

Loaves & Fishes

Volume 7 • Issue 1 • 2009

*The power of God alone can multiply
these loaves and fishes in your hands
to more than you can contain.*



Countless Blessings

O what a joy we find in Him,
To have forgiveness of our sin.

How blessed I am to feel Christ's love,
For countless blessings from above.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And from your side He will not part.

And what's a man, but merely dust,
That's swept away like morning gust.

His grace sufficient for us all,
Like pouring rain is in the fall.

So don't be anxious about a thing,
Rejoice in grace the Son will bring.

Artem Abramov
Henrico County Regional Jail
Barhamsville, VA



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The Fear of the Lord Leads to Life

Lavern Gingerich

Do you long to know the secret to a prosperous and successful walk with God? Are you looking for the path to abundant life? The life of right choices, progress, victory over sin, and usefulness in God's kingdom?

Many people seek for that kind of life, but they fail to lay the foundation. Because of this, they wander about in defeat, making foolish choices, with no idea how to change. What is missing?

The *fear of the Lord* is the foundation of walking with God. Serving the Lord without fear is like building a house on sand with no foundation – the house will not stand.

One purpose of the Old Covenant was to teach the fear of God. In the New Testament, grace is a major theme. The fear of the Lord is the foundation of grace. We must learn the fear of God before we can truly understand the grace of God.

The fear of the Lord leads to *abundant life* (Proverbs 14:27) – a life which is the result of wisdom, right choices, change, and growth.

What is the fear of the Lord? This fear is a strong, yet quiet influence in the heart of every godly man or woman. It is a deep awe and reverence for God.

**The fear of the Lord
is the foundation of
walking with God.**

The fear of the Lord is a hatred for sin. It causes people to turn from sin (Proverbs 16:6) and to acknowledge that God will judge sin like He said He would.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of true wisdom and knowledge.

The fear of the Lord is based on an awareness that God is

everywhere—He knows every thought, sees every action, and hears every word you speak. The fear of God helps you to resist sin even when no one else is watching except God.

Practical Examples

Joseph in the Old Testament is an inspiring example of one who walked in the fear of God every day. He feared God at home with His parents and in a heathen country far away from godly authorities and friends. Even if it meant being locked up in prison, Joseph refused to turn his back on God.

Joseph was the favorite child of his father. He came from a large family of brothers who hated him. One day Joseph's father sent him to check up on his brothers who were out tending sheep. They saw the opportunity to get rid of Joseph. In a short time, this innocent young man was torn away from home and sold into the strange country of Egypt.

In his new Egyptian home, Joseph walked with the Lord. God caused everything to prosper which Joseph did (Genesis 39:2). His Egyptian master noticed this and put Joseph in charge of his house and everything he had. Because of Joseph's faithfulness,



The fear of God in Joseph's heart kept him from sin.

God blessed his master's house and field also (verse 5).

In the middle of all these blessings, Potiphar's wife came to Joseph and asked him to commit adultery with her. By that time, many people in his shoes would be bitter against God and those who mistreated them. Instead of saying no to temptation, they would feel like they deserve the pleasure of such a sin.

Instead, Joseph *refused* to sin! He said, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" This woman tempted him each day, but the fear of God in Joseph's heart kept him from sin. He would not give in to sin and was careful not to even spend time with her.

One day as Joseph was faithfully doing his work in the house, Potiphar's wife came



Let God's judgement for sin inspire a healthy fear of God in your heart.

with her usual request, and this time she even grabbed his garment. Joseph fled, leaving his garment in her hand.

Imagine the scheme of this wicked woman! In less than one day, Joseph landed in prison, falsely accused of approaching his master's wife. This was yet another unexpected and painful transition in Joseph's life.

But praise God, Joseph came through this test as close to God as ever before. Before long, the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners. Even in prison, Joseph was useful because the Lord was with him and prospered him.

Are you willing to take a stand like Joseph did? It takes an awareness of God's presence with you and a healthy fear of God. Satan would like for you to come through each trial more bitter and tangled up in sin than before, but by God's grace, you can come through as Joseph

did — pure and with a free heart, useful as ever before, though perhaps in a slightly different environment!

Psalm 36 describes a person who has no fear of God. This wicked one flatters himself, thinking he is really something, but his performance is disgusting and hateful to God. His speech is sinful, and his actions are foolish. Before he goes to sleep at night, he thinks mischief. He carelessly goes to places that tempt him to sin. This is the life of one who loves sin and has no fear of God in his heart.

Who of us can afford to live that kind of life? Let us apply our hearts to learning the fear of God. While the fear of the Lord must be the foundation of every believer's walk with God, it shouldn't stop with what you had when you first surrendered your heart to the Lord. Here are some important steps to help you grow in the fear of God.

How to Learn the Fear of God

What instills the fear of God in our hearts? The things that help us grow in God's fear are things that help us know God.

1. Walk with God. There is no other religion that can give what Jesus Christ gives. Abide in Jesus and let Him abide in you (John 15:5). Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him. Walk close to God, and He will personally teach you.

2. Observe God's judgement for sin. Great fear came on the church after God judged Ananias and Sapphira for their dishonesty (Acts 5:1-11). There are many accounts in the Scriptures of God judging sin. Read the Bible, especially the Old Testament stories of God relating to Israel, and study each passage where God in his holiness judged sin. This will deeply enrich your understanding of God and inspire a healthy fear of God in your heart.

3. Spend much time reading and meditating on the words of God. The Bible teaches us God's character and His requirements. Are you casual about what God wants of you? Discover the truth of God's word and embrace it with all your heart. Never reject it, but obey all you know. This exercise will change

your life and teach you the fear of God.

4. Repent of the fear of man.

The fear of man keeps us from true fear of God. You will not be able to go all the way with Jesus if you allow the fear of man to control your decisions. See Luke 20:1-8, 19.

"The fear of the LORD leads to life, and he who has it will abide in satisfaction; he will not be visited with evil" (Proverbs 19:23).

"Do not let your heart envy sinners, but be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day" (Proverbs 23:17).

The fear of the Lord is the foundation for a prosperous walk with God. Actively learn to walk in the fear of God all day and give your life completely to the Lord. He will lead you to abundant life and give you all the wisdom, grace, growth, and victory you need.

We are pleased to share another issue of *Loaves & Fishes* with you. It is our gift of love to you. May it inspire you to seek the Lord with all your heart and be firmly established in the fear of the Lord.

*In Christ's love,
Lavern Gingerich*



Bible Reading

Proverbs 2

¹My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, ²so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; ³yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, ⁴if you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; ⁵then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

⁶For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; ⁷He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; ⁸He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints. ⁹then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path.

¹⁰When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, ¹¹discretion will preserve you; understand-

ing will keep you, ¹²to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things, ¹³from those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness; ¹⁴who rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the wicked; ¹⁵whose ways are crooked, and who are devious in their paths; ¹⁶to deliver you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words, ¹⁷who forsakes the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God.

¹⁸For her house leads down to death, and her paths to the dead; ¹⁹none who go to her return, nor do they regain the paths of life—²⁰so you may walk in the way of goodness, and keep to the paths of righteousness.

²¹For the upright will dwell in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; ²²but the wicked will be cut off from the earth, and the unfaithful will be uprooted from it.



Your Last Appointment

None of us should take death lightly. There is an awesome finality about death that we cannot afford to ignore. The rich and poor, the strong and weak will all face it one day. Though we enter life with a desire to grasp everything, in death our hands will be empty and our possessions will all slip away.

What lies beyond the closed door of death? Many people try to convince themselves and others that death is the end of existence. But in essence, death is merely a beginning – the transition from this life into eternity.

Following are some true stories of people leaving this life and what they said and experienced as they were dying. These are excerpts adapted from *Voices From the Edge of Eternity* compiled by John Myers. As you will see, there is no neutral ground. Either they were prepared or they were not prepared.

Isaac Shoemaker, 1779

“Oh that I could tell you what I have seen and undergone! It would pierce the hardest heart among you. Perhaps some may think there is no hell, but I have

to tell you that there *is* a hell, and a dreadful one too. And there *is* a heaven where angels clothed in white robes sit at the right hand of God, singing praises to His great name.”

–*Dying Words* by A. H. Gottschall

You Gave Me Nothing to Hold on To!

In a country village of Pennsylvania a physician gave books on infidelity to a young man and persuaded him to deny his Savior.

In about 1875 when this man was fifty years of age, he died. The infidel teacher was his physician, and as the end was



*The rich and poor,
the strong and
weak will all face
death one day.*

approaching, the doctor told him to die as he had lived—a rejector of God and Christ.

“Hold on to the end,” urged the doctor.

“Yes, doctor,” said the dying man, “there is just my trouble—you gave me nothing to hold on to.

The doctor did not reply.

—*Dying Testimonies* by S. B. Shaw

Thomas Hauks, 1555

After being condemned to death at the stake, he agreed with his friends that if God would give him grace to endure the pains of burning, he would show a sign by raising his hands above his head before dying.

With a strong chain about his waist he addressed the crowd, and as the fire was kindled, he poured out his soul to God in prayer. Soon his speech was taken away by the violence of the flames, his skin drawn together, and his fingers consumed. When everyone thought he was dead, he reached up his burning hands and clapped three times. Then sinking down in the fire he gave up his spirit.

