Salvation Issues?

Basically, everything that God obligates people to do is a matter of salvation. For those who are not yet in Christ, God obligates them to believe in Jesus (John 8:24), repent of their sins (Acts 17:30), confess their faith in Jesus as the Son of God (Romans 10:9-10) and be baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38). If accountable people outside of Christ do not do these things, they will remain lost. God’s plan of redemption is a salvation issue! Those who have been baptized into Christ must *“walk in newness of life”* (Romans 6:4), which includes worshiping God *“in spirit and truth”* (John 4:24), putting off sin while cultivating the *“new man”* (Colossians 3:1-10) and continuing to be *“conformed to the image of His Son”* (Romans 8:29). This, of course, does not mean those in Christ will be sinless (1 John 1:8-10), but it does mean they will strive to *“observe all things that I [Jesus] have commanded you”* (Matthew 28:20). Each of these obligations is a salvation issue (Matthew 7:21-23).

Are There Non-Salvation Issues?

If God’s obligations are salvation issues, then those things that God

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does not obligate are non-salvation issues [as long as something is neither a modification nor an addition to what God has authorized ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]. These fall into at least two categories: matters of indifference to God and matters of expediency. First, matters of indifference to God are such things as eating meat versus eating only vegetables or personally regarding one day above another (Romans 14:1-23; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13). As long as we do not sin in the process, God does not care whether we eat meat or vegetables (1 Timothy 4:3-4) or whether, for example, a couple sets apart their wedding anniversary as a special day of thanksgiving and prayer to God. Second, matters of expediency are those things that help carry out what God obligates (1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23). For example, one local church may decide to use songbooks to help fulfill God's obligation for us to sing in worship, while another may use PowerPoint to help fulfil that obligation. Either one of these expedients is fine because neither changes the obligation to sing (1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).

Can Non-Salvation Issues Become Salvation Issues?

Yes, concerning the categories mentioned above, matters of indifference to God and matters of expediency can be abused in such ways as to become sinful, thus making them salvation issues. Concerning both, when people bind one option as if it were the exclusive pattern from God, they sin (Romans 14:10-17). Concerning matters of indifference to God, if, for example, we eat meat in such a way that causes our brother to violate his conscience, *"you thus sin against the brethren, and...you sin against Christ"* (1 Corinthians 8:12).

Conclusion

Although there is a sense in which salvation and non-salvation issues exist, basically everything is a salvation issue based on Colossians 3:17. *"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him"* (Colossians 3:17)!✚

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Were There Christians before Pentecost?

Louis Rushmore

Someone inquired, “Were there Christians before the Pentecost of Acts 2?” Probably most Bible students are aware that the name “*Christian*” appears three times in the New Testament. “*And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the **disciples** were first called **Christians** in Antioch*” (Acts 11:26 NKJV). “*Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You almost persuade me to become a **Christian**’*” (Acts 26:28). “*Yet if anyone suffers as a **Christian**, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter*” (1 Peter 4:16).

From Acts 11:26, one can easily see that the words “*disciples*” and “*Christians*” are synonyms for the same group of people. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines the word “Christian” as “1 a: one who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ, 1 b: disciple.” Even after the first recorded use of the name “*Christian*” (Acts 11:26), those wearing that name were still called “*disciples*” (Acts 11:29).

Many of the disciples of our Lord previous to the Pentecost of Acts 2 (Matthew 5:1) remained disciples of Jesus when the events of Acts 2 were about to unfold (Acts 1:15). The term “disciple” continued to be applied to members of the Lord’s church after its establishment and for about 10 years before the name “Christian” was used of them in Acts 11:26.

Disciples of Jesus were not called “*Christians*” until Acts 11:26, though even then, the terms “*Christian*” and “*disciple*” continued to be used interchangeably. Disciples of Jesus continued with Him throughout His ministry and persevered after our Lord’s sacrificial death on Calvary’s cross. They were the same group of people irrespective of when the name “Christian” was applied to them. 

