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Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?

Men have been arguing about the resurrection of Jesus through the centuries. Did He, or did He not, come forth from the grave? For those who question the reality of His resurrection, there are a number of considerations to face.

1. The empty tomb. Even the critics of Jesus took the fact of the empty tomb for granted (Matthew 28:13-15; John 20:15).

2. The disciples' eyewitness experiences of the risen Christ. They were not expecting it though Jesus had spoken of His resurrection. When He did appear to them, they became reluctant believers. It was too good to be true, but they had seen Him . . . (1 Corinthians 15:17-19).

No time for legend to develop. And they did it in the very city where He had been crucified. Their testimony was that God had raised Him from the dead.

4. The apostles were changed men. At the death of Jesus they had proven themselves craven cowards and had fled. Peter even denied that he knew the Lord. But these men were changed into courageous confessors and bold witnesses. They now believed that Jesus had been raised from the dead and were willing to die for their convictions. It's not easy to explain away such a change.

5. The resurrection of Christ became the heart and core of their preaching. They freely admitted that if the resurrection was not true then everything else was worthless (1 Corinthians 15:17-19).

6. The failure of the Sanhedrin to silence the apostles. The Jewish leaders could not disprove their message even though they had both the power and motivation to do so.

7. The Lord's Day. The church began to worship on Sunday even though the Sabbath (Saturday) had been kept for countless generations.

8. Saul's conversion. His ministry to the Gentiles can scarcely be explained apart from the resurrection of Jesus.

Considerations such as these cause me to have great confidence in the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. I believe.

Dan Lightfoot

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

A WORD . . .

". . . CHRIST . . . LOVED THE CHURCH AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR IT, THAT HE MIGHT SANCTIFY AND CLEANSE IT. . ." (Ephesians 5:25).

People minimize the importance of the church, saying that our focal point should be Christ alone, and what He did.

But in actuality, *God's* focal point is the church! In the stream of history, His goal was not the death of Christ, but what that death accomplished — the restoration to Himself of the souls of men. This is the definition of the church: *a body of humans restored to God!* In this sense, Christ Himself served the church, and His death was the means to the end God sought.

No, we must not minimize the One who died to make life possible, but neither should we be guilty of minimizing the prize so precious to God that He made the supreme sacrifice in order to obtain it for Himself.

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It's a good idea to place copies of THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL *in public reading areas! Have you tried it yet?*

WHY BLAME THE PREACHER?

J. C. CHOATE
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The preacher's God-given responsibility is to proclaim the Word (1 Timothy 2:7). In his chosen role he is called, sent, and commanded to *preach the gospel* (Mark 16:15). *"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine"* (2 Timothy 4:2). The message he proclaims does not originate with himself but with God. If, therefore, the preacher declares the word of God, and you are not happy with what you hear, *don't blame the preacher.*

As a young man, before marriage and a family, I remember that whenever I spoke on the subject of children, and on the duties of parents in rearing them, various ones in the congregation would remark, "Just wait until you have children of your own!" It was as though I would change my preaching at that point, because of discovering as a parent that I was unable to practice what I was telling others. Well, I have children, even grandchildren, but I still have not changed what I preach about rearing children. Even if I had, that would not have changed the truth. God's Word remains the truth on that subject — or any other subject — whether I practice it or not.

When the work of women is being taught in Bible classes, often there will be a discussion concerning whether or not Paul was "down on women." Evidently even Christians don't stop to think that *Paul was being guided by the Holy Spirit in his writing.* What he said was not his *own opinion* or idea, but the *Word of the Lord.* No, Paul was not "down on women." Hearers

might not like what Paul said, but they shouldn't blame Paul. He was only saying what the Lord told him to say.

Today when a preacher speaks about baptism *[. . . Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost;* Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3,4], or about the one church *[. . . upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it;* Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:5], or that the Christian must give as God has prospered him *[Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come;* 1 Corinthians 16:2], there are those who will get angry at him.

If he preaches that one should marry only a Christian *[Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers . . .* and *. . . if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord* 2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Corinthians 7:39], and that the Christian should dress modestly (1 Timothy 3:15; 2:9), or that if one is unfaithful to his or her companion, he or she cannot marry again without committing adultery (Matthew 19:9; Romans 7:3), then those guilty of such things generally blame the preacher and have bad things to say about him. They may even move to another congregation, looking for a preacher who is more sympathetic to their lifestyle.

My question in all of this is, "Why blame the preacher?" If he is not teaching the truth, one should not pay any attention to him anyway. On the other hand, if he is preaching the Word, then that truth should be accepted as coming from God and not from man. So, don't blame the preacher. If you're going to blame anyone, blame God. In dealing with the truth — God's will — you have a choice: you can either believe it and obey it, or you can reject it and refuse to comply with it. In this life you can make the choice and you can live with it. But remember, when you stand before the Lord at the judgment, you will not be answering to a preacher but to God. You will then be judged by what the Word says, not by what some man says or by what your personal preference "re-wrote" it to say (John 12:48). ✝

DISCIPLESHIP

Byron Nichols
Managing Editor

Because of the fact that the church is made up of human beings, the church has its imperfections. This does not mean at all that God intended for the church to be imperfect. If we succeeded in being exactly like God and Christ wants us to be, the church would not have any weaknesses, any imperfections. From almost the very birth of the church in the first century, of which we read in Acts chapter two, problems have arisen. The human element has always been very apparent. For example, in the church there has always been a problem of apathy, indifference, lethargy, laziness — but actually these terms do not designate the problem — they are the result of the problem. The real problem is a lack of understanding of what is involved in discipleship and the failure to be truly committed to that.

The word "disciple" means literally "a learner." It comes from another word meaning "to learn," indicating the involvement of thought accompanied by endeavor. Thus, it denotes one who follows someone's teachings. A disciple was not only a pupil, he was an adherent. Disciples are thus spoken of in the New Testament as imitators of their teacher.

I like F. W. Farrar's definition of a disciple. He described the disciple of Christ as "one who believes His doctrines, rests upon His sacrifice, imbibes His spirit, and imitates His example."

With this brief background regarding the word "disciple" before us, let's now look at the terms of discipleship which were laid down by Jesus Himself. (1) In Matthew 16:24 Jesus said that it is necessary that His disciples deny themselves, take up their own crosses, and follow Him. Surely self-denial must be the most difficult aspect of being a disciple of Jesus. The follower of Jesus is also told that he/she must also be willing to follow the example of Jesus in bearing his/her own cross of burdens and trials. (2) In addition, in Luke 14:26ff Jesus states that one who would be His disciple must hate his own family. The Lord certainly did not intend for us to think

that we must hate in the way that the word is usually used. "Hate" here has reference to the relative preference for one thing over another. Our love for Him is to be so great that, by comparison, our love for our family is as if it were hatred. (3) Then in Luke 14:33 Jesus declares that the disciple must forsake or renounce all. Christ accepts only those who are willing to place serving Him above everything else in this life. These terms of discipleship are certainly demanding. Apparently discipleship is not something which is to be taken lightly.

Becoming a disciple (or Christian) is one thing; being a disciple is another. In Luke 14:27 we learn that Jesus requires His disciples to follow Him. What is involved in following Jesus?

A. Counting the cost (Luke 14:28-35; 2 Peter 2:20-22).

B. Sacrifice. Jesus demands first place. In Luke 5:11 they left all. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus says to seek Him first.

C. Continuing in Christ's word. In John 8:31,32 Jesus said, *"If you continue in My word, then you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* It should be obvious to all that in order to **continue** in Christ's word we must first of all **know** His word. It should be no wonder then that the Holy Spirit led Paul to instruct Timothy and us, *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"* (2 Timothy 2:15).

D. Following in Christ's footsteps. Being a disciple of Jesus necessitates our following in His footsteps as they lead us to:

1. The wilderness of temptation.
2. The house of worship.
3. Fields of service.
4. The mountain of prayer.
5. The garden of despair.
6. The cross of suffering.
7. The valley of death.
8. The throne of God.

All who would be disciples of Jesus need to be assured that the steps of Jesus do not end in the dark valley of suffering and death, but rather they proceed into Heaven and to the very throne of God (Revelation 3:21).

There are many different kinds of disciples in our world. Some are disciples of Christ, but many are disciples of false gods and of mere men. It is hoped that each one who calls himself/herself a disciple of Jesus will take more care to follow in His footsteps. True discipleship will change the world. ✝

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OUR GOAL

Realizing that the responsibility given to the church by our Lord was the evangelization of the world, it seemed imperative to us that there be a publication for the church on a world-wide scale. **THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL** is our answer to that need.

Our goal is to use this magazine as no other has been used in the history of the church. In addition to the mailing of bundles to more than 50 countries, individual volumes have been printed for free distribution in 10 nations outside the United States.

We urge mission-minded churches to help us in our stand for the truth by supporting this work. Please call 601-283-1192.

JCC

Made in His Image

"Made in His image . . ."
What does it mean?
It is said of Him,
"God is love"
and perhaps those words enfold
His attributes
and all of ours, too.

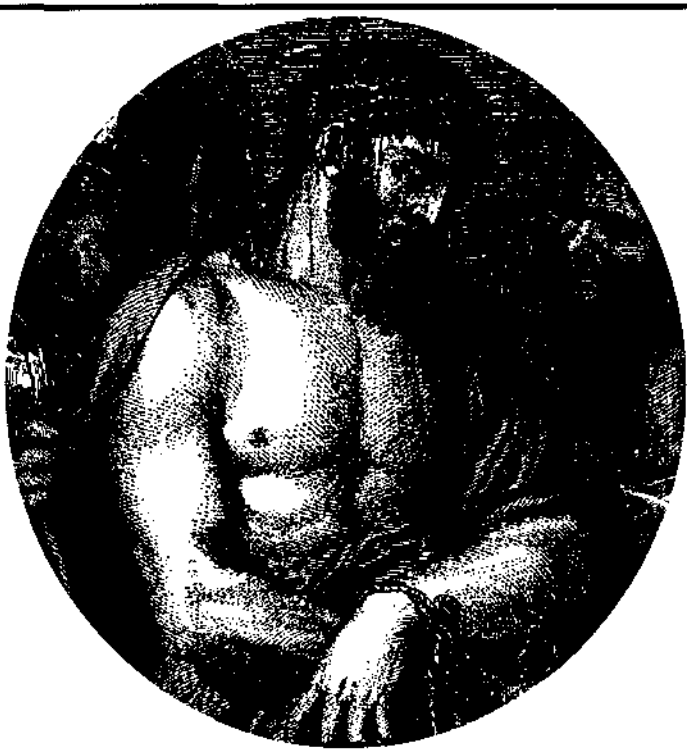
For what are purpose
and longing,
happiness,
contentment,
and fulfillment,
trust,
strength,
and even hope
but the varying fruits of love
within our hearts?

And what are disappointment
and sorrow,
pain and, yes,
despair,
but the vulnerableness
of love?

And I think that, perhaps,
greed,
and lust,
and even hate
are that same emotion
run amuck
like cancer cells within a man,
the fruit of sin
destroying
all that once they built.

Is it so?

Betty Burton Choate



BEHOLD THE MAN

Ron Bryant

Pilate is the man in charge, but he is on the spot. He has been pained and embarrassed by the Jews again and again, and now they demand that he release a known insurrectionist and murderer named Barabbas, and put to death one in whom he can find no crime. His dilemma? He is duty-bound to keep the peace, and he is charged with the dispensing of justice. Sending an innocent man to execution would make him a participant in a judicial murder, but he does not want to face the wrath of Rome if the peace is not kept. He realizes that the right political move to make is to find Jesus guilty, but the evidence forces

him to declare that he can find nothing in the man deserving of death. That should have settled the matter. Pilate said of Jesus, "*He is not guilty.*" Then he hesitates.

Pilate cannot change the mind of those who cry out for the death of Jesus, and while not agreeing in sentiment with their demand, he moves to have Jesus scourged. The act of scourging was a brutal, life-threatening ordeal and was a major part of the pain to be brought upon a condemned man. Pilate gives the order and the soldiers carry out this judicial beating. They then proceed to plait a crown of thorns and place it upon Jesus' head. Additionally, they put on Him a purple robe (verse 2). According to the record, this is the second beating at the hands of the soldiers — the first being at the behest of Herod. Pilate then set Jesus forth, doing so, according to the narrative, that the accusers of Jesus would know that Pilate could find no fault in him (verse 3).

Then there is a statement from Pilate that is unusual and yet capable of magnificent application. One can discern in this statement a number of things. For instance, it evidences a pity for Jesus, whom Pilate regards to be innocent. In His character He is innocent, but His position is one of tragedy and sadness. Yet, in his pity for Jesus there is also a contempt. For this man, who claims to be a king, who claims to bear witness to the truth, stands in chains, beaten — but unyielding. Jesus gave Pilate no way out. The Jews gave him no way out. And so, in addition to being frustrated by the answers of Jesus, in Pilate's statement there is the suggestion of disgust for these accusers of this innocent man. Pilate could read their motives and he despised their hatred toward Jesus. He says "look at this man . . . look at him with some degree of humanity and sympathy."

But the accusers were untouched by the misery or anguish of Jesus. They felt no sympathy for this person, nor cared for His desperate condition. They dismissed any thought of innocence, of nobility of character, any dignity of person. They dismissed any thought of consequence for their actions of hatred and injustice. They had no kindness toward their despised victim.

This same Jesus who stood on exhibition before Pilate and before the people of Jerusalem almost 2,000 years ago stands before all who hear the Gospel. The words of Pilate re-echo the powerful invitation to all to whom the Word is preached: **"Behold the Man!"** ✝

Ron Bryant preaches for the Camelback congregation in Phoenix, Arizona, U. S. A.

GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF TO MANKIND

Don L. Norwood

God has revealed Himself to mankind through the creation of the universe (Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1-4) and through the agency of heavenly angels as His messengers (Judges 13:2-4; Galatians 3:19). In this last dispensation He has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ. Christ became human flesh and lived among mankind for about thirty years. His teaching, miracles, and His death and resurrection proved Him to be the Son of God (Romans 1:4; Hebrews 2:1-4). The Scripture says of Him that He was the Word of God made flesh (John 1:14). To see Christ is to see the Father (John 14:9). Christ has revealed the Father's will to the whole world through the New Testament Scriptures (John 14:26; 16:13; Hebrews 1:1,2; 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Peter 1:20,21). Not only does the New Testament have within its pages all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), but these Scriptures reveal the character of God and His Holy Will for all mankind today (Colossians 1:15; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Hebrews 1:1-5; 2 Corinthians 5:19).

The Holy Spirit inspired the Psalmist to write about the Lord and His grace and watchcare over all human beings who will love Him and have faith in Him without doubt and wavering (Psalm 33:4-22; 34:1-10). Christ promised mankind that He and the Father would spiritually dwell with the Christians if they would faithfully obey His teachings (John 14:21,23). Remember, for a person to be righteous in God's sight that person must obey the Gospel of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19-21; Romans 1:16,17; Romans 8:1,14; Galatians 3:26,27). Then consider what the Psalmist said about a righteous person's relationship with God (Psalm 37:25).

Remember, we humans must study the Scriptures to be approved of God (2 Timothy 2:15). Christ will save only those who obey Him (Hebrews 5:8,9). ✝

Don L. Norwood preaches the Gospel in Mason, Texas, U. S. A.

"I Am The Resurrection"

John Dobbs

To a weeping, heartbroken, grief-stricken friend, Jesus gave the most awesome message of the universe. Martha's brother Lazarus was dead. Her only plea to the Lord was that if He had been there, her brother would not have had to die. Jesus assured her with the words, "*Your brother will rise again.*" Martha was a woman of great faith in God. "*I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.*" Indeed he will, as will all of the dead.

But into that moment of a bittersweet confession of faith in the God who can do anything came a flash of lightning from the lips of the Divine Son. "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.*

Do you believe this?" How could she believe? How can any of us comprehend this magnificent proclamation of source? Jesus is the source of life, and as such, He is the Resurrection. He empowers, enables, and enforces resurrection. No life exists or is sustained without the intervention of His will.

"*Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.*" The following events took place as if in a whirlwind. Mary arrived. Jesus wept. The Jews were amazed at His love. Jesus prayed. They moved the stone.

And then a shout that stirred the celestial spheres, "*Lazarus, come out!*" The text reads with steady, yet intense certainty, "*The dead man came out...*"

The ultimate question for us all is resurrection. Is there anything else after this life is over? If not, then life doesn't matter very much. If there is no afterlife, no heaven, no resurrection, then there is no reason for existence, no reason for character, no reason for morality, and no reason for God. But Jesus proclaimed to be the resurrection.

Three Dark Days

For three dark days and with incomplete faith, the disciples of Jesus Christ rehearsed it all. They thought about the words spoken to them by the Master. Some certainly thought it was over. Some wondered about the coming third day.

They all agonized over the brutal and violent death of their friend. The echoes of hammers striking the nails which pierced the Savior rang in their ears. The helplessness. The fear. The tears. The crown. The shame. The darkness. The blood. And yet, like a small beam of sunlight high above them in the cavern of their sorrows, there was a ray of hope.

The Stone Was Rolled Away

Then it happened. John records that Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and found the stone rolled away. She ran to Peter and John, her facts right, but her conclusion wrong. "*They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!*" The race was on. They all ran toward the tomb, saw the burial clothes, and John went inside.

They went home to discuss these events, but not Mary. She wept by the tomb, telling a stranger, "*They have taken my Lord away, and I don't know where they have put him . . .* " The stranger spoke, and how I would love to have heard the way he spoke. "*Mary.*" She then knew that he was no stranger, no gardener, no tender of the earth. In a rush of dynamic reality,

she knew she was speaking to the Resurrection. This woman of faith went to the disciples with the gripping message, an intriguing testimony, a dawning utterance of the Gospel, "*I have seen the Lord*!"

Jesus Is The Resurrection

On the glorious morning that Jesus conquered death, sin, and Satan by rising up from the grave, He proved for all time that He is the Resurrection. The awesome power of this should never become commonplace in our hearts. It is the ultimate evidence of His divinity. It is the empowering motivation of Christian hope. It is the triumphant display of the redeeming force which He possesses. It is the fulfillment of messianic prophecy. It is the significance of the cross. It is so important that the very decision to become a follower of Christ is a living re-enactment of the event. The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is eloquently pictured in our death to sin, burial in water, and arising to live a new life as a new creature. Though some would place faith in their verbal confession as sufficient to save, the Bible makes the resurrection a visible part of our true conversion to Christ, without which we are not promised forgiveness.

The proclamation by Jesus that He is the Resurrection is the essence of redemption. We will all rise to meet the Lord. Everyone who has ever died in body will be raised in spirit. This is our hope. On this hope we stand, live, and proclaim. He is risen. He is coming. We shall rise. Hallelujah, Maranatha, and Amen. ✝

John Dobbs works with the Central church in Pascagoula, Mississippi, U. S. A.

The Prince Of Life

Don W. Walker

In Acts 3 a man who has been lame from his mother's womb asks alms of Peter and John. "*In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*" the man was healed. "*And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping and praising God*" (Acts 3:8). The wonder and amazement caused the people to run to Peter and John. Peter then takes this opportunity to preach Jesus.

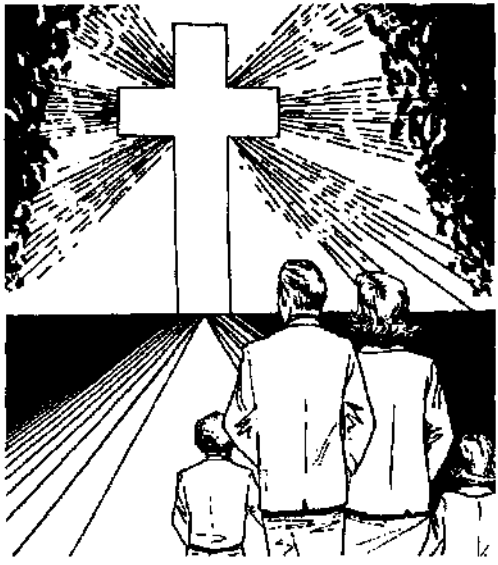
In his teaching Peter makes a very interesting statement. In Acts 3:15 he says, you "*killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses.*" Note the interesting contradiction in Peter's statement: "*You have put to death the Prince of Life.*"

In Matthew 18:18 Jesus said, "*Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell* (the bars of death) *shall not prevail against it.*" Jesus says death will have no effect on His church. Jesus' power over death is seen in His statement to Martha. "*I am the resurrection, and the life: He that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever, liveth and believeth in me shall never die*" (John 11:24-26). In John 10:10 Jesus said, "*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*" The very words Jesus spoke "*are spirit, and they are life*" (John 6:63).

In Genesis 3:15 we read, "*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*" Here we see the victory over death prophesied. In Romans 1:4 we first learn Christ was "*declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead.*" No wonder Jesus would say, "*I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death*" (Revelation 1:18). What a contradiction — putting to death the Prince of Life.

The victory can be ours, also. Paul would proclaim boldly, "*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" May we strive for the life that Christ provides, as we die to ourselves in becoming a living sacrifice to Him (Romans 6:6; 12:1,2). ✝

Don W. Walker preaches the Gospel in Stephenville, Texas, U. S. A.



Where Is The Light?