“I Am in the Flames—Pull Me Out, Pull Me Out!”

Mr. W. died in New York around 1883 at the age of seventy-four. He was an avowed infidel. About seven years prior to his

death, he attended a revival meeting and the Spirit strove with him, but he resisted to the last.

On the evening of his death, a burdened preacher and a friend entered Mr. W.’s room. The preacher felt that it was filled with an awful presence—as if he were near the region of the damned. The dying man cried out, “Oh God!—deliver me from that awful pit!” It was not a penitential prayer, but the wail of a lost soul.

About fifteen minutes before his death, he exclaimed, “I am in the flames—pull me out, pull me out!” He kept repeating this, though as his strength failed, his words became more faint. At last, the preacher put his ear down close to catch his departing whispers, and the last words he could hear were, “Pull me out! Pull me out!”

—Adapted from an article
by Rev. C. A. Balch

Abandoned to Die Alone

P. K. was a talented and wealthy man, but he hated everything connected with God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Bible. He talked, lectured, and published books and tracts against the Savior and the sacred Scriptures, circulating them freely wherever he could.

His deathbed beggared description. He clenched his teeth, and blood spurted from his nostrils while he cried, "Hell! Hell! Hell!" with a terror that no pen can describe. A neighbor declared that he heard him a quarter of a mile away.

His family could not endure the agony of that deathbed scene. They fled to an adjoining wood across the road and there remained among the trees until all became quiet at home. One by one they ventured back to find their husband and father cold in death. He literally had been left to die alone, abandoned of God and of man.

—Milburn Merrill,
Dying Testimonies by S. B. Shaw

John Brooks, 1825

Governor of Massachusetts

"I see nothing terrible in death. In looking to the future I have no fears, for I know in Whom I have believed. I look back upon my past life with humility and am sensible of many imperfections that cleave to me, but I now rest my soul on the mercy of my Creator, through the only Mediator, His Son, our Lord Jesus.

"Oh, what a ground of hope there is in that saying of the Apostle that God is in Christ, reconciling the guilty world

to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

He put out his hand and was asked, "What are you reaching for?"

"A kingdom!" he whispered, just as he passed away.

—*Dying Words* by A. H. Gottschall

The Awful Death of William Pope of Bolton

William Pope was at one time a member of the Methodist Church and seemingly a saved and happy man. With time, his zeal for religion declined, and he turned his back on God.

One day God laid His hand on William Pope, and he was seized with tuberculosis.

Mr. Rhodes says: "When I first saw him he said to me, 'I believe I was in hell last night and felt the torment of the damned, but God has brought me back again and given me respite a little longer.'

"After exhorting him to repentance and confidence in the almighty Savior, I prayed with him and left. Later that day he told me, 'I have no contrition; I cannot repent. The day of grace is lost.'"

Mr. Barraclough says: "As soon as William Pope saw me, he exclaimed, 'You are come to see one who is damned forever!' I answered, 'Christ can save the chief of sinners.' He replied, 'I

have denied Him; therefore He has cast me off forever!’ I entreated him not to be too hasty, and to pray. He answered, ‘I cannot pray; my heart is quite hardened. I have no desire to receive any blessing at the hand of God,’ and then cried out, ‘oh, the hell, the torment, the fire that I feel within me!’

“On Thursday I found him groaning under the weight of the displeasure of God. His eyes rolled to and fro; he lifted up his hands and with vehemence cried out, ‘Oh, the *burning flame* – the *hell* – the *pain* I feel! I have done the deed, the horrible, damnable deed!’

“At another time he said, ‘Oh, what a terrible thing it is! Once I could and would not; *now I want and cannot!*’ He declared that he was best satisfied when cursing.”

The day he died, when Mr. Rhodes visited him and asked the privilege to pray once more with him, he cried out with great strength, considering his weakness, “*No!*” That evening he passed away – *without God*.

– Condensed from *Remarkable Narratives*

“*It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*” (Hebrews 9:27).

How will you meet your final appointment? The Bible makes it clear that as sure as you live, you will die sometime. Everyone who is breathing is a candidate to die next. Are you prepared for this great event in your life?

If you are not prepared to die, please search the Scriptures. The way to get ready is clear. You must prepare God’s way to meet Him in peace. If you want to win, you must play by God’s rules.

No person is prepared to live until He is prepared to die. You cannot live a truly joyful life unless you have assurance that you are ready to meet God.

1 John 1:5-7 says, “⁵*This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*”

If you want to be clean, come away from the dark and into the light. Let God’s light of the gospel expose all of your sin. Confess it, forsake it, and go on your way rejoicing!

– Darold Gingerich

Putting off Anger

John Coblenz



The Deceitfulness of Anger and Bitterness

Anger in all its forms is dangerous. It is capable of terrible destruction, not only for those on the receiving end, but also for the angry one. Anger is also deceptive. It twists thinking, distorts perspective, and plays games with truth. The Apostle John addressed this very point. *“He who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes”* (1 John 2:11).

Everyone will feel anger. It is part of being human. Taking Ephesians 4:26 as it reads, we can also say anger is part of being Christian. Some situations and people will stir us to anger—even *should* stir us to anger. But when we are angry, we are warned immediately not

to sin, and warned further not to carry our anger with us: *“Do not let the sun go down on your wrath.”* A few verses later, we are commanded, *“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice”* (v. 31).

The moment we feel anger, we are in danger of sinning. But when we allow anger to take up residence in our heart, sin is inevitable. Along with this sin goes deception. Resident anger distorts perspective. It causes us to make distorted assumptions, see with a distorted perspective, and draw distorted conclusions.

To unmask the deceitfulness of anger, we will look closely at an angry man in the Bible. King Saul did not start out as an angry man.

In fact, his beginning seems to be characterized by a remarkable humility and depth of character. But once anger took up residence in Saul, it twisted his thinking and turned him into a bitter, domineering, hostile leader.

How Anger Developed in Saul

Saul's sad story is told in 1 Samuel. To understand the deception that occurred, note the events in Saul's life that led to his anger and bitterness.

1. Saul was chosen to be Israel's first king. This position was given to him by God. It was not something Saul sought or won by campaign. In fact, after he was anointed king in a private ceremony away from home, he did not even mention it to his family; and on the day of his public coronation, he had to be flushed out of hiding to receive the crown.

2. Saul faced pressures as Israel's first king. He was scorned as king by some of the Israelites—a situation he handled humbly and commendably. He also faced the pressure of invading armies.

3. Saul was commissioned by God to destroy the Amalekites totally, but he did not carry out God's directions. God consequently told Saul he was rejected as king and another would take his place who would obey God.

4. In a private ceremony and unknown to Saul, Samuel anointed David to be the next king of Israel.

5. The Spirit of God departed from Saul, and he was tormented by an evil spirit. Saul's servants recommended that he get someone skillful in music to play for him and relieve his bad moods. David was chosen, and his playing on the harp made Saul feel better.



Anger twisted Saul's thinking and turned him into a bitter, domineering, hostile leader.

6. Saul and his armies faced a challenge from the Philistines.

The giant Goliath challenged any Israelite to a one-on-one contest. Saul and his men were terrified, but God arranged for David to arrive at the battle lines at that exact time. David fought and killed Goliath and led the Israelites in a rout of the Philistine army.

7. Following the victory, the Israelite women praised David more than Saul. This was the first that Saul took special note of David. The women's praise of David galled Saul.

8. Saul took David into his army, and David was extremely successful. The more David advanced, the more Saul felt threatened.

9. Saul made attempts on David's life, first indirectly setting David up for defeat by the Philistines, then personally with a spear, next through hit men on special assignment, and finally by trying to hunt David down with the help of the Israelite army.

10. Saul's pursuit of David became an obsession that caused him to lash out at his own men and anyone else who seemed to stand in his way. Saul killed 85 priests because one of them had helped David (not

knowing that David was running from Saul).

11. Saul quit chasing David when David went to live with the Philistines.

12. Two years later, the Philistine army came against Saul. Since the Lord would not speak to Saul anymore, Saul went to a witch to seek direction. The next day, he was wounded in battle and committed suicide to avoid being taken alive by the Philistines.

How Anger Deceived Saul

These are the major events in which Saul's bitterness germinated and thrived. As anger developed in Saul, he did things that make us wonder, "Saul, what are you thinking?" The deceitfulness of anger is incredible.

All of Saul's distorted thoughts cannot be reconstructed. But following are some of the ways anger deceived Saul:

1. Saul believed the praise for David was a personal slight against himself. As already mentioned, the women of Israel were unkind to compare David and Saul publicly. But the more the Lord prospered David, the more the people sang his praises. If Saul had retained his humility and love for the Lord, he might well have loved this young man,

even as Jonathan loved him. But Saul was of a different mind. His desire for the praise of men had awakened some time before when Jonathan had successfully attacked a Philistine garrison. "Let the Hebrews hear!" Saul had proclaimed. To have this upstart from Bethlehem receiving the praises of Israel grated on Saul's ego. From the first that David was so praised, the Bible records that "*Saul eyed David from that day forward*" (1 Samuel 18:9). This is a jealous anger, and jealousy hears a rival's praises as a personal insult.