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And God Created the Digestive System

Dave Everson

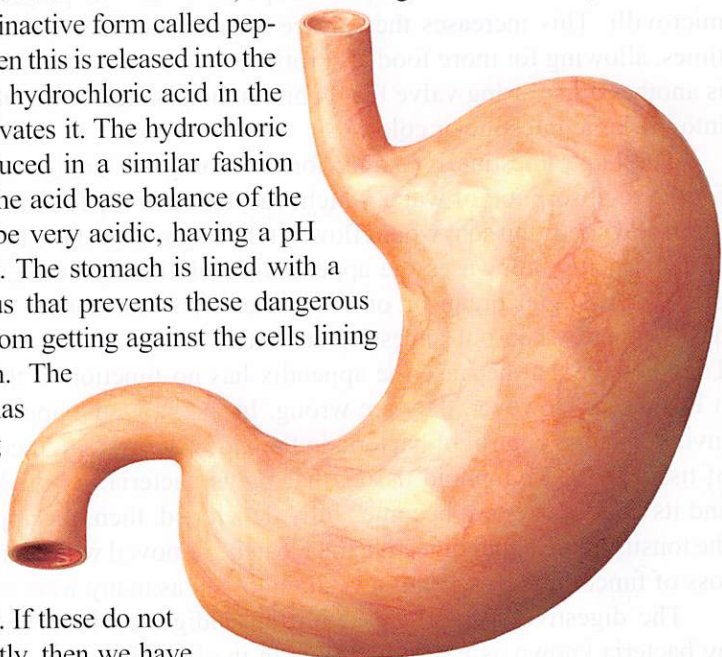
The digestive system of our bodies is a very central part of our daily lives. We give it much attention, especially as mealtime rolls around. Hunger is indeed one of the most powerful human needs. People who hunger and thirst will indeed make every effort possible to fill those needs, including some very extreme measures, even resorting to murder. When Esau was hungry, he was willing to sell his birthright for a bowl of porridge. That may be why Jesus used this very symbolism to teach how we should desire His Word, ***"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled"*** (Matthew 5:6).

While we might know that we need to eat regularly and enjoy doing so, we generally know very little about this amazing creation in our bodies. Let's examine some of the basics of how the organs of this system, which are more than thirty feet in length, function to supply the cells of the body with the materials necessary to keep them alive. This involves some very intricate activities. We are very familiar with the function of the tongue and the taste buds, as they make eating the enjoyable activity it is. Once our food has been chewed and tasted, it is swallowed as a "bolus" or ball of food. The esophagus is a muscular organ that pushes our food to the stomach. If we were standing on our heads or even in zero gravity like space, we could still swallow. Once into the stomach, the major actions of the digestive system begin—that of breaking down the food into smaller pieces.

The stomach is a "J-shaped" organ whose function is primarily to store our food. Food will stay in the stomach about four to six hours and be released very slowly into the small intestine. The stomach does digest some proteins that are in the food. It does this with a chemical called pepsin. This chemical is very strong and will digest a piece of meat very quickly. This chemical is produced by the cells of the stomach, and that would be digested by the

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pepsin, if it were active. However, the Lord designed the cells to produce the pepsin in an inactive form called pepsinogen. When this is released into the stomach, the hydrochloric acid in the stomach activates it. The hydrochloric acid is produced in a similar fashion and causes the acid base balance of the stomach to be very acidic, having a pH of about 1.0. The stomach is lined with a thick mucous that prevents these dangerous chemicals from getting against the cells lining the stomach. The stomach has purse string muscles that close the openings into and out of it. If these do not work correctly, then we have acidic juices splashing back into the esophagus, producing the experience of "heartburn" or releasing the partially digested foods too soon into the first part of the small intestine.



The small intestine is the real workhorse of the digestive system. This is where most of the digestive and absorption is done. There are three parts to this section of the digestive system. They are the duodenum, jejunum and the ileum. The duodenum is where many other digestive juices are produced. This is where the sugars, carbohydrates and the rest of the proteins are digested or broken down into smaller pieces that can be absorbed into the bloodstream and then reassembled by the cells to build our bodies. To digest our food requires the secretions of the liver, pancreas and intestines to break down everything we need to stay alive. After breakdown, the materials are absorbed by the two remaining parts of

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the small intestine. These parts have special fingerlike projections called microvilli. This increases the surface area of the intestines hundreds of times, allowing for more food absorption. At the end of the small intestine is another purse string valve that controls the passage of unabsorbed food into the large intestine or colon.

The large intestine is mainly for the storage of undigested food and for the re-absorption of water which was added to the food to keep it in a semisolid condition so it would flow. At the beginning of the large intestine is the structure known as the appendix. Evolutionary biologists say that this is a vestigial organ or one left over from our earlier evolutionary development when our ancestors ate leaves and plants more commonly. They believe that because the appendix has no function in the adult that it is unused. However, they are wrong. In the baby, the appendix is very involved in the control of bacteria in the digestive system. It contains a lot of tissue, called lymphoid tissue, that fights bacteria. As the baby grows and its immune system becomes fully developed, then, the appendix, like the tonsils in the upper digestive tract, can be removed without a noticeable loss of function. Yet, it is **not** a vestigial organ as many want to believe.

