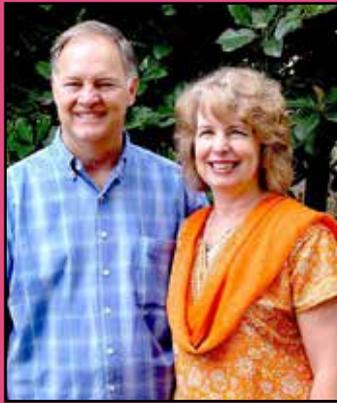


V THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



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**The Faces of
The Voice of Truth International**

The Depth of Our Fellowship

Terry Wheeler

Fellowship available in the church for every Christian is sweet, indeed. It is also deep. It touches us as no other association can. *“That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ”* (1 John 1:3 NKJV).

We are family – the family of God (Ephesians 3:15; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 4:17). Like all other families, we have our ups and downs, but we have them together (1 Corinthians 1:10). When one hurts, we all hurt. When one is strengthened, that makes us all stronger. *“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep”* (Romans 12:15).

We are connected to each other. As members of one body (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:22-23) or branches of the same plant (John 15:5), we are joined. We are not to dismiss one or overemphasize the other. We need each other or we are not whole. *“...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 4:16).

We are of the same mind, the same concern, the same goal (Philippians 3:16). So, we in essence move as one (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

The reason for this close fellowship is God. He brings us into intimate sharing with Himself by His Spirit, covered in His blood, sealed with His name. Since every Christian shares in this same fellowship with God, this closeness then draws us toward each other in the same connection (1 John 1:7), through our consistent faithful obedience to His inspired Word (Acts 6:7; 2 Thessalonians 3:14).

This fellowship is to be treasured, guarded, encouraged. It is the work of God among us. *“And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment”* (1 John 3:23). 

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

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The Heart of a Servant

Louis Rushmore

Friday evening, May 15, 2015, Bonnie Sue Rushmore was very weak. Bonnie and I both knew that she was losing her three-year-long battle with pancreatic cancer. It was a common occurrence for us to travel two hours away to a hospital for fluid in her abdomen to be drained or to otherwise stabilize her before returning to our home.

Sitting in the loveseat in our living room and covered with a blanket, Bonnie engaged in what turned out to be her final conversation with me. My dear wife must have realized that she was closer to death's threshold into eternity than I grasped. After all, I had grown accustomed to the medical visits that somewhat rejuvenated her. This time, however, we would not be leaving the hospital together.

Bonnie uttered the following words in an almost shocked tone. "But I'm not done, yet!" She wasn't bemoaning her frailty and premature death on account of personal or selfish reasons, which would not have been the least unreasonable. Her words on the page could be misconstrued and lead one to the assumption that she thought death was not near for her. Instead, Bonnie lamented that by dying she could no longer serve our Lord Jesus Christ on earth. She was always and fully immersed in the service of Christ. Since I was an evangelist and Bonnie was my wife, Christian service was a way of life for us and for our three children. In addition, Bonnie and I were missionaries to India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Guyana (South America). We routinely changed planes in Moscow, Taipei, Hong Kong, Tokyo, etc.

Saturday morning, our daughter Rebecca and I managed to get Bonnie – semi-conscious – into the car and to the local hospital. Shortly thereafter,

she fell unconscious from which she never recovered. I kept repeating over and over to her that I loved her, and finally in a stupor, Bonnie's last words were, "I love you."

Transferred to a hospital two hours away, I rode in the ambulance with Bonnie. I was with her in the emergency theater and later upstairs in a room. I held one of Bonnie's hands for the balance of Saturday, all of Sunday and until she finally breathed her last on Monday afternoon, May 18, 2015. Rebecca had arrived Sunday morning and held Bonnie's other hand. We had mixed feelings of relief and sorrow as she passed away.



A few days afterward, brethren from several states came to a little white church house in a small clearing in the woods and kudzu of north central Mississippi. The meeting place was packed, a testament to the servant Bonnie had become. She had a servant's heart to the end of her life, expressed in the words, "But I'm not done, yet!"

Perhaps in some little way she resembled Dorcas in her good deeds.

At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. And since Lydda was near Joppa, and

the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. (Acts 9:36-39 NKJV)

My late wife had done all she knew to do to prepare for meeting God in the Judgment (Amos 4:12). That fateful Friday evening, Bonnie asked me if she had left anything undone that would garner God's disfavor. Then, she thanked me for leading her to Christ. ***"I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea"*** (Romans 16:1).

Whereas my wife of 42 years had a servant's heart, each child of God ought likewise to possess a servant's heart for as long as he or she lives – even if serving Jesus Christ results in the loss of one's life (Revelation 2:10). We all want to possess for ourselves the mind and the preparedness of the apostle Paul preceding his death. ***"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing"*** (2 Timothy 4:7-8). ✝

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

Make Me A Servant

Kelly Willard

**Make Me A Servant, Humble And Meek.
Lord, Let Me Lift Up Those Who Are Weak,
And May The Prayer Of My Heart Always Be:
Make Me A Servant, Make Me A Servant,
Make Me A Servant Today!** (hymn chorus)

ASSOCIATE EDITOR



I feel sure everyone realizes that Christians should live honestly in the sight of fellow Christians and the world, too. Many verses could be mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments that have a bearing on this subject. The apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians how he had lived among them. ***“Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one”*** (2 Corinthians 7:2). Certainly, we cannot let our Christian light shine while cheating or defrauding other people in any way. Sadly, some Christians will readily cheat others if they can. I have heard of preachers moving from one city to another

and leaving behind several debts that the congregation had to pay in order to protect the name of the church. Many might think that only poor people default on their debts, but that is not true. Regardless of how much money one makes, one can easily owe too much. The rich can also fail to pay their debts, which are simply much bigger than the debts of others.



The Bible does not prohibit all borrowing. ***“Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away”*** (Matthew 5:42). The one talent man was told that he should have at least put his money with a bank so he could have gained some interest (Matthew 25:37). Jesus talked about lending and borrowing in the context of Christian love.

And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful (Luke 6:34-36).

We must conclude from these verses that borrowing money is not necessarily evil.

Psalms 37:21 makes it clear that the wicked person fails to pay what he owes. ***“The wicked borrows and does not repay, But the righteous shows mercy and gives.”*** Romans 13:8 gives us the general principle by which all Christians should live. ***“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.”*** Some have misunderstood this verse and concluded that a Christian should never go into debt for any reason; however, that is a misapplication of the verse. There is nothing inherently wrong in either loaning or borrowing money, and it is almost impossible to live in our modern world without going into debt at some point. As long as regular payments are made according to the agreement, one is still in compliance with Romans 13:8. Yet, one can easily borrow too much, and hence, wise decisions must be made in order to avoid overindebtedness. ***“The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty”*** (Proverbs 21:5).

We must be very careful about making financial commitments, because one can easily overcommit – beyond one’s ability to pay, especially if hardships come. Financial difficulties can remove happiness from our lives. People frequently think that more **things** will make them happy, but the reverse is often true. Proverbs 22:7 says that the debtor is in servitude to the lender. ***“The rich rules over the poor, And the borrower is servant to the lender.”*** With debt, one works just to pay for what he has already bought. Under Judaism in the Old Testament time frame, loans were forgiven every seven years (Deuteronomy 15:1-2; Jeremiah 34:14). Obviously, many loans are much longer now than seven years.

All Christians should be absolutely committed to repay all their commitments. A debt is a vow, a covenant or a pledge. Truthful and honest

God-fearing people keep their pledges and promises. *“When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed. Better not to vow than to vow and not pay”* (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5).

What happens when a person simply cannot repay? Sometimes people get into situations in which it is impossible to repay their debts, and it is not always something they could foresee. It might be brutally high medical bills, death, loss of job or other unforeseen calamities that plunge one into debt beyond which he can repay. Occasionally, we hear about a spouse running up an impossibly large debt unknown to the other spouse, and that person ends up having to pay for it. Sometimes creditors may force a person into bankruptcy.



The Bible does not give a clear statement on whether bankruptcy is a sin, but we do find some verses relating to a person's inability to pay their debts. In Luke 7:41-42, Jesus told of a creditor who had two debtors that could not repay their debts. This master freely forgave them both. I think all would agree that going head over heels in debt over frivolous things would be wrong. It shows that we are worshipping the god of this world, and unfortunately, this seems to be the problem in most cases. Historically,

often when one could not pay his debts, he was put in prison (Matthew 5:25-26; 18:29-30) or sold into slavery (Matthew 18:25).

Can one say it is always a sin to declare bankruptcy? It would be easy to say “Yes” to such a scenario because one could conclude that it is simply a legal way to avoid paying debts. In many cases that may be true, and if one thinks he can simply walk away from his indebtedness with minimal repayment while protecting all future earnings, then I would agree that would be going against the principles found in Scripture. However, that is not always the case. One can go into bankruptcy that allows a person to restructure his payment schedule so as to make it more manageable, or he might legally postpone repayment rather than to evade it. One might work with creditors to accept a lower payment that would allow a person to manage his indebtedness.

In conclusion, it seems that in certain dire circumstances, Christians might be able to utilize the bankruptcy laws of his country, while still trying to not abuse his creditors and making an honest effort to take care of his financial obligations. The question of bankruptcy does not have an easy “Yes” or “No” answer. I think it is more involved than that. However, **we must never forget basic biblical principles. Regardless of the reasons we may go into debt, we are scripturally obligated to do whatever we can to pay those debts. God calls upon Christians to be completely honest in all dealings.** As Wayne Jackson puts it, “Honesty is not merely the ‘best’ policy for the Christian – it is the only policy!” 

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

Robison's Rubies

Have you ever noticed how some people like to think they are smarter than others? Maybe some are, but one thing is sure – nobody ever gets too smart for God. The apostle Paul wrote about some who thought they were wiser than God. He stated concerning some, **“Professing to be wise, they became fools”** (Romans 1:22 NKJV). The apostle explained in the surrounding context that those folks replaced their worship of God with the worship of idols. How can people who get so smart do that? Are we expected to believe an idol of gold or even random chance is responsible for all the beauty of this world?



To Whom Was John 13-16 Originally Spoken?

Shane Fisher

Two important rules of biblical interpretation are: **“Who is speaking?”** and **“To whom is the speaker speaking?”** When we study through the Bible, we ought to recognize some verses just cannot apply today because of the original audience to whom they were spoken. While this article cannot bear out **all the reasons** why some verses do not apply today, let us deal with a specific section of Scripture that is often abused and mishandled: John 13-16.

I remember teaching a Bible class some years ago and explaining how this specific promise of the Holy Spirit (John 13-16) applied to the apostles **only**. One Christian lady replied: “You are shaking my faith!” In no way should our faith be shaken, but rather, it should be strengthened and built up to know that the Holy Spirit miraculously equipped the apostles to be the eyewitnesses of the Lord’s bodily resurrection, bear witness of Him by powerful miracles, teach them all things, guide them into all truth, help them to remember everything Jesus had taught them during His earthly ministry and to abide in them (John 14:16-17, 25-26; 15:26-27; 16:7-16).

The **first reason** is the **remote context** itself. Jesus and the apostles were in the upper room in Jerusalem, and they had just finished observing the Passover. John 13:1-5 states:

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that

*His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the **disciples' feet**, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.*

From the other Gospel accounts, we know who was in the upper room with Jesus (Matthew 26:20-30; Mark 14:17-26; Luke 22:14-38). Matthew 26:20 states, *“When evening had come, He sat down with **the twelve**.”* Mark 14:17 states, *“In the evening He came with **the twelve**.”* Luke 22:14 says, *“When the hour had come, He sat down, and **the twelve apostles with Him**.”* All the Gospel records agree that Jesus was with His disciples (whom we also know as the apostles). We know Judas Iscariot left after receiving the piece of bread that Jesus had dipped in the dish (John 13:26-30).

The **second reason** is there are **specific names** that are mentioned in these chapters who we know as the apostles. There is Simon Peter (John 13:6-12, 24, 36), Thomas (John 14:5), Philip (John 14:8) and Judas [not Iscariot] (John 14:22).

The **third reason** is that toward the end of John 16, the disciples were mentioned as the **original audience**. The text of John 16:17-18, states:

*Then **some of His disciples** said among themselves, “What is this that He says to us, “A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me” and, “because I go to the Father?” They said therefore, “What is this that He says, ‘A little while’? We do not know what He is saying.’*

The **fourth reason** is due to the **contextual indicators** in these chapters. John 15:27 records, *“And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me **from the beginning**.”* Who, today, can truthfully proclaim we have been with Jesus since the beginning of His earthly ministry 2,000 years ago? No one! John 16:16 declares, *“A little while,*

and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father.” Who, today, can honestly claim to have seen Jesus personally in the flesh? No one! Certainly, the context is that the disciples are not going to see Jesus for a little while because He will have died and been buried in the tomb for three days. However, they were to see Him alive again in a raised, incorruptible body from the grave.



The **fifth reason** is that what the Holy Spirit promised is certainly **not occurring today**. For example, the Holy Spirit is **not** directly reminding us of Jesus’ teachings during His earthly ministry. We have to study in order to know His Word (Acts 17:11). The Holy Spirit is **not** directly guiding us by inspiration into all truth because all truth was revealed in the first century A.D. (John 16:13; Jude 3). The Holy Spirit has **not** made us directly eyewitnesses of Jesus’ resurrection. However, we ought to put our faith in the inspired, reliable eyewitness testimonies of those early followers of Jesus who did see Him in His resurrected body (John 20:19).

There are some persons who might admit that the original audience were the apostles but claim that the passage under review also applies to Christians today. It is to be admitted there are a lot of moral and spiritual principles taught throughout John 13-16 that do apply to Christians today **because they are taught elsewhere in Scripture**. They are permanent

commands that extend far beyond the **age of miracles** in the first-century A.D (1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Ephesians 4:7-16).

For example, we are to have a heart of a servant and render good acts of benevolence unto people, similarly as Jesus washed the disciples' feet (John 13:1-17). We are taught elsewhere in the Bible to be faithful servants and do good unto others (James 1:27; Galatians 6:10). We are to love one another because that will show that we are Jesus' disciples (John 13:34-35). The second greatest command is loving our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:38-42; Romans 13:8-10). We are to continue to believe in the Father and the Son (John 14:1). If we truly love Jesus, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). We are able to have the peace that passes all understanding that the world does not understand (John 14:27; Philippians 4:6-7). We are to continually abide in Jesus and His words (John 15:1-7). We are to abide in the love of Jesus (John 15:9). We are not to let our joy be taken away from us (John 15:11). We are to be known as Jesus' friends if we keep His commandments (John 15:14,15). We are to go out and bear fruit that makes a lasting impact for Jesus (John 15:16). We are to remember that we are servants of Jesus and the world will hate us, even to the point of persecuting us (John 15:18-21). We are to remember that we might experience tribulation, but we can have the peace and the joy that Jesus offers (John 16:33).

In **conclusion**, it should not be a disappointment for Christians today to understand that there was a specific promise of the Holy Spirit made to the apostles in John 13-16. We know that the apostles laid their hands on those early Christians in order to impart miraculous gifts. These gifts were temporary in nature and were for the purpose of equipping the early church from an infant state into a mature state, by revealing His Word, confirming His Word as the Truth and equipping them for service (Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4, 17-21, 33, 38-39; 5:31-32; 8:14-24; 19:1-7; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Galatians 3:1-5; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:7-16, 30; 5:18; Hebrews 2:1-4; 6:4-8). We are thankful to have received **the benefits** that have come down to us **indirectly** from that specific promise of the Holy Spirit that was made to the apostles in the first century A.D., even though that promise is not given to us in the twenty-first century. †

Shane Fisher is one of the editors of *The Voice of Truth International*, a missionary and works with World Evangelism. He resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.



1932—2008

Have You Ever Heard of the Church of Christ?

J.C. Choate

In talking to various ones around the world about the church of Christ, many seemed to have never heard of it. What about you? Let me ask you, have you ever heard of the church of Christ? If not, then I am asking you as I have asked others: Why? Don't you have a Bible? What church do you read about in its pages? If you read again, you will discover that just one church is mentioned, and that is the church of Christ. Why, then, haven't you heard of this church? Why haven't all the others? You have had the Bible through the years. Quite a number of people are members of some church, but what about the church? Well, it seems that everyone has a church except the Lord. Perhaps one day soon His church will be represented everywhere, too.

The church of Christ exists around the world. It doesn't exist everywhere, but it can be found where there are people who will **follow the Bible and the Bible only**. This church is not denominational, sectarian or manmade. It is not Catholic, Protestant or Jewish. Then, what is it? It is simply the church that one reads about in your Bible, being made up of those who obey the Lord and are faithful to Him.

Christ is the Founder of the church. Read and see for yourself. In Matthew 16:18 Christ said, "...*On this rock I will build my church...*" (NKJV). It had its beginning in the city of Jerusalem. Read Luke 24 and Acts 2, and you will see that this is true. It did not have its beginning in London, in Germany or in the USA but in Jerusalem. The church was established in about A.D. 33. That means it is almost 2,000 years old. Read again in Acts 2 of how the church had its beginning, and thus the date is determined on this basis.

With **Christ as its Builder**, it, then, took the name of Christ. This was true as a church. “...*The churches of Christ salute you*” (Romans 16:16). This was also true when it came to its members. “...*And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch*” (Acts 11:26). **The Bible only will make Christians only!** Remember that. **Christ established only one church.** In Ephesians 4:4, it is referred to as the one body. In Colossians 1:18, the writer said that the body is the church. Therefore, there is **only one church**.