The truth was that David's victories were worthy of praise. Had Saul's heart been as pure as Jonathan's, he might well have joined in thanking God for a man who could fight for Israel so effectively.

2. Saul viewed David's accomplishments as a personal threat. David's success shot fear through Saul's thinking. As David grew in military experience, Saul's insecurity ballooned. He saw "takeover" threats in every advancement David made against the Philistines.

It is true that God had appointed David to be the next king, but David was not organizing a plot to take over the kingdom. He made every effort

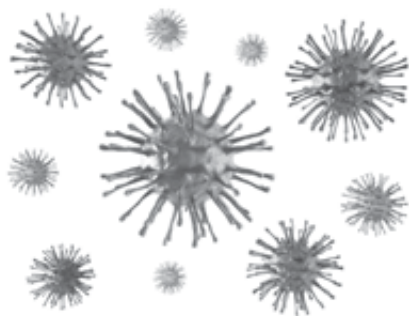
to honor Saul. As time went on, David actually fled to avoid confrontation and forceful takeover. But in Saul's mind, David became an enemy, a man to be eliminated. Such is the thinking of jealous anger.

The truth was that David's victories were a blessing to Saul and to all Israel. David was a man sorely needed in Saul's army.

3. In Saul's anger and bitterness, David's "wrongs" grew larger and larger. Saul's fear of David taking over the kingdom seems to have turned into a feeling that David was personally doing him wrong. And the more successful David was, the more wrong he became in Saul's mind. This kind of deception thrives in a climate of jealous anger. When a person angrily views another as a rival, he will interpret the actions and words of his rival as wrongs. And they will accumulate exponentially; that is, one wrong is added to another wrong to make four wrongs, and those four wrongs are somehow squared in the mathematics of jealousy to make sixteen wrongs. There is no end to the growth of hatred.

The truth is, sometimes people do wrong us. But if we

There is no end to the growth of **hatred.**



grow bitter, and particularly if we are jealous, we will find wrongs where there have been no wrongs. When imagined wrongs become part of our thinking, we have become lovers of untruth, willing to put light for darkness and darkness for light.

4. Saul felt his personal interests were more important than the national good. Saul would not have said this, but as he moved to push David aside, and even to take his life, this distorted thinking emerged. Saul came to the point that he would rather have had a weaker army than have someone other than himself receiving honor.

The truth was Saul had not come to his position by his own doing, and it was not his responsibility to protect his kingship. Saul could have found much joy in putting the

nation's good ahead of his personal reputation and honor.

5. Saul believed the personal threat David was to him justified murder. At first, Saul kept this thought well hidden. He expected David to be killed in battle with the Philistines. Instead, David grew greater. As time went on, the plots against David's life became more and more bold until it was national news. Every open effort to harm another is preceded by secret malicious desires. As those desires take root, they distort thinking until the bitter person works openly against his rival or unashamedly plots his destruction.

The truth was that David was not a threat to Saul, but rather, an asset; and even if he had been a threat, seeking the Lord's guidance would have been the proper route for Saul, not pursuing David.

6. Saul believed any means could be used to protect his personal interests. Saul's attempts on David's life turned into involved plots, lies, murder of innocents, and costly army expeditions. Saul was not only murderous, but he also became domineering, vengeful, unreasonable, accusing, and deceitful. He hurled a spear at his own son, killed 85 innocent priests, sent other men to carry out his wicked plans, and wasted the time and resources of the nation's army in pursuit of David. And all this to destroy a man vitally needed by the nation! Saul, what WERE you thinking! When bitterness takes up residence in the heart, ability to discern accurately is lost. The pathetic irony is that the smallest wrong, real or imagined, by his "enemy" may "justify" the bitter person doing far worse wrongs himself.

The truth is that God's people must not step over moral boundaries, even when the cause is right. A right end does not justify a wrong means. Anger and bitterness make people especially vulnerable to the twisted thinking that if someone else is wrong, I can use whatever means I choose to deal with that person.

7. Saul thought he would have been all right if the circumstances would have changed.

Angry Saul saw his problems as being in his surroundings. If only David would be eliminated... if only his men would cooperate... if only Jonathan would not befriend David.... Circumstances certainly can be part of a problem. That is what makes focusing on them so deceptive. Angry thinking, however, focuses solely on the outside circumstances. But unfortunately, the most frustrating circumstances are usually those we have no control over anyway. This deception leads to wasting huge amounts of mental and emotional energy, as we kick against walls that will not budge—circumstances we cannot change.

The truth was that Saul's largest problems lay in his own heart, not in his circumstances. Furthermore, when we face difficult circumstances, the effect of those circumstances on us will depend more on our attitude toward them than on the circumstances themselves. As one author stated, "Life is ten percent what happens to us and ninety percent our attitude toward what happens to us."

8. Saul thought he could carry out his plans regardless of the Lord's purposes. Samuel had told Saul he was rejected as king and the Lord had appointed

another man who would honor and obey Him. Eventually Saul even acknowledged David would be the next king. But Saul continued to pursue David's life in an attempt to secure his own dynasty. Bitter people operating under anger's deception disobey their parents, oppose church leaders, and even go against Bible principles in pursuit of their agenda.

The truth is that every plan or purpose of man that is against the purposes of God is doomed to fail. At times it may seem to prosper. The time came when David went to the Philistines and was out of Saul's way, but God still accomplished His purposes. Saul was rejected, and David became king. Any seeming progress against the will of God is only a delusion that precedes a terrible awakening. God will have His way.

9. Saul believed people were against him who actually were for him. We have already noted how this was so with David, but it was true with others also. Saul accused Jonathan of plotting against him; he accused his soldiers of being secretly aligned with David; he accused the priests of forming a conspiracy with David against him. Anger poisoned his thinking,



Saul's largest problems lay in his own heart.

making him suspicious and resentful, causing him to lash out at people who were actually helping him. Bitterness can become so ingrained that even loving actions of Christian friends may trigger angry, resentful responses from the bitter person.

The truth was that David, Jonathan, Saul's men, and the priests were loyal to Saul and the nation of Israel. Bitterness blinds. It robs the bitter person of the ability to discern between friends and enemies, between good and evil designs.

10. Saul believed he was a victim. When he accused his men of conspiracy with Da-

vid, he pouted, *“There is not one of you who is sorry for me”* (1 Samuel 22:8). Victim thinking grows naturally out of blame thinking. It holds others responsible for things they have not done, and makes us blind to our own responsibility for our actions. Victim thinking drips with self-pity. It crafts subtle ways to make others feel guilty. It projects helplessness on the surface, but underneath it is a means of controlling others. By putting up a sorry front, the “victim” is manipulating others to conform to his will. At the same time, he is setting up barriers against anyone approaching him with his responsibility – by shedding tears, he safeguards himself against others doing anything to upset him further.

The truth was that Saul was not a victim. He was victimizing others. Saul did not need pity; he needed to repent of his disobedience, jealousy, and anger. Saul was not helpless in his problems; he could have turned to the Lord and found mercy and grace. On the other hand, some people are victims of other persons’ evil doings. When the victim mentality sets in, however, it will cause us to develop a pattern of crying, “I’m a victim! It’s not my fault!” when

in truth we are responsible. It is furthermore true, as we will explore later, that in Christ we can be more than conquerors, even when we are the victims of the worst of atrocities.

11. Saul believed nobody understood his situation. We see this reflected at various times in his verbal tirades. It is a common deception of those who grow bitter. The more distorted their thinking becomes, the harder they try to get people to see things their way. And the harder they try, the more impatient and less understanding others are likely to become. What bitter people usually want is for someone to agree with their way of seeing a situation, justifying themselves, and blaming others. The more their minds churn in the muddy waters of bitterness, the more “evidence” they will find against others and for their own position. But the muddier the evidence, the less inclined people are to believe them.

Bitter people walk around, as it were, with a sack over their shoulders, carrying all the wrongs others have done to them. They have a variety of ways of arousing others’ curiosity about what is in the sack, such as walking doubled over under the weight of these problems or



Bitter people pull out **juicy spoilage** from their past.

hinting about the terrible things stored in their sack. They can bring their problems into conversations on nearly any topic. When they get a listening ear, they take down their sack and begin pulling out juicy spoilage from their past. When a discerning friend questions their bent reasoning, they respond with something like, “Oh, I haven’t told you the half!” And into the sack they go for more. If an honest and committed friend suggests the bitter person must leave his bitterness, the bitter person will typically respond, “You just don’t understand.” At that point, he usually throws his sack over his shoulder and walks off in a huff to find someone else who will listen.

The truth is, there are usually people in the bitter person’s life who understand him better than he is willing to acknowledge. More basically, the problem is not people misunderstanding

the bitter person’s situation, but they are uncomfortable and unsympathetic with the bitter person’s underlying motives.

12. Saul thought being a victim obligated others to help him get his way. The mentality of a victim is self-centered. Saul’s world revolved around himself, and the more it did, the worse his problems grew. People’s lack of cooperation fuels a victim’s thinking that he is being wronged, which in turn makes him believe even more strongly that others are obligated to help him. When the bitter person is in power, this vicious cycle becomes especially nasty. Saul’s men were willing to go after David, and they took Saul’s scoldings stoically, but when commanded to kill the priests, they were trapped. On the one hand was a deranged king’s order, and on the other, the realization these were holy men who did not deserve to die.