The digestive system ends with the undigested food being utilized by bacteria known as *E. coli* that live in the large intestine. This bacteria breaks down the plant material, uses it for food and then releases the chemical we call vitamin K, which we absorb for our use. This very important relationship is critical to the existence of both, but these guests can sometimes present us with an unwelcome problem of intestinal gas that they release.

We can see, then, that the digestive system is an amazingly complex set of organs—that all functions together to provide us with the necessary nutrients for life. With any one part not doing its job properly, the whole system becomes much less effective.

“I will praise the Lord for I am fearfully and wonderfully made”
(Psalm 139:14).



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An Indisputable Proof For Christianity:

The Remarkable Conversion of Saul of Tarsus

Shane Fisher

George Lyttelton (1709-1773) along with his friend, Gilbert West, set out together to prove the Christian religion to be a hoax. Lyttelton studied and researched the events surrounding the change in the life of Saul of Tarsus while West examined the resurrection of Jesus. Interestingly enough after a few months, they both came to the same conclusion that the evidence showed Christianity to be true. Lyttelton summarized his study in his book, *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul*. In a letter to Gilbert West, Lyttelton set out four main propositions. Those four propositions were: **(1) Paul was a liar, (2) Paul was a lunatic, (3)**



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Paul was lured into a trap or (4) Paul was legitimate.

Proposition # 1: Paul was a liar

Maybe Paul did not see the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus and made it all up. He set out to deceive the masses. As Lyttelton asked, "What could have induced Paul on his way to and later on into Damascus to turn to become a disciple?" Was it: (1) payment, (2) prominence, (3) power, (4) pleasure or (5) prestige? There must have been some ulterior motive as to why Paul changed.

1. Payment

Maybe Paul thought he could get rich off this deal by becoming a disciple of Jesus the Messiah. The evidence is against this assertion. The majority of Christians were financially poor. Paul often refused to take anything from the brethren. He labored himself as a tentmaker (Acts 18:1-3). Acts 20:33-34 states, *"I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me."* First Corinthians 4:11-12 states, *"To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now."* If Paul's aim was to get rich, the deal fell through big time because he, near the end of his life, desired to have a coat to keep warm in that cold, dark prison cell (2 Timothy 4:9-12)!

2. Prominence

Perhaps Paul desired to be famous among people. The evidence for this assertion is lacking also. Christians were held in contempt (1 Corinthians 4:13) and remained unpopular for the first few centuries. The leader of the group had been put to death on a cross as a criminal. According to the world's standards, the wisest and greatest men in all the Greco-Roman world rejected Christianity. First Corinthians 1:22-23 states, *"For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness."*

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Paul would now be recognized as a traitor among his own nation. Could he, a disciple of Gamaliel (one of the greatest Jewish rabbis), expect to have a great reputation among fishermen, tax collectors, etc.? Could he flatter himself to believe that the doctrines he taught would bring him honor? He would eventually be put to death for that which he believed.

3. Power

Perhaps Paul desired great power! There are men across history who have come into the spotlight because their ulterior motive was to wield power such as: ❶ Muhammad of Islam and ❷ Joseph Smith of the Latter-Day Saints church. Remember, that power would be exerted over whom? It would have been over a “flock of sheep” (the church, Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4) that were being driven to the slaughter (persecution)! The Chief Shepherd, Jesus, had already been struck down. Paul never regarded himself as more superior than anyone. He stated in 1 Corinthians 15:9, ***“For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”*** (See also Ephesians 3:8.) If there was ever a time for Paul to come out to claim power, it would have been with the situation that was occurring with the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:12-16). Paul imitated his Master, Jesus Christ, the Ultimate Servant. Second Corinthians 4:5 states, ***“For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake.”***

4. Pleasure

Sin has its temporary pleasures (Hebrews 11:25). In the end, though, it takes one further than he wants to go and farther than where a person wants to stay. Perhaps, Paul pretended to have “revelations” so that he could indulge and gratify his own fleshly desires, just like Joseph Smith who supposedly received a “revelation” that polygamy was divinely sanctioned (*Doctrine & Covenants* 132), even though Jesus, two thousand years ago, had upheld the original Edenic marital plan of “one man and one woman for life” (Matthew 19:3-12).