Frances Parr

It was a sunny Tuesday morning, the day after a holiday. I was busily catching up on chores from the day before plus regular activities when I realized I needed something from the store. My thoughts roamed as I drove the six miles into town. Having made that trip two to five times daily for over twenty years, there was no need to think about it.

As I stepped out of the car, it seemed the sunshine had a strange glow. Glancing skyward, I saw no clouds in sight, but I thought little of it. Probably my sun glasses were smeared or dusty.

Inside the store I overheard people talking. "It's just beginning; you ought to come look," and "Remember, don't look right at it."

Suddenly I remembered. It was May 10, 1994, and there was an eclipse, visible in the central part of the U.S.A. At that moment the moon was passing in front of the sun!

I hurried home, grabbed two sheets of white paper, and poked a pin through the center of one. I took my scientific experiment outside, where the sunlight beaming through the pin hole showed a perfect shadow image of the phenomenon. I watched, fascinated, as the moon passed across the face of the sun and continued on its westward trek. Then the sun was brightly shining again.

The sun's brilliance cannot be

endured by the naked eyes of man. From a distance of 93,000,000 miles its heat can blister human skin in a very few hours. This magnificent fireball was easily created by a mere thought of God and contains only a fraction of His great power. In itself, the sun is a small part of a vast solar complex, perhaps one of many such systems.

During the eclipse I thought about the sun's light and how it changed as the moon blocked off a portion of its brilliance. Would my life be changed if God blocked off even a small part of His power?

As I go about my daily life, I give little or no thought to my lungs breathing, my heart beating, or the perfect, intricate workings of the different parts of my body. Unless something goes wrong, I usually don't think about it at all.

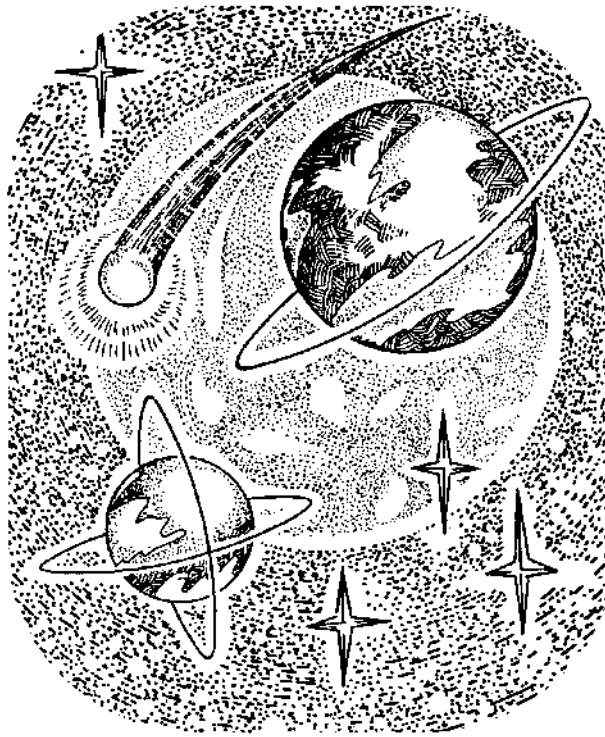
While I frequently thank God for the beauty of the earth around me and for His care of me, I generally take for granted the air I breathe, the coming of day and night, and the seasons in their turn.

If He suddenly withdrew all things which He has created and given to mankind, how would I be affected? The earth would be in total darkness, perhaps careening uncontrolled through space. Would my lungs explode from lack of air? Would my brain forget to tell my heart to beat? Without God's constant care, my life would end instantly.

It was not difficult at all for God to bring about such fantastic things as the sun, stars and planets, and the earth with its surging oceans, tall mountains, and deep valleys. This same power is available to you and me in our daily lives. No matter what the circumstances, God can handle it. All we have to do is to let Him! ✝

Frances Parr is a Christian writer living in Eldon, Missouri, U. S. A.

"For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from Thee, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth. Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Thy book they were all written, The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them" (Psalm 139:13-16).



How Much Evidence Do We Need?

Ancil Jenkins

The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork (Psalm 19:1). For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse (Romans 1:20). If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own (John 7:17).

Evidences

Someone once asked Bertrand Russell, a noted atheist, "Suppose you are wrong and God exists. What are you going to say to Him at the Judgment?" He replied, "Not enough evidence, God! Not enough evidence."

In reality, "not enough evidence" is the cry of the agnostic, not of the atheist. The agnostic is one who does not believe there is an adequate reason to believe in God. In many ways, he has less moral courage than an atheist. If there is not enough evidence to believe in God, it is because God is either unwilling or unable to provide it. If either case were true, such a God would be unworthy of belief. The atheist is at least willing to make a decision and take a public stand. The agnostic is not.

Is there enough evidence? To some it may seem like circular reasoning to quote God's book to show the existence of God. Yet, this timeless book claims nature makes the first and most evident argument for His existence. Nature's claim is powerful. Isn't there a lesson in the fact that science, even from its beginning, has made no discovery that disproves God's existence? On the contrary, time after time it has given credibility to man's belief in Him.

The question of the origin of the earth has puzzled man for centuries. Only when men denied the truth of God's creation did man become frustrated. Discoveries have repeatedly refuted man's false claims. Although the "Big Bang" theory of the earth's origin does not completely harmonize with the Genesis account, it is a discovery that admits that the earth had a beginning. This Beginning powerfully indicates that a Force caused it.

The problem with belief is the heart of man. If a person is willing to believe in a Creator, there is a great weight of credible evidence. Jesus said that the one willing to believe will find evidence for this belief (John 7:17). The world's materialistic approach to our creation and existence has no place for the spiritual. It, on the other hand, has not proven that the spiritual has not or cannot exist.

The problem is that when one comes to accepting the evidence of God's existence, man must repent and commit himself. Belief in God requires humility. Man must acknowledge there is Something greater than himself. Man must admit his inability to understand or control his life. The lack of evidence is not the problem. Man's unwillingness to submit to God may be the greatest barrier to belief. ✝

Ancil Jenkins is a writer and preacher in Miami, Florida, U. S. A.

Myths Of Evolution

Bobby Dockery

Many scientists like to describe the Biblical account of Creation as a "myth." Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines the word "myth" as: "an ill-founded belief held uncritically, especially by an interested group." In other words, a myth is something which is not true, but is accepted as truth without question.

It may come as a surprise to many, but modern science often believes in myths. Scientists, especially when explaining the origin of life on Earth, hold ill-founded beliefs which they do not question. Consider some common myths of evolution.

MYTH #1 — The Assumption that evolution is Science. Though evolutionists frequently claim otherwise, both evolution and Creation are faith systems. Each is a matter of belief. Paul Erlich and L. C. Birch wrote in *Nature*, April 22, 1967: "Our theory of evolution . . . is thus 'outside of empirical science' . . . No one can think of ways in which to test it . . . [evolutionary ideas] have become part of an evolutionary dogma accepted by most of us as part of our training." In 1971, Dr. L. H. Matthews wrote in an "Introduction" to a new edition of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, published in London: "Belief in the theory of evolution is thus exactly parallel to belief in special creation — both are concepts which believers know to be true, but neither, up to the present, has been capable of proof." Evolution is clearly a matter outside the realm of science. Those who choose to accept evolution do so as a matter of faith, not because evolution has been demonstrated to be fact.

MYTH #2 — The Assump-

tion that evolution is the Result of Beneficial Mutations. For evolution to be plausible, it must have a mechanism by which it operates. Many scientists argue that it is through mutations that one organism changes itself into another. But it is inconceivable that mutations can be responsible for all of the 1.7 million forms of life on our earth. Mutations are very rare. Most are produced by abnormal conditions such as exposure to atomic radiation or drugs. It is estimated that a mutation will occur once in every 100,000 to 1-million instances. Dr. H. Douglas Dean, Chairman of the Biology Department at Pepperdine University, points out that it would take 100,000 favorable mutations for the tiny ancestral horse, Eohippus, to evolve into a modern horse! In light of the relative infrequency of mutations and the negligible percentage of them which are helpful, evolution is clearly impossible! Even Julian Huxley, the noted defender of evolution, admits that the odds of evolution having occurred through beneficial mutations are 1 in $1000^{1,000,000}$ — 1 followed by 3 million zeroes (it would take 3 large 500-page books just to print this number!). No mutation has ever been shown to have produced a new species, or even a new organ in a species! Only minor changes have occurred, such as wing-shape or color. Mutations do not result in adding a wing to a cow or a backbone to a worm!

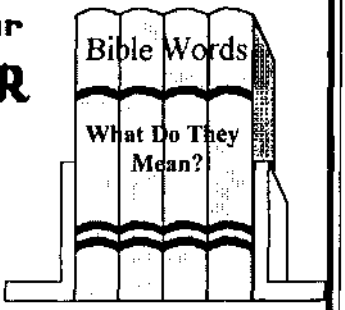
MYTH #3 — The Belief in Spontaneous Generation. Life comes only from life. Yet evolution teaches that at some time in the distant past, non-living matter suddenly came to life. Drs. Fuller and Tippo, both evolutionists, in their text on *College Botany* admit: ". . . if one subscribes to this theory, he admits that the first protoplasm to appear on earth was a product of spontaneous generation . . . In other words . . . spontaneous generation worked when the first living substance was formed, but probably hasn't worked since." Question: Is it conceivable that blind chance accidentally did in the "primeval soup" what the best scientific minds of the 20th Century have been unable to duplicate in the laboratory — create life from non-life?

Which is harder to believe: the Biblical account of an all-wise, all-powerful Creator, or evolution's faith in blind, blundering chance? Is the evidence for evolution credible . . . reliable . . . believable? Or, is it merely evidence that men have exchanged the truths of God for a lie, and that professing to be wise they became fools (Romans 1:22)? ✝

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

It Helps to Enrich Your

BIBLE WORD POWER



By Fenter Northern

Are you sure you are understanding the richest meaning of the Bible? Test your comprehension of the following words used in the context of Romans 5:1-4. After making your choices, turn the page for the correct answers.

1. **justified** v.—A: empowered. B: pronounced such as one ought to be. C: freed. D: excused.
2. **faith** *n.*—A: assurance of relationship with God. B: acceptance of a divine being. C: believe that Jesus lived. D: handle poisonous snakes.
3. **peace** n.—A: a part of anything. B: cease hostilities. C: sign a treaty. D: a state of harmonious relationship.
4. **access** n.—A: an open door. B: a thoroughfare. C: the right of approach with favorable disposition. D: a key to a locked door.
5. **grace** n.—A: salvation without any individual response. B: unmerited favor. C: divine blessings. D: a prayer before meals.
6. **stand** v.—A: rise from a seated position. B: to be established. C: to advocate a position. D: stop walking.
7. **hope** n.—A: joyful, confident expectation. B: desire to have. C: to make a wish. D: to place a bet.
8. **glory** n.—A: exaltation. B: a by-word of praise. C: magnification. D: a shining light.
9. **tribulation** *n.*—A: affliction, persecution, B: judgment coming with the rapture. C: money paid in taxes. D: worry
10. **patience** *n.*—A: fortitude. B: stamina. C. enduring steadfast while suffering. D: never break into a line.
11. ***experience n.***—*A: employment history. B: a past event in one's life.* C: to receive the Holy Ghost. D: character proved by trial.
12. **ashamed** v.—A: dishonor, disgrace. B: have bad feeling about something. C: to be arrested. D: to cower or lower one's head.
13. **love** *n.*—A: to embrace. B: to have an appetite for. C: to manifest good will or show benevolence for. D: a strong desire of affection.
14. **righteous** adj.—A: viewed as innocent by faith. B: a tenet or doctrine. C: do good deeds. D: have a good reputation
15. **wrath** *n*—A: hatefulness. B: despite. C: anger exhibited in punishment. D: displeasure.
16. **reconciled** *v.*—A: returned to favor with. B: remarry. C: end a strike. D: adjust a checkbook to a bank statement.
17. **atonement** *n.*—A: to be made free. B: exchange of values. C: to offer a sacrifice. D: to repent and make restitution for wrongs.

1. **justified**-(Gk. dikaioo) B: pronounced such as one ought to be, i.e. without sin. Think of it this way: *just as if I'd* never sinned.
2. **faith**.—*(Gk. pistis) A:* assurance of a relationship with God. See also Hebrews 11:1-2.
3. **peace**—(Gk. eirene) D: a state of harmonious relationship; in this context, with God.
4. **access**—(Gk. prosagoge) C: the right of approach with favorable disposition. Through Christ one can draw nigh, and not stand afar off as they in the Old Testament. See also Hebrews 12:18-24.
5. **grace**—(Gk. charis) B: unmerited favor. One does not approach God on his own righteousness, but because of Jesus righteousness that was offered for all the faith people.
6. **stand** v.—(Gk. histemi) B: to be established, i.e., in the faith of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and not be tossed about by false doctrines. See also Eph. 4:14 and 6:11)
7. **hope** n.—(Gk. elpis) A: joyful, confident expectation; to both desire and expect the Lord to return with his personal blessings for the soul whose heart is longing for his return.
8. **glory** n.—(Gk. doxa) C: magnification; enhancing by praise and righteous living the deity of God.
9. **tribulation** *n.*—(Gk. thlipsis) A: affliction, persecution; to endure physical or mental pain, or both, for one's faith and practice in the Christian religion.
10. **patience** *n.*—(Gk. hupomone) C: enduring steadfast while suffering. Patience was considered one of the greatest virtues when early Christian's were tested by horrifying tortures in the last part of the first century.
11. **experience** *n.*—(Gk. dokime) D: character proved by trial. In this context patience has worked expatience, i.e. one faithfully enduring trials has proved his righteous character.
12. **ashamed** v.—(Gk. kataischuno) A: dishonor, disgrace. In this context one's abiding faithful under duress will *not* be dishonored or disgraced in the judgment.
13. **love** *n.*—(Gk agape) C: to manifest goodwill or show benevolence for. Love can be shown as a friend, but that is from a different Greek word. Agape is a demonstrated benevolent action of good, even to those who would harm the faithful.
14. **righteous** adj.—(Gk. dikaios) A: viewed as innocent by faith. See also Genesis 15:4 where Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness.
15. **wrath** n.—(Gk. orge) C: anger exhibited in punishment. Paul declared in this context that a faith person need never fear the wrathful judgment of God.
16. **reconciled** *v.*—(Gk. katallasso) A: return to favor with. A believer through the redeeming death of Jesus is reconciled to God.
17. **atonement** *n.*— (Gk katallage) B: exchange of values. The Lord exchanged his righteousness for our unrighteousness when he died as a felon on the cross.

Vocabulary Scale

7—10 correct.....good
11—13 correct.....Bible Student
14—15 correct.....Bible Scholar

Perspectives From Psalms

Tom Holland

The ancient inspired Psalms, often quoted in New Testament Scripture, are relevant. Anyone who doubts this observation should read the Psalms.

People were experiencing a lot of pain when the Psalms were written. The Holy Spirit used a suffering person, through whom He revealed some great lessons of life. The technological advances and the communications revolution of the 20th century have not changed the fact that people are hurting physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Perhaps there are times when you, too, feel as if *"many bulls have surrounded me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me. They gape at me with their mouths, like a raging and roaring lion"* (Psalm 22:12,13).

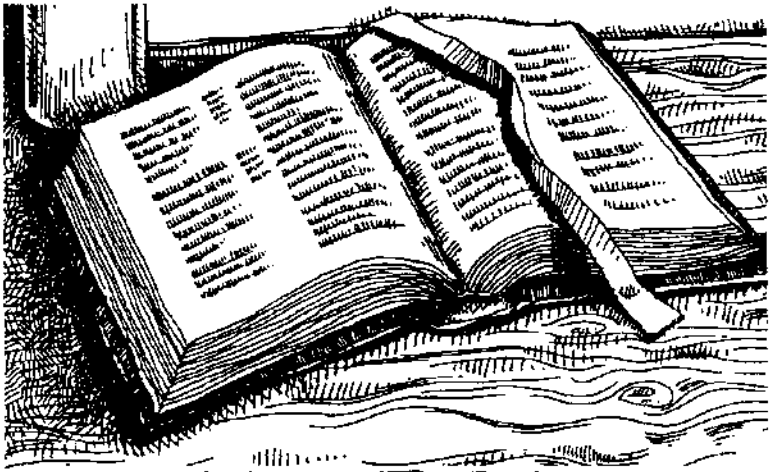
The persistent, perplexing problem of evil people prospering and good people suffering is as current as it was when David nearly lost his faith when he considered how unfair life was (Psalm 73). This vexing problem of suffering seems to be one of the strong arguments of those who deny God's very existence.

Like David, we must tackle the problem of life being unfair from the perspective of eternity (Psalm 73:17). Life on earth for the wicked is both brief and uncertain. *"Certainly every man at his best state is but a vapor"* (Psalm 39:5,11). God's people must learn to *"wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land"* (Psalm 37:34).

The loving care and providence of God catch the attention, challenge the mind, and comfort the heart of the careful reader of the Psalms. The enduring mercy of God flows from Psalms to God's people (Psalm 136). Indeed God *"heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds"* (Psalm 146:3).

God's goodness, His majesty, His power, His glory, His involvement with people, call for man's recognition and respect which breaks forth in sincere praise to God. These 150 inspired poems end with, *"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!"* (Psalm 150:6). ⇧

Tom Holland is a preacher of the Gospel in Nashville, Tennessee.



The Bible

Dalton Key

The Bible is by far the best book in the world. It merits our reverence, our respect, our love, our belief, our trust, our subjection, and our complete obedience. Without the Bible we would be as helpless, hopeless nomads traveling the road to eternity with no purpose, no map, and no guide. If it were not for God's book, the Bible, we would know nothing of God's law, will, love, and eternal purpose; we would be ignorant of Christ's sacrifice, blood, intercession, and advocacy; we would be without knowledge of our sin, our need for salvation, and our eternal nature and destiny.

The word "Bible" is not found within the pages of God's eternal revelation to mankind. God's book refers to itself as the law (Psalm 119:97; James 1:25), the word (Psalm 119:11), the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15), the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11), scripture (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 3:16; Acts 17:11), doctrine (2 John 9; 2 Timothy 4:2,3), and truth (John 8:32; 17:17). It describes itself as a sword (Ephesians 6:17), a fire (Jeremiah 23:29), a hammer (Jeremiah 23:29), a seed (Luke 8:11), a lamp (Psalm 119:105), and a light (Psalm 119:105).

The Bible is not a "dead letter." According to the Hebrews' writer, God's Word is both quick and powerful (Hebrews 4:12). It was by the word of God that the worlds were framed and the heavens were made (Hebrews 11:3, Psalm 33:6). The Bible quickens (Psalm 119:50), begets (James 1:18), cleanses (John 15:3), purifies (1 Peter 1:22), converts (Psalm 19:7), saves (Acts 11:14; James 1:21), pricks (Acts 2:36-38), cuts (Hebrews 4:12), and will judge us in the day of Judgment (John 12:48).

The Bible is unlike any man-made book or creed in that it is perfect (Psalm 19:7), verbally inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13), and eternal in nature (Matthew 24:35; 1 Peter 1:24,25). While the books of men rise and fall in terms of public acceptance and popularity, the Bible has throughout the years sustained a "best seller" status. Other volumes are constantly undergoing revision, yet the Bible is every bit as relevant — up-to-date — today as it was in the ancient days of its inspiration.

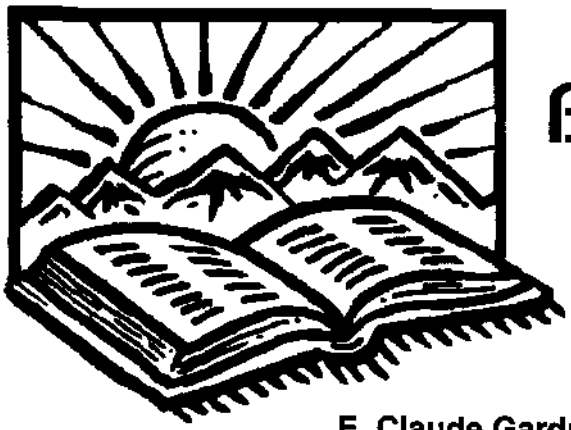
There are various attitudes in regard to the Bible. Some reject it, some wage war against it, some are apathetic toward it, and some love, cherish, and respect it. Many, like Jehoiakim, would like to burn it, while others, like David, love it to the point of making it their constant meditation (Jeremiah 36:23; Psalm 119:97). What is your attitude toward the Bible? ✞

Dalton Key is the editor of *Old Paths* and preaches in Amarillo, Texas.

10 Ways To Find Time To Read Your Bible

1. Wake up 10 minutes early each morning and read.
2. Put a Bible portion under your pillow to read each night before sleep.
3. Talk less and you will have a few more minutes to read.
4. Keep a copy on hand at the telephone to read while you "hold."
5. Carry a copy of the Bible in your pocket or purse to read while waiting for doctors, non-punctual people, etc.
6. Never go on a trip without your Bible.
7. Keep a copy in the glove compartment of your car.
8. Remember, a Bible in your hand is worth two on the table.
9. Turn the TV off and read to your children.
10. Read a verse or two at meal times when all the family is together.

— Anonymous



The Bible Is From God

E. Claude Gardner

God is Jehovah, the eternal, personal, living God who has always existed, and He lives today to guide and influence nations, families, and individuals. God is not dead, but He is alive evermore.