The truth is that no amount of victimization justifies unrighteous responses or obligates others to cooperate with unrighteous responses. It is right to stand with, understand, and give loving support to true victims. But Saul was not a victim. No one is obligated to cooperate with plans motivated by jealousy, hatred, or ill will.

13. Saul believed if people did not agree with him, they were against him. Saul wanted people on his side. He thought in terms of his world and his causes alone. Uncooperative people landed on his black list and were in danger of wrath, accusation, and harm. In 1 Chronicles 12, we find a long list of defectors from Saul's army. *"They were of Benjamin, Saul's brethren"* (v. 2). These were men who fell out of favor with Saul, for whatever reason, and "came to David day by day... until it was a great army, like the army of God" (vv. 20, 22). Some of these men demonstrated outstanding loyalty in service to David. Saul simply had no time or use for people not totally agreed with him nor operating by his agenda. By forcing people to line up with his cause, he pushed his best people away.

The truth is good people do disagree with plans born of

wrong motives. Their disagreement does not mean they are disloyal; loyalty may in fact motivate them to disagree. Good people realize the real dividing line is not between being for or against a bitter person, but between being for or against God. No man or woman is big enough to demand other people to be either for or against them. Only Jesus is a person significant enough; only God's cause of eternal salvation through His Son is a cause significant enough to say, "He that is not for us is against us." When bitter people, like Saul, try to force others to be either totally for them or against them, they are deluded.

14. Saul believed others had motives similar to his own. Saul became mean and vindictive. The more evil motives drove Saul's mind and behavior, the more suspicious he grew of others. He secretly plotted against David and assumed David was plotting against him. He hid his true motives from his men and assumed his men were secretly working against him. Behind a good face, he assigned secret missions and schemed evil, and he assumed the priests had evil plans hidden behind their righteous service. Such is the deception of bitterness. It becomes so familiar with

treachery that it cannot trust, so acquainted with malice that it cannot believe people would love purely, so adept at wearing masks that it suspects every honest man's face, so steeped in selfishness that it cannot believe others are capable of sacrificial loyalty. The evil motivations that churn in the bitter person's heart are subconsciously transferred to others.

The truth was Saul doubted and accused men who were trustworthy and blameless. Evil motives destroy the ability to discern the true motives of others.

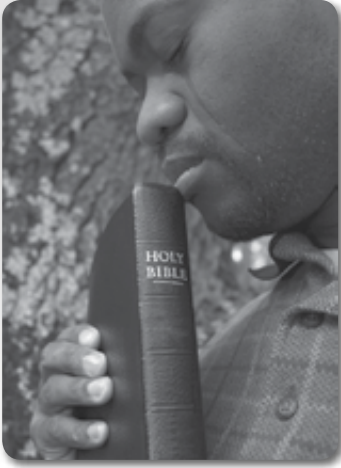
15. By blaming others, Saul became blind to how he could have corrected his own sins. This deception led to the tragedy of Saul's death. He spent his life pursuing revenge instead of repentance. We could well wonder how the Biblical record might have been different if Saul had laid down his grudge against David and had sought the Lord. Saul may not have changed God's purposes for transferring the kingdom to David, but he could have changed his attitude and position in relation to God's purposes. By focusing on what he

wanted, however, and by keeping his finger pointed at others, Saul could not see the steps to repentance. He was blind to how he could have brought unity to the nation and peace to his own heart. *"He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes"* (1 John 2:10, 11).

The truth is that no person can keep us from repentance and finding God's blessing in our own lives. The barrier to joy in Saul's life was the wickedness in his own heart.

16. Saul doubted God's goodness and denied God's interest in him personally. Observing the dismal emotional and spiritual condition in which Saul sought direction from a witch, we could weep. *"I am deeply distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me and does not answer me anymore, neither by prophets nor by dreams. Therefore I have called you, that you may reveal to me what I should do"* (1 Samuel 28:15).

No one can keep us from finding God's blessing.



**“The LORD is near
to those who have
a broken heart.”**

Psalm 34:18a

“The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit” (Psalm 34:18). David, the man Saul despised, wrote those words; but Saul, absorbed as he was in his anger and bitterness, was blind to the goodness of God.

There were surely more than 16 deceptions that affected Saul’s thinking, but these are enough to demonstrate that anger and bitterness distort perspective. The person who holds to his anger enters a darkness, and in that darkness he judges people and

interprets events through twisted logic and carnal motivations.

All these deceptions, however, have to do with what was going on inside of Saul himself. Bitterness is not only a personal problem, but also an interpersonal one.

How Bitterness Is Deceptive in Interpersonal Relationships

Many of the interpersonal evidences of bitterness are overt and obvious. A bitter person, for example, develops patterns of blaming others, complaining, and pitying himself, and has problems living under authority. These evidences are not hard to discern. Although the bitter person may be deceived and may vehemently deny bitterness, those around him can easily see bitterness is the root problem.

Other symptoms of bitterness are less obvious. Bitterness is like a root growing underground; the place it “springs up” may be so far removed from the area of bitterness that there would seem to be no connection. If we get beneath the surface, however, we can see the problem is directly tied to bitterness in the heart. Let’s consider several examples:

1. Intemperate pursuits. Steve was a 16-year-old boy who

lived and breathed hockey. He would rather have played hockey with his youth group than anything else. He let nothing stand in the way of his playing, including a health problem and his parents' concern about how hard and how often he played. Steve's father believed hockey was foolishness. If he had had his way, Steve would not have played at all, certainly not regularly. Beneath the tension about hockey was a broken father-son relationship that went back for years. Steve's father had always made work his priority. Family fun, the children's interests, and home activities were often sacrificed for work.

Numerous other factors contributed to Steve's troubles with his father, but the bottom line was that Steve was bitterly angry. He felt unloved, inferior, and cheated. If anyone would have asked Steve if he pursued hockey with such fervor because he was bitter toward his dad, he would have scoffed at the idea. But many times the fuel behind an intemperate pursuit is unresolved bitterness. The more a parent opposes the pursuit of a bitter son or daughter, the more they are driven to pursue it.

Bitter people have a way of finding each other. A young man like Steve will easily be drawn

to a young woman with similar problems and attitudes. On the surface their relationship seems to be one of understanding and sensitivity. They feel like balm for each other. And the more their parents object, the more balm they will need and willingly give.

Nobody can convince them they are not good for each other. If anyone would suggest they are more motivated by bitterness than by love, they would think that person to be totally wrong. But again, when a bitter person ardently pursues something, more often than not, the force driving that pursuit is the fire of bitterness burning within. After Mr. and Mrs. Bitter get married, reality sets in. They find the balm they were using was acidic. They were only spreading the infection, not treating it. They soon find that bitterness in the intimate relationship of marriage is more hurtful than it was in their former relationship with their parents. The injuries only multiply. The pain only increases.

2. Know-it-all attitude. This covert symptom of bitterness grows out of the inner devastation surrounding bitterness. Often, bitter people have been deeply hurt—rejected, abused, neglected, etc. Sometimes, as in



A bitter person is struggling against what is beyond his control.

Saul's case, the bitterness rises out of some form of self-centered anger, such as jealousy. But in any case, the bitter person feels like a "zero person," a nobody. When this inferiority has been fed by regular attacks against one's person—name calling, criticism, sarcasm—the buildup of inner frustration is sometimes vented in grandiose talk. Without understanding himself, he is trying to cover who he fears he is—a nobody, a simpleton, an incompetent. The person absorbs information, diagnoses problems, and prescribes solutions, all in an effort to project an image of competence.

When bitterness drives a person to establish his identity, relationships suffer. What the bitter person desperately wants is acceptance, but his arrogance only estranges him further. He makes claims that are hard to believe. He often challenges established procedures. He de-

lights in showing up the errors of experts. He farms differently, builds differently, drives differently, schedules differently, manages differently, and doctors differently just to prove that he knows best.

But behind the mask, under the confident front, is a lonely person. Others can't get close to him, and he knows it and feels it. His loneliness only adds to his drive to be somebody significant. The know-it-all will sometimes let people get close to him to a certain extent when he is in trouble, as he often is. But once he is on his feet again, his besetting sin easily takes over and he is off again thinking big thoughts, making big plans, erecting the big facade that says, "I'm somebody!"

3. Control tactics. Not all people who try to control others are bitter, but all who are bitter try to control. Sometimes a bitter person's control tactics

are overt (as for example, in an outburst of anger—controlling by making others back off), but many times the control tactics are subtle and have no seeming connection to bitterness. Some methods of control, in fact, seem pleasant on the surface.

To understand why a bitter person tries to control others, we need to understand that a bitter person is fighting an emotional warfare against situations or people he cannot change. He may go over and over events that have happened in the past and can never be undone, or he may spend his free time mentally arguing with or outmaneuvering a person he resents. In any case, the bitter person is struggling against what is beyond his control. But the tendency is to think of ways to bring the situation and people back under control.