Paul expressed some of the highest and loftiest ideals on ethics ever known to mankind. Within his writings can be found some of the greatest standards of morality that a person can follow, by *not* practicing the works

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of the flesh, but by developing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:19-23). Paul stated that we are to obey the government and its laws (Romans 13:1-7). He was willing to undergo and subject himself to the same rules of morality as everyone else (1 Thessalonians 2:10; 2 Corinthians 7:2). Why would someone subject himself and others to such high ideals, especially if he knew that all of it was a fraud (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)?

5. Prestige

Did Paul pretend to receive a divine revelation in order to give himself prestige in advancing the teachings of Christianity? Christianity was the one thing he had set out to *destroy* (Galatians 1:23)! Would he have endured “*the loss of all things*” for what he knew was a fraud (Philippians 3:8)? How could Paul have obtained the necessary information if he was public enemy number one, since the church was afraid of him? If Paul had fabricated his story, he would have most likely put it somewhere in a remote location where there were no witnesses. Why were not the witnesses brought in for questioning when Paul was testifying his account of his vision of Jesus? They, too, had noticed something strange happened on the road to Damascus, and they could not deny it (Acts 26:25-26).

Proposition # 2: Lunatic

Perhaps Paul honestly thought that he did see the resurrected Jesus, but he was delusional. He had some mental breakdown.

1. Great heat of temper

Was he not able to control his temper? Did his anger get out of control toward the Christians that he so despised, and that anger somehow produced a change within him? After he became a Christian, notice carefully his character throughout his writings. He was fervent, yet governed by discretion and reason (Romans 9:1-5). His zeal was eager and warm, tempered with self-control (Romans 10:1-3; Galatians 5:22-23). Read the historical account with Festus and notice Paul’s demeanor (Acts 26:25-26). We don’t see anger expressed in any of those encounters.

2. Melancholy

Was Paul full of gloominess and despair? Even though he was in prison when he wrote to the congregation at Philippi, Paul rejoiced in the

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Lord always (Philippians 4:4). He was a man whose heart was filled with a glorious hope because of Whom he had seen on the road to Damascus! (Romans 8:24-25) He had learned to be content in the state where he was (Philippians 4:11). An attitude of sadness and despair just does not make sense for the radical change in Paul.

3. Ignorance

Was Paul ignorant? Absolutely not. He was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). He was educated in the Greek poets (Acts 17). He was a master logician (Romans). He was fully capable of rationally drawing the necessary conclusions from the evidence.

4. Doubts

This assertion fails because Paul's mission was that he had set his eyes on Damascus to deliver the Christians in that city to prison. Before starting the persecution, if he was living in Jerusalem where the church was growing: (1) he had already heard of the report of the lame man and other miracles (Acts 3) and (2) of the apostles escaping the prison (Acts 4). He was present at the murder of Stephen (Acts 6:8). It is very unlikely that doubt was building up inside him or else he would have never started the persecution in the first place (Acts 8:1-4).

5. Vanity

Was Paul full of pride and arrogance? When he was compelled to defend his apostleship, he did it effectively. He then had to apologize for being compelled to speak of himself. He spoke of himself in the third person sometimes (2 Corinthians 12:1-12). He was a very humble man who had his pride broken when he saw the risen Jesus. He realized he had been wrong all this time about Who the real Messiah was.

Proposition # 3: Was Paul lured with deception?

Let us for the sake of argument pretend that some of the disciples of Jesus were hiding behind some big rocks out there on the road to Damascus. How could the disciples of Jesus have: (1) produced a light that was brighter than the sun, (2) made Paul hear the words, yet the rest of the company did not understand the words, and (3) caused him to be blind for three days? This theory just does not make sense

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because of the company who journeyed with Paul on the road. They would have captured such deceptive Christians!

Proposition # 4: Paul was telling the truth — legitimate

We have looked at (1) Paul was a liar, (2) Paul was a lunatic and (3) Paul was lured into this fraud. The evidence does not back up these assertions. What about the fourth proposition, (4) Paul was telling the truth? He was being legitimate.