Christ is the Head of the church. “*For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the church; and He is the savior of the body*” (Ephesians 5:23). The Lord’s church does not have an earthly head or an earthly headquarter. Christ is the Head, and He dwells in Heaven at the right hand of God.

Christ is the Savior of the church. This is also pointed out in Ephesians 5:23. That means if one is to be saved, then, he must be a member of the church. Christ died for the church (Ephesians 5:25; Acts 20:28). This is how much it meant to Him. What does it mean to you? The saved are added to the church by our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:47). Furthermore, Christ adds the saved to the right church, His church. Someday, He is coming back for His church (Ephesians 5:27). What if you are not a member of it when He comes back? Think about that.

If the Lord’s church is not already in your area, in your city or in your community, then it can be when you and others love the Lord enough to read and study the divinely inspired Word of God – the Bible – and do what it teaches. In so doing, you will come to believe the Word of God, its Author – the Father in Heaven – and Jesus Christ, His Son (Hebrews 11:6; John 14:1-3; Romans 10:17). Next, you will need to believe that Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah – Savior, Redeemer, Son of God (John 8:24). Afterward, you will need to repent of all your sins (meaning, to turn from them, Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; Acts 2:38) and confess Christ as the Son of God (Romans 10:10; Matthew 10:32). Finally, you will need to be baptized (buried in water) for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Peter 3:21).

As a result, the Lord will add you to His church (Acts 2:47), and you will be a Christian only (1 Peter 4:16). This will mean the beginning of the church of Christ in your area, and it will remain there as long as there are people who love the Lord, will obey Him and will be faithful to Him. This does not

mean, however, that you will be a part of just another church. Neither will you be beginning a denomination, for the Lord's church is not a denomination. A denomination in any context is merely a part of something, whereas the church of the Bible – the church of Christ – is independent of denominations and is not a part of anything manmade. It is divine in origin and is the whole and only church, rather than being simply a part of something else.

For the time being, if you would like to know more about the church, read your Bible – especially the New Testament. The Lord's church is a New Testament institution. You are also invited to contact the editors of the magazine in which this article appears personally for further information and for a free home Bible study course. Send your email to rushmore@gospelgazette.com or jerry@worldevangelism.org or shanefisher86@gmail.com. 

J.C. Choate, now deceased, was the Founding Editor of *The Voice of Truth International*.

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God's Great Servant, Epaphroditus

Byron Nichols

Please consider with me the life of one of the greatest heroes of the Bible. This Christian of the New Testament age gave us all a wonderful example of service, sacrifice and devotion to Christ. In spite of his greatness, few even recognize his name, which appears only two times (Philippians

2:25; 4:18). Let's get better acquainted with the godly man, **Epaphroditus**.

I want to urge you to open your Bible or New Testament and read verses 25-30 in chapter 2. Notice in verse 25 that Paul called this man his **brother**. They were not fleshly brothers, but Paul thought so highly of him that he felt as close to him as if they were twins! Paul was an apostle, but they were brothers in Paul's mind. On another occasion, he declared that Christians "**are all one in Christ Jesus**" (Galatians 3:28 NKJV).

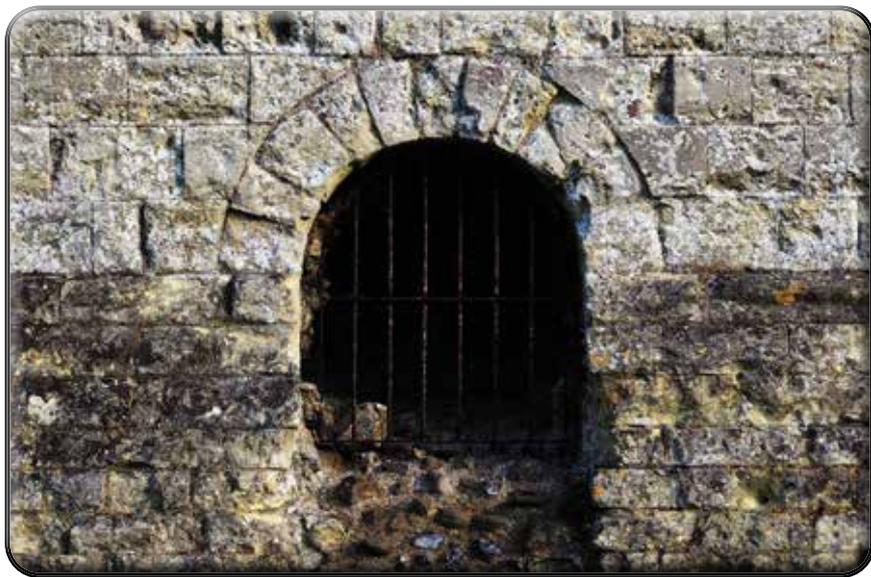
The apostle also referred to this man as a "**fellow worker**" and a "**fellow soldier**" (Philippians 2:25). Paul emphasized that he in no way **looked down** on Epaphroditus; rather he considered Epaphroditus and himself as **equals** and that they were more than just **companions** but **workers**. He even called this coworker a "**fellow soldier**," implying bravery and dedication in the spreading of the Gospel. It wasn't easy to be a Christian in those days!

Word reached Philippi regarding Epaphroditus' illness but not of his recovery. In some things, times haven't changed much over the centuries; for instance even today, bad news travels faster than good news. Epaphroditus was less worried about his own critical illness than he was

about the anxiety that the news of his illness was causing to his friends and loved ones back home. The pain in their hearts was breaking his heart.

This good man nearly died for Christ and His church! It is interesting that Paul did not miraculously heal his dear brother. Miracles were not for selfishness but for special and specific purposes.

Have we ever really suffered for Christ? Have we ever really sacrificed for Him? Epaphroditus loved the Lord so much that he nearly died trying to serve Him!



In reading both verses 25 and 28, we learn that in spite of his great desire to return to Philippi, Epaphroditus was willing to stay with Paul. Paul, however, decided that his coworker must go. Like his Lord, Epaphroditus sacrificed his will in order to benefit others. In verse 29, we find Paul heaping praise upon Epaphroditus, and rightly so.

To be praised as a Christian by Paul would have been marvelous. He was a great worker; he was an apostle; he expected much, but he also gave much. In verse 30, Paul emphasized again that Epaphroditus almost died in rendering service to Paul on behalf of the church at Philippi. The apostle wanted to assure them that their brother was not a quitter and that he was

not shirking his duty. Paul was in prison, determined and dedicated, but lonely. Just the presence of a friend or loved one in time of trouble or sickness is a great source of comfort.

It is not easy to identify ourselves with outcasts or unpopular persons, but Epaphroditus readily associated with and identified himself with Paul, who was very unpopular, a convict and no doubt regarded as a traitor by the Jews.

Paul felt better having this brother around. What a compliment! This would be true regarding anyone but especially regarding the apostle Paul. What a beautiful relationship existed between Paul and Epaphroditus! The same relationship existed between the Philippians and their devout servant.

Just try to imagine what the scene was like when Epaphroditus departed from Paul in prison that day and headed out of Rome back to Philippi. These things are not recorded for us in the Bible, but surely some of these things took place that day: tears of love and sorrow; embracing; Paul encouraging Epaphroditus with words like, “Take care of yourself, don’t worry about me, I’ll be alright,” Paul’s expressions of gratitude to Epaphroditus; Paul’s request for Epaphroditus to give his greetings to various ones at Philippi and his thanks to all of the church there.

Here are four lessons for us:

- 1. Serving is the means to greatness and honor.** Albert Pine was right when he said, “What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us. What we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.” Certainly, this was true of Epaphroditus.
- 2. It is not wrong but right to honor those who are noble servants.**
- 3. God is mindful of His servants.** This is illustrated by Jesus in His parable in Matthew 25:23: “...*Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.*”
- 4. Like Christ and Epaphroditus, we should be willing to deny ourselves** in order that we may promote the welfare of others and the cause of Christ. 

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



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Suffering

Paula Bates

1. For you it has been granted on behalf of _____, not only to believe in Him, but also to _____ for his sake. Philippians 1:29
2. You therefore must _____ hardship as a good _____ of Jesus Christ. 2 Timothy 2:3
3. Do not _____ any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed the _____ is about to throw you into prison, that you may be _____, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be _____ unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. Revelation 2:10
4. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and the gentle, but also to the _____. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering _____. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an _____, that you should follow his steps. 1 Peter 2:18-21
5. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot _____ with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet _____ sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find _____ to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:15-16



- Answers:**
1. Christ, suffer
 2. Endure, soldier
 3. Fear, devil, tested, faithful
 4. Harsh, wrongfully, example
 5. Sympathize, without, grace

God Created Ants: The Oldest Farmers in the World

David P. Everson

“Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler, Provides her supplies in the summer, And gathers her food in the harvest” (Proverbs 6:6-8 NKJV). With these words, God’s inspired writer pointed out thousands of years ago a truth that is being marveled at today. In the technologically advanced and busy world in which we live and hustle, from time to time, we scientists **discover** truths that reconfirm what God so plainly said. The ant has proven time and time again this fact.

We have known for years of the marvelous complexity of ant colonies, how with unfailing energy, the colony goes about its way of life, communicating without words what needs to be done. Each ant seemingly knows what it is to do and then does it. Whether scouting food



sources, gathering the food, construction of new living areas, guarding the nest, tending the queen’s every need or laying the eggs to sustain the colony, each ant works to accomplish its **assigned** task.

So, when the inspired writer wrote that we should be workers and busy about our business, he could not have picked a better example than the ant. However, in recent years, it has come to light that God really knew something else about some of the ant species that we are just learning.

“Provides her supplies in the summer, And gathers her food in the harvest” was thought to include only ants’ collection of food that God has provided in the environment around them. Not so! In at least one species of the ant, the leaf cutter ant, it is much more complex than just going out to pick up food. It involves the growing of its food: cultivating the ground, planting the

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seed, tending, weeding and then harvesting when the crop is ready.

The leaf cutter ant includes about 190 known species living in the tropical climates of South America. They have been known as great collectors of leaves for a long time. Searching out the best plant to collect, laying trails for all to follow and then carefully **cutting** off quarter sized hunks of leaf using their mouthparts. That is no small task when you consider the size of the ant and the thickness of some of the leaves they like. It would be like you chewing through a thick plush carpet. These pieces of leaves weighing as much as 10 times of the ant itself are carried down the tree, back to the nest and down into underground storage chambers for eating later. If this were the whole story, we could truly say that the wisdom and design of God is seen in this creation. Yet, this is not the half of the story.

These ants are not collecting the leaf parts for food – they are collecting them as **soil** to grow their food supply. Once back at the nest, the leaf is chewed into a soft pulp and stored in chambers filled with leaf pulp. Then, ants go to a piece of existing pulp and pick a seed to plant in the new **soil**. As the seed grows, any unwanted **weeds** are cropped out, and the ants nurture their crop. Finally, they **harvest** the crop that grows as their food. The food source for these ants is a fungus, which is eaten as the shoots develop. These ants carefully **farm** the food necessary for the entire colony, comprised of millions of members. Many times, the larger colonies have **farms** spread throughout the nest so food is closely available for everyone.

As a new queen sets out to start a new colony, she will take a piece of starter pellet of fungus for the beginning of that colony's farm. It has recently been discovered that all of the fungus that is found growing in the farms of all leaf cutter ants is genetically identical. Using DNA analysis, scientists have been able to show that they are the same fungus. Not just the same species but **the same individual!**

The fungus that these ants are growing today is the same one that God created on day five of the creation week! Indeed, we should consider the ant, marvel and be wise because of the marvelous things that God has done. †

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

Verse Search



2 CORINTHIANS 8: 1-15

Jerry Bates

1. What had been bestowed upon the churches in Macedonia? (v. 1)
2. What was the financial situation of the churches in Macedonia? (v. 2)
3. How liberal did Paul say they had been in their giving? (v. 3)
4. Even though Paul was apparently reluctant to take their offering, how did the Christians react?
5. Why were these Christians so willing to give? (v. 5)
6. What are some things in which Paul said they had abounded? (v. 7)
7. What did Paul tell the Macedonians that he was testing? (v. 8)
8. Paul said that though Christ was _____, he became _____ poor for our sakes. (v. 9)
9. Why did Christ do that?
10. What advice did Paul give to the Macedonians? (v. 10)
11. According to what criteria does God accept our offering? (v. 12)
12. Paul desired that all Christians have a part in caring for the needy. Why? (v. 13)
13. What Old Testament example did Paul use to illustrate what he was exhorting the Christians to do? (v. 15)

(See the back cover for answers.)

VERSE SEARCH

1 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: **2** that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. **3** For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, **4** imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. **5** And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God. **6** So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well. **7** But as you abound in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us – see that you abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. **9** For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

10 And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; **11** but now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have. **12** For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.

13 For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; **14** but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack – that there may be equality. **15** As it is written, “He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.”

NOTES: In this section Paul commended the Macedonians for their generosity in giving to help ease the poverty of Christians in Judea. They even gave more than Paul thought they could. This should be a great encouragement for us to be more liberal in our giving. Few of us would consider ourselves to be living in poverty, yet, how do we respond when we hear of a need? God has promised to bless us even more based on how we give. Do we really trust Him?

A Strange Story from the Life of Jesus

David R. Pharr

To the casual reader, the story of our Lord's encounter with a Canaanite woman near Tyre and Sidon may seem strangely uncharacteristic of what we know about Him (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30). *"A woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter"* (Mark 7:25-26 NKJV). At first, Jesus did not respond, and His disciples urged Him to *"...send her away, '...for she cries after us'"* (Matthew 15:23). Jesus explained that His ministry was to His own people. *"...I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"* (Matthew 15:24). Still, the woman persisted. *"Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!'"* (Matthew 15:25). **She would not abandon her purpose!**

It was at this point that our Lord spoke to her in a way that seems harsh and abusive to us. *"...It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs"* (Matthew 15:26). In any language, to imply that a person is a "dog" sounds insulting. It was common in that age to despise people of other nations. The bluntness of our Lord's words, no doubt, pleased the disciples, because they wanted to be rid of her. However, it seems very unlike Jesus – Who was so full of compassion and pity, Whose character was the essence of love – that He would so denigrate one of God's pitiable creatures, especially one whose only purpose was to save her daughter.

The explanation is in His divine anticipation of how she would respond. He foresaw that she would answer in a way that, on the one hand, ought to have shamed the twelve for their racial bigotry and lack of compassion, and which, on the other hand, would give her the opportunity to express the unwavering and humble faith that brought her to Jesus. She

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said, “*Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.*’ Then Jesus answered and said to her, ‘*O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.*’ And her daughter was *healed from that very hour*” (Matthew 15:27-28).

Though Jesus had been sent to “*the lost sheep of the house of Israel,*” He had “*...Other sheep... which are not of this [Jewish] fold...*” (John 10:16). By inviting her response and by then granting her petition, Jesus was preparing the disciples to learn the truth that “*...God is no respecter of persons*” (KJV) or “*...God shows no partiality*” (Acts 10:34 NKJV). Her case served well then as well now as a rebuke for all forms of racial and national bigotry. More especially, however, **her faith and impertunity in the face of what seemed a hopeless rebuff teaches us the humility that must accompany our faith.**



Though we know that “*pride goes before destruction...*” (Proverbs 16:18), we tend to be very protective of our pride. A proud heart would not

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bear the implication in what seemed so unkind a rejection of her petition. **This woman, though, had a need that was greater than her pride.**

It might have seemed embarrassing to go to a stranger for help, but her desperation was greater than any sense of social propriety! It could be humiliating to ask for help from a foreigner, especially one from a nation that despised her people, but her daughter was suffering! How uncomfortable, even embarrassing, she might have felt knowing that the Lord's disciples did not want her to be there, but she had a little girl at home who she loved more than she loved her own self-respect! In any circumstances, but especially in these, it might seem too degrading, too demeaning, too disgraceful to get down on one's knees and beg, but her daughter was "...*grievously vexed with a devil!*" (KJV) or "...*severely demon-possessed*" (Matthew 15:22 NKJV). **This mother was even ready to be a little dog if it meant she could have a few crumbs from the Master's table!**

Suppose, however, that her pride had been stronger than her faith. What if she had said, "I don't need this! I am not going to submit to such!?" She would have gone home to find her little girl with the same affliction. Pride may be the greatest barrier between us and our Lord's blessings. "...*'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble*" (James 4:6). "*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up*" (James 4:10). †

David R. Pharr (1937-2023) was a renowned Gospel preacher who also served as an elder for the Charlotte Ave. Church of Christ in Rock Hill, South Carolina, USA.



Kenney's Pennies

"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 16:25 NKJV). Do you feel lost? If you are not a Christian, then there is the solution – become one. If you are an unfaithful Christian, then, there is the solution – return as one. If you are a discouraged Christian, then, there is the solution – look up higher!

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Looking to Jesus

Cliff Holmes

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV)

Jesus Christ is our Hero, our Defender, our Guide and, most of all, our Savior. In looking to Jesus, the writer of Hebrews informs us what we can expect to find in Him. Note seven very vital things when we look to our Lord Jesus.

Look to Jesus for Life

Jesus said in John 14:6, *“...I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* We must be one with Jesus. There is no other way except in unity with our Lord Jesus to live life on Earth and truly anticipate everlasting life in Heaven.