Some people, like King Saul, are in a position to control. Others, without authority, learn more subtle ways of managing situations and people. Following are a few examples of control tactics subtle enough that, on the surface, they do not seem related to bitterness:

a. *Flattery: saying nice things about (or doing favors for) people in order to obligate them to be nice*

in return or to side with the bitter person. A bitter person can be extremely kind, courteous, and even sacrificial if it is to his advantage. Although the bitter person would deny it, his flattery or favor is almost invariably an attempt to prove something to the one(s) he is bitter toward.

b. *Being confidential: sharing private information to secure people's friendship and obligate their trust, especially if the bitter person does not want these people to get closer to the one he is bitter toward.* The writer of the proverbs wisely said, "Make no friendship with an angry man" (Proverbs 22:24). The motives of a bitter person are so hidden that even he would seldom understand he is being confidential and friendly more because of ill will toward others than goodwill toward his "friend."

c. *Giving veiled signals of needs: hinting in roundabout ways that something is wrong, but not being specific or open.* This is often a subconscious way of controlling caring people—manipulating them to give their kind attention. Following is a typical conversation showing how a bitter person tries to control a caring person:

Caring Connie: "Hi, Betty. How are you doing?"

Bitter Betty: "Oh, I'll be all right."

Caring Connie: "Is something wrong?"

Bitter Betty: "Oh, it's nothing. I'll be okay."

Caring Connie: "Are you sure?"

Bitter Betty: "It's just more of the same."

Caring Connie: "Are you having problems with your mom again?"

Bitter Betty: "Just the normal."

Caring Connie: "Do you want to talk about it?"

Bitter Betty: "I don't see what good it would do."

This conversation typically drags on until Connie has pulled the whole story out of Betty. Notice Betty pretended it was a small thing and not necessary to talk about (and probably it wasn't). But if Connie had not taken the time to draw it out of her, Betty would have been deeply hurt. Betty tries to control people like Connie as a direct result of bitterness.

The above examples of control tactics are only samples. A bitter person can turn virtually every contact with others into an opportunity to control. The real problem is not his control tactics, but the bitterness that drives him to control people.

Veiled control tactics, like intemperate pursuits and a know-it-all attitude, are covert symptoms of bitterness. On the surface we may not see the connection between these interpersonal problems and bitterness, but this only emphasizes how deceptive bitterness really is.

People who are driven and people who are know-it-alls and people who try to control others create conflict. Unfortunately, it is far easier to focus on the surface symptoms than on the root problem. The father focuses on the son's disobedience and intemperance. People criticize the know-it-all or argue with him or turn away in disgust. The controlling person is avoided as much as possible. But until the root of bitterness is dealt with, there is no lasting remedy for the surface problems.

The deception of bitterness could well bring us to despair. With the Apostle Paul, we might cry, "Who can deliver us from this wretched condition?" Paul found deliverance from sin's power to be in Jesus Christ. Through Christ there is deliverance for every sin. In the following chapters we will look at remedies for anger and bitterness.



Study Questions

1. To better understand the change that occurred in Saul, read each of the following verses in its context and describe the character quality you see in Saul.

- a. 1 Samuel 9:5
- b. 1 Samuel 9:21
- c. 1 Samuel 10:16
- d. 1 Samuel 10:22
- e. 1 Samuel 10:27
- f. 1 Samuel 11:6
- g. 1 Samuel 11:13

2. The exact turning point in Saul's life is not clear. Perhaps there were several turning points. What do you see as significant about Saul's character in each of the following verses?

- a. 1 Samuel 13:3
- b. 1 Samuel 13:8–12
- c. 1 Samuel 14:24
- d. 1 Samuel 15:9
- e. 1 Samuel 15:30

3. What did Saul fear in David?

4. How did Saul's fear feed his anger?

5. List a number of things Saul accused David of.

6. Do you think Saul actually believed these things, or did he use them as excuses to pursue David?

7. List the attempts Saul made on David's life. Roughly estimate the cost of Saul's efforts.

8. List the people in Saul's life whom he turned against.

9. How did Saul emotionally manipulate his men (1 Samuel 22)?

10. Scan 1 Chronicles 12 and list the groups of people who defected to David.

11. What do these defections indicate about Saul's character?

12. Describe the thinking of a victim.

13. Describe how anger distorts our thinking about other people beyond the one we are angry toward.

14. Describe how anger distorts our thinking about God.

15. What is the danger of two bitter people getting married?

16. Bitter people typically become controllers. Study Acts 8:13–24 for an example of a bitter man obsessed with power. What control tactics do you see in Simon?

17. What is the deceptive thinking behind the control tactics of a bitter person?

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Free on the Inside!

Prisoners proclaiming Jesus, the source of true freedom.

A New Man With a New Life

Testimony of Mitchel Thornton

Idaho Correctional Institution > Orofino > Idaho

I was thirty-eight years old when I was forced to face my own sinful infirmity. Confronted by an unbelieving and horrified wife, I admitted to years of adultery and my secret criminal life. I thought about running from the problem. I didn't want to face the embarrassment and humiliation of anyone knowing my dark and secret life. How could I face my family and friends?

My wife wanted no explanation, no excuses, not even an apology. She just wanted me gone! So I grabbed my coat and keys and off I went. I drove around for hours before coming to the conclusion that I had only two options. I could commit suicide or I could take responsi-

bility and turn myself in. I knew that if I really loved my family that the former was not an option at all and therefore I turned myself in to the authorities.

As I walked through the security doors, my first instinct was to turn and run just as fast as I could. But I was exhausted and couldn't find the strength to move. I sat in a small intake cell looking into the eyes of the officer sitting across from me. For the first time in my life I opened up completely to another human being. I told him all that had transpired during the night and over the last two years. I expressed to him my thoughts of suicide and fears of my future. He took the time to listen as I un-

folded my sinful life before him. When I was through unloading my dirt on him, he assured me that everything would be okay. He outlined what the process to come would be, including the charges I was facing. I knew I was facing a lengthy prison term, but oddly enough I felt better about this than expected. For the first time in my life I had not run from my problems. I was facing life, not running from it, and I was in a better place than I had been in years.

My courage had brought me into unfamiliar territory. Dealing with a problem as opposed to brushing it under the carpet was harder than I could have imagined. I began to wonder, *What have I done? Why have I turned myself in?* Before the night ended, I was arrested and placed in a jail cell.

My eyes burned from lack of sleep and the tears that had finally been allowed to flow. Relief and anxiety fought within me.

I tried to sleep but sleep would not come. I would not, or could not, allow myself the peace the officer told me I deserved.

Jail was also a new experience, and I was bitter and resentful toward my wife, family, and everyone around me. Months

passed before I was broken enough to reach out to the only real Christian I knew. I phoned my sister and told her how depressed and bitter I was. She reminded me that I didn't have to be alone—that it was my choice. She told me that if I ask the Lord for forgiveness and seek Jesus as my Savior, I would find a friend that

would never leave me. She asked if I had a Bible or had ever read one. She knew the answer would be "no" since she had been trying for twenty years to lead me to Christ. She sent me a Bible and instructed me to read the Gospel of John. I was amazed by the effect this account of Christ had on me. I couldn't put it down.



***For the first time
in my life I had
not run from my
problems.***

I read the entire book of John and was well into the book of Romans when late in the night I put down my Bible and fell to my knees in the middle of my cell. With tears rolling down my face, I asked Jesus to forgive my sins and to help change my heart. I asked Jesus to give me peace like I had never known in my life.

Although the cell was dark, there was a light projecting down in front of me. I am still sure that I was the only one who could see that light and the vision it produced. There in front of me was a man standing beside a stream. It was all so calm and serene. He stood there with his hand reaching out to me. And without uttering a word, he reassured me that everything would be okay. At that moment in the darkness of my cell, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior.

I awoke the next morning with a stirring in my soul and a new outlook on life. Sure I was in jail and was certain my sentence would reflect my crime, but somehow it no longer seemed to

matter. Christ had brought me to a new place. I was reborn, a new man with a new life!

From that day in May 2000, I've taken every opportunity to tell my story of salvation. Once you have found the healing love of Jesus Christ it is your duty as a Christian to help others find that same love. Christ wants us to share His word and our

experiences of walking with Him. It might be the gentle guide that leads the crippled at heart to the healing waters.

Thanks be to the Lord for all His mercy. Although I am doing a 25-year sentence in prison, I am freer today than I have ever been.

— Mitchel Thornton



***I am doing a
25-year sentence
in prison, but I am
freer today than I
have ever been.***

Me in My Cell

Me in my cell, quiet as can be;
Just listen – there in a whisper God talks to me.

He lets me know what he says is true,
And always reminds me, “What will Jesus do?”

At times like this I give him praise
That He saved a sinner like me.

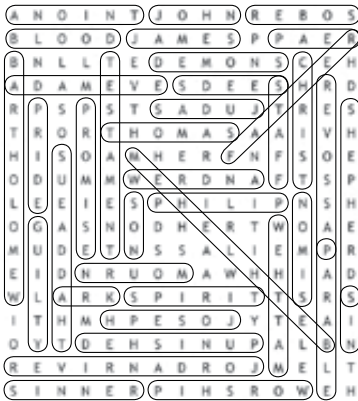
And thank God that Jesus died
On the cross to pay for sin eternally.