Lyttelton asked, “What could have induced Paul on his way to, and later in Damascus, to have a complete turn-about and become a disciple?” He answered this possible charge in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7. *“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve... Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.”*

The most reasonable conclusion from the evidence of Paul’s life is that he testified truthfully that he was an eyewitness to the resurrected Son of God. As Lyttelton wrote in his book to Gilbert West:

Sir, in a late conversation we had together upon the subject of the Christian religion, I told you that besides all the proofs of it which may be drawn from the prophecies of the Old Testament, from the necessary connection it has with the whole system of the Jewish religion, from the miracles of Christ, and from the evidence given of his reflection by all the other apostles, I thought the conversion and apostleship of Saint Paul alone, duly considered, was of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity a divine revelation. (Lyttelton 5)✝

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Paul claimed he saw
the resurrected Christ

His claim was
False

His claim was
True

And he did
not believe it

And he
believed it

He did see the
resurrected Christ

Liar

1. Payment
2. Prominence
3. Power
4. Pleasure
5. Prestige

Lunatic

1. Anger out of control
2. Sadness & despair
3. Ignorance
4. Doubts
5. Vanity

Lured

1. Light brighter than sun?
2. Heard words that others did not understand?
3. Blinded for three days?

Legitimate

Telling the truth -
1 Corinthians
9:1; 15:8

Press on to the Goal

Mark N. Posey

Philippians 3:13-14

Introduction:

- A. Christians must live in the future tense, dwelling in a constant state of readiness.
- B. We must daily strive for heaven!

I. PRESS ON TO THE GOAL, living a Christ-like life (Colossians 3:1-4).

- A. Consider the PRICE that was paid (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18-19).
- B. Consider the STEPS that were left (1 Peter 2:21; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Ruth 1:16).
- C. Consider the MIND that is available (Philippians 2:5; Proverbs 23:7; Philippians 4:8).

II. PRESS ON TO THE GOAL, living by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). The Bible speaks of weak, little, much, great and strong faith.

- A. Saving faith is a living faith (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 4:20).
- B. Living faith is personal, purposeful and profitable, *“For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain”* (Philippians 1:21).
- C. Active faith is *“steadfast, unmovable, always abounding”* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

III. PRESS ON TO THE GOAL as a doer of the Word and not just a hearer (James 1:17-25).


- A. God’s Word is a precious gift (James 1:17; 1 Samuel 3:1—rare = precious; John 1:41; Luke 15:8-10; Matthew 13:45-46).
- B. God’s Word must be received (James 1:21; Acts 17:11).
- C. God’s Word will save and bless (James 1:21, 25; Acts 20:32).

CHARTS & OUTLINES

IV. PRESS ON TO THE GOAL by being supremely committed to the church for which Christ died (1 Corinthians 15:24-25).

- A. She is unique, being the one true church (Ephesians 4:4).
- B. She is loved, because Christ is her Head (Ephesians 5:23).
- C. She is right in organization (Philippians 1:1), purpose (Ephesians 1:10-12), worship (Acts 20:7) and doctrine (Ephesians 5:25-27).

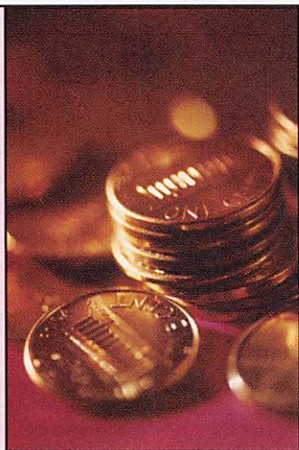
V. PRESS ON TO THE GOAL by striving to save your family (Psalm 127:3-5). John said, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (2 John 4).

- A. Each family must study God's Word in the home (Ephesians 6:4). Fathers have the responsibility of teaching in word and in deed.
- B. Each family must be engaged in the Lord's work (Philippians 2:19-22), with families saying, "Here am I Lord; send me" (Isaiah 6:8).
- C. Each family must be partners in obtaining the "grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7). Christian families must band themselves together with love, serving the same Lord, striving for the same goal and obeying the same standard. 

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Kenney's Pennies

"Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:5-6 NKJV.) One cannot be "like-minded" toward others without being "like-minded" with Jesus Christ and His testament.




Their God

Cecil May, Jr.

God often identifies Himself as *“the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”* (Exodus 3:15). The writer of Hebrews observed, *“God is not ashamed to be called their God”* (11:6). Is our faith such that God might identify Himself to some who know us as *“the God of [my name] and [your name]?”*

Persecution in New Testament Times

Christians faced persecution from the beginning of the church. We usually associate the persecutors with the Romans. However, persecution by the Romans did not begin in the New Testament until Paul's last letter of 2 Timothy, and it continued through the time of the Book of Revelation. Persecution of Christians in Acts and in 1 & 2 Peter was from unbelieving Jews.

Paul, as a Roman citizen, was often rescued by Roman soldiers from Jewish mobs vowing to kill him. The Jewish opposition to Christians was a continuation of the attempt by Jewish leaders to stop the growth of this movement by crucifying Jesus. 