Look to Jesus for Aid

Hebrews 2:18 reads, *“For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”* Psalm 46:1 says, *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”* There is no other source of real help for us besides Jesus the Son and God His Father.

Look to Jesus for Love

Second Corinthians 5:14-15 reads, *“For the love of Christ controls*

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us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”

Jesus loved us when we were not worthy of His love (Romans 5:8), and we were also unworthy of the love for us that sent Him to the cruel cross of Calvary (1 John 4:10).

Look to Jesus for Peace

John 14:27 says, *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”* Acts 10:36 adds, *“As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all).”* Not only did Jesus give gracious peace to those who followed Him during His ministry, but He also secured the good news of peace for all generations right down to the present time. His peace is always at hand for us.



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Look to Jesus for Guidance

John 12:48-49 records, *“The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment – what to say and what to speak.”* What better word of guidance could man ever conceive? That guidance comes from none other than Jesus whom Peter proclaimed as having *“the words of eternal life”* (John 6:68).

Look to Jesus for Strength

Philippians 4:13 says, *“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”* No matter what the task, no matter what adversity may come upon us, we have a superhuman strength to face it, if we depend on the strength of Jesus.

Look to Jesus for Freedom

John 8:31-32 reads, *“So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, ‘If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”*

In our travel through this life, if we constantly and consistently look to Jesus, indeed, we will find the seven blessings of – life, aid, love, peace, guidance, strength and freedom. These are ours as a gift from the One Who secured for us eternal life in Heaven with God. 

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

POINTS TO PONDER

- Everyone needs to be loved, especially when one does not deserve it.
- A hug is a great gift because one size fits all. It can be given for any occasion, and it's easy to exchange.
- Let God's promises shine on your problems.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

[Luke 24:46-47; Matthew 28:18-20]

“Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

The end of the age has not come yet, and so, our Lord continues to keep His promise to be with His brothers and sisters as we “...*go into all the world and preach the gospel*” (Mark 16:15). Is the evangelism of the entire population of souls the mission of the church today? Or do we simply meet with fellow-Christians on the Lord’s day and then go home to live the rest of the week as “good secular people”? Is that our “commission”?



No! Our world begins at our door as we meet neighbors, and it can extend to the far reaches of the earth. Every person has a priceless soul for which our Lord shed His blood, and it is our privilege to share the message of salvation with all of those who will listen. Yes, our Lord has told us beforehand that ***“few who find it [the way]”*** (Matthew 7:14) because Satan is working full-time to corrupt humanity, but **we have the answer they need!** **Let’s look for opportunities to teach.**

BOOKENDS OF ROMANS: DEFINING FAITH BIBLICALLY

Kevin L. Moore

Paul's letter to the Romans has much to say about faith. The underlying Greek noun (*pistis*) and verb (*pisteuō*) are found throughout the book for a combined total of sixty-one times. Comprising nearly two thirds of these occurrences, the noun-form first emerges in Romans 1:5, and its final usage is in Romans 16:26, serving as **bookends for the entire document**. The bracketing texts read, in view of the apostolic mission: *“Through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto **obedience of faith** among all the nations for his name’s sake”* (1:5); *“but now having been made manifest through the prophetic Scriptures and according to the commandment of the eternal God unto **obedience of faith** made known unto all the nations”* (16:26).*

In the letter's opening-thanksgiving, Paul wrote, *“First of all, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all because your **faith** is being proclaimed in all the world”* (1:8). Near the close of the letter, he observed, *“For your **obedience** has reached (the attention) of all, therefore I rejoice over you”* (16:19a).

Half of Paul's use of the noun “obedience” and verb “obey” are found in Romans.** From beginning to end, **faith clearly does not stand alone apart from obedience**. Whenever Paul spoke of faith (e.g., 1:16-17; 3:22), it was not void of obedience. Whenever he spoke of obedience (e.g., 2:6; 6:17), it was not void of faith. **The faith that appropriates justification, as explained in Romans, is always an obedient faith.**

CONCLUSION

If we begin our examination of Romans in chapters 3, 4, 5 or 10, we will

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miss what was established from the letter's beginning. Therefore, one's study of faith would be subject to misunderstanding and perhaps misconstruing what the inspired message conveys. **Genuine faith is not merely an internal conviction without any observable action.** Faith without obedience is disingenuous and lifeless (James 2:17, 26). Obedience without faith is empty ritualism. **The faith that saves is the faith that obeys!** †

Kevin L. Moore serves as Director of Missions Studies at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, USA.

Endnotes

*Unless noted otherwise, Scripture quotations are the author's own translation, with emphasis added.

**The gospel preached on the Day of Pentecost and heard by "visitors from Rome" prompted a faith-response that included belief, repentance, baptism, and ongoing faithfulness (Acts 2:10-42), the same message Paul preached (1 Corinthians 15:11; Galatians 1:7-9; 3:26-27).

Robison's Rubies

Some Things Never Change!

When Paul went to Thessalonica in the first century, as recorded in Acts 17, he used logical techniques to make his case for Christ. He **"reasoned"** with them from the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 17:2), showing the prophecies of Christ. He was **"explaining and demonstrating" that Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead,**" (Acts 17:3). That is, the Old Testament Scriptures predicted the suffering and the resurrection of Christ. Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled those Scriptures in what was to them, at that time, recent history. Paul presented the Scriptures on the one hand and the facts on the other. He compared them, reasoning, explaining and demonstrating. As was usually the case, some believed, and some got angry (Acts 17:4-20).

Some things never change! †

THE WORD OF GOD

THE WAY TO A MAN'S HEART

Rodney Nulph

I am sure most have heard the old saying, “A way to a man’s heart is through his stomach.” This is usually repeated in the context of the method in which a woman can attract a man. In many cases, this saying may be true, physically speaking. However, **Jesus spoke about the true way to a man’s spiritual heart**, and that is through his ears. Matthew 13 records this truth in a convincing way. The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:4-15) helps us to understand the importance of hearing and shows what and how we hear affects our spiritual make-up. The Parable of the Sower was so named by Jesus Himself (Matthew 13:18) and is one of two parables that He interpreted for us (the other was the Parable of the Tares, Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43). What can we learn from the Parable of the Sower?

THE SEED

The seed is clearly the Word of God (Luke 8:11). “Seed” is used to describe the Word of God on many occasions (1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 3:9; 1 Corinthians 3:6-7). Why is this comparison used? Firstly, **seed is alive and has great potential, just like God’s Word**. God’s Word is living (1 Peter 1:23; Hebrew 4:12), is powerful (Romans 1:16) and produces fruit. It wins souls to Christ (Romans 1:13), produces the fruit of holiness for those who apply it (Romans 6:22), produces the fruit of Christian character (Galatians 5:22-23) and produces the fruit of good works (Colossians 1:10). **Like seed, the Word of God must be planted in the right heart, cultivated, nurtured and protected in order to produce what God expects**. One thing is certain, though; God’s Word always does what He intends (Isaiah 55:10-11).

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THE SOWER

A sower, one who sows the Word of God, is a partner with God. The one who sows is not the one who causes the seed to grow and increase (1 Corinthians 3:6), but he is an aid, a partner, in the process (John 4:35-38). We are partners with the greatest One ever known (1 Corinthians 3:9). When we sow Christ's Seed, we are joint heirs together with Him (Romans 8:17). A sower is also patient. *"Behold the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains"* (James 5:7 NASB). We must not get ahead of the process and attempt to harvest too quickly. *"...First the blade, then the ear, after that, the full corn in the ear"* (Mark 4:28b). Sadly, some sow everything but the Word of God. Some sow to the flesh (Galatians 6:7-8), while others sow discord (Proverbs 6:19). However, **the faithful understand the mission clearly; sow the Seed!**

THE SOILS

The soils in this wonderful parable represent the human heart. In this teaching, Jesus showed the four types of hearts in which the Seed is sown. There is the **surface soil**, *"...some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up"* (Matthew 13:4b; 19). Foot paths were common in Palestine when Jesus said these words. This *"wayside"* soil did not permit the seed to ever germinate. This is reminiscent of those who hear the Word of God but do not understand it. **For someone to give mental ascent to the Word is vastly different from understanding that Truth. Until the fallow ground of a person's heart is cultivated, seeking the Lord will never happen** (cf. Hosea 10:12).

There is the **stony soil**, *"Some fell upon the stony places..."* (Matthew 13:5a; 20-21). The soil in and around Palestine was often undergirded by a thick layer of limestone. The soil on top was not deep enough to really support the "root" system of a seed once it started to grow. Without a deep and abiding root system, a germinated seed will quickly perish. **The stony soil is seen in the person who quickly obeys the Gospel, but his or her faith never becomes rooted and grounded.** This is often more of

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a purely “emotional” obedience rather than a deep and abiding conviction in the truth of God’s message. Sadly, it sometimes takes very little to stop the growth of this type of heart.

There is **the choked-out soil**. *“And some fell among thorns and the thorns sprung up and choked them”* (Matthew 13:7; 22). The amazing thing about thorns is that they do not really need to be planted and tended for them to flourish. Those who have garden experience know this truth all too well. Weeds and thorns need almost nothing to grow and choke out our choice plants.

This heart is the one who obeys the Gospel, but then as the cares and obligations of this world take root, the Seed, which is God’s Word, has little room to mature. Quite possibly this is the most popular soil in the church today. It is not that these hearts are not sincere, but it is just that they are too busy, too tired and too distracted to really serve the Lord as they should.

Yet, thankfully, there is the **superior soil**; *“But other fell among good ground, and brought forth fruit...”* (Matthew 13:8; 23). This heart receives the Word (Mark 4:20) (unlike the surface soil), understands the Word (Matthew 13:23), (unlike the stony soil) and holds fast to that which he or she heard (Luke 8:15) (unlike the choked-out soil). These characteristics all culminate in fruitfulness!

The lessons in the Parable of the Sower are many. A couple takeaways for us to remember are:

1. **Satan knows the power and the potential of God’s Word and will attempt to snatch that Word out of the human heart any opportunity he has to do so.**
2. **Sowers must understand that not everyone who hears the Word of God will respond as we hope.**
3. **Sobriety in hearing is essential to all of us.**

The way to a man’s heart is truly through his ears; *“Take care then how you hear...”* (Luke 8:18a). 

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

A Morning Prayer

Cliff Holmes

I awoke this morning with my usual aches and pains,
but I was thankful that today there is no rain.

I smiled and said, "Good morning, Lord;
I'll be looking to you for a good word.

You know Lord that life isn't always fair,
but the joy I find in You there is none to compare.

So, dear God, Let me live a life tried and true,
totally and completely devoted to you.

Yes, life is not always easy and often seems unfair,
but I will live this day rejoicing, held in Your tender care."

What If One Came Back from the Dead?

Arlis Richardson

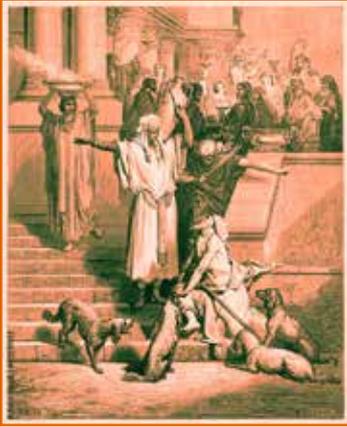
The account in Luke 16:19-31 is about a rich man and Lazarus.

So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar



off, and Lazarus in his bosom. "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.' "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' " (Luke 16:22-31 NKJV)

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Someone has appeared from the grave – Jesus Christ! People still do not listen to Him or the message of His inspired apostles. Sadly, those will be tormented in Hell unless they repent before this life is over. On the other hand, some have read and accepted the teaching of these Holy Spirit inspired apostles and are **looking forward to that great Judgment Day**. Like the apostle Paul, they can say, *“Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge will give me on that Day, and not to me only but also to*

all who love His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8). *“...What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, **looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God**... Nevertheless we, according to His promise, **look for new heavens and a new earth** in which righteousness dwells”* (2 Peter 3:11-13). Jesus said, *“And behold, **I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work”*** (Revelation 22:12) and *“...‘**Surely I am coming quickly**’...”* (Revelation 22:20). The apostle John – in harmony with the apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3 – said, *“...**Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!**”* (Revelation 22:20). †

[Editor’s Note: **One did come back from the dead – our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!** That fact has not altered the trajectory toward eternity for the majority of mankind since most people who are aware of the Bible (especially the New Testament) and of the Messiah refuse or neglect to obey (John 12:48; Hebrews 5:9; 1 Peter 2:8). *“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who **do not obey the gospel of God?**”* (1 Peter 4:17). Jesus in coming back *“in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on **those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power**”* (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). We certainly do not want to be in the number! The word *“number”* appears multiple times in the New Testament, often referring to Christians, and that’s the number in which we want to be at the Second Coming. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Arllis Richardson preached for decades for the churches of Christ in the USA, and is now deceased.

SALVATION

Why Does the Earth Still Spin?

Ralph Clevinger

The prophet Habakkuk had a problem. He saw the evil, pain and suffering inflicted by the wicked upon the righteous. Listen to his plea.

O Lord, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, "Violence!" And You will not save. Why do You show me iniquity, And cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds. (Habakkuk 1:2-4 NKJV)

Habakkuk desired to see the wicked punished for their actions. He called for the Lord to intercede on the behalf of the righteous. He wanted to see justice. The Lord responded to his pleas by giving him an answer. God would raise up the Chaldeans to bring a judgment against His people. However, His explanations displeased and confused Habakkuk. The truth was, the Lord had a reason for the plan that He revealed to Habakkuk.

Today, the earth is still full of evil, pain and suffering. One cannot deny this fact when it is ever present in television and social media. The news continually speaks about it. People make posts about the hurt and pain happening around them. The evil of this world readily works itself into the normal conversations of life. The temptation to cry out "How long!" remains today.

Peter enlightened the reader to the longsuffering of God. Hear his words. *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that*

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all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

The Lord gives time for all of mankind to turn away from wickedness.

Contrary to popular belief, God does not seek whom He can punish, but He *“desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Timothy

2:4). **The world still spins in the hope others will come to Him.**

Let us take advantage of the day! There are many who are lost in their sins. There are many who desire to find the cure to their souls' diseases. We have the answer. **Let us spread the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to all who will hear!** †

Ralph Clevinger preaches for the Greenville Church of Christ in Greenville, Tennessee, USA.

Salvation Is Priority #1

BAPTISM — FOR THE SINNER OR THE SAVED?

MARK 16:15-16

SINNER

LOST — NO SALVATION — ACTS 4:12

IN DARKNESS — JOHN 12:46

IN SIN — ROMANS 3:23

WITHOUT GOD

WITHOUT CHRIST

WITHOUT HOPE

EPH. 2:12

ROM. 6:23

BAPTISM

FOR SALVATION — MARK 16:16; 1 PET. 3:21

FOR REMISSION OF SINS — ACTS 2:38

TO WASH AWAY SINS — ACTS 22:16

INTO CHRIST — ROM. 6:3-5

INTO HIS DEATH — (BLOOD SHED) ROM. 6:3

OBEYED — FREED FROM SIN — ROM. 6:17-18

TO BEGIN NEW LIFE — ROM. 6:4

PUT ON CHRIST — GAL. 3:27

SAVED

HAS SALVATION — 2 TIM. 2:10

SINS FORGIVEN — ACTS 2:38

SINS WASHED AWAY — REV. 1:5

REDEEMED — COL. 1:13-14

IN CHRIST — ROM. 16:7

NEW CREATURE — 2 COR. 5:17

JUSTIFIED BY BLOOD — ROM. 5:9

MADE FREE FROM SIN — ROM. 6:22

INNERS CAN AND SHOULD BE BAPTIZED TO OBTAIN THESE PROMISES

WHY BAPTIZE A SAVED MAN WHO HAS THESE PROMISES?

SINCE BAPTISM IS A TRANSLATION FROM AND INTO — INTO WHAT WOULD IT TRANSLATE THE SAVED?

DANGERS THE CHURCH FACES

IGNORANCE

HOSEA 4:6; JOHN 6:45
2 TIMOTHY 2:15; COLOSSIANS 1:9

COMPROMISE

EPHESIANS 5:11; GALATIANS 2:11-12
JUDE 3; PHILIPPIANS 1:27

APOSTASY

1 CORINTHIANS 10:12; HEBREWS 3:12-13
1 TIMOTHY 4:1-3; 2 TIMOTHY 4:3-4

NEGLECTFULNESS

HEBREWS 2:1-4

MATERIALISM

LUKE 8:14; 1 TIMOTHY 6:6-10

WORLWISSNESS

2 TIMOTHY 4:10; JAMES 1:27
1 JOHN 2:15-17; GALATIANS 5:19-21

LUKEWARMNESS

REVELATION 3:14-18

ERROR

GALATIANS 1:6-9; 2:11-14

INDIFFERENCE

MATTHEW 12:30

BOASTFULNESS

MATTHEW 6:1-4

DOCTRINE CORRUPTED

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-4; 3:16-17
2 TIMOTHY 1:13; 2:1-2

EPHESIANS 6:10-18



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THE ENDURING, INDESTRUCTIBLE KINGDOM

Maxie B. Boren

Sometime near 600 B.C., Daniel interpreted a dream of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon concerning a great image. The consensus of biblical scholarship agrees that the makeup of the image was representative of four world empires: Babylonian, Persian, Grecian and Roman. Pertaining to the latter of these, Daniel foretold that ***“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever”*** (Daniel 2:44 NKJV). Thus, we know that Daniel foretold God would set up a kingdom in the days of the kings of the Roman Empire.