Victor Steel

Holmes Correctional Institution • Bonifay, Florida

Puzzle Answers for Last Issue

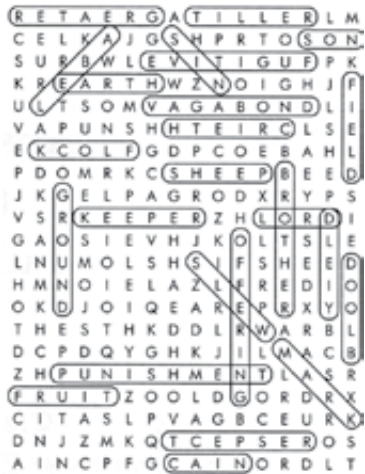
The Puzzle Corner on page 20:



Unscrambled Message on page 21:

“The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.”

Cain and Abel Puzzle on page 41:



The Good, Bad, and Ugly

Testimony of John Coomes

London Correctional Institution > London, Ohio

The good is that God saved me about five years ago. He filled me with His Holy Spirit and the blessings are good.

The bad is that I was one of the worst prisoners in Ohio before I knew the Lord. I spent a lot of time in the hole for breaking many rules. I thought I ran the show, and that's when it got ugly.

I used to hate everyone, but God has taught me to love everyone. I used to be racist, but God told me in Psalm 139:14 that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

God delivered me from all the ugly muck and mire of drinking alcohol, smoking marijuana, and dealing drugs.

I used to be a big football fan. Now I can take football or leave it. I ran stores in prison, but I can't wait to get out and humbly go to work at a store legally. I used to fight a lot, but God has made me a peacemaker.

I'm living proof of 2 Corinthians 5:17 which says *all* old things have passed away and *all* things have become new. Jesus saves! He saved a wretch like me. □



God delivered me from all the ugly muck and mire of drinking alcohol, smoking marijuana, and dealing drugs.

Would you like to share a testimony or poem with fellow-believers in prison? Send us your poems, testimonies, articles, and stories, etc., and we will consider them for publication. Any material sent to us will be used at our discretion. (We have received a large number of writings.) Any material sent to us becomes the property of Lighthouse Publishing.

Never Alone

Ron Daugherty
Noble Corrections > Caldwell, Ohio

As I sit here in prison,
I feel so alone.
With thoughts of my family,
I'm so far from home.

I pray for forgiveness
For the wrongs I have done.
(You violate God's commandments
If you break only one.)

So choose your path wisely;
Take heed my friends.
For God sent His son Jesus
To die for our sins.

I've done my crime, so
Doing this time is such a small price.
Compared to our Savior
And His sacrifice.

We owe it to Him to
No longer be lost.
For He suffered for us,
Crucified on the cross.

I once was blind,
But now I see.
It won't be my outdate
That sets me free.

I'm reading my Bible;
My knowledge has grown.
I know God's in here with me;
I'm never alone.

I Refuse

Brian M. Vest > Garza West Unit > Beeville, Texas

I refuse to be discouraged,
To be sad, or to cry.
I refuse to be downhearted,
And here's the reason why.
I have a God Who is almighty,
Who is Sovereign and Supreme.
I have a God Who loves
And accepts me for Who I am.
He is all wise and powerful;
Jesus is His name.
Though everything else is changeable,
My God remains the same.

I refuse to be defeated;
My eyes are on my God.
He has promised to be with me
As through this life I plod.
I am looking past my circumstances
To heaven's throne above.
I give thanks to Him in everything;
My eyes are on His face.
The battle is His, the victory mine;
He will help me win the race.

Endure the **Trials of Today**

Kelvin L. David
Shawnee Correctional Center
Vienna, Illinois

This piece is just a reminder –
When things don't go your way,
Continue to remain humble;
Change will come one day.

Yes, the trials of life are grievous,
But to endure hardness is a command;
For strength is gained from afflictions
That enables us to stand.

The race isn't given to the swift
Nor the battle to the strong;
Rather grace is given to the humble
And comfort to those who mourn.

Whoever said that life was easy?
It's a challenge from the start.
Let's make the best of our lives,
So we can say we did our part.

Yes, this world is in a mess,
We wish things would get better;
But Jesus told us it would be this way;
That's one of the reasons for the Gospel letter.



Science in Creation

Noah's Ark and the Flood

Andrew Zimmerman

The sun glistened on the water. Noah remembered the days of the Deluge when he and his family feared for their lives. He recalled the water falling in sheets from the sky, and the earthquakes as the fountains of the great deep were broken up. All of that seemed to be in the distant past, in another world. As Noah stood at the window, he thanked Jehovah again for instructing him to build the ark.

How much longer would the waters cover the world below? Could life ever return to normal? A monkey swung on an overhead beam, trying to catch a glimpse of the bright outdoors. Pigeons cooed softly and a parakeet cawed. The gentle sway of the Ark floating on the water had become home to everybody and every creature on board.

The concept of a global flood is difficult for us to imagine.

Most scientists reject the Biblical account as a myth and even some Christians say that it was only a "local" flood. But when scientific evidence is interpreted from a Biblical worldview, the puzzle pieces fall into place. The Genesis story of the worldwide

continued on next page...

- Brother Andrew has had an avid
- interest in science since he
- started studying it in his early
- years of school. More recently,
- he has been blessed by studying
- the work of creation scientists
- such as Henry Morris and Ken
- Ham. Because of his interest in
- science and his belief in a literal
- six-day creation, he enjoys
- telling others about creation
- science. He lives in Central
- Pennsylvania with his wife and
- ten children.

flood explains the origin of the sedimentary layers, fossils, and many of the geologic formations we observe today. It didn't take millions of years, only a global catastrophe.

Genesis 6 tells us that because the "wickedness of man was great in the earth," God decided to destroy "man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air." But Noah was different. Because he was a just man and walked with God, God chose to save Noah and his family from destruction.

Building the Ark

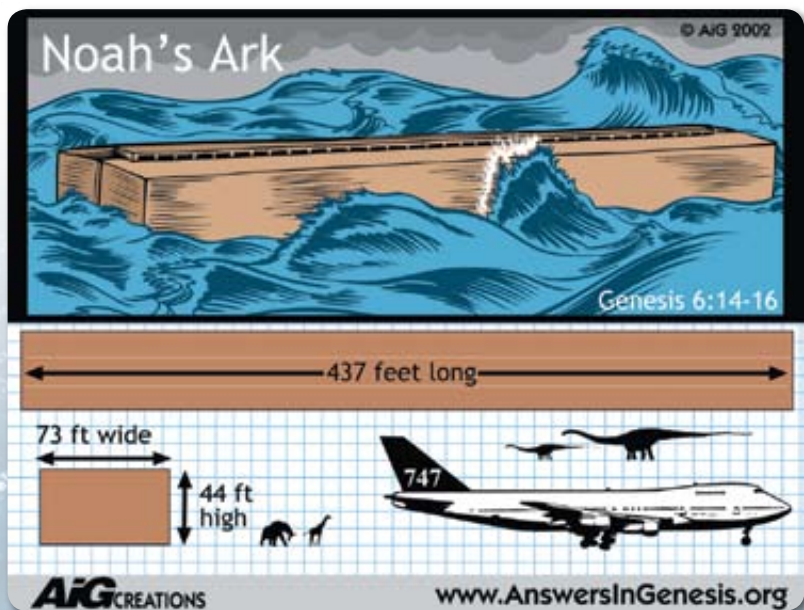
God gave Noah detailed instructions for building the ark.

It was to be made of *gopher wood*, maybe what we call cypress, which is resistant to rotting. God specified the size of the ark. Noah was to build it three stories high, with a door and a window. The three decks were divided into rooms.

Populating the Ark

God commanded Noah to bring two, a male and a female, of every sort of living thing into the ark to keep them alive. The clean animals were to be brought in by sevens. Then He would destroy the earth with a great flood.

Today there are many, many thousands of species of animals.



Through many generations, genetic information has been selected, rearranged, or lost to produce more and more species. However, all the species of dogs, coyotes, wolves, and other canine we know today probably came from one pair of canines that had the privilege of living on Noah's ark! A poodle has just a fraction of the genetic traits available for dogs. A wolf has quite a different set of characteristics. The original pair of canines had all of the genetic code in them to produce all of the species we have today. More varieties are constantly being developed through selective breeding.

It is important to remember that the formation of new varieties within a *kind* is not evolution. There is no new genetic information being added or created. The varieties are developed by breeding out certain variations, so the offspring has more predictable characteristics. The *kind* may have been very similar to the modern classification into *families*.

Creationist researcher John Woodmorappe suggests that, at most, sixteen thousand animals would have been on the ark to preserve all of the created *kinds*. If it was limited to today's *families*,

the requirement would have been even less. Only air-breathing animals, creeping things, and fowls of the air needed to be preserved. Sea dwelling creatures did not perish in the Flood. Noah did not need to have huge aquariums on the ark.

How did all of the animals fit in the ark? God gave Noah the dimensions of the ark in a unit Noah was familiar with, the cubit. A cubit is the distance from the elbow to the tips of the fingers. This is approximately seventeen to eighteen inches, depending on the size of the person. The size of the ark was approximately 437 feet long, 73 feet wide, and 44 feet high. It had three stories, or floors. That provided almost 100,000 square feet of floor space (more than two acres), plenty of room for thousands of animals and the food to feed them. It's possible that many of the animals were not full grown, but were young, requiring less space and less food. The floor space was divided into rooms.