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Robison's Rubies

The apostle Peter wrote, *“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another, love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous, not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing...”* (1 Peter 3:8-9). Christians sometimes are victims of the caricature that they are hateful, mean-spirited people. To be sure, some who call themselves Christians, indeed, are mean. Yet, that is not what Christ wanted. He wanted courteous, kind, tenderhearted behavior from His followers, even when they might disagree with people. As the saying goes, they might disagree without being disagreeable. The world surely could use some tenderhearted compassion. Let Christians lead by stepping up and showing it.

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Part One

The War in our World

Betty Burton Choate

She very casually asked the questions and typed my answers on the medical form, seemingly oblivious to the contradiction between her work and her appearance. On this winter day, her blouse was a sweater, unbuttoned to the point of indecency and pulled aside to expose the greater part of her shoulders. In an effort not to see, I turned my eyes toward the door and the parade of people in the busy hallway. Repeatedly, the women who passed were wearing the same low-cut style of clothes.

I remembered reading an article by Dinesh D'Souza in which he said, "...why [are] the Islamic radicals fighting against America? From the perspective of Bin Laden and his allies, the war is between the Muslim-led forces of monotheism and morality against the America-led forces of atheism and immorality. Secularism, not Christianity, is responsible for producing a blow-back of Muslim rage."

Earlier, I had read that Muslim men attending universities in western cultures had been so sickened by what they had seen among women, and in the decadent populace as a whole, that they often went back to their own countries with a new attitude of support for sharia (Muslim law).

Looking around at the provocative dress of the average woman, I also felt sickened and betrayed. How can women so cheapen themselves by their indecent dress that onlookers automatically conclude that they have no values or morals, that they are saying, by their dress, that they are there for the taking? What has woman-kind come to, that WOMEN would malign the entire female gender by their cheap, tawdry, promiscuous behavior and dress? I am of the generation in which women were respected, protected, treated with consideration and gentleness—the "ladies first" mentality. How our world has changed, through the "progress" resulting from the feminist movement!

As women have gone, so has gone the home and the entire western

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culture. "Wildness" would best describe much behavior today. Have you seen the pictures of teenage girls kicking, hitting, tearing out hair and attacking each other over some boy? Did you see the film of teenagers running wildly into fences, tearing them down and enjoying the thrill of being destructive while living dangerously, physically? Did you hear about the "hazing" at a college where a young man was beaten so badly with a stick that he had to be hospitalized? Have you seen the numbers of young men committing suicide or going to the other extreme and committing mass murder?

Are you keeping up with the reports of child pornography, of Internet sites of sickening pedophilia and of every other kind of perverted behavior? Did you see where millions of tax dollars were spent in support of the "Sundance Film Festival" in which there was a film depicting the rape of a 12-year-old girl and another depicting bestiality?

Were you aware of the class of third-graders that was subjected to a film promoting homosexuality, and did you know that in some *preschools* in this country there are sex "classes." Children are being "educated" in "transgenderism," so that their minds will be so confused that many will decide they are of the opposite gender and will live out their lives in internal conflict. It's not enough that the adult population is being destroyed by the atheistic/humanistic agenda; the atheistic/humanistic agenda is robbing even our babies of their innocence, twisting and perverting their minds before they are old enough to think for themselves.

Go down the list. What is counted as "off-limits" today? Children grow up using curse words as a normal part of their language because those are the expressions they hear on every side. Even on cable "news" programs, where one would expect a degree of modesty in dress on the part of women reporters and dignity and careful selection of words, men and women freely discuss together any part of the body and any act, with no restraints. There are also no restraints about the kind of lewd jokes in stand-up comedy, and there are no restraints about the immoral stories shown on TV.

Alcohol is destroying homes and lives every day. What is the prescribed remedy? A designated driver to get the drunk friends home safely! Every city is cursed with the scourge of drugs and the resulting crime: robbery,

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murder, dealing drugs, suicide and rape. Those involved in selling or taking drugs live on the edge of death every day; non-participants in the neighborhood live in fear of their lives because of the criminal and unpredictable behavior of the drug pushers and users.

Every year we hear a report of how much money the casinos have taken in, an indication of how much tax revenue the state will get from this profitable business. However, how many stop to think that every dollar those businesses take in is money taken out of the pockets of families, often resulting in deprivation of food and clothes or in the loss of a car or a home in bankruptcy, or even in suicide?