God has made Himself known through two "books" — The Book of Nature, and the Book of Books, the Bible. By observing nature and our universe, we are forced by reason and Scripture to conclude that what we see came by a Creator. They are the handiwork of a mighty God. Jesus, the Son of God, was the agent of creation, "*All things were made by Him*" (John 1:3). The apostle Paul attributed creation to Jesus when he wrote, "*For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him*" (Colossians 1:16).

Nature does not reveal a complete picture of God; therefore, His characteristics and goals for mankind are unfolded in the Bible. Both in the Old and New Testaments God is revealed as good, kind, and longsuffering, but He also holds us accountable and requires us to be obedient. God reveals Himself in many places in the Bible, and one of these is through Nahum of the Old Testament. "*The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked . . . The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him . . . . God is*

jealous, and the Lord revengeth . . ." (Nahum 1:3,7,2).

Now that one has concluded that God is as He is described in the Bible, then one is able to accept the truth that God has revealed His will to us through the written Word. If one believes in an everlasting God who is all-wise, then one can believe that He can and did give a divine revelation. It not only instructs mankind in right living, but instructs him in how to be delivered from sins, and how to worship One greater than we. Indeed God has "*spoken unto us by his Son*" (Hebrews 1:1,2). Jesus spoke through the apostles and evangelists. They were endowed by the Holy Spirit to reveal His message of truth concerning His divinity, the church, the Gospel plan of salvation, grace expressed by the cross, and eternity. While on earth and shortly before His return to heaven, Jesus promised that the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, would come to His followers, who would "*teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I said unto you*" (John 14:26). Furthermore, He promised that the Holy Spirit, called "*the Spirit of truth,*" will "*guide you into all truth*" (John 16:26). The Bible writers did not write as human beings write, but rather it was by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They wrote by "*inspiration*" (God-breathed message), which was supernatural, rather than by their native talent only. The apostle Paul claimed divine guidance when he stated, "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Since the Holy Spirit directed the Bible messages, they are divine and without error. The Bible is accurate in all of its doctrine and in the facts related to history, geography and science (see 2 Peter 1:21; 1 Peter 4:11).

Many proofs establish the divine nature of the Bible. One major way is through prophecy and many years later, the fulfillment. One example will suffice. Isaiah recorded that a virgin would give birth to a son, who would be called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14). About 700 years later Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled this prophecy (see Matthew 1:21-23). Numerous instances of prophecy and fulfillment are found to show that the Bible is a special and divine book from God.

Other books accepted by devout people cannot measure up to the divine standard of the Bible. Bible believers are happy to compare it with the Koran, Book of

Mormon, Veda, Westminster Confession of Faith, or any other "holy book." The Bible is open to thorough investigation.

Since the Bible claims divine inspiration and that it is without error, it follows that it must be the **authority** in all of our doctrine, practice, and manner of living. Hence, we accept it as the Word of God, which is the final authority in answering all questions pertaining to our life here and in the next life. When we decide to go by the Word of God only, we reject as authority the long-held traditions of man; cultural religious teaching of our ancestors; the hierarchy of popes, bishops, and priests; synods and creed books; and claiming that mysterious feelings are Spirit-directed, separate from the Bible. Jesus, who has spoken to us through His Word, claims to have all authority both "*in heaven and in earth*" (Matthew 28:18). When we accept the Bible as our sole authority, we also accept the authority of Jesus as Lord (see Acts 2:36).

By the authority of Jesus one may obey Him and the Gospel and be delivered from all sins of the past. "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*" (Mark 16:16). ✝

E. Claude Gardner is president-emeritus of Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, U. S. A.

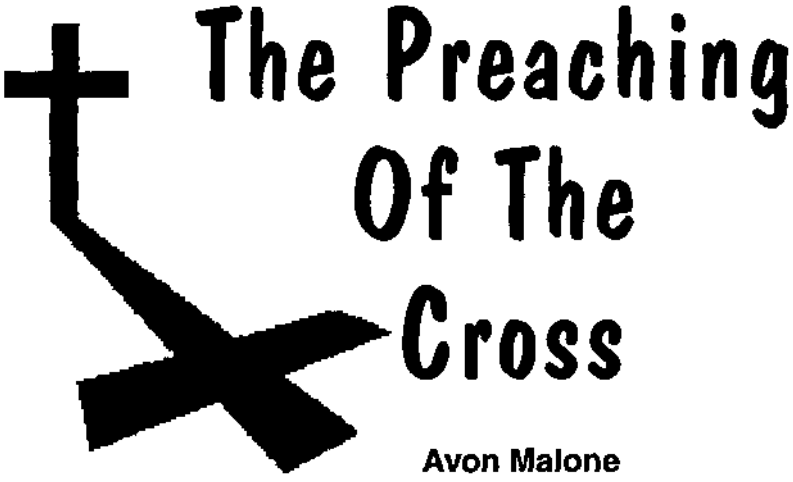
"An Ordinary Member"

"Just an ordinary member
Of the church," I heard him say;
But you'd always find him
present,
Even on a rainy day.
He had a hearty handclasp
For the stranger in the aisle;
And a friend who was in trouble
Found sunshine in his smile.

When the sermon helped him
He told the speaker so.
And when he needed comfort,
He let the preacher know.
He always gave so freely
And tried to do his share
In all the ordinary tasks
For which some have no care.

His talents were not many
But his love for God was true;
His prayers were not in public,
But he prayed for me and you.
"An ordinary member . . . "
I think that I would say
He was extraordinary
In a humble sort of way.

—Selected



The Preaching Of The Cross

Avon Malone

It is abundantly clear that Paul's purpose in preaching centered in and derived itself from the message itself. It was Paul's purpose to convey Christ and His cross. Since it is the "*word of the cross*" that saves (1 Corinthians 1:18), Paul sees himself sent " . . . *to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void*" (1 Corinthians 1:17). Christ's cross is the "preaching" — the message that saves (1 Corinthians 1:18-25).

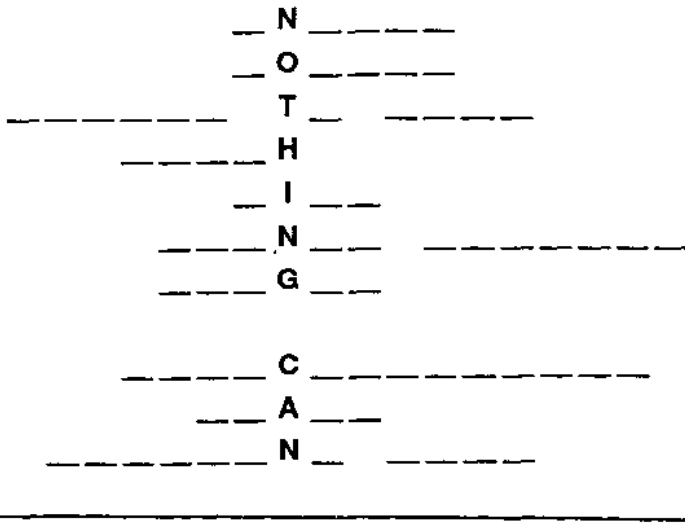
Paul's purpose was not simply to get folks to feel good about themselves and to get on with fulfilling their human potential. Only the Gospel can really resolve the fundamental problem of human guilt (1 Corinthians 15:3ff; Romans 4:18,25; 5:9ff) and it can greatly affect the way one feels about himself. However, Paul's message concerned itself with the great spiritual realities.

Paul's purpose in preaching was to save sinful men (Romans 1:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:8,9; 1 Corinthians 9:16,22). He was consumed with the cross. To him, preaching was not a method; it was a message! It was "*Christ and Him crucified.*" That great act of faith, Bible baptism, is crucial because it is "*unto His death*" (Romans 6:3; Acts 2:38; 22:16). Whether preaching to sinners or teaching saints, Paul's message always centered in the cross. ✝

Avon Malone teaches Bible at Oklahoma Christian University in Edmond, Oklahoma, U. S. A.

The Book of Romans for Adults

Romans 8:38-39 lists ten things that are unable to separate us from God's love. Write them on the lines below.



"You know I must live . . . ."

It is reported that the counsel of Tertullian, a second-century Christian, was sought by a Christian businessman who was being pressured to furnish his pagan customers with certain services he did not feel comfortable furnishing. He said to Tertullian: "You know I must live." To this statement Tertullian replied: "Must you?"

Tertullian's point is still valid. Is Christ our Lord only until we feel we must do something that contradicts Him?

Does It Matter What You Believe?

Bill Dillon

A strange statement often overheard is, "Well, it doesn't make any difference what you believe . . . " Is this statement an accurate reflection of the will of God, or is it man's wishful thinking? Is the statement designed to please men, or please God? The Bible, God's will for man in this age, teaches that what you believe does make a difference:

1. It matters if we believe in God. Hebrews 11:6, *"He that cometh to God **must believe** that he is . . ."*

2. It matters if we believe in Christ. Jesus said in John 8:24, ***"Except ye believe** I am He, ye shall die in your sins."*

3. It matters if we believe false prophets and teachers. John, the apostle of love, said, ***"believe not** every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God"* (John 4:1). Peter wrote, *"There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies"* (2 Peter 2:1).

4. It matters if we believe the truth. 2 Thessalonians 2:12 says, *"That they all might be damned **who believed not the truth** . . . ."* The truth is God's Word (John 17:17).

The negative attitude which says, "What we believe doesn't matter," discourages research, stifles investigation, and puts a premium on ignorance. Unless error is the same as truth, up the same as down, and yes the same as no, then it **does** matter what we believe. The Bible says Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). The Lord commands His Gospel to be preached to every creature under heaven, and *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:15,16). Reader, think carefully, if it doesn't matter ***what*** you believe — then it doesn't matter *if* you believe! ✝

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Grace Only?

Jimmy Jividen

Man needs grace. He finds that he is a sinner — one who has rebelled against God's will. He is guilty and lost and can do nothing to save himself. His judgment is damnation without hope.

Grace is the unmerited favor of God. It cannot be earned by good works or bought with money. God unconditionally gave it to man without cost. That is what makes it grace. Paul described it thus:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Grace is free to man, but it cost God His Son. God loved man even though he was unworthy and sinful. To show that love, He graciously sent Jesus into the world to live as man and die for man. Grace cost Jesus His life. He graciously died on the cross to save man from the punishment that his sins deserved. So, although grace is free, it was very expensive for God.

God's grace has been extended to all men. Does this mean that all men will be saved? Not at all. God's grace is sufficient for all men everywhere — but not all men will receive His grace. A gift of water to a man dying of thirst will not be of any benefit unless he drinks it. Even so, the gift of God's grace will not benefit man unless he receives it. Man is not saved by grace alone, because God does not force His grace upon anyone.

A man can respond to God's grace in two ways. He can receive it in faith and submission, or he can reject it by rebellion and neglect. Grace can be offered to a person, but without benefit because it was received "*in vain*" (2 Corinthians 6:1).

Why would anyone refuse to receive the grace of God? It is free to all who receive it. However, it must never be used as an excuse to continue in sin (Romans 6:1,2). ✝

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"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word" (2 Thessalonians 2:16,17).

"The Power of His Resurrection"

W. Douglass Harris

***"...That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection"* (Philippians 3:10).**

In the text above, Paul speaks of the power of His resurrection. We are living in a power-conscious age. We know there is power in steam, in water, in electricity, in explosives, in the wind, etc. In more recent times we have heard about atomic and nuclear power, but Paul spoke of a different power — the power of Christ's resurrection. This power is revealed in the following ways:

1. In the Institutions and Ordinances it has Established. One of these is the church. Christ promised to build His church in spite of His death (Matthew 16:18). He was made head of the church

through His resurrection (Ephesians 1:19-23). Had He not been raised from the dead His church would have never been built. His resurrection gives meaning and authority to the conditions of entrance into His church (Acts 2:37,38). Baptism is a symbol of His burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12). Without His resurrection, He would not eat and drink with us in the Lord's Supper, as He promised (Matthew 26:29). His resurrection sets apart and specializes the Lord's day (John 20:1; Mark 16:9; Revelation 1:10).

2. In the Faith It Creates. It established the fact of Christ's Messiahship and His divine nature (Acts 2:36; Romans 1:3,4). If Christ had not been raised, He could not have been accepted as the Christ of God, and there would be no basis for our faith. Without His resurrection, our faith would be vain (1 Corinthians 15:12-27).

3. In the Hope It Inspires. When Jesus was crucified and buried, His disciples lost hope (Luke 24:13-21). This hope was revived and vitalized by His resurrection. It is His resurrection that gives us hope of immortality (1 Peter 1:3,4). Peter describes it as a living hope and an inheritance that fadeth not away. His resurrection gave Him power to raise us, and this begets hope in us (John 5:28,29; 1 Thessalonians 4:13,14). What a glorious hope!

4. In the Transformation of Life It Instills. Before the resurrection His disciples were filled with fear and dismay (Matthew 26:31-35,56,58,69-75). After His resurrection they became bold and aggressive. They began a mighty campaign to evangelize the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Acts 2:14; 4:18,19; 5:29). Genuine faith in Christ and His resurrection changes one's life (Colossians 3:1-4). It is the power that enables us to subdue sin (Romans 6:1-14).

5. In the Victory It Gives Over Death. The world of humanity dies nearly three times in a century. All the forces of earth cannot halt the ravages of death. But through His resurrection we can overcome death (2 Timothy 1:10). His resurrection is a pledge of our resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20-23,51-57).

Thank God for the power of Christ's resurrection! Do you desire to know this power as much as Paul did? This is the support of the entire Bible — the law, prophets, and the Gospel, and the fact of His resurrection makes all of His promises good. ✝

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DEGREES OF FAITH

John Thiesen

The Word of God emphasizes the importance of faith to our salvation. Most people understand the need to believe in God and in His Son Jesus Christ. What some may not realize is that there are degrees of faith, some good and some bad.

Dead Faith

There is such a thing as a **dead faith**. *"But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"* (James 2:20). James went ahead to explain that if our faith does not move us to obey God by doing good it is like a dead body, without movement. For example, he said to fail to give a needy person food or clothing is to have a dead faith (verses 15-17). What counts with God is not just to believe that He exists, but to put our faith to action with a *"faith which worketh by love"* (Galatians 5:6).

Shrinking and Stretching Faith

There is also a **shrinking faith**. This happens when a believer begins to get discouraged and starts losing his faith or confidence in God. *"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him"* (Hebrews 10:38).

Contrast this with its opposite, which is a **stretching or elastic faith**. It stretches through the whole life of the person. This faith will carry him on to eternal life. The Hebrews writer said, *"But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul"* (Hebrews 10:39).

Strong and Weak Faith

Abraham is the greatest example of a **strong faith**. He was *"Not weak in faith . . . but was strong in faith, giving glory to God"* when he believed God's promise to give him a son in his advanced age (Romans 4:19-21). Believing in God, he left his own country as an old man and journeyed to a

distant land he had never seen but that God promised to give to him. A **weak faith** would have been unsure, hesitant, doubtful, partly believing and partly pessimistic.

Overcoming Faith

What we need most of all is an **overcoming faith**, one that endures to the end of our life. John said, *"And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith"* (1 John 5:4). With this kind of faith, we will be able to overcome sin for Christ. With it we will not turn back, but confidently look to the reward of faithfully serving Christ, which is eternal life. Let's have this living, strong, stretching, overcoming kind of faith.

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Today

Outside my window, a new day I see,
And only I can determine what kind it will be.
It can be busy and sunny, laughing and gay
Or boring and cold, unhappy and gray.
My own state of mind is the determining key,
For I am only the person I let myself be.
I can be thoughtful and do all I can to help,
Or be selfish and think just of myself.
I can enjoy what I do and make it seem fun,
Or gripe and complain and make it hard on someone.
I can be patient with those who may not understand,
Or belittle and hurt them as much as I can.
But I have faith in the Lord, and believe when I say;
I personally intend to make the best of each day.

— Author Unknown

Paying The Price

Salvador B. Cariaga

"Paying the Price." That was the headline on the foreign section of a newspaper last wee. The story is about Katherine Ann Power, who joined the Anti-Vietnam Movement as a college student, but went far beyond demonstrating to engage in violent crime. Ms. Power drove the get-away car in a 1970 bank robbery in which a police officer was killed. For 23 years she had been a fugitive until she turned herself in last month. Judge Robert Banks sentenced Ms. Power to 8-12 years in prison and directed that she may not earn any profit from books and movies related to her crime.

Two years ago, a man in California was arrested for a murder he committed 28 years ago. He freely roamed around until high-tech and modern police gadgets caught up with him. The DNA in his hair, along with his finger print, matched that of the wanted murderer. When confronted, he readily confessed.

The Bible tells us that sin costs. It's not free: "For the wages of sin is death . . ." The consequences of it are not erased by time. Some people might think people will forget, time will heal, but not with God and not with sin. Neither can anyone hide from it. Distancing yourself by traveling afar will not help

you escape from the sin you have committed. It will follow you to the ends of the earth. Finally, you cannot pay for your sins. Your church contribution may help support the preachers, the poor or proclaim the gospel, but it has nothing to do with the payment of your sins. You may be able to bribe your way out of past troubles with some people or institutions, but not this one.

So, you may ask, "How do I pay my debt to God?" You can't. But someone can. In fact, he already did. You're not off the hook yet, though. First, you need to **believe.** Believe in whom? Believe in Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of God, that He came to save you from sin, that you may be saved. Second, you need to **repent**. Jesus said that if you do not repent, you will die. You much regret and have remorse over your past sins. You are a sinner and you need to be sorry for that. Paul declared: *"All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."* Denial in this case, which is one of our defensive weapons, will rob us of God's forgiveness. Third, you much accept Christ in **baptism**. Paul, Peter and the rest of the New Testament Christians all taught and practiced water baptism (See Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 4:21; Romans 6:4; Acts 8:38; just to name a few).

After you have done those things, then you have been born again. You have accepted the grace of God in your life. You have become a child of God, a **Christian**. That is not the end of it. It is just the beginning of a wonderful relationship with God. Great things await you. Walk with God. Continue to love Him and serve Him and you will **grow**. May God bless you.

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Inborn Reaching Out

A child,
hurting or afraid,
Runs to find security
In the arms of someone
bigger,
older.
Unquestioning faith is there,
but what causes
such conviction
that older
bigger
arms
can make things right?
Is it from the soul's
inborn reaching out
to God,
to older, bigger arms?

— Betty Burton Choate

Baptism

Bobby Key

If one comes to realize he is lost in sin, if he has been taught the Gospel, if he believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of the world, and if he has fully decided to repent and follow the will of God, there will be no hesitancy on his part to obey the command to be baptized.

Baptism is included in the Great Commission. The Savior said: "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mark 16:16).

The idea that one is saved and then baptized is entirely false. After one has studied the Bible he learns that baptism comes before salvation. Your Bible reads, "*Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins*" (Acts 2:38). One is still a sinner until he has been baptized. Saul, a sinner, had been praying three days and nights. He was commanded to "*Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16). He needed to submit to baptism that his sins might be blotted out.

Peter, guided by the Spirit, declared that baptism saves. He let us know that Noah and his family were saved by water, which was a shadow of baptism that saves us (1 Peter 3:20-22).

Baptism is necessary to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5). Christ is our Savior, and we are baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3). "*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" (Galatians 3:27).

If one is convinced that baptism is necessary, he will gladly be immersed, and will be raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). ✝

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Ananias: A Devout Man

Bill Nicks

Ananias, a "*devout man according to the law*," had a good report of "*all Jews that dwelt in Damascus*" (Acts 22:12). We know that the Lord appeared to him "*in a vision*" and instructed him to "*inquire for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth*" (Acts 9:11). He was then told that Saul had seen in a vision a "*man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight*" (vs. 12).

There is no question that Ananias had miraculous power, since the Lord gave it to him, either directly by the vision, or indirectly through the laying on of apostolic hands.

We learn in Acts 8:13-17 that only the apostles could impart spiritual gifts to others. In the context, Philip, who was "*full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom*" and had the "*laying on of the apostles' hands*" (Acts 6:3-6), worked mighty miracles among the Samaritans, confirming the Word by the "*signs following*" (Mark 16:17-20). But even Philip could not impart these gifts to others; thus Peter and John, two apostles, laid their hands on the Samaritans, "*and they received the Holy Spirit*," after praying that they might receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15-17).

If Philip could not impart miraculous gifts, though having the laying on of apostolic hands, it follows that Ananias could not impart them to Saul. In fact, no one except the apostles had been chosen by the Lord to impart miraculous gifts. These gifts were given by the Lord for the edification of the early church in a period before revelation of the New Testament was complete (1 Corinthians 13:8-10, Ephesians 4:7-16). The church was in its infancy, and needed spiritual gifts "*until that which was perfect*" was come, that is, the complete revelation of the New Testament. The gifts were needed when the revelation was "*in part*," or partial, "*till we all attain to the unity of the faith, unto the knowledge of the Son of God*." Now that "*the faith has been*

once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), miraculous gifts are no longer needed.

Ananias laid his hands on Saul that he might receive his sight, just as the Lord had instructed him (Acts 9:11,17). After that, Saul arose and was baptized (9:18), since Ananias said to him, "*Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (22:16).