At a somewhat later date, Daniel received a vision from God that gives us additional and vital information.

I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14)

Daniel saw ***“One”*** (undoubtedly the ***“One”*** he saw was Christ). We are informed in the New Testament of the ascension of Christ (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9-11) and His exaltation at God’s right hand, where He received power and dominion and was given to be the Head of the church (Luke 2:26-33; Acts 2:29-36; 13:22-23, 30-37; Ephesians 1:19-23; Hebrews 1:3; 1 Peter 3:22; Philippians 2:9-11).

In the conclusion of our Lord’s personal ministry, just before He died for

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the sins of the world, Jesus affirmed before Pilate that He was indeed a king. ***“Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘Are You a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice”*** (John 18:37). His kingdom was to be a spiritual kingdom, in the world, but **not of the world** (John 17:14-16)!

It is readily apparent to the sincere seeker of truth that the kingship of Jesus over His kingdom is exactly one and the same with His headship over the church. Therefore, the church and the kingdom are one and the same. This is certainly indicated by our Lord’s own use of the two terms in Matthew 16:18-19. In that context, Jesus said ***“the gates of hades shall not prevail against it.”***

The church of our Lord (i.e., the kingdom of Christ) is enduring, indestructible! It shall never be destroyed! Nothing, not even death, shall prevail against it! Thus, we ascribe glory and praise to Almighty God who planned and purposed it (Ephesians 3:10-11) and to Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, Who is its Head and King! Jesus will reign over it (as He is presently doing!) until all His enemies become His footstool, and when the last enemy – death – is destroyed. Then, He will deliver up the kingdom to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

We who have heard, believed and obeyed the Gospel have been added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47). We have thus been ***“conveyed”*** (NKJV) or ***“translated”*** (KJV) from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Colossians 1:13). ***“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the coming of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”*** (Philippians 3:20-21) to receive eternal life. We, as God’s people, shall then abide forever in Heaven – citizens of His eternal kingdom (1 Peter 1:4; 1 John 2:17; Revelation 22:1-5)! **Thanks be to God!** †

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THE CHURCH

LET THE BIBLE SPEAK

Mbakwe Israel Madu

You may have heard or believed the saying in our religious world that “the church is not important.” It is simply said but difficult if not impossible to be true. It is not only a rash but an unlearned conclusion for a true believer. You already know that God loves all His creation. The Bible affirms in John 3:16, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (NKJV). Why is it only those who believe that will not perish? Again, in 2 Peter 3:9, the Bible states, *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”* Why does God require repentance from His creatures? This is beautifully rendered in Hebrews 5:9, *“And having been perfected, He [Jesus Christ] became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.”* Why does God require obedience? Think right! He wants a *“peculiar people”* (KJV) or *“special people”* (NKJV) called the church (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; 1 Peter 2:9).

We must understand that when the Bible talks about the church, it does not refer to a denomination. Neither does the Bible call cathedrals or buildings for religious assemblies *“the church.”* Denominations demonstrate through their teachings and practices that they cannot lead anyone to true salvation.

The Bible teaches that Christ saves those who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9), whom He adds to the church (Acts 2:47). All of this corresponds to the fact affirmed in Acts 4:12, *“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* Obviously, the church is comprised of saved people (i.e., individual Christians make up the body of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12:27-28), called the church of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; Romans 16:16). Accordingly, no unsaved person on the earth is a member of the church or is a Christian. **The church denotes a people being saved.** How can we think otherwise?

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Therefore, I encourage you, my diligent Reader, to rise against the rash and unlearned conclusion that “the church is not important” (2 Peter 3:16). **The church of the Bible is the body of the saved, whose mission it is to take the saving Gospel to the whole world (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16).** Many people in the religious world are not saved, who are ignorant of the Bible teachings about the church and who oppose the ordinances of Christ and God. They promote hyphenated Christianity or denominationalism that the Lord will root up (Matthew 15:13). The warning is plainly simple but with a severe penalty. The Scriptures assure the wise that there is salvation in only one church of the Bible built by Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18; Romans 16:16; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4). Don’t believe those who claim and preach that “the church is not important;” it is a claim from the pit of hell. No wise person can afford to lose Heaven with all its glory. Therefore, understand that **the church is a saved body of Christ, to which one must be added.** There is only one of its kind.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE?

The church is a body of people who have been, ‘called out of darkness into the marvelous light of Christ’ (1 Peter 2:9) through their obedience to the Gospel of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). The church is, therefore, a spiritual body housing all the saved. I hope this is clear to you! Read 1 Peter 2:5 to discover that every Christian is a lively stone and a priest to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Obviously, the church of the Bible – the church of Christ – can be positively identified. Its identifying marks and doctrinal features are so distinctly set forth in the New Testament that it can be readily distinguished from among the multitudes of sects and schisms arising from and dependent upon for their existence the doctrines and commandments of men (Matthew 15:8-9). See 2 John 9-10 to observe the tragedy of not abiding in the doctrine of Christ. I want to sound it loudly and clearly that **the Lord** needed and **built only one church.** So, He built only one. He certainly knew that all men could be saved through one church (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4). The question to why there are multitudes of churches today

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relates to predictions by the apostles of Christ about apostasy (Acts 20:29-30; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; 4:3-4; 2 Peter 2:1-3; Jude 17-19).

Men have often shown their displeasure with God's arrangements. They do this in their attempts to change the church of Christ. Men have either added certain things not authorized by God in His worship or specifically subtracted specific things required by God. The trend today is for men to substitute their methods and devices for those things that God originally placed in His church. We must be careful not to either add to or subtract from the wholesome Word of God, because the consequences are grave (Revelation 22:18-19).

No man can speak better things than God. Undoubtedly, God cannot send contradictory messages because He is not, as the Bible says, the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). The Bible warns, and I quote, ***“Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple”*** (Romans 16:17-18). Note that the efforts of dissenters have developed a vast system of denominationalism, to which they append mention of the name of Christ in order to make it appear that unbiblical changes appear to have God's approval. They only deceive the naive and not the elect. Let it be made abundantly clear that no man has ever succeeded or will succeed in changing the church of Christ (Matthew 16:18). God will always have a remnant (Romans 11:5).

The true church of the Bible, the church of Christ to be precise (Romans 16:16), still consists, as it always has and as it always will of those:

1. Who are properly taught the Word of God – Christ's Gospel (Mark 16:15; Romans 10:14-17).
2. Who have believed the Gospel of Christ (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24).
3. Who have repented of their sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30).
4. Who have confessed the name of Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Matthew 10:32).
5. Who have been scripturally baptized for the remission of their sins

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(Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12).

6. Who faithfully worship in His prescribed manner without addition, subtraction or substitution (1 Corinthians 4:6; 1 Peter 4:11).
7. Who express their love for the Lord thereafter in faithful service and obedience (1 Corinthians 15:58), even were it to cost one's life (Revelation 2:10).

CONCLUSION

A warm welcome awaits you today if you will obey the Author of eternal salvation to be added to the church of the Bible – God's important, spiritual institution for the saved. God cares (Matthew 11:28-30; 28:19-20). If one could be saved outside the church, one can be saved without the blood of Jesus Christ – a mission impossible (Acts 20:28). You can worship with the church of Christ close to you or contact the Editor of the magazine in which this article appears at rushmore@gospelgazette.com. They will help put you in contact with someone near you or direct you to biblical studies online or through the mail. †

Mbakwe Israel Madu lives in Nigeria.



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Be Thou Faithful unto Death

Ernest S. Underwood

*“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. **Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life**”* (Revelation 2:10 NKJV). How often have you either read this passage or heard it quoted? What did it mean, and what does it mean to you? How do you apply it? Some think that it means that if one will live a good life till he dies, then Heaven and the crown of life await. The Bible certainly teaches that if one obeys God in becoming a Christian, then lives a faithful life all the days of his life, Heaven will certainly be his home. However, this is not the passage to quote in support of this great fact.

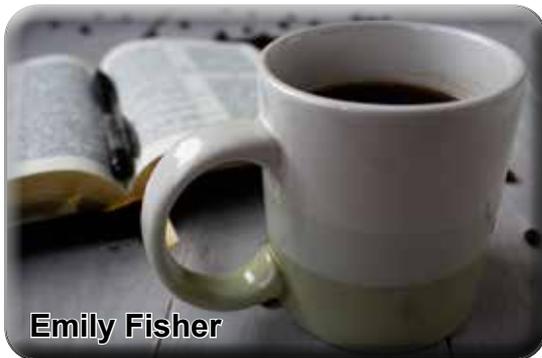
Gene Burgett, in an article, pointed out that the key word in the passage is *“death.”* There was to be intensified suffering in the death addressed in the passage. Burgett then quoted Tacitus, a Roman Senator during the reign of Nero. Tacitus wrote:

They were put to death with exquisite cruelty, and to their sufferings Nero added mockery and derision. Some were covered with skins of wild beasts and left to be devoured by dogs; others were nailed to crosses; numbers of them were burned alive; many were covered with inflammable matter, were set on fire to serve as torches during the night.

With this knowledge, the exhortation to *“be thou faithful unto death”* takes on a new meaning. If you and I had lived in Smyrna in the first century, would we have been among those who were *“faithful unto death”*? When was the last time we allowed something of minor importance to keep us from doing what we knew was right and should be done? Do we pass up opportunities to do something that we had both the ability and the responsibility to do? 

Ernest S. Underwood is a Gospel preacher who resides in Ellijay, Georgia, USA.

Noting Your Bible



Emily Fisher

He is Able

The God of the universe is all-powerful, all-present, all-knowing and all-loving. We, as His creation, cannot fathom His characteristics and total nature. He tells us through His Word about some of His qualities, one of which is, He is able! This, of course, sparks the question – what is God able to do? Let’s open our Bibles and explore this faith-building topic.

1. In your Bible write, “**He is able**” and next to it, “**see Daniel 3:17.**”
2. Turn to Daniel 3:17 and note, “**He can and will deliver (see Matthew 10:28).**” Study the context of Daniel 3 to see the great faith these Hebrews exhibited!
3. In Matthew 10, write, “**God is just; that means He must punish wickedness (See Matthew 3:9).**” Again, consider the context in Matthew 10 and how many times Jesus told His apostles not to fear earthly things. Also, if I am not prepared for eternity, my soul and (resurrected) body will suffer everlastingly (Matthew 18:8-9; 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-9).
4. Turn to Matthew 3:9 and write, “**God’s power can turn stones into humans, like in the beginning (Genesis 2:7). (See Hebrews 5:7).**”
5. In Hebrews 5, note next to verse 7, “**Matthew 26:53-54 – Jesus knew God could save Him from death but willingly submitted to the cross! (See Hebrews 7:25).**”
6. At Hebrews 7:25, underline or highlight this verse and note that “**utmost**” means completely/forever. (See Romans 11:23).”
7. Turn to Romans 11, study the context here and write, “**God stands**

ready to add those who in faith come to Him. (See 2 Timothy 1:12)."

8. In 2 Timothy 1:12, note, **"God is faithful! He will keep my soul – 1 Peter 4:19. (See 2 Corinthians 9:8)."**
9. Next to 2 Corinthians 9:8, write, **"Acts 20:32 – learn about God's grace through His Word. (See Romans 16:25)."**
10. Turn to Romans 16 and next to verses 25-27, note, **"He establishes us on the true foundation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (See Jude 24)."**
11. In Jude 24, note, **"He is able to keep us from stumbling – How? (See Hebrews 2:18)."**
12. In Hebrews 2:18, write, **"He helps us when we are tempted – 1 Corinthians 10:13. (See Ephesians 3:20)."** You may want to make some notes next to 1 Corinthians 10:13. When tempted, always look for the way of escape!
13. Next to Ephesians 3:20, note, **"Our God is able to do far and above any of my ideas! (See Philippians 3:21)."**
14. Turn to Philippians and take the time to read the whole book. Note in the context of 3:21, **"God is able to raise corruptible bodies and change them into incorruptible/glorious bodies like our Lord's body – 1 Corinthians 15:42-58."** We will obtain this resurrection of the dead if we are found in Him with the same mind (Philippians 2:1-8; 3:8-16; 4:2-9)!

The great king of Babylon recognized the God Who is Able (Daniel 4:37). In Nebuchadnezzar's case, as well as with most of us, pride is the culprit that prevents God from looking favorably upon us, which will eventually bring the prideful down (Proverbs 16:18). When we humble ourselves and come to God through faith in Jesus Christ, the **One Who is Able** will save us from our pride, selfishness and all sins! (See Romans 6; Colossians 2:11-13). May we examine ourselves whether we are standing in the grace of God (1 Peter 5:12) and still growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord (2 Peter 3:18) – learning about and giving praise and thanksgiving for what He is able to do (1 Peter 1:3-6). 

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

The Lord's Supper: 1 Corinthians 11

David Conley

1. **It Is a Commandment** (v. 23) *“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you...”* (NKJV).
2. **It Is a Memorial** (v. 24) *“...this do in remembrance of me.”*
3. **It Is a Covenant Token** (v. 25) *“...This cup is the New Covenant in my blood...”*
4. **It Is an Announcement** (v. 26) *“...you proclaim the Lord's death till he comes.”*
5. **It Is an Examination** (v. 28) *“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”*
6. **It Is a Fellowship Meal** (v. 33) *“Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.”*

If we teach what the Lord's Supper is, then the question about how often to take it will be easier to accept. Taking the Lord's Supper is an **act of worship**! Just as we pray, give, sing and preach **every Sunday**, we take the **Lord's Supper every Sunday**. *“Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...”* (Acts 20:7). †

[Editor's Note: Two activities in particular strike visitors to the worship assemblies of the churches of Christ as being odd to them, because few religious groups practice them today. First, singing without the accompaniment of mechanical instruments of music is seldom experienced by congregants in our day and time. Second, few churches observe the Lord's Supper weekly. The Lord's church – if it's to be the Lord's church – endeavors to act out the biblical examples and divinely-given instructions found upon the pages of the New Testament. We haven't changed! Rather the denominational world changed how it worships and resorts to manmade books rather than exclusively to the Bible. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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

WORSHIP

Lessons from a First Century Worship Service

Hiram Kemp

Worship was an important aspect of the church's life from the outset of its existence. We read of the new converts in Jerusalem continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers (Acts 2:42). We read of singing also being something that the early church engaged as a part of its worship together (Ephesians 5:19). We are to follow the pattern set by the inspired apostles and prophets of the New Testament and acknowledge that the things they wrote to us are the commandments of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37). In Acts 20, Luke gave insight into a 1st century worship service. As Paul and his traveling companions came to Troas, we see a window into a worship service (Acts 20:4-6). There are lessons for those of us who live in the 21st century both to learn and to apply.

Prioritizing the Assembly

The Christian's daily life is to be one of sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2). The Sunday assembly is not all that there is in living for Jesus, but it is an important part of life in Christ. We are encouraged in the assembly (Hebrews 10:24). We teach and instruct each other (Colossians 3:16). We pray for each other (1 Thessalonians 5:25). We know that Paul desired to be in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost so he could preach to a large number of Jews (Acts 20:16). Yet, Paul and his companions waited seven days in Troas in order to worship with the brethren there (Acts 20:6). In Paul's mind, the worship assembly on the first day of the week warranted attention and time. Paul did not want to miss this opportunity to worship God with his brethren in Troas. No one had to quote Hebrews 10:25 to Paul since he did not view the assembly as something to be avoided. Instead, Paul considered the worship assembly as something desirable. We must learn from this worship gathering how important it is to gather

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with the saints every Sunday. **Paul had other plans, but those plans were not more important than the need to worship.** Whether we are on vacation, on the road or away for work, we should make whatever adjustments are necessary to be with the brethren on the Lord's day. **Part of seeking the kingdom of God first involves sacrificing time, comfort and convenience to be a dedicated disciple** (Matthew 6:33). The early saints were together daily on some occasions but especially on the first day of the week (Acts 2:46; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2).

Partaking of the Lord's Supper is Important

Jesus told His disciples to partake of the unleavened bread and of the fruit of the vine in commemoration of His sacrificial death (Matthew 26:26-29). We often speak of the need to partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week based on Acts 20:7, and this is correct. We also can note that the breaking of bread in Acts 2:42, which is a reference to the Lord's Supper, was done steadfastly. The frequency with which we take the Lord's Supper is important, but Acts 20:7 tells us more than that. Luke says the Christians came together to break bread. This was the primary purpose for their assembly. This does not mean that singing, praying, giving and preaching are not important, but **the Lord's Supper is unique as an item of worship. The Lord's Supper is the only item of worship that is limited to the first day of the week.** The other four items of worship can be engaged in on any other day of the week with God's approval. Only the Lord's Supper is to be taken on Sunday. When we gather on Sunday, the Lord's Supper is not something we simply check off a list or rush through. It is something we need to do in **reverent fashion. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for failing to observe the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner** (1 Corinthians 11:23-30), meaning the Lord's Supper must be done in the **same mindset the Lord gave it and for the reason Christ gave it** (Colossians 3:17). Our minds must go back to Calvary and to the suffering of our Savior as we partake of the bread and of the cup (1 Corinthians 10:16). **First century Christians gathered together with the breaking of bread on their minds.** We, too, must gather on the Lord's

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Day, keeping in mind that without His sacrifice there would be no service.