Have you heard that there are more "single parent" families and more "live-in" situations now than there are traditional "husband/wife" families? Did you know that only 1 in 20 births in the 1960's (when women more often behaved in such a way as to be respected) were to unwed mothers, and there was great family shame? That percentage has jumped to 4 out of 10 births now, with little shame felt by anyone! Among Blacks, 7 out of 10 births are to unwed mothers; among Hispanics, 5 out of 10. As the divorce rate has soared, live-in situations, out-of-wedlock births and a plethora of resulting problems have also grown.

What is the projected future for these babies? One report says, "Children born to unmarried mothers are more likely to grow up in a single-parent household, experience instability in living arrangements, live in poverty, and have socio-emotional problems. As these children reach adolescence, they are more likely to have low educational attainment, engage in sex at younger ages, and have a premarital birth. As young adults, children born outside of marriage are more likely to be idle (neither in school nor employed), have lower occupational status and income, and have more troubled marriages and divorces than those born to married parents." Not a pretty picture, is it?

What we see in much of the western "culture" is unrestrained wildness. Built into such sinful behavior are consequences. Alcohol and drugs destroy health and lives; promiscuity results in venereal disease; homosexuality breeds AIDS; immorality and infidelity cause broken homes and scarred children.

FROM THE HEART OF

☞ Sin curses whatever it touches, and a great portion of our population is in a downward spiral of self-induced destruction. They are sick—sick—and many are too blind to know it.

On the other side of this great cultural divide is a seeming growing hunger for spiritual things, especially among the younger generation. According to recent statistics, “sixty-two percent identify a decline in moral values as one of the major causes of our problems today.” High on the list of concerns is the desire of young Americans to give their mates and children more stable family lives than their baby-boomer parents gave them.

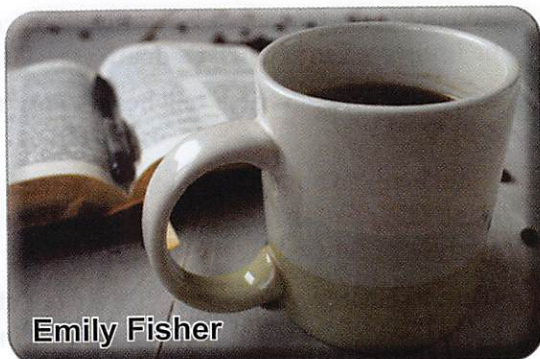
Since the accelerated take over of America’s educational and judicial institutions in the latter half of the 20th century by the atheistic/humanistic powers-that-be, we have seen an increasing war aimed at erasing the Judeo-Christian heritage of our country. “Freedoms” and “rights” are being used to destroy us. How will we, as a nation, respond? Will the desire of half the people to uphold God overcome the other half that has sold out to Satan?

In our world, we are so schooled to “mind our own business” and we are so concerned about not being offensive that the “silent majority” usually avoids confrontations. I looked at the young lady at the hospital desk and concluded that it is high time for those of us who care to say something. So, I asked her how she would feel if she was forced to wear the black burqua clothing of a Muslim woman or to be stoned to death. Her face showed blank surprise.

I explained, “Muslims say that the immorality among American women is one reason they fight. We, as Americans, need to realize that there are repercussions for our behavior. The way you are dressed leaves an appearance of being immoral. Yet, it’s not only you—most of the women walking up and down the hall are indecently dressed. We are responsible to God for the way we dress and the way we live. If we don’t listen to Him, we may be facing some terrible consequences.” I gave her a tract about salvation and thanked her, inviting her to visit the church in the area and to study with them about these things. As I turned to go, she was buttoning her sweater. ✝

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

Noting Your Bible




Emily Fisher

God's Grace

What is grace? A better question is what is *biblical* grace? As you study and note your Bible, read the overall context of each passage.

1. Start by writing in the front of your Bible, "Grace (Genesis 6:8-9)." Then, turn there and note beside it, "Noah found grace as he was obedient (cf., 6:22) (See Exodus 33:17)."
2. In Exodus, write, "Grace shown throughout Israel's history (cf., Ezra 9:8; Jeremiah 31:2) (see Zechariah 12:10)."
3. Turn to Zechariah, and note here, "Grace prophesied (see 1 Peter 1:10-12)." At this passage, write, "Spirit of grace = Spirit of Christ (see John 1:14-18)."
4. In John 1, note "Grace is through Jesus Christ (cf., 1 Corinthians 1:4; Romans 3:24; 1 Timothy 1:14; 2 Timothy 1:9; 2:1) (see Acts 15:9, 11)."
5. Turn to Acts 15 and write, "Grace to all people as all are saved in the same manner (see Acts 14:3)."
6. Write, "Hear the word of grace (see Acts 18:27-28)." Here, write, "See Acts 11:21-24)."
7. In Acts 11, note that "Grace is seen when people believe and turn to God (see Romans 5)."
8. Here, note "Grace is accessed by faith cf., 4:16) (see chapter 6)." In

Romans 6, next to verses 1-3, write, “Grace leads us to die to sin and be immersed into Christ’s death (see Titus 2:11-3:7).”