But does not Acts 9:17 also say, "*and be filled with the Holy Spirit*"? Yes, but please observe again that Ananias could not baptize him with the Holy Spirit, since only the Lord could do that. Neither could he lay his hands on Saul and impart to him the miraculous gift of the Spirit. There are only two possibilities here: (1) Saul could receive this baptism of the Spirit from the Lord, or else (2) he could have the ability of miraculous gifts from another apostle.

It is our conviction that Paul did receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit from the Lord Himself, but not at the time the Lord appeared unto him on the road to Damascus. It was then said to him, "*I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee*" (Acts 26:16). Notice that the Lord promised to appear unto Paul in some ways in the future as well. By observing the actions of Paul and his claims later, we learn that he was baptized in the Holy Spirit, since he had power to lay his hands on others and impart spiritual gifts (2 Timothy 1:6; Acts 19:1-6; Galatians 3:2). After his conversion in Damascus, he went into Arabia and back to Damascus. After three years he went up to Jerusalem to visit Peter and James, the Lord's brother (Galatians 1:16-19). In that chapter he said he received his revelation, not from man, "*but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Galatians 1:11ff). Sometime between his conversion and the time he went up to Jerusalem, he received an appearance of the Lord according to His promise, and was baptized with the Holy Spirit, or "*filled with the Spirit*" (Acts 9:17, 26:16; 1 Corinthians 2:12ff; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

These miraculous powers were limited to the age when the New Testament was being revealed, and after its completion, were taken away. Prophecies, tongues, and miraculous knowledge, in fact all signs and wonders, have been taken away since the completion of the "*perfect law of liberty*" (James 1:25, 2:12). ⇧

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Heaven

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT?

Wayne Jackson

"Heaven" is a topic that people frequently talk about and sing about, even in secular songs, but there is very little biblically-based discussion on the subject. What are some of the scriptural facts regarding this fond hope of the faithful child of God?

The term "heaven" (or "heavens") is used in several ways in the Bible. First, there is the region just above the earth where birds fly (Genesis 2:19), and dew, clouds, frost, and rain form (Genesis 27:28; Daniel 7:13; Job 38:29, Genesis 8:2). Second, there is the region of the moon, sun, and stars (Genesis 1:14-16; 22:17). Third, there is the "heaven of heavens" (Deuteronomy 10:14), known also as the "third heaven" (2 Corinthians 12:2). This is the habitation of God (Psalm 33:13,14; Matthew 6:9). Finally, in Matthew 21:25 "heaven" is used figuratively for God Himself.

The Promise of Heaven

Heaven, the dwelling place of Jehovah, is a precious promise for the faithful child of God. For example, those who remain loyal, even under persecution, are told that their *"reward in heaven"* will be great (Matthew 5:12). Paul declares that our hope is laid up for us *"in the heavens"* (Colossians 1:5), and Peter affirms that an incorruptible inheritance is *"reserved in heaven"* for us (1 Peter 1:4).

Who will be in heaven? The universalist alleges that all of humanity will ultimately see this blissful home, but the Scriptures provide no such hope. Jesus plainly declared: *"Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leads unto life, and few are they that find it"* (Matthew 7:13,14).

Obviously the most wonderful aspect of heaven will be the presence of the divine Godhead. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit will be there (see Revelation 1:4,5). Too, angels will be citizens of heav-

en (see Luke 15:7,10). The great men and women of faith whom we read about in the Holy Bible will likewise be inhabitants of heaven. Jesus promised: *"Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 8:11; cf. Hebrews 11:16).

So far as this present age is concerned, the hope of heaven is available only to those who are "in Christ." *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord . . ."* (Revelation 14:13). Those who choose to remain outside of Christ, i.e., outside His spiritual body, the church, are without the hope of heaven (Ephesians 2:12,13; 5:23; cf. Galatians 3:27). The inhabitants of heaven are described as those who have *"washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"* (Revelation 7:14), a process which initially occurs in obedience to the first principles of the Gospel (cf. Acts 2:38; 22:16), and is maintained by sustained fidelity to truth (1 John 1:7). Heaven is a place for those who have pursued the path of obedience (Hebrews 5:9).

We must likewise note in passing that those who die in a state of innocence will also be privileged to enter heaven (see 2 Samuel 12:23; cf. Matthew 19:14). The Bible knows nothing of "limbo" — the doctrine that "unbaptized children are excluded from heaven" — as advocated by some in the religious world.

The Nature of Heaven

There are many who misunderstand the nature of heaven. Accordingly, they really have no desire to go there. If one were to survey such people and ask — Where would you wish to go when you die? (1) Heaven; (2) Hell; (3) Neither of the above — they probably would check number three. These folks have cultivated no spiritual appetite whatever, and thus their interest in an eternal state, apart from this world, is absolutely nil. Many are so wedded to this world that their very concept of heaven is earthly.

Contrary to the assertions of some, heaven will not be on earth. Christ plainly taught that we are not to lay up treasures on earth, but in heaven (Matthew 6:19). Hence, it is obvious that heaven and earth are not the same. The writer of Hebrews makes it plain that the patriarchs were but *"pilgrims on the earth"* and that they longed for a better country, i.e., a heavenly place (Hebrews 11:13-16). Clearly, they did not view earth and heaven as being identical. We are informed that this earth will pass away (Matthew 24:35; Revelation 21:1),

and 2 Peter 3:1-13 contains a vivid description of the passing of this material universe.

It should further be noted that heaven, wherever it is, is not a material place. There is a beautiful portrayal of heaven in the 21st and 22nd chapters of the book of Revelation. First, it is represented as *"a new heaven and a new earth"* (21:1); then as *"a holy city, the new Jerusalem"* (21:2-4). There is a breath-taking picture of this happy realm of the redeemed, described figuratively as consisting of precious stones and pure gold (21:9-26). It is a place of perpetual day, without sin, sickness, sadness or death (4:23-27; cf. 7:16-17; 22:3,15). One must ever keep in mind that John's visions consist of many symbols, the design of which is to represent the glory and beauty of heaven. It is surely a mistake to view these descriptions in a literal fashion, as some have done.

As we now live in the flesh, in a material world, our only perceptions, as gained from personal experience, are of a material nature. We simply are not, therefore, at this present stage of our existence, prepared to clearly understand what heaven will actually be like. In this regard, it is a challenge to walk by faith, for we cannot walk by sight. The Spirit has thus employed many figures of speech, consisting of precious material things, to convey to us the value of the heavenly state.

Heaven is not a place of physical existence. Paul declared that *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"* (1 Corinthians 15:50). By way of contrast, for example, the Moslem concept of heaven is quite physical. Equally erroneous is the idea that the marriage relationship will continue in heaven. Jesus plainly affirmed that *"in the resurrection, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage"* (Matthew 22:30).

One preacher recently revealed his carnalistic view of heaven by suggesting that his dog would be in that celestial state! Such false ideas as these have no basis in biblical fact.

It may be difficult to understand how we can enjoy heaven if there will be absolutely no physical pleasures there. We must remember, however, that all physical appetites diminish with the passing of time. Heaven is an eternal state. Consequently, the bliss of that future existence will be adapted to us as we then will be, and not as we now are. This must necessarily be the case if we are to be eternally happy! ✝

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Only The Obedient Will Be Saved

Rick Cunningham

"Once saved, always saved," is a common belief today. It is argued that if a person is truly saved, possessing the true Spirit of God, he cannot and will not fall away. If he falls away, he never was saved in the first place.

This "doctrine of perseverance" is simply not true. It is possible, and it is common, for people to be truly saved, lost, restored, and lost again. In fact, even the Holy Spirit warns us not to turn away after being saved:

"So, as the Holy Spirit says, Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me, and for forty years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, Their hearts are always going astray, and they do not know my ways. So I declared an oath in my anger, They shall never enter my rest. See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God" (Hebrews 3:7-12).

Our words and actions determine our acceptability with God. Jesus said, *"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching"* (John 14:23). And, *"He who does not love me will not obey my teaching"* (John 14:24). And the Holy Spirit reminded the apostles of this same teaching (John 14:26).

Friend, do not entertain the idea that salvation is certain, regardless of our actions. If we would be saved, we must obey the Lord. Any other doctrine is not the Lord's doctrine. ✝

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In addition to committing the golden rule to memory, we must commit it to life.

What Would Jesus Have Me Do?

John Gipson

If one is willing to listen to the voice of God, he will hear the words of Jesus. Peter, James, and John learned this firsthand. On a high mountain they watched Jesus as His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as light. What an occasion! But, there was more to come. A bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, *"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased: listen to him"* (Matthew 17:5). If you respect the voice of God, you will listen to His Son.

The Hebrews writer confirms all of this by pointing out that in the past God spoke in many and various ways, *"but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world"* (Hebrews 1:2).

There are many voices crying out in the world today, but the one I need to hear above all others is the voice of God's Son. And that is because God has expressly told us to hear Him.

Jesus calls us into His fellowship in words that are clear and unmistakable. *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden . . . Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me"* (Matthew 11:28,29). That's what Jesus wants you to do! Have you done it? Believers in the city of Corinth did, and the apostle Paul speaks of how they were called into the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Corinthians 1:9). Won't you hear the voice of Jesus as did the Corinthians?

Jesus calls upon us to believe in Him. According to Jesus, this is eternal life. *"He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life"* (John 3:36). Peter tells us that *"every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name"* (Acts 10:43). If you do

what Jesus wants you to do, you will believe in Him!

Jesus wants me to repent of my sins. He preached, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel"* (Mark 1:15). Those who refused to repent He upbraided and warned what would happen to them on the day of judgment (Matthew 11:20-24). If I do what Jesus wants me to do, I will repent.

Jesus wants me to confess and acknowledge Him before men. He says, *"So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 10:32,33). That's plain, isn't it!

Jesus wants me to be baptized. He said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16). Jesus was baptized, and He wants me to be. He says I must be born of the water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:1-5).

I want to do what Jesus wants me to do, because life is at stake. *" . . . He who does not obey the Son shall not see life . . . "*(John 3:36). ⇧

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We're Just Pilgrims

Earth is not our habitation
For our home is in the sky
Heaven is our destination
We're just pilgrims passing by.

All our thoughts to God are given
As our journey we pursue
Going to our home in heaven
We're just pilgrims passing thru.

All our hopes, and our desires
Upward are to Heaven drawn
By the light His word inspires
We're just pilgrims passing on.

This is just a visitation
We on earth as strangers roam
To a waiting celebration
We're just pilgrims going home.

— Harry Presley

THE TWO-SIDED CROSS

Olden Cook

The cross was a two-sided structure. It was both **ugly** and **beautiful**. It was **ugly** because our sins were hanging there in the personage of Jesus . . . it was **beautiful** because it was our Savior hanging there, dying for our sins. *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:4). It was **ugly** in that it meant horrible suffering for the Son of God, suffering beyond our wildest imagination . . . it was **beautiful** because it portrayed in the most graphic way the love and grace of God extended to us. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him"* (John 3:16,17).

As Jesus was lifted up on the cross atop the hill of Calvary, God was reaching down to the valley of our despair and hopelessness. It was the nature of the event taking place there that made it both **ugly** and **beautiful** at the same time: **ugly** in that it was sin — the sin of those who physically perpetrated the act, your sins, my sins — that nailed Him there . . . but **beautiful** in what it did for us!

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, The emblem of suffering and shame; And I love that old cross where the dearest and best For a world of lost sinners was slain.

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross, Till my trophies at last I lay down; I will cling to the old rugged cross And exchange it some day for a crown.

— George Bennard ✝

Olden Cook preaches the Gospel in Kerrville, Texas, U. S. A.

Three Things You Should Know About Salvation

Jack Harriman

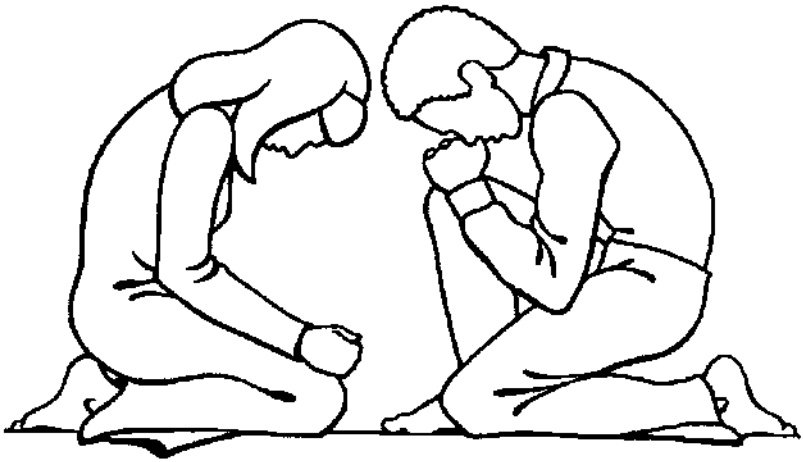
First, you should know that you can be saved. God's desire is that you be saved (2 Peter 3:9). Christ died for every man (Hebrews 2:9). The Gospel was to be preached to every person (Mark 16:15). Why? Because every person could be saved. You can understand and believe the Gospel message. You can repent of past sins. You can confess your faith in Christ and be baptized (Acts 2:38). No one can keep you from obeying the Gospel, not even the Devil himself. You can be saved.

Secondly, you should know that you can lose your salvation. Jesus said, *"If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned"* (John 15:6). Paul said, *" . . . in the latter times some shall fall away from the faith"* (1 Timothy 4:1). John recorded Jesus as saying, *"He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life"* (Revelation 3:5). You can so live as to lose your salvation.

Thirdly, you should know that you can insure your salvation. You don't have to lose it, and you can take steps to insure that you won't lose it. Peter tells us how. *" . . . add to your faith virtue . . . knowledge . . . temperance . . . patience . . . godliness . . . brotherly kindness . . . love. For if these things are in you . . . they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful . . . brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if you do these things you shall never fall"* (2 Peter 1:5-10).

You can be saved, and then you can do one of two things with your salvation. You can either lose it, or you can insure it. God wants you to be saved. So do I. ⇧

Jack Harriman preaches for the Center Street church in Fayetteville, Arkansas, U. S. A.



"Born Again Christian"

Sunny David

We have all heard people talk about a "born again Christian." What do they mean by such an expression? Is there any other kind of Christian?

According to the Bible, every Christian is a born again person, born of water and of the Spirit. In fact, one cannot be a Christian in any other way. The phrase or the term "born again Christian" is not even once mentioned in the Bible, because it denotes the idea of a special kind of Christian. A Christian is simply a Christian, a follower of Christ (Acts 11:26), one who has been saved by the propitiatory death of Jesus Christ; whom the Lord has added to his church; and who has the hope of entering into the eternal kingdom of God. (Romans 3:21-26; 5:6-11; Acts 2:27; 2 Corinthians 5:1).

It is indubitably obvious that to enter into God's eternal kingdom of heaven one must be born again, anew, and that that new birth must be of *"water and of the Spirit."* Christ Himself taught that *"unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,"* and to explain that more explicitly, the Lord said, *"unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God."* (John 3:3,5)

How then is one born of water and the Spirit? We must understand that it is a command of the Lord

with which every person must comply. It is something that one must do individually. It is not a mystical experience bestowed upon the person by the Lord, which is "better felt than told." Such a concept is not even mentioned in the Bible anywhere.

Certainly, one must be born again to become a Christian, and if one *is* a Christian it is because he *has been born again,* since one cannot be a Christian in any other way. But there is no mystical experience promised by the Lord in being born again, nor is there example in the entire Bible of any such experience by which anyone ever became a Christian.

The Bible must be our standard of authority for becoming a Christian and for everything that is enjoined to Christianity. According to its teaching, one becomes a Christian when he hears the gospel of Jesus Christ preached, and believes in Christ, repents of sins, and is baptized in water (immersed) for the remission of sins. (John 3:16; Acts 2:38) Notice the parallel readings: *"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God"* and, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved."* (John 3:5 and Mark 16:16) Only the saved will enter heaven.

It was by the Spirit, or the Holy Spirit, that the word of God was delivered to man. When man obeys that word, it leads him to salvation. Notice what the apostle Peter wrote to Christians: *"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another with a pure heart,* ***having been born again,*** *not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever."* (1 Peter 1:22,23) How did they purify their souls? In obeying the truth that was brought to them by the Spirit. How were they born again? Through the word of God.

Here is an example: When a multitude of people had heard the gospel of Christ for the first time, we read, *"Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.' Then those who gladly received his words were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them."* (Acts 2:37,38,41) In the last verse of the same chapter we read about those people that *"They were praising God and having favour with all the people and the Lord added to the*

church daily those who were being saved."

Were these penitent people *born again* of water and the Spirit? Of course they were, because if they had not been the Lord would not have added them to His church, since He adds to His church only those who are saved. Yet that wasn't the result of some sudden mystical experience "better felt than told." They had heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, and had believed in Him, and had repented of their sins, and were baptized (immersed in water) for the forgiveness of their sins.

The new life begins with the new birth. *"Or do you not know,"* said the apostle Paul, *"that as many of us as have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* (Romans 6:3,4)

Baptism of a believer signifies the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ, as well as of the believer who died to sin by repentance and allowed himself to be buried with Christ in baptism. Coming out of the waters of baptism, he begins to walk in the newness of life in Christ. This is how one is born again — born of water and of the Spirit — and this is how one becomes a Christian. There is no other way.

Think about it: A Christian is not born again. But one must be born again to become a Christian! ⇧

Sunny David works with the Lord's church in New Delhi, India.

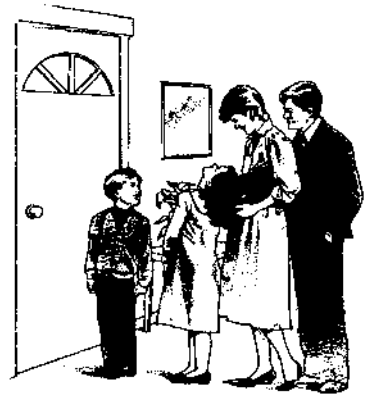
A Wonderful Life

Today I'm happy, I can smile.
My heart is joyous all the while,
And I can sing . . . mile after mile.
You've given me a wonderful life!

You send the sunshine and the rain
And when Life's trials bring me pain,
You give me strength to love again.
You've given me a wonderful life!

I have a peace that won't depart.
You've set a rainbow in my heart.
O what a precious Lord thou art!
You've given me a wonderful life!

– Carol Richardson



God's Precious Promises

When I am tempted . . .

"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

When I have sinned . . .

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

When I am afraid . . .

"Fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand" (Isaiah 41:1).

When I need wisdom . . .

"If any of you lacks wisdom let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).

When I fear death . . .

"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25,26).

When I am lonely . . .

". . . and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Who created evil?

Some people say that if God created *all* things, He must have created *evil*. They say this proves that God has a good side and an evil side—a light side and a dark side.

Is this true? Did sin and evil and Satan come from the mind and hands of God?

In the Bible we read, "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was *very good*." (Genesis 1:31)

In James 1:17,18, we are told, "Every *good gift* and every *perfect gift* is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

1 John 1:5 says "God is light and in Him is *no darkness* at all."

The nature of God is holiness, righteousness and purity. To have brought Satan into existence would have been contrary to the very essence of God.

So, God is good, and everything He created was good. The evil that exists is in opposition to Him; it did not originate with Him. We must look further for the explanation for Satan and for evil.

Next: Who, then, made Satan?

Fellowship of the Body

Tom Kelton

The fellowship of the body is the mutual care and concern its members have for each other. That care and concern is expressed in the "*one another*" passages of the New Testament. We are to confess our sins one to another (James 5:16); build up one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11); bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2); pray for one another (James 5:16); be kind to one another (Ephesians 4:32); submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21); show hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9); serve one another (Galatians 5:13); comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18); restore one another (Galatians 6:1); forgive one another (Colossians 3:13); admonish one another (Romans 15:14); teach one another (Colossians 3:16); encourage one another (Hebrews 3:13); and, above all, love one another (1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 4:7, 11).

There is a lot more to biblical fellowship than drinking coffee and eating sandwiches in a fellowship hall. True fellowship takes place when Christians come together to minister to one another.

In a normal, healthy human body, all the members work together. If they don't, that body is disabled, unable to function normally. No single part functions independently of the rest. So also is the body of Christ. All the members must work together if the body is to function normally. And no member was meant to function in isolation from the rest of the body. The New

Testament knew nothing of Christians who weren't part of a local assembly. God never intended the assembly to be a place where lonely people come on Sunday, sit alone among the crowd, and leave, still lonely and hurting. Rather, in the assembly, warm, intimate fellowship should take place.

When each member functions properly, the body is strong and healthy. And that will be a powerful example that the world can't help noticing.

Tom Kelton is a writer and preacher in Pharr, Texas, U. S. A.

For All His Blessings

For all His countless blessings
And all His gifts of love,
I owe all things that I possess
To God, the Lord above.

For hope and inner courage
When failure came my way,
And new found faith to carry on
To face another day.

He made my life far brighter
When it seemed so in vain,
He led me on to greater heights
I strove and sought to gain.

— Harold F. Mohn

Seven Free Gifts

1. **The Gift of Praise.** Critics destroy. Encouragers build up. Make it a point to give several compliments daily.
2. **The Gift of Understanding.** Down deep, this is really what most of us wish, to be understood.
3. **The Gift of Concession.** You don't have to win all the time.
4. **The Gift of Gratitude.** Look for someone to thank. Gratitude is the same root word for grace. We receive grace with gratis.
5. **The Gift of Attention.** Wives, children, employees seek human dignity. To give someone your time, respect, and attention is one of the greatest gifts.
6. **The Gift of Inspiration.** "Enthusiasm" literally means "God within us."
7. **The Gift of Personal Presence.** Eighty percent of success comes with merely "showing up." Broken hearts come when you don't. Your greatest power is you, your presence. Give it.