Preachers and the Clock

Luke did not reveal when Paul began his sermon, but he recorded when he ended it. Paul preached to them with his departure on his mind, and yet, he continued until midnight (Acts 20:7). The word *parateinō*, translated as “continue” (KJV), “prolonged” (ESV, NASB) and “kept on talking” (NIV) means to prolong or to stretch out. It is interesting to note that **Paul preached until he was done and was not rushed for the sake of time**. This should not be taken to mean that preachers should be insensitive to those who listen to them and preach for two hours. There are many with health problems who cannot sit for lengthy periods of time and others with small children who are struggling to keep them still. However, it is interesting that **Paul preached the word until he had finished his message** (2 Timothy 4:2). In a day when our attention span is eight seconds (a goldfish has an attention span of nine seconds), it is common for many to watch the clock. Preachers should not add fluff to their lessons to purposely preach long sermons, but Christians must develop enough spiritual stamina to endure and enjoy a forty-minute lesson.

Pillows in the Pews

Not everyone was excited by the length of Paul’s sermon. We are introduced to a young man named Eutychus who fell asleep as Paul was preaching, fell three stories and was believed to be dead (Acts 20:8-9). The name Eutychus means fortunate. He was definitely fortunate that Paul was present as he took a nap and fell. Paul was able to go down to where he fell and take him up on his feet, restoring his life (Acts 20:10). Falling asleep in worship is not anything new. People have fallen asleep in worship since the first century. Sometimes it is blamed on the ability of the preacher, but **people even slept on Paul** (1 Corinthians 3:6). We should get adequate rest so we can worship the Lord in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). We also should give grace to those that we may find snoozing in worship. Sometimes it is a side effect of the medication someone is taking, or they

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have been up all night with a sick child. We should assume the best of our brethren until shown otherwise (1 Corinthians 13:5). As Paul literally lifted sleepy Eutychus to his feet, we should bear one another's burdens and help each other remain spiritually alert (Galatians 6:1-2). **Worship** is not nap time. It **is time to engage with brethren as we go to the throne of God, gather the necessary strength for the week to come and glorify our Heavenly Father.**

Thankfully, the first century church teaches us many things about worship. It teaches us how to worship, activities that are authorized in our assembly and that not much has changed in almost 2,000 years. ✚

Hiram Kemp preaches for the Lehman Ave. Church of Christ in Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA.



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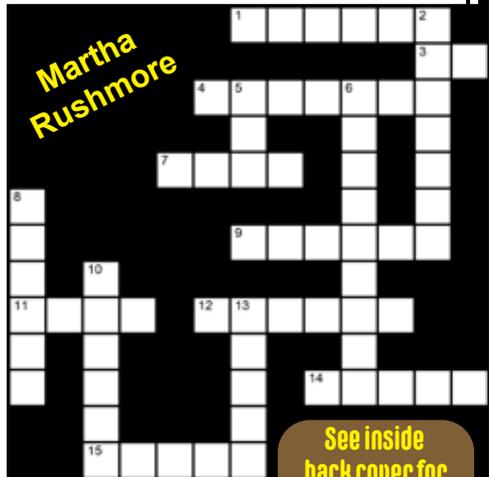
OLD TESTAMENT TRIVIA

Across

- 1 Which book of the Old Testament has the longest and shortest chapters?
- 3 Who slept on an iron bedstead that was nine cubits long?
Deuteronomy 3:11
- 4 What queen was eaten by dogs? 2 Kings 9:35-37
- 7 Who was the first city builder? Genesis 4:17
- 9 Who set 300 fox tails on fire? Judges 15:4-5
- 11 Who was the hairy hunter? Genesis 25:25
- 12 What daughter stole her father's idols and then sat on them? Genesis 31:19-34
- 14 What king sent Uriah to the front line of battle to be killed? 2 Samuel 11:14-17
- 15 Who was hanged on gallows that he had built for Mordecai? Esther 7:10

Down

- 2 Who had 700 wives and 300 concubines? 2 Kings 11:1-3
- 5 Who fell off a seat backwards and broke his neck? 1 Samuel 4:15-18
- 6 Who was Solomon's mother? 2 Samuel 12:24
- 8 What boy had a tunic of many colors? Genesis 37:3
- 10 What mother made her son a coat every year? 1 Samuel 2:18-21
- 13 Who stretched out his hands over the water and caused the plague of frogs in Egypt? Exodus 8:6



See inside
back cover for
the solution.

Enriching Your Marriage

David Myers



I noticed the show *Home Improvement* the other day on Roku TV. The show's main character is Tim "The Tool Man" who is the most accident-prone handyman on the planet. He plugs in the Christmas lights and almost electrocutes himself in the process. He flips the switch to demonstrate the newly installed vacuum system, which slurps up the psychology paper that his wife stayed up all night to finish. Certainly, that didn't help enrich his marriage! It was apparent in the show that he never read the instructions, which ruined almost everything he tried to fix.

Is it your aim to work toward enriching your marriage? Trying to build an enriched marriage can feel like Tim "The Tool Man," can't it? Things don't work like they are supposed to work sometimes. That's when we

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need to remember that we are not building our marriages alone. God not only supplied the blueprints in the Scriptures for enriching marriages, but He is also right there with us on the project. If you feel like your marriage isn't working as it should, consider the following questions.

- **How much are you depending on God for your marriage?**
- **Do you regularly consult His blueprint and talk to Him in prayer about it?**
- **Who wears the foreman's hat in your marriage?**
- **Do you expect the other person to meet the deepest needs of your heart in your marriage? If so, you have placed an impossible burden on the person you love.**
- **If something in your marriage is not working right, are you reluctant to face the truth about yourself, preferring to believe that it is your spouse who has a problem?**

Most people would prefer a successful and fulfilling marriage to just happen by itself. Yet, a **growing and enriching marriage requires effort and perseverance**. God is still involved when it comes to every believer's marriage, and He cares about the success of your marriage. God calls each marriage partner to work at their relationship with Him. That's why it is so important to **read the instructions** (Ephesians 5:22-23, especially vs. 28-29, 32). 

David Myers preaches and also is an elder for the Church of Christ in Wildwood, Florida, USA. He is a missionary to Guyana, South America.

Kenney's Pennies

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32 NKJV). What a beautiful passage and one of my favorites on church member relationships. Notice very carefully the qualifier “in Christ.” You have to be “in Christ” to be forgiven by God. How does one become “in Christ”? It certainly includes immersion for the forgiveness of sins (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12)! 

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WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT ABORTION?

Sandra Adkison

It is amazing to me that some Christians believe taking the life of an unborn baby is okay under certain situations. Many are unaware what the Bible teaches about abortion since the word “abortion” does not appear in our English Bibles. Let’s examine some Scriptures.

In Genesis 1:28-30, God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful, to multiply and to fill the earth. The following Old Testament Scriptures pertain to the question, “What does the Bible say about abortion?”

- ***“Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward”*** (Psalm 127:3 NKJV).
- ***“As you do not know what is the way of the wind, Or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, So you do not know the works of God who makes everything”*** (Ecclesiastes 11:5).
- ***“Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves...”*** (Psalm 100:3).
- Isaiah declared that the Lord ***“...formed Me from the womb to be His Servant...”*** (Isaiah 49:5).
- ***“Your hands have made me and fashioned me, An intricate unity...”*** (Job 10:8).
- ***God said to Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations”*** (Jeremiah 1:5).
- ***“If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman’s husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if any harm follows, then you shall give life***

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for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe” (Exodus 21:22-25).



- *“If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall fall on me,’ Even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You. For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them” (Psalm 139:11-16).*

Darkness and light are the same to God. Covered and uncovered are the same to God. David was in darkness and covered while being formed by God in the womb. He was in light and uncovered after birth. **The baby in the womb and the baby after birth are the same to God!**

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New Testament Scriptures likewise are pertinent to the question, “What does the Bible say about abortion?”

- *“And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit”* (Luke 1:41).
- *“For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy”* (Luke 1:44).
- *“And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger”* (Luke 2:12).
- *“And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger”* (Luke 2:16).

The Greek word “*brephos*” means an infant. The same Greek word refers to before and after birth of a baby. **The baby in the womb and the baby after birth are the same to God!** *“There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death”* (Proverbs 14:12). †

[Editor’s Note: Remember, under Judaism in the Old Testament, taking the life of an unborn baby was a capital offense (Exodus 21:22-25). Yet, 73 million babies worldwide die by induced abortion each year. Nearly a third of all pregnancies terminate because of abortion. Proverbs 6:16-19 lists seven sins which are so repulsive to God that he calls them abominations, and one of them is *“Hands that shed innocent blood”* (Proverbs 6:17). Hence, induced **abortion is an abomination to God.** ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Sandra Adkison was the Administrative Director for eight years of a pregnancy center near Orlando, Florida. She is a member of the College Avenue Church of Christ and resides in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, USA.

Ponder This

Anciently, Palestine was essentially the center of the earth because it served as a land bridge between Europe, Asia, Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Palestine was in the middle of a fertile route capable of sustaining transients, caravans and armies. Contrariwise, east of Palestine the harsh desert and mountains on either side of the Jordan River Valley hindered migration, commerce and military advances. West of Palestine was the Mediterranean Sea with few satisfactory ports along the coastline. A 1585 woodcut map of the world depicts Jerusalem as the center of the world. Jerusalem appears as the middle of a blossom, whereas the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa look like petals. Palestine remained the significant connection between continents and subcontinents until the introduction of the airplane.

THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Children

Wayne Barrier

The social norm in the western world of our day regarding children is disturbing. Birth rates in the developed world are at all time low points as masses of childbearing age women choose not to bring children into the world. Millions are killed in their mother's womb and aborted to prevent live birth. Others are destroyed as they are being born. Millions are born to lives of neglect and abuse. Adults are encouraging and facilitating the mutilation of their children in the name of gender care and health. Masses of children are subjected to between 10-20 years of school and complete the process without the ability to read, write, perform simple math computations or make a decision through the simplest reasoning processes. Entire nations and states are revising their laws to legalize the sexual abuse of children by adults in the name of freedom. All of this failure and abuse is done by people considered by many to be the most advanced and progressive of all time.

What does God think about this situation? The Bible reveals some of God's thoughts about children. Consider Psalm 127:3, "***Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward***" (NKJV). Jesus made several statements regarding children. Matthew 19:13-14 states, "***Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'***" On another occasion, as recorded in Luke 9:46-48 we find, "***Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. And Jesus perceiving the thought of their heart took a little child and set him by Him and said to them, 'Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me, For he who is least among you all will be great.'***"

Paul instructed fathers in Ephesians 6:4 concerning their relationship

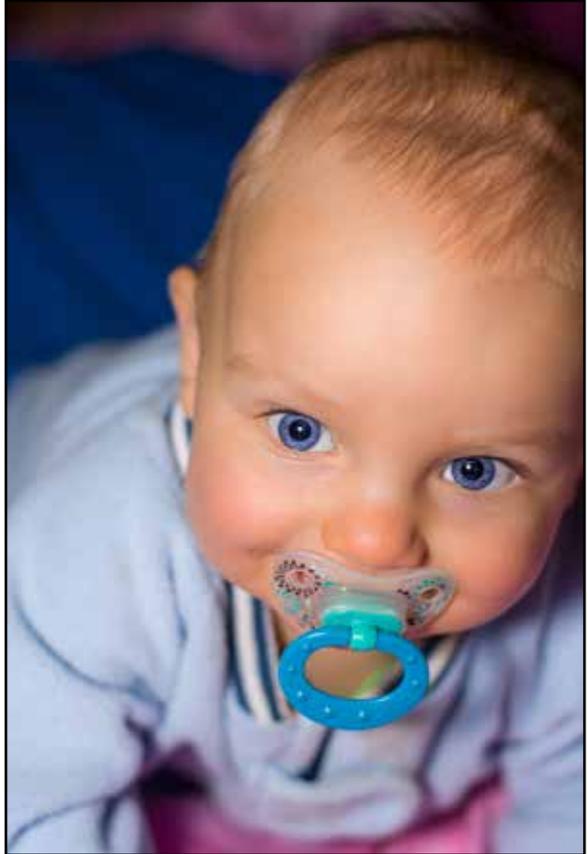
THE CHRISTIAN HOME

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

Mothers are commanded to love and to teach their children through the maturing process (Titus 2:4). Children are to be taught to obey their parents in the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-2) and to honor their father and mother. Bible guidance must be followed regarding everything we do, including the love, care and development of children.

God loves man. He made us in His image and likeness. He

blesses us with forgiveness and acceptance into His kingdom with Heaven as our eternal home. We are given many responsibilities in this earthly life. **Children are given to us as a blessing from God. They are innocent, dependent, vulnerable and totally trusting of their adult family. God will hold us accountable for their care, protection and upbringing.** †



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

How Do You Measure Up?

At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

Have you heard the Gospel of our Lord? Have you been baptized into His body, the church? Do you wear his name, "Christian"? If so, it is your work and mine to continue going into all the world, preaching that saving Gospel.

Where does your world begin? *In your neighborhood, in your town, in your country!*

How can you teach people?

- ❖ *By your example of righteous Christianity;*
- ❖ *By keeping tracts and other printed materials in your home, your purse, and/or car, so that they will be at your fingertips when an opportunity to share presents itself;*
- ❖ *By turning conversations to spiritual matters, and inviting the contact to worship meetings and/or for a personal study;*
- ❖ *By moving to a new town or country, to plant the church where it has not previously existed!*

Acts 8:1, 4

Betty Burton Choate



Fig Leaves Are Back in Style

Summer is here! Gone are those ole bulky winter clothes and all those layers! The ultra freedom of summer clothes surrounds us again. This summer, women will go to the beach wearing bikinis or something even skimpier. Probably that same woman would never consider parading around on the beach wearing only a bra and thong-type underpants, but I ask, “What is the difference in the amount of body she would be revealing?” None! The only difference is in the fabric used to make the garments! It would be scandalous to go out in public dressed only in one’s underwear – wouldn’t it?

Leaving the beach scene of near-nudity, look at the offering for relaxed outings: the briefest of stretch pants, topped with a knit, spaghetti-strap shirt. Another possibility is a one-piece stretch top that will barely cover the torso – breast down to upper thighs. Oh, this blueprint is better; it’s a little longer, and at least it does have spaghetti straps! Then, there is the blue knit top, also with the spaghetti straps. Of course, the degree of immodesty is the choice of the wearer: will it be a top that is loose and exposes only the upper part of the body, or will it be three sizes too small so that it is stretched like a second skin? Then, there is a subdued choice: a black straight skirt. Should we wonder what folks will see when the wearer sits down or bends over? Another offering are shorts for the hot-natured woman. The manufacturer invested very little in the fabric, but, sadly, the price tag doesn’t reflect that savings.

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

With the lowering of all standards of honesty, integrity and modesty in the world, we know that the downhill spiral of morals for the general populace is likely to continue. There are reports that nudity is accepted in some public situations in Europe, as well as on TV. Since those countries seem to be the model we are following, we can accurately project what we will see on American streets in the near future.

What the world is doing is not nearly as alarming to me as the transformation that is taking place in the Lord's church. Sometimes I am afraid to look up to see incoming attendees for worship because of what some of the women are

wearing: short, tight skirts; spaghetti-strap dresses; see-through fabrics; low-cut tops that reveal cleavage. Some among us could walk out of the church buildings and blend harmoniously



with the women of the world! **Shame! Shame!** Are there no sermons or Bible class studies anymore on modest apparel for Christian women? Are there no elders sincerely looking after the flock? Do the husbands and fathers of these women have no eyes? Does no one remember the connection between exposure of the physical body and the resulting lust in the hearts of the beholders?

“Politeness” may silence leaders and fellow-Christians in the church, but God loves us too deeply to be silent. What does He say?

- ***“Do not let your adornment be merely outward – arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel – rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the **incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit**, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in***

DAILY CHRISTIAN LIVING

this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands” (1 Peter 3:3-5 NKJV).

- *“...that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is **proper for women professing godliness, with good works**” (1 Timothy 2:9).*
- *“...whoever **looks at a woman to lust for her** has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).*
- *“**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 12:2).*

The choice to wear clothing that will **create lust** in the eyes of those around us is wrong in itself; the **resulting lust** in the hearts of the beholders is sin on the part of the one who causes it as well as the one who is lusting. Lust can literally **lead to immorality, infidelity, lies, abandoned children, broken homes and more**. When Satan gets a toehold, he will continue to add to the temptation until – far too often – he succeeds in **destroying** the **souls** involved.

Mothers, please don't train up your little girls to dress like the world.

From the start, teach them modesty by the choices **you** make in **their** clothing. Furthermore, be an example in your own choice of clothing.

Dear Christian sisters, please remember that **the first death was God's taking the life of animals to make modest clothing for Adam and Eve after they realized their nakedness**. He **cares what we wear!** [A little observation: Besides their tragic decision to disobey God, Adam and Eve's choice of clothing fabric – fig leaves – was quite an itchy one!] †

[Editor's Note: Especially the current fad of women wearing leggings without additional clothing over them is a little less defining of **every part of the female form** than complete nudity. One can't imagine that the same women would have any inhibitions of parading around literally naked. Clothing originally served primarily two purposes: (1) to conceal the features of one's body and (2) to protect a person from the weather. Immodest apparel today does neither! ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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

Fighting Against God

Emily Fisher

In Acts 5, after being imprisoned for teaching Jesus, escaping from that prison by the assistance of an angel of the Lord and then being brought again before the Jewish council, the apostles were ever resolved to **“obey God rather than men”** (Acts 5:29 NKJV). At that council, one man named Gamaliel showed wisdom in reminding his Jewish brethren that others claiming to be somebody had risen to power for a short time, died and their followers consequently scattered. In stating his conclusion, Gamaliel said, **“...if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it – lest you even be found to fight against God”** (Acts 5:38-39).