9. In Titus, write, “Grace teaches us how to live (see 2 Corinthians 8-9).”
10. Note here, “Abounding in grace is seen in our actions (cf., Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:16; 4:6 [in our speech]; 1 Peter 4:8-11 [in everyday life] (see Hebrews 12:15).”
11. Turn to Hebrews and write, “Don’t fall short of grace, don’t set it aside (Galatians 2:21), don’t receive it in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1) or turn it into lewdness (Jude 4), and don’t fall from grace (Galatians 5:4) (see 1 Peter 5:12).”
12. Here, write, “Stand in grace (cf., Acts 13:43) (see 2 Peter 3:18).”
13. In 2 Peter write, “Grow in grace (see Acts 20:32).”
14. In Acts 20, note, “Word of grace builds us up giving an inheritance (see 1 Peter 1:13).”
15. Here, note, “Grace gives hope (cf., 2 Thessalonians 2:16) (see Hebrews 4:16).”
16. Write next to Hebrews 4, “Because of Christ, we find grace at the throne (cf., 12:28) (see 2 Corinthians 4:15).”
17. Here, write, “Causes thanksgiving! (see Ephesians 2:1-10).”
18. Turn to Ephesians. This chapter is full of God’s grace. Write, “Grace saves.” Note here also, the full picture of grace given in God’s mercy, love and kindness (vss. 4-7). Indeed, we give thanks for the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10)! 

Emily Fisher is a missionary and works with World Evangelism. She resides in Winaona, Mississippi, USA.

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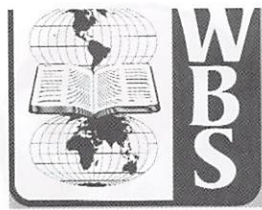
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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (Page 36)

1. Understanding, babes
2. Unbelievers, believe
3. They are out of their minds
4. He is convicted.
5. Edification
6. Let only 2 or 3 speak, one at a time, and one should interpret.
7. Keep silent
8. One
9. Confusion, peace
10. Be silent
11. Their husbands at home
12. The commandments of the
- Lord
13. Decently, order

Bible Find (page 38)



Scavenger Hunt (page 78)

Answers:

1. 20 (1:3)
2. Levi (1:47-49)
3. one month old (3:14-15)
4. cloud by day, fire by night (9:15-16)
5. 2 silver trumpets (10:1-2)
6. Moses (12:3)
7. Joshua and Caleb (14:6-9)
8. death by stoning (15:32-36)
9. He struck the rock instead of speaking to it. (20:1-10)
10. his donkey (22:22-33)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

In a time of persecution, can I endure? This is a question that should haunt every serious Christian: If my life were threatened, or if the lives of my children or loved ones were threatened if I did not renounce Christianity, how would I stand? Probably none of us know the answer until we are faced with the reality, and we pray we would then have the courage of first century Christians.

Most of us live in a time of relative ease: financially, physically, spiritually. We're not hungry. We don't keep a constant watch behind us because of fear of attack. We can worship as we choose, when we choose, without challenge. We have free access to God's Word.

In the midst of our ease and abundance, though, we would do well to remember God's warning to the Israelites as they were about to enter the land that was flowing with milk and honey: **"Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God..."** (Deuteronomy 8:10-14).

The world grows more menacing to Christians every day. Judicial decisions are being made that threaten our right to stand for biblical principles: protection for the unborn, proper discipline and parenting of our children, the condemnation of the practice of homosexuality, the sanctity of marriage—shielding it from divorce for "no reason", from same-sex unions, from polygamy and from the "live-in" practice that has become accepted by many today. Atheism and humanism have been in league for many decades to destroy our biblically-based culture. Now another threat is taking hold in many areas of the world: radical Islam. Their stated goal is to destroy the "western culture" that has already been largely corrupted by these atheistic assaults on our civilization.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, each of us must ask himself or herself this vital question NOW: **"In a time of persecution, can I endure?"** NOW, we still have time to immerse ourselves in God's Word and commitment to Him so that we CAN stand. **"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"** (Romans 8:35).