— Adapted, G. Max Tarbet

"Who Is My Mother And My Brethren?"

Basil Overton

"And a multitude was sitting about him; and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answereth them and saith, Who is my mother and my brethren? And looking round on them that sat round about him, he saith, Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:32-35).

Obviously, Jesus taught that those who do God's will sustain a relationship to Him that is more valuable than the relationship that He and Mary sustained as mother and son. This certainly places a lot of emphasis on the importance of doing the will of God. *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21). To enter heaven at last we will have to do God's commandments (Revelation 22:14). God's mercy is extended to those who remember His commandments to do them (Psalm 103:18).

Jesus had a mother, and brothers and sisters. *"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon; and are not his sisters here with us?"* (Mark 6:3). Jesus was the first of several children; He is called Mary's "firstborn son" in Luke 2:7. As dear as the ties in His family were, Jesus taught that those who do the will of God are His "mother and brethren" in a dearer sense than those who were literally His flesh kin. Those who do the will of God become members of God's family, the church that we read about in the Bible. Being in that family is more important than anything else in the world. Those in God's family have to do God's will to have the promise of going to heaven (2 Peter 1:5-11). ✝

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Paul's View Of The Church

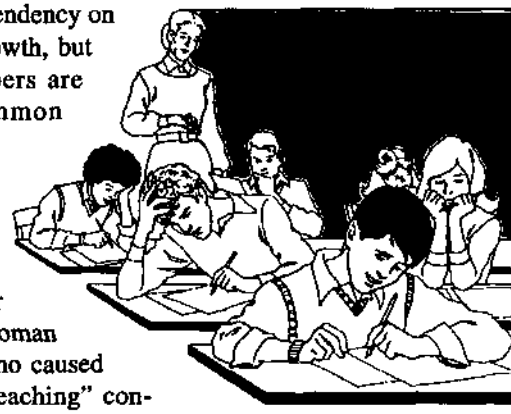
Jerry Jenkins

This article begins with a disclaimer: "By Paul's view of the church this writer does not intend to infer that his view was different from that of Jesus or any other of the apostles." Let it be noted, however, that we have more teaching from Paul than any other person concerning the church. With this in mind, consideration is given to his concept of the church.

First, Paul envisioned the church as the body of Christ. In numerous settings, Paul made reference to the church as the body of Christ; i.e., *"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another"* (Romans 12:4,5). *"But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ:"* (1 Corinthians 12: 11,12). *"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all"* (Ephesians 1:22,23).

In these passages Paul represents the church as an organism rather than an organization. An organization consists of parts mechanically related to one another; an organism consists of parts vitally related. In an

organization there is no dependency on one another for life and growth, but in an organism the members are bound together in a common whole.



Paul depicted the church as a school in Christian living. To the churches of Galatia, Paul indicated the law was their tutor. He appealed to the Roman Christians to mark those who caused divisions by advocating "teaching" contrary to that which they had "learned" (Romans 16:17). In the church we learn the lesson of love, the lesson of usefulness, the lesson of worship, the lesson of prayer, the lesson of forbearance, the lesson of humility, the lesson of teaching others, etc.

Finally, at least for this brief article, Paul perceived the church as the family of God. He told Timothy, *"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God . . ."* (1 Timothy 3:15). In Philippians, Paul outlined this beautiful picture of the church as God's family. The following qualities should characterize this family: Unity, Humility, Obedience, Service, Exemplary Living, Joyful Cooperation, and Sacrificial Sharing. ↑

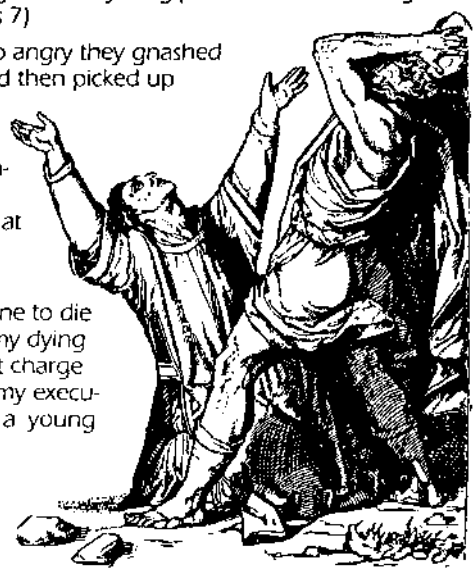
Jerry Jenkins is the preacher for the Roebuck Parkway church in Birmingham, Alabama, U. S. A.

But you have come to . . . the general assembly and **church of the firstborn** who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant . . . (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Who Am I?

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

1. **100** I lived in the first century A. D.
2. **90** I was described as a wise person of good reputation. (Acts 6:3)
3. **80** I was a very godly, spiritual person, said to be "full of the Holy Spirit". (Acts 6:5)
4. **70** My particular work in the Jerusalem church was to look after the needs of widows. (Acts 6:1)
5. **60** At the time I was chosen to do this work, the apostles laid their hands on me, giving me special power to do miracles. (Acts 6:6,8)
6. **50** Because I preached powerfully that Jesus is the Christ of God, some Jewish leaders aroused a mob against me. (Acts 6:9-12)
7. **40** The sermon I preached in response was a review of Jewish history, showing that everything pointed to the coming of the Christ. (Acts 7)
8. **30** The mob was so angry they gnashed at me with their teeth and then picked up stones to kill me for blasphemy. (Acts 7:54,57)
9. **20** I gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God! (Acts 7:55)
10. **10** I was the first one to die for Jesus. Like our Lord, my dying prayer was, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." The cloaks of my executioners were placed in the care of a young man called Saul. (Acts 7:57, 60)



My Score _____

See answer on inside back cover.

Where Will You Spend Eternity?

J. A. McNutt

Everything on earth, all material possessions, every relationship, every pleasure, and even our lives are limited. Experience has taught us that everything physical has a beginning and a limited existence. How can we comprehend "eternity," which has to do with infinite duration, eternal existence, and our state after death?

Life Is A Journey

All men are like travelers, pilgrims, and sojourners on this earth (1 Peter 2:11). This earth is not our home, and we seek a heavenly country and that eternal city (Hebrews 11:13-16). We are swiftly passing through time and are well on our way toward our eternal destination. It may be later than you think. Have you ever stopped and asked yourself the question, "When I get where I'm going, where will I be?" Agnostics offer no comfort or consolation, because they say, "We do not know that God exists, or that men will live again." Infidels say, "There is no God, and man is destined for dust and annihilation, death ends it all," while the Bible affirms, *"The spirit returns to God who gave it"* (Ecclesiastes 12:7), death is the gateway to life eternal, and the faithful will wear the crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

Let no man deceive you, both **heaven** and **hell** are definite realities, and Jesus plainly says of the wicked, *"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal"* (Matthew 25:46). Check your destination, **NOW!** The pathway to salvation, entrance into the kingdom, and eventually entering heaven must begin with being born of **water** and the **Spirit** (John 3:5). Being **born again** is best understood by reading Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38. ⇧

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THE MEANING OF SONSHIP

Gordon Hogan

How wonderful it is to have a father and a family. Surely when we have a loving, caring physical father and family, life is full and rich. This is even a much greater truth when we are children of God and are a part of His family, the church of Jesus Christ.

The evidence of sonship is seen in us when, having been born of the water and spirit (John 3:3-5; Acts 2:38), we take on a new nature. The apostle John tells us about this new nature:

> *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and 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. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*
>
> *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*
>
> *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God (1 John 3:1-9).*

The apostle Paul tells us that evidence of sonship is that we are led by the Spirit, that is, the instruction of the Spirit through the Word of God. We

are free, delivered from the bondage of sin, and have a special close relationship with our heavenly Father. Notice what Paul writes:

> *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together (Romans 8:12-17).*

Further evidence of sonship is God's wisdom in supplying discipline, and our willingness to receive it. The writer of Hebrews explains:

> *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*
>
> *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby (Hebrews 12:4-11).*

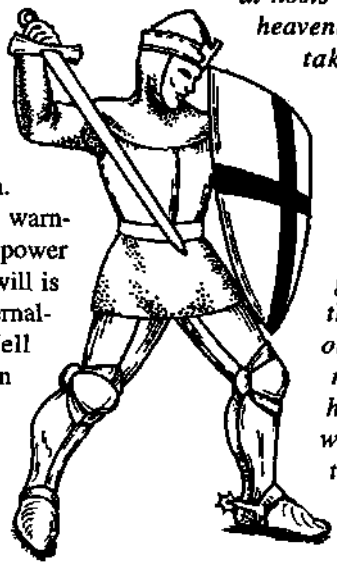
Praise God our Father who promises, if we keep His will, that we will share the riches of heaven with the only begotten Son, Jesus, our elder brother. ✝

Gordon Hogan has served as a missionary in Singapore for many years and is now Missionary-in-Residence at Harding University, Searcy, Arkansas, U. S. A.

The Whole Armour of God

Wayne Barrier

The Bible describes Satan as a **deceptive** (Revelation 12:9), **lying** (James 8:44), **scheming** (2 Corinthians 2:11), **cunning** (2 Corinthians 11:3), **wicked** (1 John 2:13), **proud** (1 Timothy 3:6), **powerful** (Ephesians 2:2), and **fierce** (Luke 8:29) **adversary** (1 Peter 5:8) of God. He is the father of evil and the eternal enemy of God and man.



We are repeatedly warned concerning Satan's power and influence. If his will is obeyed, we will be eternally lost, doomed to Hell forever. But we can win the struggle with Satan even though he is stronger than "flesh and blood," if we follow God's guidance. One comprehensive passage giving instruction to help with this struggle is Ephesians 6:10-18

Paul says *"Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against power, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore having girded your waist with the truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being*

watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints . . .". (Ephesians 6:10-18)

Satan's handiwork can be seen everywhere, every day — murder, adultery, child abuse, corruption, war, human starvation, hatred, idolatry, drunkenness, drug abuse, and strife. Man tries, usually with no success, to address these problems with solutions based on human wisdom and power. The effective weapons for overcoming them seem simple, yet they are powerful and profound because they come to us from God — truth, righteousness, preparation of the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word of God, prayer, perseverance, and watchfulness.

Satan can be defeated in our lives if we rely on the Lord and the power of His might. Only in this trust do we have the assurance of victory. ✞

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Spiritual Toughness

Physical toughness is developed by building endurance through *disciplined exercise.* Athletes develop great strength and refined skills this way.

Mental toughness is developed by making a resolve through *mental discipline.* Without this one cannot achieve his goals. He becomes like a wave driven by the wind.

Spiritual toughness is developed by making a *disciplined commitment* to the Lord. It is the resource by which one is able to accomplish noble tasks and endure severe persecution. Even more than this, it allows one *"not to be weary in well doing."* A mature Christian keeps on keeping on.

And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary (Galatians 6:9).

— Jimmy Jividen

Be Quiet, And Listen To God!

Bill Keele

God had the Psalmist say, *"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth"* (Psalm 46:10). And further, Habakkuk said, *"But the Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent before Him"* (Habakkuk 2:20).

To be quiet means to slow down in your life enough so that you are not dominated by human activity. Some are unable to be quiet, because they have thirty-six hours of activity packed into every twenty-four hour day! They have so filled their life with earthly activities that there is no time to take in any more messages.

To be quiet means to refuse to let your own feelings and attitudes dominate your life. This kind of person is so tuned in to himself that there is no room for openness to tune in to anything or anyone else — God included! For such a person, being tuned in to his own feelings is a thin disguise for simple selfishness.

To be quiet means to stop justifying what you are doing because you are caught by circumstances beyond your control. Blaming others, blaming circumstances, blaming God — all of these things help keep a person from being quiet before God.

To listen to God means to get into the Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16,17). It means to pay attention to the truth once delivered to all the saints (Jude 3). It means to reject the religious traditions and doctrines of men. It means to know His book.

To listen to God means to meditate upon His law, so that you find the practical application in daily living that God, in Scripture, intends.

To listen to God means to refuse to let feelings, intuitions, and inexplicable events make the written Word void! Dreams, omens, cloud formations, and strange voices do not change the written Word. Even a good conscience does not change the Word.

To listen to God involves an openness to apply God's written will to one's life. One argues, another seeks to understand. One avoids, another seeks to apply. One delays, another seeks to implement.

To be quiet and listen to God means to get into the Bible, the Word of God, and obey it. ✝

Bill Keele is an evangelist for the Lord's church in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, U. S. A.

Take Up The Cross

T. Pierce Brown

In reading Mark 8:34, the thought occurred to me that I do not ever remember hearing a sermon which really emphasized the two points in this verse that in order to follow Jesus one would have to deny self and take up the cross. I have heard and preached many that would tell the blessings one would receive, such as forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, eternal life, joy and peace, but I do not remember hearing much about the absolute necessity of self-denial and cross-bearing. I hear "I'm O.K.; You're O.K.," "How to Enjoy Life More," or even occasionally by some "old-time" preacher, "What Must I Do To Be Saved," including faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, but not much from anyone on what is involved in following Christ.

It is my opinion that a large number of us do not even realize what "self-denial" means. I think I grew up thinking it was denying self some things that I might want that were wrong to have. If I passed the neighbor's watermelon patch on some hot summer day and knew he did not want me to get one, self-denial seemed to mean that I would not take what I wanted.

I had probably been preaching for several years before it really dawned on me that to deny **self** is not to deny self some **things**, but to deny self **himself**! The middle of **sin** is **I**! As the song indicates, we may start out with "All of self and none of thee," but we must come to "**none** of self and all of thee." We must deny self in order to be a Christian. Paul put it in Galatians 3:20, *"Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."*

But I wanted the primary thrust of this article to deal with *"take up his cross."* It is probably a very misused expression. If one wrecks his car, he may say, "It is just a cross I have to bear." If his wife nags him, he may think, "I must bear that cross." Any sorrow, loss, or difficulty is spoken of as "my cross." Sometimes people even speak of their own sins and shortcomings as a cross. "I have a hot temper, but that is just one of the crosses I must bear." What a travesty on the proper use of the term as Christ used it!

Calm endurance in the midst of the constant changes of life may be a virtue lacking in many of us, but Christianity is not simply a form of stoicism. The cross is not something that just falls on us. The cross is

something we take up. It is a deliberate choice of something we could have escaped, except for the fact that we deliberately chose to serve Christ, and as a result, suffer some difficulty, tribulation, persecution, or trouble.

When you and I take upon ourselves the bearing of one another's burdens **because of our Christian relationships,** that might be said to be *"taking up the cross."* When we are ridiculed, laughed at, persecuted, or maligned because **we are fighting the good fight of faith,** this is taking up the cross. But if we are merely ridiculed because we act in a ridiculous fashion, or are laughed at because we are funny, or are rejected because we are stubborn, hateful, or mean, we have no right to assume "I have taken up my cross and followed Jesus." ⇧

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Dare To Be Different

In the mad rush to keep up with the culture, it is easy to compromise. Non-conformity is never an end within itself, but to follow Christ means non-conformity with the world. It is the very nature of things. We are not to *"be conformed to this world."*

We are God's special people. That makes us different. We are different in our commitment, our morals and our priorities. The world just does not get it. Our distinctiveness is wrapped up in whose we are.

> *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (1 Peter 2:9a).*

Dare to be different. It reflects the nature of those who are God's children.

– Jimmy Jividen

"A Little Bit Of Sugar Inside"

Betty Tucker

A mother hugged her six-year-old daughter. She asked Laurie, "What makes you so sweet?" The little girl answered, "I think when God made me, He put a little bit of sugar inside."

Listen to the advice of Jesus, "*Give and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again*" (Luke 6:38).

He tells us that goodness returns dividends. His thought is echoed in Proverbs 21:21, "*He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour.*"

Some Related Attributes

Courtesy

Courtesy is the universal language. Peter advises us in the third chapter of his first letter, "*Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous*" (1 Peter 3:8).

Ruth found herself in a strange land, with her beloved Naomi to support. She worked in the fields in the heat of the day, gleaning behind the reapers. Her good manners and

ready smile won the heart of Boaz (Ruth 2:11). At last, the two were married. This happy story might easily have taken another direction if Ruth had not shown herself to be sweet and courteous to all.

Tact

One blessed with this attribute has the discernment to approach opposition at the least sensitive spot.

The wise man tells us in Proverbs 25:11, "*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.*" Some have a gift for always saying the right thing at the right time.

Searching the pages of the Bible, we see Esther employ tact to great advantage. She prepared a feast for the king and invited Haman to attend. Haman was the avowed enemy of the Jews. He planned to kill every Israelite who lived in Persia, even the women and children. Queen Esther showed great strength of character as she tactfully waited to tell the king what her desire was. She invited proud Haman to another banquet. When the time was right, she pointed the finger of accusation and said, " . . . *The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman . . . .*" (Esther 7:6).

Patience

For a study on the patience of God, we look to His promise to the Amalekites. In Genesis 17:14 we hear Him say, " . . . *I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.*"

One hundred years passed, 200 years, 300 — and still the Amalekites pursued their campaigns of hostility. **Four hundred and three years** passed before God make good His promise. In 1 Samuel 15:2 we read, "*Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel . . .* " He then tells King Saul to utterly destroy them all.

James instructs Christians to "*Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord . . .* " (James 5:7). He had earlier told us that, " . . . *the trying* [testing] *of your faith worketh patience*" (James 1:3).

We know that to have good children, we must work patiently with them. Even the prettiest flowers and the best music require diligent, patient work.

Let us so live that we may say with the little girl who introduced our study, "There's a little bit of sugar inside." ✝

Betty Tucker is the wife of a gospel preacher and lives in Lobelville, Tennessee, U. S. A.

Help, Lord

Demar Elam

Have you ever been in a situation in life where you simply shouted, "Help, Lord!"? David the Psalmist did so, saying, "*Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases to be. For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men*" (Psalm 12:1).

Man's sinful condition today makes one want to cry out those same words. The righteous are at times discouraged when wickedness prevails among men. It is disheartening when men of spiritual stature are swept along with the flow of an evil society and fail to walk upright. When the children of light fail to walk in that light, man's future appears dark and threatening.

Where are the "Davids" of our day who cry out, "Help, Lord!"? Shakespeare once said, "The common curse of mankind — folly and ignorance." The folly of man is great in the earth today, and it condemns those engaging in it. The wise man wrote, "*Like a dog that returns to its vomit, is a fool who repeats his folly*" (Proverbs 26:11). No doubt this is the reason we see foolish, evil actions being repeated over and over again in the lives of some individuals.

So, the righteous cries out, "Help, Lord!", and then he remembers the many Biblical passages assuring him that God has never forsaken the righteous, such passages as Isaiah 41:10-14.

Just as God heard and helped Jacob and the men of Israel, let us be of good courage and know that, today if the righteous will cry out, "Help, Lord!", God will uphold them with that same right hand of righteousness. We must grow and develop spiritually. Each Christian has the individual responsibility to mature in Christ. Where are the great men of God today who will cry out, "Help, Lord!" and wait for the Lord's mighty hand to deliver them? ⇧

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A Requiem Worthy of Our King

Mark Hall

The most beautiful piece of music I have ever heard is Brahms' Requiem. A requiem is a composition dedicated to someone after death, to commemorate the meaning of the person's life and to wish him peace. Brahms' Requiem, the composer said, was written for all of mankind, and the words are taken from Isaiah 40:6-8. It reads:

A voice says, "Call out."
Then he answered, "What shall I call out?"
All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, and the flower fades,
When the breath of the Lord blows upon it;
Surely the people are grass.
The grass withers and the flower fades,
But the word of the Lord stands forever.

The music Brahms wrote is extraordinary and *so* majestic. The chorus sings with great feeling, and the harmony is flawless. When I listen, I think to myself, "The singing in heaven must be closer to this than anything else I have heard on this earth."

The requiem, as a form of music composition, is more or less a thing of the past, because it was generally written for royalty. As I think about the greatest King who ever lived — Jesus — and all of the songs we sing to Him and about Him, I'm left wondering *how one would begin to write a requiem that would be worthy of the Master?* If one could assemble all the composers in the world and have them write the grandest scores that had ever been written, would they be adequate? If one could hire every orchestra in the world to play the finished music, would that do Him justice? If

every person on the face of the earth joined in to sing this masterpiece, could their voices be beautiful enough or their harmony perfect enough to properly honor the King?

Brahms' Requiem was written in German. In which language would we write our tribute? We sing a song from our hymn books which says, "What language shall I borrow to thank thee, dearest Friend?" Clearly, the message in these words is that there is no language that can adequately express to Jesus the thanks in our hearts. No language in the world has words that are beautiful enough or that could really convey the meaning behind the thoughts.

It becomes obvious that writing a requiem is not the proper medium for expressing our thanks for what Christ has done for us. How can we respond to this love He has shown? Micah 6:6-8 reads as follows:

With what shall I come to the Lord
And bow myself before the God on high?
Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings,
With yearling calves?
Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams,
In ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I present my first-born for my rebellious acts,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He has told you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice, to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God?