Indeed, the book of Acts bears out over and over that the Jews did fight against God. The first century church mainly suffered persecution from Jews early on rather than from the Romans (Acts 21:27; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16). Jesus warned of this attitude exhibited in the majority of Israel and of the consequences of rejecting His will (Matthew 23-24). From the beginning of Christ’s ministry on earth to the end, the Jews continued to reject the will of God (Luke 7:29-30; 23:35). Israel did not recognize Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah of which their Scriptures prophesied. With every miracle that they saw Him do, every teaching that they heard and every prophecy He fulfilled, they turned a blind eye to it; **they fought against God!** The evidence that Jesus is God’s Son, Deity in human flesh, is overwhelming. (What mere man could perfectly fulfill over 300 prophecies written hundreds of years before his life?) **Sadly, many continue to fight against God** by rejecting Jesus as God in the flesh (Hebrews 1:1-3; 1 John 4:2-3).

There are various ways we, too, can be found fighting against God. First, **we fight against Him if we reject immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins.** If the Jews in Jesus’ days resisted God’s will by not submitting to John’s baptism (Luke 7:30), how much more spiritually fatal is it to reject the

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commandment of Christ (Mark 16:16)? **Immersion is where God cuts off our sins, as we die to self, and He raises us up a new creation in Christ** (Colossians 2:11-12). The Lord is doing the work! We simply submit to Him in faith. Peter, inspired by God, clearly stated in Acts 2:38, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...”* If baptism is **not** for the forgiveness of sins, then one must show where the Scriptures state that. However, the New Testament says the very opposite! *“There is also an antitype which now **saves us – baptism** (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 3:21). With Ananias let us proclaim, *“Why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord”* (Acts 22:16).

We fight against God when we do not take church discipline seriously. The Lord’s church, made up of imperfect humans, will need to deal with sin. That is just a fact. It is when we do not handle those situations as God laid forth in His Word that the problem multiplies. Jesus spoke on this subject briefly, laying out the procedure to address sins (Matthew 18:15-17). The previous verses in Matthew 18:1-14 speak of the seriousness of sin (vs. 6-9 – causing others to sin and vs. 10-14 – despising the lost one). **Our Lord is concerned about that one stray sheep, and so, why aren’t we?** Christ wants His bride (the church) to remain pure and holy (1 Peter 1:15-16; 1 Timothy 5:22). The apostle Paul gave specific commands to congregations on how to deal with sinning brethren (Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; Titus 3:10-11). Are we following these principles in our respective congregations? **We must not think that the purity of the Lord’s body is a trivial matter. We fight against God if we do!**

Another way we can fight against our Creator is when we do not submit to our God-given roles. The world, under Satan’s influence, is waging war on the roles of men and women. We must look to our authority on the subject – God’s Word. In the beginning, God created the man first (Genesis 1-2). He could have created the male and female human pair simultaneously, but He did not. There may be multiple reasons for God making man first. One of them could be that He was showing Adam

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(specifically at that time) and mankind (generally in the future) that the man is to be the leader. **Paul referred to this creation order (across time and culture) for the reason women are not to teach or have authority over a man** (1 Timothy 2:11-15). Prior to this command for the women, Paul told the men that they are to *“pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting”* (1 Timothy 2:8). Furthermore, in Titus 2, the apostle gave instructions for men and women. Notice a reason for living in our God-given role is *“that the word of God may not be blasphemed”* (Titus 2:5). Many in the world have derided Paul for these statements, but Peter said the same in his epistles (1 Peter 3:1-7) – again, to both women and men. Of course, Paul and Peter were both inspired by the one Author. Why do some struggle with the fact that submission is not inequality? God created both male and female in His image (Genesis 1:27), and both stand equal before their Judge in need of salvation (Galatians 3:28). God knows best, and He has told us that He desires men to lead and women to assist them – working together, bringing glory to Christ. Satan wants conflict between men and women and between humans and their Creator. **We are on the adversary’s side fighting against God when we do not submit to the role that He has given for us.**

We fight against the Lord when we do not uphold the sanctity of marriage. Again, **Satan has declared war on the home, and sadly, many Christians have invited him in to set up camp!** Marriage is a beautiful picture of Christ and His bride, the church (Ephesians 5:22-33). The husband is to love his wife as his own body – nourishing and cherishing her (vs. 25-29) – and the wife is to respect her husband, submitting to him (vs. 22-24, 33). This means we show love and respect to our spouse even when we don’t feel like it and during conflicts. *“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge”* (Hebrews 13:4). Are we teaching young people how special marriage is? Are we teaching and helping those who are married how to stay married? **A husband and wife should be a powerful team working with God against all worldliness and evil.**

Another way we fight against our Maker is when we claim to love

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Him, but we hate our brethren (1 John 4:20-21). God has commanded us to love others. When we do not love, we are not keeping His commandments (1 John 5:2-3). **Love is a distinguishing feature of Christianity to the world** (John 13:34-35). The world despises Christ and His followers when they see us take our fellow brother to court (1 Corinthians 6), treat our neighbor poorly (Romans 13) or speak evil of our brother or sister. (This is a big problem on social media, James 4:11.) James further stated *“that friendship with the world is enmity with God”* (James 4:4). **We are fighting against God when we do not love people created in His image.**

God’s Word stands. It will not be made void (Isaiah 55:11). **All attempts to fight against God are futile** (Psalm 2). May we all *“walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God”* (Colossians 1:10) and never be found fighting against Him. †

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[Editor’s Note: I heartily commend this article by sister Fisher because it is so accurately and biblically articulated in an exemplary manner. The Lord’s church in our time – in all ages to come, too – needs to embrace and uphold in congregational and personal lives daily God’s holy Word – the Bible. This exceptional article gives each of us a place to begin doing just that. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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Gerizim and Ebal

Mark McWhorter

In Joshua 7, the Israelites attacked Ai but were soundly defeated. God then revealed to Joshua that someone had taken items from Jericho. All the things of Jericho were to be burned. God considered this action by the disobedient person not only as sin but as stealing from Him.

Joshua learned from God that it was Achan who sinned. **Achan and his family were punished by being put to death.** Afterward, the Israelites went up against Ai again, and this time they defeated the city.

After the Israelites were finished with Ai, they traveled to the valley between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. Moses had told Joshua to take the people there when they entered the land. Joshua was to read the Law to the people. He read all **the blessings and the cursings.** Half of the tribes stood in front of Mount Gerizim, and half stood in front of Mount Ebal. The blessings were called out from Gerizim, while the cursings were called out from Ebal.

These were given to educate and to encourage the people to obey God. We also need to obey God. **The only way to be blessed by God with spiritual blessings and with eternal life in Heaven is to obey Him.**

Study your Bible. Learn how to obey God. If any of this is hard to understand, ask an adult to help you. †

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

Kenney's Pennies

“In God (I will praise His word), In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?” (Psalm 56:4 NKJV). The *“flesh”* can do a whole lot against our flesh; however, *“flesh”* can do nothing to touch our souls. We are more than flesh and blood. Man, made in the image of God, has been blessed with an immortal soul. Too many live to the flesh without regard for the soul and the Caretaker and Preserver of souls.

Can You Run with the Horses?

Emanuel Daugherty

If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, Then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, In which you trusted, they wearied you, Then how will you do in the floodplain (“swelling” KJV; “thicket” ESV) of the Jordan? (Jeremiah 12:5 NKJV)

God’s Challenge: Can You Run with the Horses?

1. **Overcoming excuses:** Jeremiah, ‘I am just a boy!’ 1:6. God can grow you into a man!
2. **Inadequacies:** Not smart enough, don’t have enough time, energy, money, not tall enough, too tall, not strong enough. Get over the “I Can’ts”!
3. **Criticism:** rebuke, scorn, personal attacks, hatred of you as a Christian
4. **Rejection:** by family, relatives, friends, neighbors
5. **Works of the flesh:** immorality, lust, envy, sin, temptations
6. **Philosophies:** atheism, agnosticism, ignorance, false teaching, anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Bible
7. **Politics:** laws against true religion, laws restricting freedom

[Editor’s Note: The primary ‘can do’ passage for Christians is, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*” (Philippians 4:13). Remember, God became angry with Moses when he offered a series of excuses (Exodus 3:14). Certainly, we do not want God to become angry with us because we offered excuses instead of faithful service (Hebrews 9:14; 12:28). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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You Don't Really Believe in Heaven or Hell, Do You?

Demar Elam

If you ask the average Christian, “Do you believe in Heaven and in Hell?” they would most likely answer, “Why of course I believe in Heaven and in Hell!” However, to say one believes in these places is one thing and to live in such a manner so as to prove that one believes is another. I heard an illustration used in a sermon on one occasion concerning a preacher and his infidel friend who met on the street and began talking. This illustration had a profound effect upon my thinking and opened my mind to the possibility that many today are saying they believe in Heaven and in Hell when, in reality, they do not.

A preacher and his infidel friend met on the street and recognized each other from college days. They had been good friends during those years in school but had not seen each other since leaving school. They went into a coffee shop, ordered coffee and began to reminisce and renew their friendship. They talked about almost everything they had experienced together in the past and finally were about to part company. The infidel said to the preacher, “You don't really believe in Heaven or in Hell, do you?” The preacher was taken back at the suggestion of such a thought. “Of course, I believe in Heaven and Hell!” replied the preacher. His friend said, “Then, I must call you a liar because if you really believed in those two places you would have talked to me about my soul. According to the Bible I am lost and headed to Hell, and yet, you talked about everything in the world with me but what should have really mattered.”

It is shocking to think that we might be confessing one thing with our tongues and, in reality, acting out something entirely different in our daily lives. Christians need to search their hearts regarding the answer to this question. If we really believe that there is a lake that burns with fire and brimstone, a place ***“Where their worm does not die, And the fire is not***

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quenched” (Mark 9:44 NKJV), then, we, out of necessity, will speak to everyone we can to warn them of the pending destruction.

Do we really believe that *“The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God”* (Psalms 9:17)? Do we really believe the words found in Revelation 21:8, *“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, and sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death”*? Do you personally believe there is going to be a second death? Do you really believe this? Do you believe it so strongly you must act upon your belief and warn people of this second death that awaits them for their sinful lives and their failure to accept the gift of God’s love, Jesus Christ, into their lives?

Saying we believe in Hell is one thing, and living in a practical manner that demonstrates we believe there is a Hell definitely are two different things. Hell is a place of insatiable torment. We read in Luke 16:22-25 the following.

So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” But Abraham said, “Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.”

The rich man cried for a drink of water, but there was no water to quench his thirst. Think about this and realize that if Christians really believe this is true and that there is a place like this, how could they and why do they do so little about warning lost souls about it? Hell is a place of unutterable and everlasting shame and contempt. The great prophet Daniel penned these words, *“And many of them that sleep in the dust*

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of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2). **How strongly do professing Christians believe in the resurrection of the dead, in everlasting life and everlasting contempt that is to follow that resurrection? The extent of that belief is what compels us to go or not to go and evangelize those not evangelized in our world.**

There is utter darkness in hell; it is banishment from Heaven, from God, from Christ and from the Holy Spirit where all is light to an extreme opposite of eternal darkness. Matthew 25:30 teaches that the wicked and unprofitable servants will be cast into Hell. Jesus said, ***“And cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*** There will be weeping in Hell – an expression of wailing, anguish and great sorrow. There will be gnashing of teeth in Hell – an expression of great rage and indignation (Matthew 25:30). The question is how strongly do Christians believe this? The extent of our actions will give us the answer, which may not correspond to what our tongues say.

The Bible also speaks of this place called Heaven – the home of the soul. How strongly do we believe in this place? Evidently, some don’t think strongly enough of Heaven to recommend it to others on an urgent and ongoing basis. Sure, there are those who will occasionally mention Heaven in a passing fashion, but where are the Christians today who believe in Heaven so strongly that they are driven to tell as many people about this place as possible? Why aren’t more Christians covering land and sea to share the wonderful news of Heaven – the habitation of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and all the redeemed of all the ages?

Jesus said in John 14:1-3, ***“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”*** Can Christians today envision that place and those mansions? Do they believe this text so strongly that they are compelled to tell others about it? **Has belief become so complete and full that they are driven to share the Gospel with the**

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lost all around them? Heaven is a place just as Earth is a place. Isaiah the prophet of old wrote, *“Thus says the Lord: ‘Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool...’* (Isaiah 66:1). Heaven is spoken of as being so much better than anything we have ever known on Earth (Hebrews 10:34). Do we believe this with such intensity of heart that we cannot hold the news of it back but must share it with as many others as we can? The writer of Hebrews spoke of Heaven as a place of rest in Hebrews 4:9. He urged Christians to give diligence to enter into that rest (Hebrews 4:11) and not to fall short of it (Hebrews 4:1).

Heaven is spoken of as being a place where faithful children of God will finally be delivered from the sorrows, tribulations and the heartaches, pains and death faced in this life. According to the Revelation by Jesus Christ and penned by John, the beloved disciple, Heaven is a place where, *“...God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away”* (Revelation 21:4). Does that not excite your heart? Do you believe it? How strongly do you believe?

Remember what the infidel said to the preacher; “If you really believed in Heaven and in Hell, you would have talked to me about my soul.” Often, we hear people say, “Well, why are we here? What is life all about? What is my purpose for being here?” A casual reader of the Bible knows that God’s Word teaches this life is preparatory for life beyond this present existence. **Heaven and Hell are real! Judgment is sure and certain.** God’s gift of love is extended to all people through Christ. God’s love for His creation has been shed abroad through His Son who saves people from the impending doom that awaits all who refuse to accept God’s Son through obedience and service. If we believe all these things, then, we will talk to people about Heaven, Hell and their relationship with Christ. Remember that it is the extent of our belief in Heaven and in Hell that compels us to speak to others about the condition of their souls. †

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HYMNS

Hear the Precious Gospel Story

Eliza Edmunds Hewitt, 1901
Arr. Paul Clements, 2020

Paul Clements, 2020

1. Hear the precious gos-pel sto-ry, Told to sin-ners long a-go;
2. Free-ly take this great sal-va-tion, Bought up-on the cross for you;

The first system of music consists of a treble and bass staff. The treble staff has a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 3/4 time signature. The bass staff has a key signature of two sharps and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is written in the treble staff, and the bass line is in the bass staff. The lyrics are placed between the two staves.

O what com-fort, O what glo-ry, From this bles-sed truth shall flow.
Bow the heart in a-dor-a-tion, Give your life in ser-vice true.

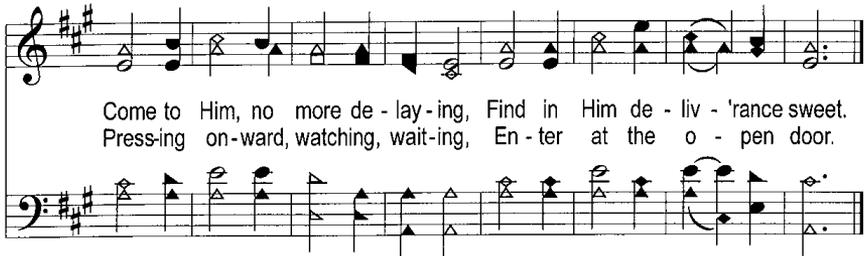
The second system of music continues the melody and bass line from the first system. The lyrics are placed between the two staves.

Now ac-cept this faith-ful say-ing, Let it draw you to His feet;
Now be-lieve this faith-ful say-ing, Trust-ing Je-sus, doubt no more;

The third system of music concludes the piece. The lyrics are placed between the two staves.

HYMNS

Hear the Precious Gospel Story



Come to Him, no more de - lay - ing, Find in Him de - liv - 'rance sweet.
Pressing on - ward, watching, wait - ing, En - ter at the o - pen door.

Paul Clements is a former elder, a Gospel preacher, a writer and a hymn composer. He lives in Pike Road, Alabama, USA.



The Island of Understanding

Keith Kasarjian

Located in the middle of a beautiful lake, in a valley deep in the Scottish highlands, is the Island of Understanding. The island is so named because local custom mandated that two parties in disagreement about a matter are to be taken to the island, given food and drink, and stranded until they can come to an understanding. The locals boast that, because of this custom, there has been only one murder in 1,500 years! What a great idea! How we sometimes need an “Island of Understanding”!

Husbands and wives need an island of understanding. When the inevitable disagreements and arguments come, they must be worked out. Avoiding difficult discussions and simply hoping that the problem will just go away is rarely healthy for the relationship. Husbands are told to live with their wives *“according to knowledge”* (KJV) or *“with understanding”* (NKJV) (1 Peter 3:7), but how can either spouse have knowledge or understanding without communication and trying to come to an accord? Husbands and wives should always remember the three C’s.

- **Concern** – because you love each other and your marriage.
- **Compassion** – because disagreements are more likely to be resolved when approached correctly.
- **Compromise** – because no one can, or should, get all of his or her way all of the time.