It's very likely that dinosaurs were preserved on the ark. They would have been created on the sixth day along with the rest of the animals. Job's post-flood description of the behemoth in Job chapter 40 has the charac-

teristics of a dinosaur. While some species of dinosaurs grew to be very large, many of them were relatively small, with the average dinosaur being the size of a sheep.

The Flood

Is there enough water on the planet and in the atmosphere to cover the entire surface of the earth? The flood was a major catastrophic event. We can still see the affects of it today. The “*fountains of the great deep*” were “*broken up.*” Today there is still a lot of water trapped under the surface of the earth. It has been estimated that there is five times as much water below the surface as on the surface. The receding flood waters eroded and formed many of the land features we see today. It appears that there may have been only a single continent at the time of creation. Possibly during the Flood the continents were broken apart, the ocean basins dropped to receive the receding flood waters, and the mountains were pushed up. See Psalm 104:6-8. Modern *plate tectonics* theory has the continents moving apart very slowly. The creationist *catastrophic plate tectonics* theory has them separating relatively quickly during the flood.

Even the top of Mount Everest has fossil layers deposited by the flood. Assuming a flat surface with no mountains, there is enough water in the oceans to cover the earth nearly two miles deep. Since the water was only fifteen cubits above the highest mountain, we know there were mountains before the flood, but not as high as Everest.

Landing

The “*mountains of Ararat*” are generally believed to be in Turkey. There is a mountain named Mount Ararat, but this is not proof that it is the mountain on which the ark landed. Mount Ararat was named many centuries after Moses wrote the book of Genesis.

Genesis 11 says that the descendants of Noah traveled “*from the east*” into Shinar. Shinar is in Iraq, in the vicinity of Babylon. That would place the mountains of Ararat in Iran. At the time Moses wrote the book of Genesis, Ararat was the name for a large region of the upper Mesopotamian Valley.

Finding the Ark Today

There have been numerous expeditions to Mount Ararat in Turkey to search for the ark. An expedition to an Iranian

**The only salvation from the coming judgment
is through Jesus Christ and His shed blood.**

Have you entered the Door?



mountain found large pieces of petrified wood high above the tree line.

It has been 4,500 years since the ark landed. It could have been used by Noah and his family for lumber, or for firewood. It could have deteriorated. If it is ever found it would be the greatest archeological discovery ever!

Before the Flood came, Noah was probably standing in the doorway of the ark inviting people to come in and be saved. The only salvation from the coming flood waters was through that door. Maybe we can't find

the ark, but we can find the Door to salvation today. Jesus is the Door. The only salvation from the coming judgment is through Jesus Christ and His shed blood. Have you entered the Door?



Resources for Further Study

The New Answers Book by Ken Ham, Answers In Genesis

Noah's Ark: A Feasibility Study by John Woodmorappe, to be reprinted by Answers In Genesis

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Noah's Ark

Genesis 6:1-9:18



Find these words in the puzzle below:

Altar
Ararat
Ark
Beast
Bow

Clean
Covenant
Creeping
Days
Dove

Earth
Flood
Forty
Fowl
Ham

Japheth
Mountains
Nights
Noah
Offerings

Promise
Rain
Raven
Shem
Wickedness

W Q L M E S L A C I N A C P E O
T Y P R S T E I R N H I O Y S A
D O O L F L H T E O T R V D T R
S F Z S O A A E E J R A E M P A
A L T A R S O M P A S V N E U R
D M B N T U R P I M L E A H Z A
C H E C Y W L N N N M N N S L T
W T A T S Z B U G G A H T U E E
S W R I D O V M O U N T A I N S
C O T K W I C K E D N E S S O S
I G H X O D B S Y C A Y E I M L
A Y B I U L W O F X J Y K E W O
W N I G H T S E T R V Q S P H O
V E C D I C U K N O A H L M T N
O F F E R I N G S L Q E P O E T
L M A H P N Z H T O J I R M H H
I F K J T G A E V O D N O H P E
C P Q S N X W E L D A E M V A T
P R A Q I M O Z L F O D I A J F
J E H W A Q A R K C H C S B E I
B S L M R M O U N T N I E A C P

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*"Two by two they went into the ark to Noah, male and female,
as God had commanded Noah." Genesis 7:9*

The Pursuit of Godly Seed

Denny Kenaston

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Denny and Jackie Kenaston were saved in 1972 out of the “hippie culture.” The Lord Jesus delivered them from drugs, drinking, and many other things that go along with that life-style. They have raised their eight children in the rural setting of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania for more than 20 years. In this setting, they find many opportunities to extend their home school far beyond the classroom.

They were first called to this location to help start Charity Christian Fellowship where Brother Denny serves as an elder. He also travels extensively in a church planting and preaching ministry. God has placed an anointing upon him to call the church back to a burden for the family, and through this, many families have fallen on their faces in repentance and received a new vision for a godly home. Our prayer is that your heart and home will be challenged and changed by this section taken from his book *The Pursuit of Godly Seed*.



I never cease to be in awe as I gaze into the face of an innocent child. When God gives them to us, they come as a blank sheet of paper – clean, pure, and waiting to be inscribed upon. They trust us, open themselves up to us, and receive whatever we give them, whether it be good or bad. Lord, teach us how to guide and train them!

Wholehearted Households

“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...
but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

Joshua 24:15

The above famous words were spoken by Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses. If you read the words all by themselves, not knowing the context in which they were given, it would seem they are being spoken by a young man full of dreams and vision. But it was not so with Joshua. He actually spoke these words at the end of his long life. He was 110 years old and ready to die when these words flowed out of his heart and mouth in a sermon. It had been seventy years since God had said of Caleb and Joshua, “*They have wholly followed the Lord*” (Numbers 32:12b).

As we glance over the recorded years of Joshua’s service for God, we all agree: he lived wholeheartedly all his days. I am glad for his example, because true Christianity is a

wholehearted religion. The Bible abounds with verses that attest to this definition. It seems fitting to me that our homes and the way we seek to raise our children should follow the same pattern. Many of us have Joshua’s confession



Joshua had passed on his zeal and love for God to his seed.

on the wall in our houses, and many of us men have quoted the verse as an expression of our own choice and direction for our homes.

Joshua was speaking prophetically as he proclaimed his intent and the intent of his family. He knew his days would be few on the earth. So how could he say these words? I believe

he could say them because he had passed on his zeal and love for God to his seed. At the time of his confession, there were four generations of his children living. That is what he meant by his “house.” He was a true patriarch, looking out over his descendants and prophesying, *“My house will serve the Lord.”* The house of Joshua is a beautiful example of a wholehearted household.

A Jewish Home

Some years ago I was preparing a message on the home. It was Saturday, and I was planning to preach the next day. As I was preparing, the Lord directed me to study the Jewish home. It was one of the most revealing studies I ever pursued. I was so excited by the time I had finished the sermon that I could hardly wait until it was time to preach.

I was astounded when I saw how the Jews ordered their homes and raised their children. It confirmed the testimony and vision of my own heart. It became very clear that the wholehearted household was the standard that God had given to Israel. Spiritual Israel was totally consumed with raising their children for Jehovah.

In the middle of my investigations, it dawned upon me that this was the kind of home in which Jesus and John the Baptist grew up. I am convinced that when God’s people get consumed with raising their children, when it becomes top priority, they will raise up godly children!

Spiritual Israel was consumed with the rearing of their children. It affected the way they built their houses. They built a house with small rooms, where everyone



When God’s people get consumed with raising their children, they will raise up godly children!

slept, and one large room in the center, where the family spent most of their time. They cooked in this room, ate there, had devotions there, and used it to extend hospitality to others. This room was the central part of the home. In Israel's day, they only had one light, which they carried around the house. Now we have a light in every room. The parents would put the light in the main room of the house, and all the children would gather together. What a beautiful picture. (I'm not against electricity, but I am for gathering the family.) They built their homes with raising children in mind.

I have noticed similar patterns among the Mennonite people where I live. So many decisions are made with a godly family in mind. Large houses are built for the possibility of twelve children. Father plans a family business with training children in his mind. All other plans are made accordingly.

The Sabbath

As I studied the Jewish home, it was a blessing to see the way they conducted the Sabbath evening. Every Friday evening they had a ritual that they went through at home. When father had finished his work for the day, he arose, changed his clothes, and went to

the synagogue. Only the fathers went to the synagogues. The rest of the family stayed home to prepare for the Sabbath.

While the fathers went to the synagogue for prayer and preaching, the whole house was being changed. The whole family was busy getting out the best dishes they had and preparing the best food available in the house. The children all took baths and put on clean clothes in preparation for the Sabbath. The table was set; the Sabbath light was lit; and Mama and the children were waiting for father to come home.

When the father arrived, the children were all lined up, one after another, waiting for the father's Sabbath blessing. As he entered his house, he walked up to each one, put his hand upon each head, and spoke the blessing of Israel upon them. Can you visualize the picture in your mind: those children all lined up, looking up to their father with reverence and respect?

God's Law

The Jewish father taught his children the Word of God. Day in and day out, the fathers were consumed with teaching their children the Law of God: *"Precept upon precept; line upon line... here a little, there a little,"*

as Isaiah 28:10 says. This sounds like an all-inclusive training program to me. They believed Deuteronomy 6:1-7 was to be obeyed. These verses instruct the father to teach his children continually.