And in John 14:15 Jesus explains, *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."*

These verses demonstrate that it is our hearts which God wants, our inward obedience rather than just outward expressions that are sometimes empty of meaning. This is true obedience — and the highest praise we can offer our Creator.

"What language shall I borrow, to thank thee, dearest Friend?" *The language of obedience.* ✞

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If God is my Companion

Throughout the day and night,
If every thought and action
Is bathed in His great light,
Though others' foes may touch my own
With happiness or grief,
No outside force can rule my soul
Or rob me of His peace.

— Betty Burton Choate

Broken Dreams

As children bring their broken toys
With tears for us to mend,
I brought my broken dreams to
God
Because He was my
friend.

But then instead of
leaving Him
In peace to work
alone
I hung around and
tried to help
With ways that
were my own.

At last I snatched
them back
And cried, "How can
You be so slow?"
"My child," He said,
"What could I do?
You never did let go."

– Anonymous

The Christian Home

Harvey Porter

It is interesting that the Bible has so much to say about the home, husband and wife, rearing children, loving each other, and having a good life. The problem is that many will not seek this instruction, and many who know what it says will not follow it because of selfishness and disregard for God's authority.

I recently read the following words from a fine Christian teacher and preacher: "Beautiful is the marriage of Christians, two who are one in hope, one in desire, one in the way of life they follow, one in the religion they practice. They are both servants of the same Master. Nothing divides them, either in flesh or in spirit. They are two in one flesh, and where there is one flesh there is also one spirit. They pray together, they worship together; instructing one another, strengthening one another. Side by side they visit God's church; side by side they face difficulties and persecution, share their consolations." It was written by Tertullian in the third century after Christ.

The amazing thing about the

Word of God is that it is timeless. It is never out of date. The twentieth century home still needs what the third century home needed. The Bible teaches that one man and one woman, by love and purpose, are joined together for life before God. This was His plan. The man is the head of the home in the same loving manner that Jesus is the head of His church. The wife submits to the husband as the church submits to Christ (Ephesians 5:21-32). Children obeyed their parents in the Lord in New Testament times as in Old Testament times (Ephesians 6:1-3). And parents were loving and considerate in bringing up their children (Ephesians 6:4).

God planned the home for our good and for our fulfillment. There are no unreasonable demands. Love is at the center of the home. Authority is basic to any relationship. Everyone cannot do "his own thing." All have to love, honor, and respect one another. They communicate, they give in to one another, they reconcile, they conciliate. They respect God's authority, the parent's authority, the father's authority.

There is no relationship devoid of problems. Where humans are concerned we will have problems. As humans, we have problems with God, but let it be remembered that God is always right. While He is patient and kind toward us, we must always bend our will to His will. If every home in trouble would seek God's will for their marriage and children, there would be no separations, single-parent homes, disturbed children, and hurt loved ones. It takes time and real effort to work out marital problems, but God has the solutions if we are willing to follow them. If the Bible is not the solution, then what have we that will work? I have known those who would not follow what God says. They broke up the home. They went separate ways. They lost money, health insurance for the children, and it takes twice the amount to maintain two households. They broke the hearts of their children and the hearts of family members who loved both of them. They had personal misery in the process; some had emotional breakdowns. And, I have heard many say after having married a second or third time, "I wish I had worked it out the first time!"

Tertullian was right when he wrote, "Side by side they visit God's church; side by side they face difficulties and persecution, and share their consolations." Let's all try it! ✝

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The Christian Wife

Jennie Carlaga

God, in His infinite wisdom, created man with a need not only for his Maker, but for a companion and spiritual partner on earth as well. Thus woman was provided for man: *"Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh."* (Genesis 2:24) It was God's design from the very beginning for man and woman to live together as husband and wife.

Today, thousands of years later, it is still God's design for men and women to marry and begin new families, and within that design God has a specific plan for each individual family member. As Christian wives, we ought to be concerned about our role within the family. How does God wish and expect Christian women to behave? What is God's message for the Christian wife?

The Christian Wife Belongs to Her Husband

The apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 that *"each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband"* (verse 2), and that each should respect each other's rights and wishes. Then he explains, *"For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise, the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does."* In

other words, you both literally belong to one another: you belong to your husband, and he belongs to you. Therefore, we should be giving to our husbands, and understanding of their needs.

The Christian Wife Treasures Her Marriage

Paul writes further in verse 10 of 1 Corinthians 7 that *"the wife should not separate from her husband."* It has never been God's will that a husband and wife should part ways or break up the family that they have created. Jesus himself admonished us, *"What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder."* (Matthew 19:6) As Christian wives, we must bear in mind that God sanctified our marriage, and it is a holy union that we should not treat lightly. It is something to be treasured and cultivated, not tossed aside or destroyed.

The Christian Wife Stays with An Unbeliever

But what about those wives who find themselves bound to a man who does not share their faith? Are they to do the same as those who are married to Christians? Paul addresses this problem in verse 13 of 1 Corinthians 7, saying, *"If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him."* Even this union is sanctified by God through the believing partner, and should not be put asunder unless, according to Paul, *"the unbelieving partner desires separation."* (verse 15)

The Christian Wife Teaches through Her Actions

There are many reasons why God desires such a marriage to continue, and Paul states one of these clearly in verse 16 of 1 Corinthians 7: *"Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband?"* It is very possible that a husband who is not faithful will be converted, not so much by nagging or insisting, but by observing his wife's Christian behavior. The apostle Peter also stresses this point in 1 Peter 3:1,2 when he writes, *"Likewise you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, when they see your reverent and chaste behavior."*

The Christian Wife Is Submissive to Her Husband

This reverent and chaste behavior should dominate the life of a Christian wife, regardless of the beliefs of her husband. The apostle Paul says in Ephesians 5:21,22 *"Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord."* And again in

verse 24, *"As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands."* Our love and reverence for Christ should lead us to a submissive and respectful relationship with our husbands, not because we are inferior to or have less value than they, but because they are the head of the family, just as Christ is the head of the church. A husband has God-given authority which it is wrong for a wife to try to usurp.

The Christian Wife Is Faithful to Her Husband

Not only should we be reverent towards our spouses, but we should behave respectfully. We are told in Hebrews 13:4, *"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for God will judge the immoral and adulterous."* If we have the true respect for our husband that God wishes, we will never consider being flirtatious or unfaithful. It is a sin against the husband, and a sin against God. Certainly a Christian wife should avoid such conduct, especially if she wants to win an unbelieving partner to the Lord.

Conclusion: What Is a Good Wife?

King Solomon summarized the qualities of a good wife in the last chapter of Proverbs, and I will let his closing remarks be my closing remarks. *"Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: 'Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all,' charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised."* (Proverbs 31:25-30) This is what God desires of a Christian wife: respect, submissiveness, and faithfulness, both to her husband and to God. ⇧

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EVERY LIVING THING must be cultivated — tended — or it wastes away from neglect and dies. Marriages are living things, and they must be cultivated day by day or they will wither from neglect and eventually die.

Many marriages are like many gardens — full of weeds and briars, a few good things growing in hard ground.

But, ah! the marriage that is tended daily with love and thoughtfulness — that nears the perfection of happiness, planned first in the mind of God!

— Betty Burton Choate

Marriage Life

Hans J. Dederscheck

At the very beginning of the Bible we read, "*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . .* " (Genesis 1:26). "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them*" (Genesis 1:27). When God created man and woman He blessed them and said, "*Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth ...*" (Genesis 1:28). "*And the Lord said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him*" (Genesis 2:18). Jesus Christ insists on the oneness of marriage. "*For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh . . . What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" (Matthew 19:4-6). Marriage is an essential element of God's creation

Marriage in the Bible is seen in a very positive way. "*A virtuous woman is a crown of her husband*" (Proverbs 12:4). Marriage is able to produce a happy life (Proverbs 31:10-31). The Song of Solomon is filled with the beauty of marriage, the love between a man and his wife. Proverbs 5:18 says, "*Rejoice with the wife of thy youth.*"

Marriage is a great mystery in the sense that it ought to reflect the union between Jesus Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:22,23). The Bible teaches that marriage is strictly monogamous (having only one mate), for Jesus Christ has and can have only one bride. A second marriage is possible if the first mate dies (Romans 7:2,3; 1 Corinthians 7:39), but "*only in the Lord.*" A second marriage is also a possibility in cases of fornication. God intends for marriages to last. "*What God has joined together let no man put asunder*" (Matthew 19:6).

The married couple form a unit of oneness, a reflection of Christ's unity with the Christian. Christ is the head of His body, the church (Ephesians 5:22-33); the man is the head of the woman (1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:9-15). However, the husband performs his role, not as a dictator, but as one who loves his wife (Ephesians 5:33; Colossians 3:19). ✝

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The Rod In Proverbs

Dayton Keesee

In an age of child abuse on the one hand and neglected discipline on the other, some consider the rod in Proverbs an outdated idea for child rearing. Take a close look through this article and see if you would agree.

The solution as to Solomon's words about the rod is to understand, not misapply, them. Note that Solomon wrote that a father who "loves" his son "disciplines" him "diligently" (Proverbs 13:24). The hand holding that rod is related to a heart that loves (Hebrew *Aheb* — "to love as one's own soul, to breathe after, desire") and disciplines (Hebrew *Musar* — includes correction, admonition, example, instruction). That discipline is done diligently (Hebrew *Shachar* — "to seek, carefully prepares chastisement, to long after"). Would that rod in that hand and from that heart ever be guilty of child abuse? Never! What a beautiful God-guided example of discipline Solomon gave to us.

Remember that the rod is still in God's word. In Proverbs 22:15 that rod will remove "foolishness" (Hebrew *Ivveleth* — "impiety, power, pre-eminence of fools") that is bound up in the heart of a child. Removed by this "rod of correction" is a spirit of no respect for property or principles. Does our society still need that rod? Unless it offers **correction**, that is not the rod Solomon has given.

Proverbs 23:13f goes even further to state that we should not hold back discipline, adding *"if you beat him with the rod, you would 'deliver'* (Hebrew *Natsal* — "to snatch out of danger, to escape") *his soul."* When you apply the rod so that it snatches a child out of danger, is that a bad method of discipline?

In Proverbs 29:15 the rod is blended with "reproof" (Hebrew *Tokachath* — "the act of arguing, showing, maintaining the right, positive in assertions, correction, punishment") to give wisdom. The failure to use the rod with reproof is

seen as Solomon adds, *"but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother."* What a price is paid when a parent is left with that "shame" (Hebrew *Bosh* — "astonished, confounded, put to silence, paleness and terror, to fail in hope and expectation, overwhelmed with unexpected calamity"). The rod and reproof that can avoid those heart-wrenching emotions is not only needed, but an imperative!

When you have the rod in a hand that **corrects**, through words of **reproof** that give **wisdom** out of a heart of **love**, surely God through Solomon has supplied us with good guidelines for discipline.

Haim Ginott made this observation: "Whatever grandfather did was done with authority: whatever we do is done with hesitation. Even when in error, grandfather acted with certainty. Even when in the right, we act with doubt." Those responses inspired some unknown writer to pen the following poem:

We Need More Grandpas

Junior bit the meter man
Junior hit the cook;
Junior's anti-social now
(According to the book);
Junior smashed the clock and lamp,
Junior hacked the tree;
(Destructive trends are treated
In chapters two and three).

Junior tossed his shoes and socks
Out into the rain;
(Negation, that is normal —
Disregard the strain).
Junior set Dad's shirt on fire,
Whittled Grandpa's pine;
(That's to gain attention,
See page eighty-nine).

Grandpa seized a slipper,
And yanked Junior cross his knee;
He's read nothing but the Bible
Since 1893!

Apply Solomon's suggestions to Junior, and he will grow up to be a better boy! ✝

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Parents need to discipline their children when they are young so they will discipline themselves when they are grown.

THE WORTH OF A WOMAN...

Her Power in the Home

Betty Burton Choate

God had said of Abraham that he was the kind of faithful man who would *"command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him [*that *'I will make you a great nation . . . and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.']"* (Genesis 18:19; 12:2,3)

Abraham's son, Isaac, was faithful to God. He had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Esau chose to marry women who were not believers in God, so his descendants fell under that influence of paganism. Genesis 26:35 says of Esau's idolatrous wives, *"They were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah."* In Genesis 27:46, Rebekah said to Isaac, *"I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth (her pagan daughters-in-law); if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these who are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"*

Rebekah recognized the need for marriage and the home to be built on faith in God, in the heart of the wife as well as the husband. What an important factor this has been throughout history, and how wise parents would be today to teach their children to choose mates only among those of like-faith.

Because of Rebekah's insistence, Jacob was sent to Haran, to his uncle's house. There he met Rachel, his cousin, and a worshipper of the true God. He loved her immediately, and with such a deep love that he agreed to work seven years for her, *" . . . and they seemed but a few days to him because of the love he had for her."* (Genesis 29:20) At the end of that time, Laban tricked Jacob and gave him his older daughter in marriage instead of Rachel.

God's plan for marriage from the beginning of creation had been 'one woman for one man'. Concerning Adam and Eve and marriage, God had said, *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."* (Genesis 2:24)

Contrary to God's will, in those days it had become a common practice for men to take more than one

wife. This was evidently tolerated by God at that time, though He never spoke approval of it. In the case of Jacob, Jacob had loved and chosen Rachel, and evidently would have married only her. For seven years he had kept himself true to his commitment to her. In all good faith he had gone through the marriage, believing his bride was Rachel. But, *"It came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah. And he said to Laban, 'What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?'"*

Laban explained that it was not their custom for the younger daughter to marry before the elder. He suggested that he would also give Rachel to Jacob — if he would work for her seven more years! Jacob's love was so great that he agreed to Laban's suggestion.

What happened as a result of this practice of polygamy? Were they a large happy family? No, we read that Jacob *"loved Rachel more than Leah."* (Genesis 29:30) Naturally this was so, since Rachel had been his choice. But this caused jealousy. Leah, who was not loved, gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, saying, *"The Lord has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me."* Her statement shows her misery at being an unloved wife. Leah gave birth to a second son, and she said *"Because the Lord has heard that I am unloved. He has therefore given me this son also."* (Genesis 29:33)

"Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, 'Give me children, or else I die!'" (Genesis 30:1) Such pain and emotional torment we read in the words of these sisters!

With the passing years both women gave their handmaids to Jacob, claiming as their own the children born to them. This, too, was a practice of that age. Finally Rachel gave birth to Joseph, who became Jacob's favorite child. At last, Rachel died giving birth to Jacob's last son, Benjamin.

What had the mixture of polygamy, jealousy, favoritism, and competition done in the lives of Jacob, Leah, Rachel, and their thirteen children? Did it bring happiness or pain? What effect did these wives have on their husband's life? How did they influence their children?

Though these things happened in another age, reading the biblical narratives in the latter chapters of the book of Genesis, we can feel the strong emotions. We can almost see their tears. We can learn from their mistakes that God's way is best.

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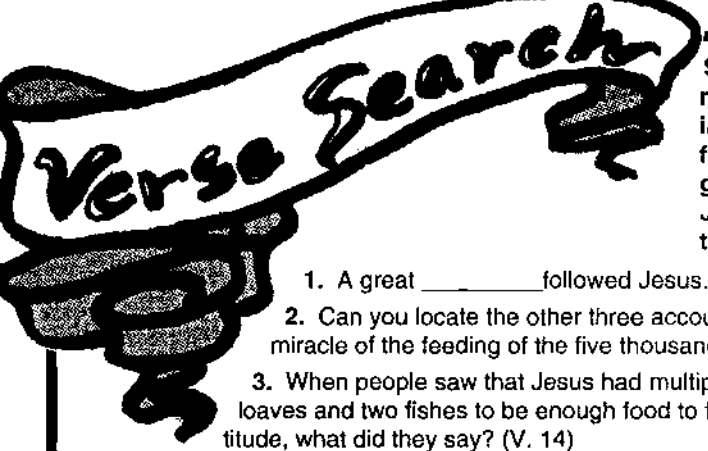


Supply the missing information from the gospel of John, chapter six.

1. A great _____followed Jesus. (V. 2)

2. Can you locate the other three accounts of the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand?

3. When people saw that Jesus had multiplied the five loaves and two fishes to be enough food to feed the multitude, what did they say? (V. 14)

4. The people would have done what? (V. 15)

5. When Jesus approached the disciples, walking on the waters of the Sea of Galilee, what did He say to them? (V. 20)

6. Why did the crowds look for Jesus? (V. 26)

7. What is to be our greatest concern: (1) food for the body; (2) food for the soul? (V. 27)

8. "This is the _____ of _____, that you _____ in _____ whom He sent." (V. 29)

9. The true bread from Heaven is _____. (V. 33,34)

10. Why did Jesus come from Heaven? (V. 38)

11. When Jesus said that He Himself was the bread of life, what question did the people ask? (V. 42)

12. "Therefore _____ who has _____ and _____ from the Father _____ _____ _____." (V. 45)

13. Read Matthew 26:26-29 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-29. What do these passages tell us about Jesus' statements regarding eating His flesh and drinking His blood? (V. 51-58)

14. Did Christians in the first-century church eat the Lord's Supper regularly? (Acts 20:7)

15. As is true today, because of lack of understanding, many followers left Jesus after hearing these words, remarking, "This is __ _____ _____; _____ _____ _____ ___?" (V. 60)

16. Jesus asked the disciples, "Do you also want to go away?" What did Peter answer? (V. 68,69)

[See inside of back cover for answers.]

A Bible Study About Jesus

Kerry Holton

We care about our lost friends. We do not want them to suffer eternal condemnation. We would like to begin a Bible study with them. But where do we start? How about telling the story of Jesus? Just proclaim the Gospel! What follows is a recommended outline. Just read the Scriptures together and ask questions as you go.

Jesus was born of a virgin (Matthew 1:18-25).
He is the Son of God (Matthew 3:13-17).
He performed miracles (Matthew 1:2-6; John 20:30, 31).
He turned water into wine (John 2:1-11). He has power over nature.
He healed an official's son (John 4:46-54). He has power over space and time.
He healed a crippled man (John 5:2-18). He has power over disease.
He fed five thousand (John 6:1-15). He has power to supply man's needs.
He walked on the Sea of Galilee (John 6:16-21). He has power over nature.

He healed a man born blind (John 9). He has power over physical senses.
He raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-53). He has power over death.
He lived a sinless life (Hebrews 4:14-16).
He was crucified (Matthew 27:27-54).
He was raised from the dead (Matthew 28:1-10).
He was taken into heaven (Acts 1:6-11).
He is coming back for His followers (Acts 1:11; John 14:1-3).

After we introduce our friends to Jesus, it is time to talk about other subjects. We will want to demonstrate how the Bible is our only guide and authority in religion. We will need to discuss our sin problem, the judgment to come, and how Jesus became our substitute when He paid the penalty for sin on the cross. We must talk about obedience, faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. This is how God has prescribed that we accept His offer of salvation. We'll want to study about the church, worship, and Christian living. But before we talk about these essentials, let's talk about Jesus. "*And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ*" (Acts 5:42). ⇧

Kerry Holton is a preacher of the Gospel in Yukon, Oklahoma, U. S. A.

"Men Have Forgotten God"

"While I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of older people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: 'Men have forgotten God . . .' Since then I have spent well-nigh fifty years working on the history of our revolution . . . . I have read hundreds of books . . . hundreds of personal testimonies . . . and contributed eight volumes of my own toward the effort of clearing away the rubble left by that upheaval. But if I were asked today to formulate . . . the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some sixty million of our people, I (would) repeat: 'Men have forgotten God!' That's why all this has happened. I myself see Christianity today as the only living spiritual force capable of undertaking the spiritual healing of Russia."

–Aleksander Solzhenitysn in a 1983 address.

Our Chief Work

David Pharr

It is the mission of the church to preach the gospel to the whole world. As a member of the church you have a part in this mission.

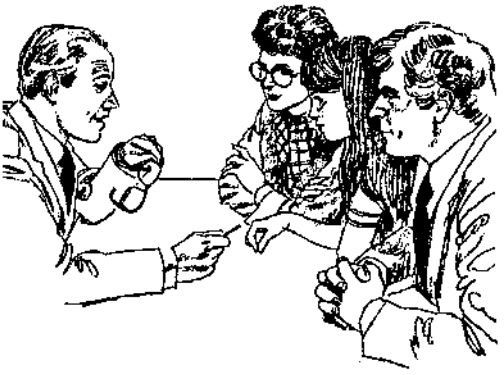
Read Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; and Luke 24:47. These passages have often been called "the great commission" because they give Christ's great order that the Gospel is to be taken to all people.

It is obvious that the church in modern times is failing to accomplish this. Regardless of what our excuses might be, it is certain that all is not being done that needs to be done. This should cause us all to have greater zeal that the church might move forward in evangelism at home and abroad.

The seriousness of failing to teach others was recognized by the apostle Paul when he wrote, *"Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel!"* (1 Corinthians 9:16). But the apostles and public speakers were not the only Christians involved in preaching. In Acts 8:1-4 we read that the members of the church were driven from their homes by persecution, but verse 4 tells us that *"they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."* This indicates that they were all involved in telling others about Christ.

Acts 20:20 tells of preaching that was done *"publicly, and from house to house."* There are many ways in which the Gospel might be spread to large numbers at once (papers, radio, television, etc.), but there will always be a great need for individual Christians to teach others on the personal level.