Parents and children need an island of understanding. At its best, parenting is a difficult proposition. If we can recall with an accurate memory, all will agree that childhood and adolescence is no bed of roses either. Further, due to often tenuous relationships, many parents and children stop communicating (i.e., real communicating). Mom and Dad, if there is a problem, don’t let it fester. Instead, go to an island of understanding. Part of *“bring them up in the... admonition of the Lord”* (NKJV) and to *“not provoke your children to anger”* (ESV) (Ephesians 6:4) is resolving the conflicts that arise. Young people, instead of pouting

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or self-imposed banishment to your room, talk to Mom and Dad (the way you'd want them to talk to you), and try to work out your difficulty.

Brethren need an island of understanding. Jesus knew that simply being brethren would not always be enough to prevent disagreements and misunderstandings. So, He gave instructions in Matthew 5:23-24 and 18:15-17 for resolving conflict. Jesus taught initially to go to one's brother alone and to try to rectify the problem. Yet, instead of obeying the command of our Lord, some brethren still think they can worship acceptably and be right with God while at odds with a brother. Therefore, instead of going to the island of understanding with one's brother, they hurl insults from long distances or speak about their grievance to everyone but the brother with whom the disagreement exists. How shameful and sinful! Brethren, go to the island!



When we go to the island of understanding, let all that is said and done be governed by the words of Ephesians 4:31-32, which reads, ***“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you”*** (NKJV). Harry Truman was right when he said, “When we understand the other fellow’s viewpoint – understand what he is trying to do – nine times out of ten, he is trying to do right.” 

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DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

The Prints of the Nails

T. Pierce Brown

Although we do not remember which song book we used as we sang about it, we feel sure that most of our readers will remember the song that says, "I shall know Him by the prints of the nails in His hands." We have a feeling, too, that some of the poets or classical writers have alluded to the nail-scarred hands of Jesus as if they would be a mute witness of His love for us throughout eternity.

One of my most beloved Bible teachers, the late R.C. Bell, tried to teach us that the body of Jesus that He showed Thomas and the other apostles was His glorified body that He now has. We doubted it 50 years ago and still do. The reason we bring it up now is not because we consider it worth an argument, but because we think it suggests a very important principle. We need constantly to examine our opinions and see if we can determine whether we got them from Milton, Moses, men, the Jesuits, Jews or Jesus. Our own conviction is that it may be better to be wrong about some trivial matter and have the right attitude toward truth than to be right about it and have the wrong attitude. We are not implying that it is more important to have the right attitude than it is to teach true doctrine, but we are saying that many false and dangerous doctrines have been believed because of a wrong attitude toward truth.

To those of you who have been taught in class or song that the resurrected body of Jesus is the body He now has, and will have forever, let us raise a few questions. First, why do you assume so? Is it because He could appear and disappear at will after His resurrection? If so, do you assume that He could not do that before He died, when He had His natural body?

Is it because you think He was so changed that His disciples did not recognize Him (Luke 24:10)? If so, do you think that "their eyes were holden" means the same as "His body was changed?" Is it because the angels said (Acts 1:11) that He would come "*in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven?*" If so, do you think "*in like manner*" must mean "with a body of the

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same nature” rather than “openly, and in the clouds,” or some other things that relate to “manner”? Is there any logical, theological or linguistic reason why *“in like manner”* must mean “with the same kind of body?” All these so-called reasons we heard and refuted 50 and more years ago.

There may be some other, more valid reasons why some supposed we should conclude that His resurrected body was His present, glorified one, but we



do not remember ever hearing anyone present them. Now let us note some difficulties with the assumptions that the resurrected body of Jesus was a glorified or spiritual one like ours will be.

First, when Paul dealt with the question, *“With what body do they come?”* in 1 Corinthians 15:35, he taught that the body that is planted is not the body that will come up (v. 37). This evidently was not the case with Christ, for His flesh did not see corruption (Acts 2:31) and His body apparently bore all the marks of identification that would show it to be the same body.

If one assumes that His body will bear throughout eternity the physical marks of human torture and disfigurement, then one has a right to assume the same about our glorified bodies – warts, scars, wrinkles and all. If not, why not? One may assume that the glorious marks of His physical torture would be appropriate for Him to wear throughout eternity as a wonderful reminder to us of His sacrifice for us. One may assume that the scars of smallpox or the lion’s paw on the face of another who died the martyr’s death would **not** be appropriate as a reminder of his sacrifice for Christ. Yet, if you assume either or both, we hope you will be discerning enough to recognize that it is but an assumption with no necessary connection to the Bible or logic.

When I suggested to my beloved teacher that Paul says in 1 Corinthians

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15:50 that *“flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,”* and that Jesus had “flesh and bones” after His resurrection (Luke 24:49), his reply was, “But it says nothing about blood.” Apparently, he assumed that Jesus had flesh and bones but no blood. He could eat fish and honeycomb, perhaps carry out all the functions of digestion, assimilation and elimination, but had no blood! Why one needs to assume that, or would want to, we never learned.

However, the primary difficulty in my mind which was never answered in class (nor was it answered about 30 years later when I talked with him again in private) was this: In 1 John 3:2, we find, *“It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as He is.”*

Note carefully: John saw him as He was after His resurrection. If He were then like He is now, John would have known what He is like. Yet, John did not know what He is now like! Therefore, His body after the resurrection, while still on earth, was not His glorified body. Our bodies, after the resurrection, will be different, for they will be like His now is. If His body bears the physical scars of His earthly state, then from what John says, we conclude that ours will too. I neither believe that nor know anyone who does. Nor do I know anything in the Bible that forces us to the conclusion that a man who had his leg chewed off by a lion for his faith in Christ (or anything else) will limp through eternity on one leg!

The question may be raised, “If Christ’s body was not changed into His glorified and eternal body at His resurrection, when was it?” I must confess as much ignorance of that (or almost so) as the questioner. However, since we know that Enoch and Elijah had some interesting experiences in this area, we might logically conclude that it changed as He ascended (Acts 1:9) as theirs apparently did, and as ours shall when we are ready to ascend (1 Corinthians 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Our purpose in this article is not so much to try to convince anyone that our conclusions are right as it is to try to get more of us to examine our many assumptions more earnestly and to know the difference between opinions and facts. 

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DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

Lemonade

Martha Lynn Rushmore



“When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.” This is one of my favorite sayings. In life, we all have trials and temptations (James 1:2-4). Many times, we are handed sour lemons (Job 1:14-19; 2:7-10). What we do with these lemons is very important (Job 1:22; 2:10). I can sit and mope or I can find a way to make something good from the bad that happened to me (James 1:3).

Consider one situation with which I am familiar. A friend passed away. It was a very sad time for the family. Remember, look for something good out of a bad thing that happened. This elder in the church died, and the very next Sunday, his grandson was baptized. This boy was 18 or 19 years of age. He knew what he needed to do, but he also thought he had plenty of time to become a Christian. Yes, death was hard on the family; however,

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

this young man became a Christian because of the loss of his grandfather. **Losing his grandfather made him very aware of what he needed to do (Hebrews 9:27). This made something good out of the bad.**

Now on a more personal note, Louis lost Bonnie, the love of his life, to cancer in May of 2015. I lost my best friend and the love of my life to cancer in December 2015. Yes, we were both handed very sour lemons. I believe that when we put God first in our lives (Matthew 6:33), in time, our lives will be filled with love and happiness again (Ruth 1:1-5; 4:13-17). It does not always come fast, but it comes in God's time. God is always in charge (Psalm 75:6-7; Daniel 2:20-21). With much prayer and patience, God will give us the answer that is best for us. Sometimes, God tells us, "No," whereas sometimes His answer is, "Yes," and sometimes God says, "Later." **Every now and then, the answer to our prayers is right in front of us. We just need to be wise enough to look where God has pointed us** (Genesis 45:7-8; 50:20).

I do not believe God said this is what you must do. I believe that when given lemons, we must look hard and long sometimes for where we go to make the lemonade (Acts 16:6-10).



Remember the rain falls on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). God is **"no respecter of persons"** (KJV) or **"shows no partiality"** (NKJV) (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11). Yes, we were very alone. We both had our families, but they could not take the place of the loss of our lifetime mates. So, in time we made lemonade out of the sour lemons we had been given. We came together as husband and wife (1 Corinthians 7:1-2; Hebrews 13:4). We plan to walk through life together (1 Corinthians 9:5), helping one another (Genesis 2:18) and doing as much work for the Lord as possible (1 Corinthians 15:58; Titus 2:14). Our goal is to go to Heaven and to take as many souls with us as we can (Hebrews 11:10, 16; 13:14).✝

Martha Lynn Rushmore is a Staff Writer for *The Voice of Truth International* and *Gospel Gazette Online*. She resides in Ocala, Florida, USA.



Rebecca Rushmore

1. Name the two men with Paul at the writing of the epistle.
2. In what did Paul boast to others about the Thessalonians?
3. When Jesus is revealed at His Second Coming, who will be with Him?
4. What will happen to “the lawless one”?
5. What will God send to those who do not believe the truth?
6. How did God call the Thessalonians?
7. How were the Thessalonians taught the truth?
8. From whom were the Thessalonians to withdraw?
9. Why were Christians to withdraw from some?
10. How were Christians to treat those from whom they withdrew?

(answers inside back cover)

The Preacher & His Work!

Mark N. Posey

Text:

“But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:5).

Introduction:

1. Paul’s final words to Timothy, just before his execution, focused on preaching.
2. We must be faithful in preaching the Word, regardless of the opposition or the hardship.

Body:

I. “Be watchful.”

- A. Be well-balanced and self-controlled so as to keep a cool, calm and collected mind.
- B. Paul gave Timothy a present imperative command to be stable so that he would be continually on the alert, yet calm and careful regardless of the season.
- C. This attentiveness and calm assurance would protect him from being surprised and confused when those who professed Christ turned away from the Word unto fables and myths.

II. “Endure afflictions.”

- A. Be prepared to suffer physical pain, hardship, troubles, problems, difficulties, evils or distress.
- B. In secular Greek *kakopatheo* was frequently used to describe the hardships associated with military service.
- C. Timothy was certain to experience reproach and persecution (2 Timothy 3:12), but such experiences were not to confuse his sobriety and calm demeanor.
- D. There is no such thing as a faithful ministry that is not costly; a painless ministry is a shallow and fruitless ministry.

CHARTS & OUTLINES

III. “Do the work of an evangelist.”

- A. Do the work of a “gospelizer,” literally of the “good message teller.”
- B. Timothy was to perform this task with urgency and resolve (aorist imperative), obeying this sharp command given with military snap and curtness.
- C. This would certainly include keeping the message clear, simple and to the point, as well as not relying on manipulative techniques but rather on the power of God (as did Paul, Romans 1:16).

IV. “Fulfill your ministry.”

- A. Here Timothy was commanded to accomplish his ministry fully and wholeheartedly.
- B. He was to carry out his ministry to its end, completing all its demands and requirements.
- C. Paul gave a similar command to Archippus (Colossians 4:17).
- D. We should strive with every fiber of our being, like Paul, to fight a good fight, finish our course and keep the faith (2 Timothy 4:7).

Conclusion:

- 1. There will be times, as a preacher, when people will turn us off and not listen.
- 2. The preacher must keep preaching the Word anyway.
- 3. We must not concede the battle to the enemy.
- 4. We must defend the truth when popular and even when it is not appreciated. 

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

Jesus uttered, *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it”* (Matthew 7:13-14 NKJV.) The worldly proclaim, “How narrow!” – “How judgmental!” – “How restrictive!” – “How confining!” – “How exclusive!” Yet, how true! God’s perspective and that of His spiritual children today – Christians – corresponds not to world views but to the Holy Spirit inspired, written Word of God – the Bible. **God’s viewpoint is the only viewpoint that matters!**

LEARNING FROM THE FOOL

Gary C. Hampton

Words written to or about the fool are very potent teachers in the Proverbs. Often, they show us what to do by exploring the mistakes of the foolish.

For instance, the foolish do not listen to instruction, especially from God. Yet, God is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10; Psalm 111:10; Job 28:28). The foolish do not fear Jehovah, and therefore, they “*despise wisdom and instruction*” (Proverbs 1:7; cf., 2 Peter 2:10). Because of this, there are admonitions in the Scriptures concerning the teaching of such foolish people (Proverbs 23:9; Matthew 7:6; Acts 13:46; 18:5-6). Those who are righteous and would be wise bow to God’s Word and heed His instruction (Jeremiah 10:23; Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Words written to or about the fool are very potent teachers in the Proverbs. Often, they show us what to do by exploring the mistakes of the foolish.

Instead of listening to God, the foolish man will substitute his own way (Proverbs 1:29-31; Hosea 4:6; 2 Kings 5:11-12). He will let prosperity and ease lull him into a state of total disregard for God’s law (Proverbs 1:32; Job 21:13-15; Luke 12:19-20). While those who practice such will be destroyed, the righteous, who have listened to wisdom, will be sustained by God (Proverbs 1:33; 1 John 2:17; Psalm 25:12-13; 112:6-7).

The tongue of a fool can be a brutal instrument (Proverbs 14:3; Psalm 64:3). Learning to hold that tongue and be quiet can even make him appear wise (Proverbs 17:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:11). The fool opens his mouth without thinking or listening (Proverbs 18:6-7, 13; James 1:19; 3:3-9).

So, the fool would teach us to heed God’s instruction, accept God’s way, watch for the dangers of ease and guard our tongues. Will we let the fool teach us? 

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



Bible Word Scramble

Rebecca Rushmore

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

Genesis 2:24 8th word _____

Matthew 5:32 14th word _____

Mark 10:9 3rd word _____

Romans 7:2 8th word _____

1 Corinthians 7:10 4th word _____

1 Timothy 3:12 9th word _____

1 Timothy 5:14 22nd word _____

Hebrews 13:4 13th word _____

Bible text: New King James (NKJV)

(See the back cover for answer.)

So Much To Do, So Little Time

Rebecca Rushmore

As a general rule, people tend to identify more easily with others similar to themselves. This feeling of special understanding is not always limited to the people around us. How many times have you read the Bible and felt you understood the ways of one character better than another? Part of the reason for this may have to do with personality.

Though there are many ways to categorize personalities, one way divides people into four personality types. These categories are the sanguine, the choleric, the melancholy and the phlegmatic. Each kind of personality has general characteristics associated with it. Though the characteristics may not be true for all people with that personality, they are generally true for many such individuals. All four personality types have general strengths and weaknesses with which people must contend. No one personality type is better than any other. All four have good and bad qualities; all four are needed to make this world a better place.

For the next few moments, let's consider some Bible characters from one of the above personality types. Since these individuals cannot complete a personality test to show us their personality type, we have to use what is written on the pages of the Bible. By looking at what each wrote, did or said, we can get a good idea of their respective personality types. The goal of such a study is to see people like us serving God to the best of their abilities and providing great examples for us to follow.

The **choleric** personality type is a very strong individual. These people are your born leaders. They are characterized by being hard workers, very productive and independent. Along with this comes a tendency to be strong-willed. A choleric can easily organize and run just about anything

BIBLE CHARACTERS

to which he sets his or her mind. He or she is constantly busy making good decisions and acting on them.

Along with these good qualities, however, come some weaknesses. The choleric tends to be very short-tempered. These people are easily angered and often have explosions of temper. The natural leadership skills of this personality many times go beyond what others would like. Choleric are often bossy and domineering. They want things done their way immediately and are not shy about saying so. Such people thrive on controversy and enjoy arguments.

A choleric individual is normally a good worker. He makes a good leader and will likely finish what he starts. This person is not easily intimidated, though he often intimidates others. He thrives on control, wants things his way and needs lots of achievement and appreciation. If you run into a workaholic or someone who loves to tell you what to do and when, you have just met the average choleric.

The Bible character that fits the characteristics of a choleric best is probably the apostle Paul. James, Martha and Titus are other individuals who were probably choleric. However, much more is known about Paul, and so, many more choleric tendencies are evident. For further study of James, see his epistle. Martha's choleric traits are found in Luke 10:40 and John 12:1-2. The writings of Paul (2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:6, 13; 8:6) give us the little information we have about Titus.

Like James, Martha and Titus, Paul was a hard worker. His industry and productivity are shown by his missionary journeys, letters to the Christians of the first century and verses like 1 Thessalonians 2:9. ***“For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God”*** (NKJV).

We also see evidence of a confident but intolerant man. Paul was so sure he was doing the right thing in persecuting Christians that he said, ***“...I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day”*** (Acts 23:1). In his confidence, Paul (Saul, his Hebrew name, Acts 9:1) was intolerant of Christianity. However, once he was taught the truth, Paul used his

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confidence and intolerance in God's service. In writing to the Corinthians, he condemned their lack of shame and acceptance of gross immorality and corruption in the church (1 Corinthians 5-6). He did so with the confidence that he was doing God's will. (Whereas the apostles could teach no error, they were not flawless in their practice of Christianity, Galatians 2:11-14). We, like Paul, should be confident in our faith and intolerant of perversions of that faith. On matters of opinion, though, we should have tolerance to keep the peace or to prevent others from stumbling (1 Corinthians 8).

Paul also demonstrated a measure of resourcefulness and leadership in his character. When preaching to those around him, he used language they could understand. In Acts 17, Paul preached to the people of Athens. Before speaking, he noticed an altar to **"the unknown god"** (Acts 17:23). He, then, used this part of their lives to teach Jesus. Paul's leadership is seen in his many missionary journeys and writings. He was able to show people how to live and to teach, by both example and by the written word.