In the New Testament there is great emphasis on the growth of the church. (See Acts 2:41,47; 4:4;



5:14.) Today we should all be involved in working for the growth of the church. We should all pray for growth. We should all rejoice every time a precious soul is added to the body of Christ.

Everyone does not have the same talent or training. You should not feel guilty because you do not have all the capabilities that others have. For example, everyone cannot go to foreign lands as missionaries; but others can stay at home and provide financial support. All cannot preach from the pulpit; but they can support and encourage those who do. A husband may go out to teach in homes while the wife stays at home to keep the children. She is helping in the preaching of the Gospel by making it possible for him to go. The point is, the work is accomplished by the cooperation of each doing what is needed.

It is important, however, for each one of us to learn as much as we can about how to teach others so that we will be prepared when opportunities do arise.

The church should always be an evangelistic church. This means that the members should have evangelistic zeal. Each of us enjoys the blessing of salvation in Christ. We were given the opportunity to learn the Lord's will for our lives. Now it is our duty to do what we can to share the Gospel with relatives, friends, neighbors, every person in the whole world.

Remember to pray for every soul-winning effort. Pray for missionaries. Pray for all local efforts to teach in homes. Pray for preachers who publicly proclaim the Gospel. Pray for lost people you are seeking to reach. Pray for yourself, that you will never lose your zeal and that you will be effective in bringing others to Christ.

Whether you personally know them or not, you should pray for the dedicated men and women who are working as missionaries around the world. Pray that more will accept the challenge and that the brotherhood will support and encourage them. ✝

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Jesus And His Preaching

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

When Jesus began His ministry, He "*came preaching*." We should study carefully His preaching as our role model.

Jesus' preaching was not just a presentation of propositional truth. His content was truth that man needed to know to be free (John 8:32). But follow Him closely and you will see that His message was people-oriented. It was not just a string of theological propositions.

He preached wherever people were, including: (1) the temple court (Matthew 21:23); (2) synagogues (Matthew 4:23); (3) and through all the towns and villages (Matthew 11:1). He preached in Galilee and Judea and in Gentile territory. But wherever He preached, His messages were shaped to the needs and situations of His hearers.

He went where the people were. A meal in a home provided an opportunity to share great insights into life. Some audiences were composed of multitudes, but most of His teaching was where two or three were gathered. He walked on busy roads and down village paths. He went to those that society wanted to forget. He never went to a place to advertise a meeting and send invitations. He went to people, and the common folk heard Him gladly. He went to the work place and called people right off the job. Peter and Andrew were fishing, and Matthew was gathering taxes.

Jesus identified with people. Since Jesus was a carpenter from a small town, the ordinary people found it easy to identify with Him. He knew and understood the hurts they experienced. He moved among them with a keen eye and a listening ear. He heard their pain, fear, and desires. He heard the plea of mothers, fathers, and friends. He disputed with religious leaders, talked to women, and even ate with sinners.

Jesus was a people person. He demonstrated respect and compassion for humanity. He never sought to manipulate or exploit any person. Jesus took risks that endeared Him to some, marked Him as foolish to others, and made Him appear as a courageous teacher to yet others.

So, His preaching was not just propositional. It was also relational. Let's emulate His example and be committed to truth, and also be people-oriented. ⇧

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Lydia's Open Heart

Maxie B. Boren

"And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshipper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:13-15).

Recorded in Acts 16:13-15 is the conversion of a woman by the name of Lydia. The apostle Paul (with Silas, Luke, and Timothy accompanying him) had gone to the city of Philippi on his second missionary journey, for the purpose of preaching the Gospel of Christ. While there, on the sabbath day, Paul and his companions went down by a riverside to pray. Some women had also gathered there, including a lady by the name of Lydia. She was from the city of Thyatira; and, being a seller of purple goods, was evidently in Philippi on business. A believer in God, she had apparently become acquainted with other believers; and, in their company, had gone to this place of prayer. It was there that she and the others met Paul and his helpers, and obviously listened as the Gospel was taught.

Upon hearing the message of salvation so graciously offered by God through Jesus Christ, the Bible informs us that the Lord *"opened"* her heart to give heed. As a result of her receiving the Word, she was baptized, as was her household.

Some theologians have mistakenly interpreted the opening of Lydia's heart to mean that in some direct, overpowering fashion, God arbitrarily did the *"opening,"* independent of Lydia's will. This, however is a false conclusion. The truth of the matter is that Lydia herself was responsive to the will of God as taught by Paul. Notice that verse 14 clearly states that Lydia **"heard"**

what Paul and those with him had to say. Because of her receptive attitude to the Gospel, the Bible thus characterizes the Lord as having opened her heart. This should be understood in the same sense as the Bible telling us that God "*hardened*" the heart of Pharaoh. God did not harden Pharaoh's heart independent of his will, but only as he hardened his own heart. (Read Exodus 7:3,13,14, in the light of Exodus 7:22; 8:15,32; 9:34, and 1 Samuel 6:6). The principle is this: whoever hardens his/her own heart against God, the Almighty One has decreed that indeed such a person's heart will be hardened! But on the other hand, whoever is receptive and responsive to opening up his/her heart to God and His will, such a person's heart will be opened. **Never does God arbitrarily and directly** either *"open"* or *"harden"* a person's heart independent of his/her own free will.

Lydia was a person who wanted to do God's will, and when she learned what His will was through the preaching of the Gospel by Paul and his companions, she was obedient to it. She obeyed her Lord by being baptized. Read what Jesus taught in Matthew 28:18,19 and Mark 16:15,16. In that sense . . . as Lydia listened and heard (received) the Gospel, the Lord *"opened"* her heart. The principle is also seen in such references as Matthew 7:7,8; Acts 13:44-46; Acts 17:11,12; James 4:6b-8; etc. If we will open our hearts to God, our hearts will be opened. If we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us. But if we harden our hearts toward God, our hearts will be hardened. If we turn our backs on Him and walk away from Him, He will *"give us up"* to that course of action. Read Romans 1:20-28. ✝

Maxie B. Boren is a gospel preacher living in Bedford, Texas, U. S. A.

A Daily Prayer

Dear God, I ask forgiveness
For all the wrong I do.
I know I am not worthy
Of love bestowed by You.

You strengthen and sustain me
In time of my despair.
You give me hope and courage
In answer to my prayer.

I know I am not perfect
And cannot hope to be,
But with Your great compassion
I know that You love me.

I thank you God with humble heart
For all You give and do.
There is no day that e'er goes by
I do not kneel to You.

— Harold F. Mohn

Let Us Not Harden Our Hearts

Max Patterson

"Yet Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the Lord had said" Exodus 7:13

In Exodus chapter 7 the story is told of how Pharaoh hardened his heart. There are three factors involved in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. **First,** there are the actions of God, Exodus 7:2. God made demands of Pharaoh with regard to allowing the children of Israel to leave Egypt that were against the political and financial interests of Egypt, and certainly against the pride of Pharaoh.

A **second** factor involved in the hardening of Pharaoh's heart is the Magicians. In imitating some of the plagues, they tried to destroy the force of God's efforts to get Pharaoh to let the people go.

A **third** factor is Pharaoh himself. Rather than having an interest in justice, duty, and obedience to God, he was only interested in himself and his wishes.

Consider some of the commands of the Gospel, against which many people today have hardened their hearts.

1. **Hearing the Word of God.** When such is contrary toward our fleshly desires, we have a tendency to harden our hearts. If we study our own interests — money, pleasure, power, popularity, etc. — the result will be the same as in the case of Pharaoh.

2. **Baptism for forgiveness.** The Scriptures teach: *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:16). When we listen to the preacher, or parents, or peers, rather than to the Word of God, it is easy to become hardened.

3. **Study the Scriptures.** Under the guise of being too busy, or making a living, or whatever, we sometimes do not study. However, we cannot stand still. We either grow (2 Peter 3:18), or we become set in our own way (hardened).

4. **Preach the Gospel to the**

Lost. So many in our day and time have excused themselves for not carrying the Gospel to the lost, and they have become deluded into thinking we do not need to, or do not have to.

Will we follow in the steps of Pharaoh, or will we learn from his example (Romans 15:4)? ✝

Max Patterson preaches for the Hillcrest church in Neosho, Missouri, U. S. A.

I Thank Thee, Lord

I thank Thee, Lord, for all the things
I take for granted every day.
Please help me show my gratitude
in everything I do and say.

The very air I'm breathing now,
the flowers, birds, and trees,
the beauty that surrounds us all,
I thank Thee, Lord, for these.

For all the friends and loved ones
I met on life's pathway,
and especially for Thy endless love,
I thank Thee every day!

— Doris A. Orth

He Loves Me

I've walked life's dreary road alone,
I wandered far and wide,
And oft time wished it would all end,
At times for death I cried.

There was no hope, no help, nor friend,
No one came to my aid.
Why should I struggle on with life,
Yet, death made me afraid.

One day as I sat pondering
The meaning of it all,
I wondered, could there really be
A God that I could call?

A God up there somewhere beyond
Who really cared for me,
One whom, if I called up in prayer,
From grief could set me free.

Then suddenly a song once sung
Came drifting back to me.
That song I learned on mother's knee
When I was only three.

'Twas "Jesus loves me, this I know,
The Bible tells me so."
This song came soft, then rang out
And filled my heart and soul!

— Harry B. Barton

Jesus Christ Intercedes For Us

David W. Chadwell

"Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" (Romans 8:33,34).

Paul's above statement is one of the most powerful reassurances given Christians. If the two rhetorical questions are repeated in the form of statements, they declare: No one — in Satan's realm or on earth — can bring charges against the person who is living in Christ. No one can condemn to hell the person who is living in Christ.

Why is it impossible to charge the person living in Christ with evil or condemn him for sin? Is it because all people living in Christ are beyond sin? No! No Christian is sinless because he never sins. Even the most mature, devout Christians are never beyond sin. Despite our best efforts (and who lives daily in "his best efforts"?), we all continually sin.

These two truths create an incredible situation. All of us sin continually. All of us are guilty of spiritual failure that is deserving of "being charged." If each of us were to be subjected to divine justice, we all justly would be condemned to hell.

Yet, though we deserve to be "brought up on charges" before God, though it would be **just** for us to be condemned, God will not listen to any charges brought against us. He will not permit justice to condemn us. He will not permit such to happen, as long as we continue to live in Christ as His elect.

How is that possible? It is possible because **God justifies us**. As long as we continue to live in Christ with penitent hearts, God continually cleanses us (1 John 1:7,9). God's cleansing so totally destroys our sins that God looks upon forgiven sins as though they never happened.

It is possible because **Christ intercedes for us**. God continually

forgives us because the crucified, resurrected Jesus constantly intercedes for us. Because we live in Him, He continually stands by God representing us. Every sin, every act of unrighteousness, every spiritual failure would deeply offend and insult our pure and holy God were it not for Jesus constantly interceding for us.

Without Jesus' continual work as our intercessor, no Christian could stand uncondemned before our pure, holy, righteous God. Every ignorant sin would deeply wound Him. Every act of rebellion and transgression would insult Him. Every time we chose pleasure, greed, or selfishness over devotion to godliness, sacrifice, and humble service, we would offend and abuse His love and grace.

Only because we have put on Christ by being baptized into Christ, only because we live in Christ, can Christ intercede for us. Only because Christ intercedes for us are we forgiven by God. Only because God forgives can He look at us as though we have not sinned. The Jesus who bore our sins on the cross rescues us daily. ***"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"*** (Romans 8:1). ✝

David W. Chadwell is a preacher and writer in Oxford, Mississippi, U. S. A.

Step by Step

He does not lead me year by year,
Nor even day by day;
But step by step my path unfolds,
My Lord directs my way.

Tomorrow's plans I do not know;
I only know this minute.
But he will say, "This is the way,
By faith now walk ye in it."

And I am glad that it is so,
Today's enough to bear,
And when tomorrow comes, his grace
Shall far exceed its care.

What need to worry then, or fret?
The God who gave his Son
Holds all my moments in his hand
And gives them one by one.

– Author unknown

Paul's Principles of Christian Happiness

William Woodson

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (Philippians 4:23).

A recent study of the Letter to the Philippians gave occasion for a careful reading of this beautiful book. Many great themes are discussed within its pages. In chapter four, as Paul is concluding the book, several verses relate to the general theme of Christian steadfastness and rejoicing. It is beneficial to note these themes as a means of attaining and maintaining a sense of Christian happiness. The details can be noted in the verses cited in Philippians 4. The principles are as follows:

☛ The resolve of gentleness and forbearance (verse 5). A measure of self control and consideration for one's self and others is involved in this word *"moderation,"* or *"forbearance."* The nearness of our Lord is a basis for this grace of Christian outlook and conduct.

☛ The practice of genuine prayer to avoid excessive anxiety (verse 6). Whether rendered *"careful"* or *"anxious,"* the thought is of concerns which are allowed to shatter the unity and wholeness of our soul. The four-fold expressions of prayer, supplication, thanksgiving, and requests provide avenues of approach to God, Who can and will provide.

☛ The claim of God's peace for His people (verse 7). The word *"keep"* or *"guard"* indicates the power of God which is made available to and for the Christian heart and mind. God's people are not alone and without strength in the facing of concerns and problems; indeed, God's strength is there to help and protect them.

☛ The guidance and control of one's thoughts are to be in keeping with God's will (verse 8). The specifics of the verse (truth, honesty, justice, purity, beauty, honor, courage, and praise) provide "door keepers" for the kind of thoughts which will enter and fill the mind and heart. What is in keeping with these "door keepers" is welcomed; what is not in keeping with them is

refused.

☛ The behavior which reflects proper instruction and examples is presented to mankind (verse 9). One learns how to live from the guidance from the Lord and from good examples of others who model the Lord's will in their lives. These qualities of life are learned and practiced in one's own Christian life.

☛ Other people are considered and assisted (verse 10). There is a legitimate need to care and provide for one's own needs, to be sure, but there is a danger of self-centeredness which can become obsessive. The balancing of one's interest in and service to others with a legitimate care of one's own needs is both restorative of happiness and a means of preserving happiness.

☛ The learning of contentedness of mind and life (verse 11). The thought is that of an inner strength which has developed as one's life ebbs and flows. Not every day will be joy; not every day will be sadness. The possession of a view of life which is positive, which is strong, which is aware of blessings past and present, enables this inner strength to prevail and guide life in the future.

☛ Finally, one learns to rely on the grace of God (verse 23). There is a series of actions which are necessary on the part of the Christian, and rightly so. There is also the awareness that the love, mercy, and grace of God will be present in and for the life of the Christian.

Other great principles of Christian steadfastness and courage in life are present in this remarkable chapter. The book itself is a beautiful expression of the faith and strength of soul of Paul, who, at the time of the writing, was in a Roman prison. Such a life as Paul's and such great themes as this book provides are sources from which to draw for happiness and usefulness in God's service. ✝

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TO MAKE A LIVING REQUIRES GETTING.
TO MAKE A LIFE REQUIRES GIVING.

A Widow's Faith

2 Kings 4:1-7

Frank Chesser

> *And Elisha said to her, . . ."What do you have in the house?" And she said, "Your maidservant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil." Then he said, "Go, borrow vessels at large for yourself . . . . And you shall go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour out into all these vessels; and you shall set aside what is full." So she went . . . . And it came about when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." And he said to her, "There is not one vessel more." And the oil stopped. Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your sons can live on the rest." (2 Kings 4:1-7).*

She was a widow. The arms of strength that once held her now lay rigid and cold in death. His voice of love and affection had been silenced by the grim reaper of life. There was an empty chair at the table, a vacancy in her bed, and a deep void in her heart. The days stretched into forever and the nights were bathed in tears. There would be no togetherness in retirement years, no quiet walks at evening, no aged reminiscing of the days of youth. Who can measure the pain, the hurt, the aloneness of the loss of a mate?

She was a widow in debt. There was no pension, no Social Security, no retirement account. She had no resources for the present, no savings for the future, and no means of quenching the avaricious thirst of her creditor. Not content to have just one of her sons, he threatened both with bondage as payment for her debt.

She was a widow with children yet at home. At best, parenting is a difficult and demanding experience. Even in a home blessed with both parents, the daily routine of child-rearing is not an easy task. Now she was alone, a

single parent striving to fulfill a dual role. Gone was the strong, masculine, fatherly influence so needed by her sons. Blessed are parents who live to see their children grown and on their own.

She was a widow with great faith. She could have argued with the prophet. His proposed solution was so contrary to human wisdom. Instead, she proceeded immediately to act upon his word. That's what faith is, taking God at His word and doing what He says. No argument, no debate, no "I think, want, or wish," just simple, childlike compliance with what God says.

The stream of life does not always flow in the mold of human design. There is the unexpected, the unplanned for, the feared. However, the trials of life were no match for the resolute faith of the widow. Walking *"in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham"* (Romans 4:12), as did the widow, will allow the oil of divine blessing to continue on its unabated course.

Frank Chesser preaches the Gospel of Christ in Jacksonville, Florida, U. S. A.

Grandma's Glasses

Two small boys were discussing eye glasses.

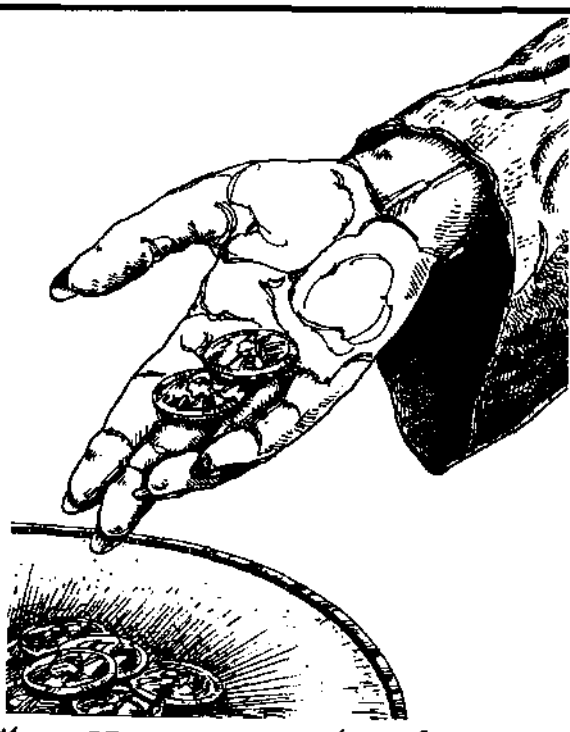
"Wouldn't you hate to wear glasses?" one asked.

"No," answered the other, "not if I could have the kind my grandma wears! My mother says she can always see when folks are tired or discouraged or sad. She sees whenever somebody is in need and she can always recognize when you have something on your mind that you need to talk over. But best of all she can always see something good in everybody!"

The little fellow continued: "I asked my grandma one day how it was that she could see that way. She said it was because of the way she's learned to look at things since she's gotten older. So I'm sure it must be those glasses of hers!"

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all of us could see others through Grandma's glasses?

— Unknown



The Poor Widow's Mites

Dick Sztanyo

Introduction: Mark 12:41-44

And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the multitude were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. And calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I say unto you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."

1. The various widows of the Bible present an interesting and inspiring study. There is the widow of Zarepheth, whose son Elijah raised (1 Kings 17:8-24); the widow of Nain, whose son the Lord raised (Luke 7:11-15). Then, there were the Grecian widows who were neglected in the daily distributions of the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:1-6). The persistent widow, whose persistence in prayer teaches us a most valuable lesson (Luke 18:1-8). Finally, there are the "widows indeed," who are the unnamed special servants to the flock (1 Timothy 5:5,9-11).
2. Another unnamed widow is introduced in this marvelous passage. Her example is recorded for all generations to consider and to imitate.

I. Her Commendation

A. She was less able to give than others. However, she was like so many other generous souls who have learned what it is to depend upon God from day to day. Those who are affluent may have great difficulty thanking God for daily bread.

B. She gave less than others. Her two mites amounted to 2/5 of one cent, which is about 1/40 of the daily wages of a laborer in the ancient land of Palestine. Her example forever proves that the Lord, who knows our hearts (1 John 3:20), views our actions qualitatively rather than quantitatively!

II. Some Implications

A. The Lord knows what we are giving!
B. The best that we can do is always appreciated by God!
C. She gave her all because she trusted in God's ability to care for her!
D. Christ commended the **faithful widow**, but condemned the **faithless rich!**

Dick Sztanyo is a preacher in Huntsville, Alabama, U. S. A.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

Approaching Our High Priest

Hebrews 4:15-16

Cliff Stewart

Introduction:

1. Historical overview
   A. At the time the Book of Hebrews was written, the church stood at the threshold of major persecution.
   B. A strong Jewish element in the church was leading the Hebrew brethren toward apostasy (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:23-29).
   C. Some were deserting their faith at the time they needed it most (Hebrews 10:35-39).
2. Text Analyzed (Hebrews 4:15-16).
   A. We have an High Priest.
   B. Characteristics of this High Priest noted.
   C. Based upon these facts we should:
      1) Hold fast our profession.
      2) Draw near to our High Priest.

I. Jesus is our High Priest:

A. He fulfills many roles in the church: head of the body; king of the kingdom; high priest of the Temple.
B. The only one ever! (Hebrews 7:22-25). After the order of Melchizedec, He is:
   1. The only one of His kind (no predecessors, no successors).
   2. Both a king and priest at the same time (Zechariah 6:13; Hebrews 7:1).
C. Enthroned in heaven (Hebrews 8:1-2), not on earth as Levites and modern pretenders. Serves not in temples made with hands (Hebrews 9:11,12).