Many choleric's are not known for their tact, patience and self-sacrifices or affection for others. However, we do see these characteristics in Paul. In his letters, he first told his readers what was good about their lives or work, and then, Paul gently but firmly instructed them how to change what was wrong. His patience is evident in the many signs he performed, letters he wrote and visits he made to the churches. Paul's whole life after his conversion was a sacrifice for the Lord. Consider the following two passages.

Are they ministers of Christ? – I speak as a fool – I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness – besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep

BIBLE CHARACTERS

concern for all the churches. (2 Corinthians 11:23-28)

Though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ. (Philippians 3:4-8)

As a Jew, Paul had bragging rights. He had achieved the highest level in the Jewish world that he could possibly attain. He had the best education he could hope to acquire. Paul could go no higher in the Jewish sphere. Yet, all that the world held in high esteem, he counted as nothing. Paul was also a Roman citizen, which gave him much advantage in a world ruled with the Roman fist. His citizenship by birth gave him freedom and rights other Jews and Gentiles could never attain. Even with all this, Paul suffered more than we can really imagine – all for Christ. His love and affection are evident from beginning to end when reading Paul’s letters to individuals or to congregations. What can cause such behavior, unusual to this personality type? The answer is Christ. God is a great influence in the lives of those who let Him in. God took the weaknesses of Paul and turned them to work for good. He used Paul’s strengths in leadership and persuasion to lead many people to the Gospel.

Do you see many of Paul’s character traits in yourself? If so, you are possibly a choleric also. The choleric of this world have their work cut out for them. Their leadership skills and hard-working nature are sorely needed in the church. At the same time, these people (like Paul, Martha, James and Titus) need to let Christ help them control their tempers, bridle their tongues and be affectionate, self-sacrificing individuals for the Lord. 

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Were the Apostles Baptized and Was Apollos Baptized a Second Time?

Louis Rushmore

These two questions are related: **“Were the apostles baptized?”** and **“Was Apollos baptized a second time?”** The New Testament neither records the instances of the apostles being baptized nor of a second baptism of Apollos. However, Scripture implies that neither the apostles nor Apollos needed to be baptized **after** the establishment of the Lord’s church, about which one reads in Acts 2.

The baptism administered by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1-6), his disciples and the disciples of Jesus (John 4:1-2) – **before** the establishment of the church – involved repentance (Matthew 3:2) “for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4). *“...The word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a **baptism of repentance for the remission of sins**”* (Luke 3:2-3). Jesus Christ preached the same message as John upon the beginning of His earthly ministry (Matthew 4:17). It is reasonable to conclude that the disciples of John and the apostles of Jesus Christ were themselves baptized in John the Baptist’s baptism since (1) they baptized others, and (2) our Lord Jesus was also baptized (Matthew 3:13-17).

Regarding Apollos, since he was baptizing others in John’s baptism, it is reasonable to conclude that he himself had already been baptized in John’s baptism. He was unaware of the baptism of the Great Commission (Acts 18:24-25; Mark 16:15-16).

This man [Apollos] had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. (Acts 18:25-26)

BIBLE QUESTIONS



On the birthday of the Lord's church in Acts 2, the 3,000 converts (Acts 2:41) **"were added to them"** – **"added to the church"** (Acts 2:47). The apostles and all the disciples who had been baptized in John's baptism **before** the establishment of the church comprised the "them" and "the church" to which the 3,000 new converts were added. John's baptism was valid **prior** to the establishment of the church, whereas the Great Commission baptism was valid **after** the establishment of the church. There is no indication whatsoever that anyone who was baptized in John's baptism while it was valid – **before** the establishment of the church – was called upon to be baptized anew in the

Great Commission baptism **after** the establishment of the church. **The only reason for which 12 believers were rebaptized in the Great Commission baptism is because John's baptism was no longer valid at the time it was administered to them** (Acts 19:1-7).

John's baptism pointed souls **forward** to Jesus Christ as the Messiah, whereas the baptism of the Great Commission points souls **backward** to Jesus Christ (Acts 19:4). The directional significance regarding Jesus Christ was sufficient reason for the twelve men of Acts 19:7 to be rebaptized. Therefore, denominational baptisms whose purposes vary from the purpose of the Great Commission baptism (e.g., to become a member of a denominational church, because one thinks he or she is already saved, etc.) are suspect and no more valid than John's baptism after it was no longer valid and had been replaced with the baptism of the Great Commission.

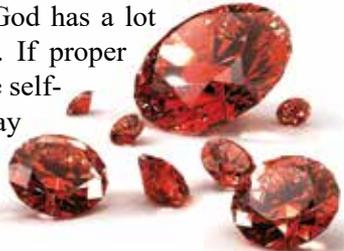
BIBLE QUESTIONS

The soul-saving blood of our Lord Jesus Christ flows forward from Calvary's cross to the present, as well as backward all the way to the time of Adam and Eve. It was no more needful for the apostles (and other disciples) to whom John's baptism had been administered **prior** to the beginning of the church to be immersed in the Great Commission baptism than would it somehow, were it possible, for Adam and Eve, Noah, Joshua or others who lived under Patriarchy and Judaism to be baptized in the Great Commission baptism. The righteous who obeyed God under Patriarchy and Judaism are members of the eternal kingdom as are also those who have obeyed and those today who obey God respecting Christianity via the New Testament. Both John's baptism and the baptism of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:38) were preached respecting repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The latter replaced the former, but the Great Commission baptism did not invalidate John's baptism concerning those who were baptized in it **when it was valid or in force.** †

Robison's Rubies

“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:8-10). Love

is a powerful principle. Obedience to God has a lot to do with how we treat other people. If proper love motivates a person, he will exercise self-control to not hurt someone else in any way – physically, emotionally or spiritually. Love does no harm to a neighbor.



PROVERBS 17:22



The Most Hilarious Things Court Reporters Have Ever Reported To Be Said in Court:

LAWYER: Can you describe what the person who attacked you looked like?

WITNESS: No. He was wearing a mask.

LAWYER: What was he wearing under the mask?

WITNESS: Er...his face.



LAWYER: This myasthenia gravis, does it affect your memory at all?

WITNESS: Yes.

LAWYER: And in what ways does it affect your memory?

WITNESS: I forget..

LAWYER: You forget? Can you give us an example of something you forgot?



LAWYER: You say that the stairs went down to the basement?

WITNESS: Yes.

LAWYER: And these stairs, did they go up also?



LAWYER: How old is your son, the one living with you?

WITNESS: Thirty-eight or thirty-five, I can't remember which.

LAWYER: How long has he lived with you?

WITNESS: Forty-five years.



LAWYER: How far apart were the vehicles at the time of the collision?



LAWYER: Were you acquainted with the deceased?

WITNESS: Yes sir.

LAWYER: Before or after he died?



LAWYER: You were there until the time you left, is that true?



PROVERBS 17:22

LAWYER: Have you lived in this town all your life?

WITNESS: Not yet.



LAWYER: Were you alone or by yourself?



LAWYER: And what did he do then?

WITNESS: He came home, and the next morning he was dead.

LAWYER: So when he woke up the next morning he was dead?



LAWYER: What is your date of birth?

WITNESS: July 18th.

LAWYER: What year?

WITNESS: Every year.



LAWYER: Could you see him from where you were standing?

WITNESS: I could see his head.

LAWYER: And where was his head?

WITNESS: Just above his shoulders.



LAWYER: Do you have any children or anything of that kind?



LAWYER: Did you blow your horn or anything?

WITNESS: After the accident?

LAWYER: Before the accident.

WITNESS: Sure, I played for ten years. I even went to school for it.



LAWYER: You don't know what it was, and you didn't know what it looked like, but can you describe it?



LAWYER: Do you know if your daughter has ever been involved in voodoo or the occult?

WITNESS: We both do.

LAWYER: Voodoo?

WITNESS: We do.

LAWYER: You do?

WITNESS: Yes, voodoo.



LAWYER: Were you present when your picture was taken?



The Faces of World Evangelism

The Beginning of The Voice of Truth International



J.C. wrote his first book (Sermon Outlines) at the age of 30. When he and Betty Burton married and then moved to Pakistan, later to Sri Lanka and India, to do mission work, his follow-up tool for radio and TV programs and for personal outreach was always printed materials – weekly papers and monthly magazines. He was convinced that the church, as a whole, needed a well-written, inexpensive magazine for its own use and for distributing to friends and relatives who were not members of the church.

Brother Byron Nichols was signed on as the official Editor of the proposed magazine, and the first issue of *The Voice of Truth International* was published in May of 1993. The current volume, 119, is a triumph in continuation and growth. Not only are 8,000 copies printed and distributed in English in color (for India and 15 additional countries), but another 18,500 copies are printed in 4 of the local languages. 7,000 copies are printed in Tanzania in Swahili and shipped to 5 neighboring countries, with 18,500 copies shipped to 6 additional African countries. More than 12,000 magazines are shipped from the US office to 35 countries worldwide each quarter.

FROM THE HEART OF

Total? Approximately 60,000 copies of *The Voice of Truth International* are working night and day to spread the message of salvation to souls throughout the world. Some of the expense is covered by subscriptions as American churches order boxes of 35 copies for use within their congregations and for local evangelism. Because all of the magazines in overseas printing are distributed free of charge, monthly contributions are made by caring Christians to *The Voice of Truth International* and mailed to P.O. Box 72, Winona, MS 38967. †

A Family Undertaking: Wayne and Janet Barrier & family

Janet and I have been associated with World Evangelism since 1982, and since 1996, we have worked under the oversight and sponsorship of the Double Springs, Alabama congregation of the church. Our work, World Evangelism Missions, is focused on conducting coordinated mass evangelism, follow-up teaching and training school programs. Mass media efforts are done in cooperation with the Winona and Ocala World Evangelism teams.



We now operate Bible schools in countries throughout Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, Myanmar, China, India, Malaysia and Nepal. An average of 600 students receive training each year with about 150

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enrolled in 2- to 3-year programs. We coordinate campaign and follow-up evangelism teams that operate from about 30 locations to provide personal contact and teaching to thousands every year. Additionally, we assist with several projects in South America and East Africa.

Our sons Jamie, Joey and Jeremy work with us. Joey is co-director of the Double Springs work, and Jeremy directs work under the oversight of the Madison church of Christ in Madison, Alabama. Our daughter and her husband, Jenny and Mike Johnson, work with the church in Eastpoint, Florida as domestic missionaries. We have seven grandchildren, all of whom participate in our work. Our home is in Florence, Alabama. ✝

The Birth of an International Magazine: Byron and Gay Nichols

It was interesting looking back through my records regarding the preparation, printing and distribution of Volume 1 of *The Voice of Truth International*. All of the preliminary activity began in late 1991, and the printing of Volume 1 was completed in May 1993.

I continue to enjoy reading once again the great number of expressions of appreciation and admiration received from brethren and others from coast to coast, as well as those from other countries.



FROM THE HEART OF

Byron served as the Managing Editor for years, bringing together dozens of excellent writers and building up the distribution of the magazine to include not only subscribers all over the U.S., but over 60 foreign countries also received *The Voice of Truth International*. He became the Editor when J.C. died (2008). Byron continued to serve in that role until his retirement. During this time, the magazine continued to grow in its reach across the country and the world. †

*Louis,
Bonnie,
Rebecca
& Martha
Rushmore*



My late wife Bonnie and I agreed on July 1, 2007 to become World Evangelism team members, though it took us until October 2007 to raise enough funds to physically move our belongings to Winona, Mississippi. I was serving as the minister and as one of the elders for a small congregation in West Virginia. Over the years, I had been printing local lectureship books and stationery, as well as publishing my own books and tracts. For over a decade I edited and published a monthly online Gospel magazine – *Gospel Gazette Online* – and before that, *GGO* appeared in various printed forms. It was my distinct honor also

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to have taught in the West Virginia School of Preaching for 10 years.

Once in Winona, we gravitated toward areas of work – as did other team members – for which we had education, aptitude and a particular interest. For Bonnie and me, that meant not only sharing duties with everyone else to keep the office and warehouse functioning smoothly, but eventually, we began to help layout pages for *The Voice of Truth International* quarterly magazine. Between stateside travels to raise funds and overseas mission trips to India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Singapore and Guyana, we were typically away from home parts of 40 or more weeks annually. Our adult daughter Rebecca introduced us to the work in Guyana, and she participated with us in a mission trip to Myanmar. Bonnie died in 2015, and two years later, her best friend Martha and I wed. (Her husband and our friend had also passed away in 2015.) Martha and I continued the stateside trips and foreign travels with the exception that I never got back to Sri Lanka. In later years, I was privileged to be selected by our team members to be the Editor of *VOTI*. More recently, I've been appointed to the eldership of the congregation where we worship in Florida. I continue to write books and tracts, plus articles that appear in both magazines. †

Jerry & Paula Bates: Mainstays for World Evangelism

Jerry and Paula both obeyed Christ in baptism at a youthful age and taught Bible classes early in their Christian walk. Both grew up in West Tennessee, about 45 minutes apart, but they did not meet each other until age 25. They have two married daughters, Lynette and Cathy, who both live in Jonesboro, Arkansas. Lynette has two sons, and Cathy has one son.

In 1989, Jerry started preaching every Sunday while also running his own business. After three years, he sold his business and began full-time preaching in Palestine, Arkansas. In 1998, they moved to Paragould, Arkansas where they were houseparents at the children's home. While there, Jerry also preached at Greenway, Arkansas. In 2002, they moved

FROM THE HEART OF

to Corinth, Mississippi and began to work with the Fraley's Chapel congregation. Jerry also served as an elder while preaching for that congregation. They made one mission trip nearly every year during that time.

In 2007, they moved to Winona, Mississippi and began full-time mission work with World Evangelism and The Voice of Truth International. In the beginning, their emphasis was Southeast Asia, primarily India. It was not long before Jerry also began teaching at some Bear Valley extension schools. This led to traveling to



several countries in Africa. This in turn resulted in increased opportunities to print World Evangelism literature in several countries in Africa. On most of their trips, Paula traveled as well, teaching many children's and ladies' classes.

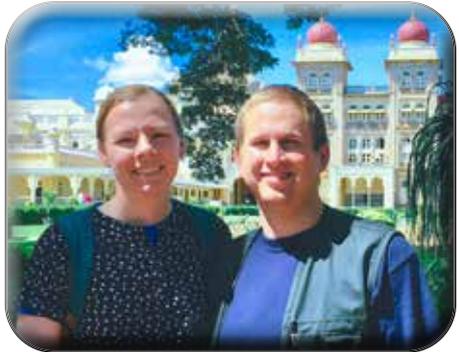
In 2019, Jerry was banned from entering India but continues to coordinate with the Indian brethren with various works, such as TV and literature. Paula works daily with the accounting aspect of the office. Since 2019, they have turned more attention to Africa, primarily Zimbabwe and Uganda. Recently, they have also begun traveling more to the Philippines and currently sponsor one radio program with plans to expand that to more programs. They currently work primarily in the Philippines, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Tanzania and Ghana, but they have also traveled to several other countries preaching or teaching the Gospel and coordinating the printing and distribution of massive amounts of literature. In addition, Jerry also teaches some online Bible classes and seminars for various countries. From the beginning of full-time mission work, the Strickland Church of Christ near Corinth, Mississippi has served as their sponsoring congregation. ✝

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FROM THE HEART OF

World Travelers: Shane & Emily Fisher

We have been laboring with World Evangelism in Winona, MS since 2019, after doing mission work in South Korea for four years. Much of our first year was spent raising support in order to do the work, and the Lord blessed us to be able to make our first trip to India in the fall of 2019. In addition to making extensive mission trips throughout the year, we



both serve daily in the office with various tasks, writing for *The Voice of Truth International* and *Gospel Gazette Online*, as well as teaching online.

It has been a blessing to work with brethren around the world, expanding the work through translations, distributions of literature and mass media exposure to reach the lost and edify and strengthen local congregations and Christians. Most of the World Evangelism publications have been digitized and placed on the website: www.worldevangelismlibrary.org for easy downloading and sharing with others – free of charge. We encourage you to take advantage of these resources to aid you in your own evangelistic efforts. Please give us a call (662-283-1192) if we can help you with anything! ✝

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What Can You Do to Help Spread the Word?

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

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

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

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

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

To speed up your announcement that you want to help,
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◆ We want to give \$_____ each month to help send this magazine to mission fields of the world, including the USA.

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

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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (page 24)

1. Grace of God.
2. Deep poverty.
3. They gave more than should.
4. Begged him with much urgency.
5. They first gave themselves to the Lord.
6. Faith, speech, knowledge, diligence & love.
7. The sincerity of their love.
8. Rich, poor.
9. So that we might become rich.
10. To complete what they had begun.
11. If we have a willing mind, it is accepted according to what we have.
12. So that some would not be burdened, while others were at ease.
13. Israelites in the wilderness gathering manna.

Scavenger Hunt (page 90)

1. Silvanus, Timothy (1:1)
2. their patience and faith (1:4)
3. "His mighty angels" (1:7)
4. "the Lord will consume... and destroy" (2:8)
5. "strong delusion" (2:11)
6. "by our gospel" (2:14)
7. by word and epistle (2:15)
8. "every brother who walks disorderly" (3:6)
9. so the person would be ashamed (3:14)
10. "admonish him as a brother" (3:15)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Bible Word Scramble (page 94)

Marriage

Bible Find (page 59)





The Voice of Truth International

The Voice of Truth International is printed in, or shipped to, these countries:

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Nepal

Nepali: 2,000 copies

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Nigeria

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English: 5,000 copies

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English: 1,800 copies

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English: 3,000 copies

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TRUTH!!!**