II. Characteristics of our High Priest:

A. Can be touched (sympathetic with our problems).
   1. The multitude in Matthew 14:14.

2. The widow at Nain in Luke 7:13.
3. Over the city of Jerusalem in Luke 19:43.
4. At the graveside of Lazarus in John 11:33.

B. Was tempted "in all points" as we.
1. We are tempted through lust of eye, lust of flesh, pride of life (1 John 2:15-17).
2. The devil tried all three on Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11.
3. Having been tempted, He is able to succor us (Hebrews 2:14-18).

C. Yet, He was without sin (1 Peter 2:22,23; Hebrews 7:26-28).

III. We are urged to draw near:

A. "Boldly" (not rudely, audaciously, not imprudently, but confidently, wholly assured). Note Hebrews 10:22.
1. Approach Him not as fearful slaves (Romans 8:15).
2. Approach confidently as respectful children.

B. That we may obtain "mercy" and find "grace."
1. "Grace" is getting what we don't deserve.
2. "Mercy" is not getting what we do deserve.
3. These are our only hope for salvation (Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:5).

C. To receive help in time of need.
1. All have needs of some kind.
2. His willingness to give to us (Matthew 7:7-11; Romans 8:28).

Conclusion: All things work together for good to those who "love God."

1. Those who love God obey Him (1 John 2:4,5; John 14:15,21,23,24).
2. God's purpose in our calling is that we might receive the eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15).
3. We are called by the Gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:13,14).
4. Let us then draw near to our High Priest through obedience to the commands of the Gospel. ✝

Cliff Stewart lives in West Plains, Missouri, U. S. A., and preaches the Gospel in that area.

DO NOT PRAY FOR RAIN IF YOU'RE GOING TO COMPLAIN OF MUD.

Key Questions About Baptism

Ken Tyler

1. Is Baptism a Burial, Sprinkling or Pouring? Paul made it plain in two different passages that baptism is a burial. Paul asked the Romans, *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are* ***buried*** *with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"* (Romans 6:3,4). He also said in Colossians 2:12, *"buried with him* (Christ) *in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."* Paul said baptism is a burial. He could not have meant sprinkling or pouring.

2. Who is to be Baptized? Those who are able to understand and believe. Phillip asked the Eunuch, *"...understandest thou what thou readest?"* (Acts 8:30). By asking this question, Phillip pointed out that a person must be able to understand before he can obey. Jesus said, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved . . ."* (Mark 16:16). It should be obvious that a mentally retarded person or a small child cannot understand and believe. They are not accountable to God because their minds are not developed where they can understand and believe the Gospel.

3. What is the Purpose of Baptism? On the day the church began, Peter told people who asked what to do to be saved to *"...repent, and be baptized . . . for the remission of sins . . . ."* (Acts 2:38). We must conclude that individuals are baptized *". . . for the remission of sins . . . ."* To teach that a person can be saved and be a Christian without baptism is a misunderstanding of Bible baptism. Remember, Jesus said, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved . . . ."* (Mark 16:16). Notice that our Savior did not put salvation before baptism. Peter also said in 1 Peter 3:21, *"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us . . . ."* How can this statement be true if baptism is not absolutely necessary for salvation? The New Testament teaches that baptism is *" . . . for the remission of sins . . . ."*

What have we said? (1) Baptism is a burial; (2) Those who are able to understand and believe are to be baptized; and (3) Baptism is for the remission of sins. Have you been scripturally baptized? ✝

Ken Tyler has preached for the Lord's church in Arab, Alabama, U. S. A. for many years. During the decade of the 1980's, he preached in six campaigns in Trinidad, West Indies.

What Is The Meaning Of Life?

Garell L. Forehand

Human beings have an innate need to discover a meaningful purpose for their existence. For verification of that fact, just look at the searches that have taken place to that end. People have an inner ache for meaning; and they suffer a very real dissatisfaction without it. Forget about evolution — we don't want to believe that we are merely products of random chance! We can't appreciate the claim that we are merely accidents! We want to know that we are here for a reason. And so the search continues.

This craving for meaning is not a new motivation to the human race. Aristocracy and leisure have in every age given some men a unique opportunity to study the values of life. And there was never a man more qualified to make such a determinative study than was the great King Solomon. He inherited the throne of Israel at its zenith in power and majesty. He was the ultimate glamour-boy, complete with a success story that began with the Lord essentially giving hima magic wishing ring. He was wise, wealthy, famous, and married.

Solomon's search for meaning is recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes. He wrote, *"Vanity of vanities . . . all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever"* (Ecclesiastes 1:2-4). What profit will there have been in my having been here after I am gone? What difference do I make? Those are questions that have plagued the human soul for centuries. Solomon, however, was fully equipped to make the search for those answers. He sought fulfillment in every source of worldly pleasure and experience; and Ecclesiastes is a record of that search. His discoveries are uniquely important to others because Solomon alone was able to work with the extremities of human capability. He didn't just have to dabble in those things he tested — he had the most and the best of everything!

Therefore, his findings give us the final say from a humanistic standpoint. We can't possibly hope to find the answers by taking the same roads he initially took, because we have only meager, single-faceted capabilities in this life. None of us have it all. But Solomon did! His conclusions are recorded so men and women may know what will and will not give true fulfillment and happiness. His unique circumstances make his conclusions once-for-all determinations. Please bear in mind that the book of Ecclesiastes is written from the viewpoint of one who initially tries to find the answers in every way but God's way.

Solomon Searched For Meaning In Wisdom. We discover in 1 Kings 3 that he didn't even have to work for his wisdom. But Solomon reveals that even God-given wisdom, if not applied to serving God, is not the answer. Raw education does not deal with the innate need. (Read Ecclesiastes 1:13-18). He summed up the search down that road in these words: *"I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."*

Solomon Searched For Meaning In Wealth. He was rich! Read of his incredible house (1 Kings 7). Read of his personal extravagance (1 Kings 10:14ff). We are told that *"King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches"* (verse 23). But look at his final diagnosis of seeking the answers down that path — Ecclesiastes 2:4-11; 5:10-12. Material things are not the answer.

Solomon Searched For Meaning In Worldly Pleasures. Everyone has his idea about what would bring pleasure. But when you examine the life of King Solomon you will find that he tried it all (all that was available to him in that day). No one has ever partied like Solomon (Ecclesiastes 2:1-3). But his findings reveal the same dead end (read Ecclesiastes 1:8-11). *"The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing . . . there is no new thing under the sun."* If you can try it all, you will come up with the same understanding: the pleasures or thrills don't last. Everything eventually becomes tiresome and routine. If you're given to the pleasure god, then you will eventually fall into despair, because you will finally run out of new thrills and new highs. You will run out of mountains to climb!

Solomon Searched For Meaning in Power and Fame. Some people feel that if only their names were in lights, they would be completely fulfilled, needing noth-

ing else to be happy. Solomon had that kind of power. He was the ruler of the greatest nation in the world at its very apex of power. His military spending was massive. He had at his disposal 1,400 chariots (our equivalent of military tanks) and 40,000 stalls for the chariot horses. He had 12,000 horsemen and a huge rented Navy at sea (read I Kings 4,10). The problem was, he just had no one to fight! All nations revered him and brought tribute to him. You can read of the visit paid him by the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1-9). He was given for wives the most beautiful daughters of the most powerful kings of the world. But it still left him empty and searching. He was still dissatisfied with what fame and power could offer him.

Solomon Searched For Meaning Through Creative Release. Many people who have about everything else they need will often seek to express their "inner selves" through creative writing (whether songs, books, plays, poetry, etc.). According to 1 Kings 4:32, Solomon wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs (most of which we do not have). However, this escape in literature and music did not turn out to be the answer. He wrote, *"And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh"* (Ecclesiastes 12:12). He said that it doesn't get you answers; it just gets you tired!

Time and space would fail for us to look at all the roads Solomon took in trying to find the answers of life. But in his own review of the fruits of his serious attempts to find meaning, Solomon came to despair of life itself. His search led him to the same emotional agony ultimately shared by all humanistic philosophers. Read Solomon's pitiful words in Ecclesiastes 2:15-23. *"Therefore I hated life . . . I hated all my labor which I had taken under the sun . . . Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair . . . This is also vanity."*

And then the answer is perceived! The conclusion to the search is reached. And we should listen to Solomon's findings, because he's been there — he's been there in ways we could never duplicate. *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil"* (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14).

We are not in the dark. The final answer is in our hands. ✝

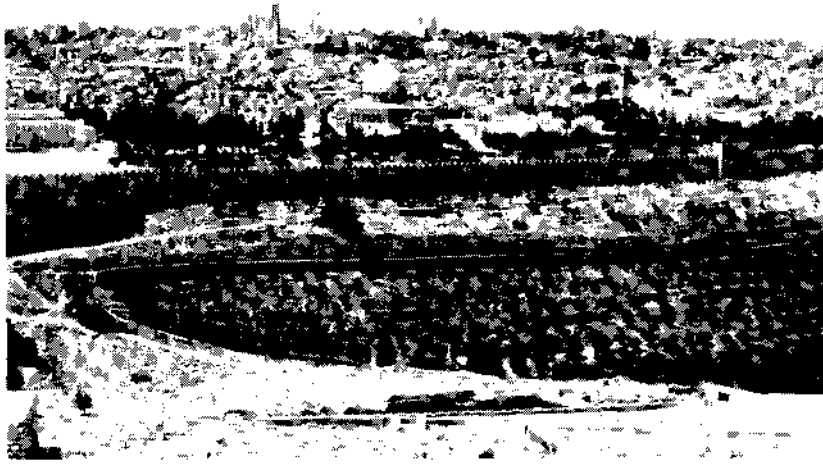
Garell L. Forehand is the preacher for the Granbury Street church in Cleburne, Texas, U. S. A.

Israel

Ernest Stewart

The formation of a modern Jewish state within the area called "Palestine" was determined by a vote of the United Nations in November of 1947. The celebrated birth date of the State of Israel is May 15, 1948. The state was not born without conflict and war, the area having been populated for centuries by Arabs. Other major wars have been fought in 1967, 1973 and 1982, with almost continual internal conflict between Jew and Arab.

The population of Israel (figures published by the state January 1, 1995) is 5.46 million. The Jewish population is listed at 4 million, the Arab population at 1.2 million. The remaining .26 million is a mixture, including British, American and many others. The population of Jerusalem is listed as 1 million, this figure including the suburbs, both Jewish and Arab suburbs,



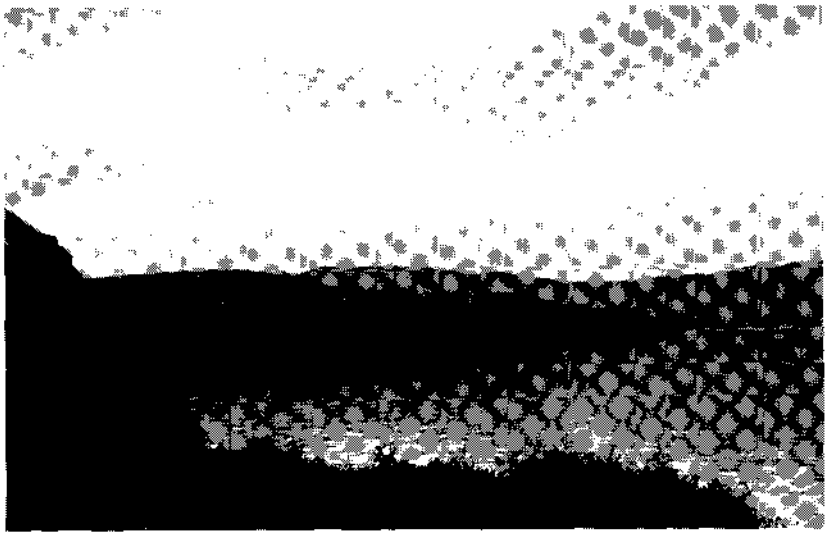
The modern city of Jerusalem blends with the city of ages past. "The Dome on the Rock" is an important site to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Tradition says that here Abraham prepared to offer Isaac.

and including the Old City. Just a few years ago the city of Tel Aviv was considered the largest city in Israel, but I don't know the population there today — probably less than Jerusalem.

Brother Ralph Henley and his family and I, with my family, arrived in Israel on the date of August 4, 1960, to begin our work for the Lord. We chose to live in Jerusalem, but to teach anywhere in the country that gave us opportunity. Representatives of the new state-to-be had said to the United Nations in 1947 that no non-Jewish religious group not already represented within the country would be permitted to enter, but God opened the door. It did require three years of effort and prayer, the decision to go having been made in 1957. Churches of Christ still have only two residence visas.

Brother Henley left Israel after two years and we were alone there for several years. From the beginning we worked among both Jews and Arabs, even Bedouin. Brother Henley and his family worked for a period of time in both Greece and Turkey, and he is still involved in

Near Jericho, Bedouins herd goats and sheep in near-desert terrain. Scenes such as this remind the traveler of Jesus' description of the judgment scene, when the 'goats' will be divided by God to the left and the 'sheep' to the right.



The beautiful Sea of Galilee was the scene of many of the events recorded in the life of Christ. From this sea flows the Jordan River in which He was baptized to "fulfill all righteousness."

the work in Israel.

Others who have worked in Israel are: Paul Watson, Charles Chumley, Jr., Evertt Huffard and Evertt Wayne Huffard, Milt Shatzer, William Van Winkle, Bill Clark.

The work in Israel has reached the stage today where most of the evangelistic work is carried on by national preachers (however, we badly need two good American families there). I would very much like to still be living there, but feel that is should be turned over to a younger man who doesn't have a rather critical heart problem. I still spend nearly 100% of my time in encouraging, raising funds, and make at least two working trips a year. There are seven full-time national preachers, four of them Arab and three Jewish. There are six congregations. Other regular meetings in which only a few have been baptized might well be called congregations too. But, three of the six which we call congregations are Jewish and three Arab. Since Israel (especially Jerusalem) attracts so

These ruins are believed to be the synagogue of Capernaum, of the first century. Perhaps it was even here that Jesus taught; nearby are the ruins of a house identified as that of Peter. Certainly, we do know that it was in this city where Peter's family lived and his mother-in-law was healed.

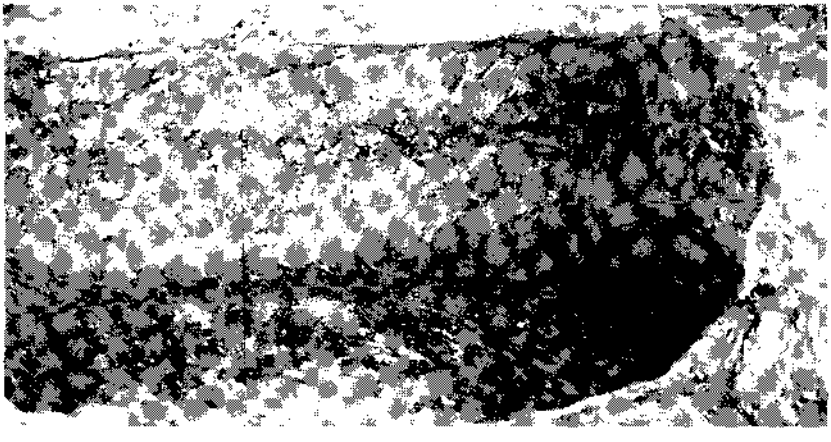
many travellers (some remaining for periods of more than a year) there have been many baptized into Christ who have returned to their homes in many places: England, most European countries, Finland, Japan, etc. Some brothers and sisters now live in the U.S., both Jewish and Arab. We believe that efforts will soon begin here in the U.S. to reach both the Jew and the Arab. The actual count of brothers and sisters who meet together in Israel, including both Jew and Arab, would not exceed three hundred. We do feel, however, that the future is bright.

In 1966 a Christian High School was established among the Arab people of the Galilee — in the heart of the Galilee, sixteen miles NE of Nazareth and five miles west of the Sea of Galilee. This school has served many good purposes, filling an educational void in the lives of Arab people from many villages, but especially making Christ known to students and families on a daily basis. We are bursting the walls and need badly to raise sufficient funds to enlarge the facility. The name of the school is Galilee Christian High School.

An ancient olive tree in the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem. It was here that Jesus prayed just before His betrayal.

The Lord's church began in Jerusalem almost two thousand years ago. Sadly, in the passing of time, Christianity ceased to exist there. This should be a warning to all Christians, that each generation must not only treasure the truth but make it its primary goal to pass the gospel on as a living thing to the next generation — else, eventually someone from outside will have to care enough to come in and start all over.

May God help us to revere His word, to study it carefully for ourselves, and to feel an indebtedness to share it with others. Let us not forget what Jesus did for us.



Inside "the Garden Tomb" are carved receptacles for burial. Archaeologists say only one was used in this tomb. A stone was rolled in front of the opening, to close it securely. From such a tomb as this Jesus conquered death for Himself and for His followers.

Answers to Puzzles

Verse Search – 6

(from page 84)

1. Multitude
2. Matthew 14:13; Mark 6:32; Luke 9:10,12
3. "This is truly the prophet who is to come into the world."
4. They would have made Jesus king by force.
5. "It is I; be not afraid."
6. Because they had eaten of the loaves and fishes, and they wanted more.
7. Food for the soul.
8. Work; God; believe; Him.
9. Jesus Christ.
10. To do the will of Him who sent Him.
11. "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it that He says 'I have come down from heaven'?" See also Matthew 13:55.
12. Everyone; heard; learned; comes to Me.
13. The bread of the Lord's Supper represents His body, the fruit of the vine represents His blood. Christians eat this sup per to remember the sacrifice He made for us, and to remember our commitment as living sacrifices to Him.
14. Yes; each First Day of the week.
15. A hard saying; who can understand it?
16. "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The Book of Romans

a **N** gels
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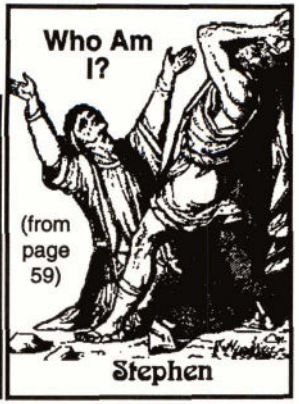
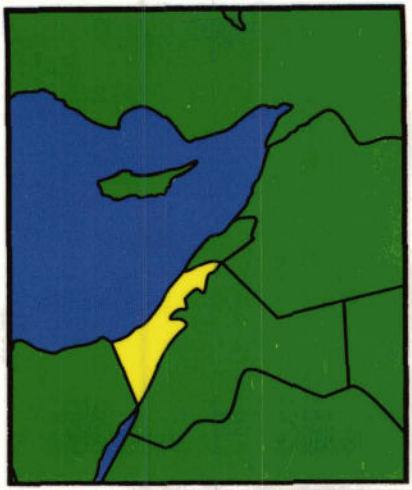
Who Am I?

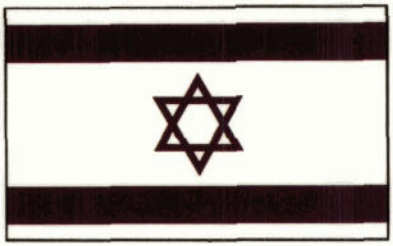


(from page 59)

For further information, please contact:

Israel





Government: REPUBLIC
President: CHAIM HERZOG
Prime Minister: YITZHAK RABIN

Secular Facts:

Location: On the eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea, bordered by Syria on the north, Jordan on the east, and Egypt on the west. Famous bodies of water include the Sea of Galilee in the north, the Jordan River on the east, and the Dead Sea, which is the lowest point on the earth's surface.

Land Mass: 7,847 square miles, about the size of New Jersey.

Population: 5,460,000.

Major Cities:
Jerusalem (also the capital); Tel Aviv, Nazareth, Haifa.

Ethnic Groups:
Jewish (83%) and Arab (16%).

Languages:
Hebrew and Arabic (Official).

Literacy:
92% (Jewish); 70% (Arab).

Religion:
Jewish (83%); Muslim (13%).

Economy:
Labor force: 6% agriculture; 23% industry; 30% public services.

The Church:

Congregations: There are six churches in Israel, of which three are Arabic and three are Jewish. Work has been done primarily in the areas of Jerusalem and Nazareth.

History: On the first day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, in approximately A.D. 30, the Holy Spirit was poured out by God on the Apostles, in the city of Jerusalem, and the church of Christ was begun. Three thousand souls were converted that day. The gospel spread from Jerusalem to Judea, then to Samaria, and finally throughout the entire world within less than 30 years. Over the centuries, corruption of truth led much of the church into apostasy, resulting in the Roman Catholic church. The religion of Islam began in the eighth century, eventually controlling most of the people of the Middle East.

Modern History: In 1960 the **Ralph Henleys** and the **Ernest Stewarts** moved to Israel to plant the church anew. The **Evertt Huffards**, **Charles Chumleys**, and others added to their efforts. Local men — **Victor Joseph**, **Raji Stephan**, and **Joe Shulam** — continue to give leadership to the church.

Galilee Christian High School, near Nazareth, is an important outreach tool, filling an educational void for area Arabs.

Front Cover: **The Garden Tomb**, located outside the old city wall of Jerusalem.