When a young man was deciding on his lifetime occupation, he measured his choices up against these verses. He asked himself, "Will this occupation allow me to teach my children the Law of my God?" Many times a young man would choose a lesser profession, so he could be active with his children during the day. I know that our modern society is making choices like this more and more difficult, but even so, if you go to a strong Jewish community today, you will see this principle being lived out. I think we New Covenant Christians have a few things to learn from these Old Covenant Jews.

The father was constantly connecting the actions of his family's life with a command in the Law. Everything they did had a reason. "This is why we pray; here is the verse for it." In this way, the father methodically catechized the children. "This is why we keep the Passover, and here are the scriptures for it." The children learned from little on up. I mean from the time

they were suckling children, they learned why they did what they did and what the verses were behind everything they did. Their father taught them God's Word.

Ancient Homeschooling

The father taught the children how to read in the Jewish home long before they were involved in a systematic education. Do you know how he did it? They all used the same learning-to-read curriculum. They used the Word of God. That was their textbook. Do you know what the father's motive was? He would have said, "I want my children to be able to read the Law as soon as they can." He wasn't planning out the children's formal education when he started to teach them to read. He wanted his children's hearts to be full of the Word of God. So the father would sit the children down in the evening and teach them, beginning with the Hebrew alphabet. After the children had mastered the alphabet, he would move on to simple words out of the Bible, and then on to simple sentences. Slowly but surely, day after day, the father would teach them until the children could read out of the Law by the age of five. As I ponder early American

life, I imagine some of the same scenes in the homes, with many of the same motivations.

The fathers taught the children to memorize Scripture long before they could read. As soon as the children could talk, they were learning to quote Scriptures by memory. As soon as the children could understand words, they were taught by rote and repetition, Scriptures, proverbs, and songs to sing. One of the first psalms that the children memorized was Psalm 119, because it follows the Hebrew alphabet and flows more like a song.

Dear brethren, have we lost the vision? I think we have. We are too soft and too busy. I don't think we realize the mental abilities of these little minds. Our children can memorize Scripture much sooner and much faster than we think they can. If we would begin, and be consistent

in helping them, our children could have chapters of God's word hidden in their hearts by the time they reach seven or eight years of age. In these ways, the father catechized the children. God's ways and God's words were the center of conversation and the center of life in a spiritual Jewish home.

They pursued the next generation with their whole heart. It is time we do the same. Many of us get uneasy when we hear talk about rules and standards in the church, but we ourselves are not willing to make the sacrifices needed to put the standards in the hearts of our children. We need to take the Bible and break it down to a child's level, and teach them why we do what we do. We need to teach them why the sisters wear a covering, why we dress modestly, why we kneel for prayer or raise our hands when



The fathers taught the children to memorize Scripture long before they could read.

we sing. This is the responsibility of every father in every home. That is what catechism is, and the fathers are supposed to do it, not the pastor.

When the sons reached the age of eight, they went away to a more formal school. It was different for the daughters in a Jewish home. They had school at home with their mothers. They received an education, but the emphasis was placed more on learning how to take care of the home. They stayed home with Mama and learned to cook, sew, garden, and care for children. I know this may get a rise out of some ladies reading this. I think our daughters should be educated. However, we see a clear division of responsibilities here that is being lost in our land.

Let's go on to the boys. When the boys were of age, whom do you suppose they hired to train their sons? (I mean no reflection on any teachers reading this. God bless every one of you for your sacrificial labors.) They didn't just hire a young person who needed a job. No. They sought out the most spiritual, mature rabbi that they could find, and put him in the school to train those boys. Now why did they do that? Because they were raising up leaders for the

nation of Israel, and that is a very serious task. They put the most spiritual men to the task.

What am I saying in all this? Am I saying we should all go to Jewish practices? No, I am not saying that at all. What I am saying is this. Spiritual Israel raised their children with a purpose. They had many verses to direct them and a vision to inspire them, and they did it with their whole heart. I believe we need to follow the example of spiritual Israel, and reap some powerful results.

Did you ever consider, as I mentioned already, that this is the kind of home in which our Lord Jesus was raised? You can be sure that when the Father in heaven was searching to find the right family setting for His Son, He made sure that all these things were in place. This would also apply to the home in which John the Baptist was raised. The Bible says of John's parents, "*They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*" (Luke 1:6). This is quite a powerful statement.

What do you think their home was like? Remember the Bible pictures we looked at: polished cornerstones, nurtured plants, olive plants, the house, making the



Who is willing to pay the price of a beautiful home?

arrows, and laying a foundation. These visions are the fuel that made the fire, and that produced the Jewish home we just viewed. Each illustration is full of vision, method, and action. Acting on these visions and methods, Israel raised up godly children for Yahweh. Their lives were filled with raising their children.

The question that comes to my mind is this: are we willing to pay the price? There is a price tag on a beautiful home like this. What is the price, and who is ready to pay it? When I am preaching about the home, older folks often stand to testify at the end of the message with tears, "Oh, if only I had heard these things thirty years ago!" They always admonish the young parents to pay the price at all cost because they have lost their children to the world. Their perspective is worthy of

our consideration. When those who have lost their children look back, having lived with that loss every day, it puts urgency in their plea.

Who then are willing to consecrate themselves to the Lord, so that grace may flow through them, so that they change their priorities and train up their children in the ways of the Lord? Up until now, there have not been many who are willing. This is changing, and I praise God for this change, but there have not been many. If this statement seems too strong, stop and look around you. How many homes do you know in which the children are all-out for God? We have very few examples to follow. The churches should be full of gray heads who have successfully reared a generation of soldiers, out on the fields fighting the war. In reality, they are

but a very few. Dear fathers and mothers, we owe the next generation of parents an example that they can study and follow. Pay the price; pay it all. Don't hold back, and don't let up one bit! Give your whole heart to it, you will never be sorry.

The House of Stephanas

"Ye know the house of Stephanas... that they addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints" (1 Corinthians 16:15).

Here is the testimony of a wholehearted household in one simple sentence. As in the previous text about Joshua, this word "house" is referring to the whole household of Stephanas: father, mother, children, and even servants. When Paul went to Corinth to preach the gospel, this family became his first converts. There is not much written about them. However, as you can see from the verse, what is written speaks volumes about them. It seems that when they heard the Good News,

they all entered in from the beginning with joy and enthusiasm. They are a special family to me because of the word "addicted" in the verse. I was addicted to drugs and alcohol before I was born again, so I know the strength of the word "addicted."

When Paul referred to this family in his letter to the Corinthian church, he used the word "know." This is an experiential word. Paul was saying, "You know how this family lives; you know their testimony among you."

Here is a godly family whose commitment to Christ is without question. Stephanas and his wife were so in love with Christ that the whole family was affected by it. The house of Stephanas addicted themselves to, or allowed themselves to get hooked on, serving the saints. Wow! What an example for us today!

For the past twenty years, I have taken this family as a model to pattern after. May God give us a vision like this today,



The whole house of Stephanas was hooked on serving the saints.

that it may be said of our family ten years from now, "The whole family is given over to the work of God!" My goal is that from the youngest to the oldest, the whole family will be sold out to live for God. I believe if we live a life of zeal and joy before them, the little ones will want to serve God in their innocence, and the older ones will rise up and say, "I want to serve God with my life." They will do it, yes they will! They will want to pass out tracts, go out preaching, work on the streets of some major city in America, sing, pray, and so on. They will want to do all the godly things that you do.

I don't know what your response is to such an example, but my heart says, "Oh, God, I want that mountain, and I will have that mountain." May God give us the Spirit of Caleb, who believed God's promise to him and rose up in strength to possess it.

The House of the Elder

Consider the illustration of a bishop (elder) in the New Testament (1 Timothy 3:1-7). One requirement of a bishop is to make sure he has a family that is in order. Many of the character requirements listed for church leaders were described with one

word. But when the Holy Spirit came to the area of the leader's home, many words are used. A man's family is probably the greatest revelation of who he really is. Someone once said, "True character is who you are when no one is looking." I think this is what God is saying when He places so much emphasis on the home of a potential leader. The Bible uses terms such as "faithful children" and "one who rules his own house well." We know it is true: if you find a home that is in order, you have found a man who lives right, behind closed doors.

You see, our family gives us away. We cannot hide who we really are. We may think for a few years that nobody knows who we really are. But it's not true. Our children give us away every time. If father and mother are sober, the children are sober. If father and mother are critical, the children are critical. We cannot hide ourselves. A man's family speaks volumes about his private everyday life. A happy wife and faithful children give a silent message that the head of the house is walking with God when the doors are shut. My family is an expression, and an extension of me. That can be a very painful reality to face at

***The responsibilities of raising
a family prepare a man
for ministry like
nothing else can.***



times, but we men must get honest with ourselves on this point.

I realize I am saying some pretty heavy things in the last few pages. I am moving beyond the realm of inspiration and challenge on purpose. We need to make some changes. It is time to get serious about our homes. Marry of them are going the way of most homes in America today – nowhere. Very few people are really willing to pay the price it will take to turn their homes around – very few.

Most people are too busy, too busy to raise up godly children who will hit the mark in the enemy's camp some day. This doesn't make any sense in my mind, but it's a matter of priority. We are too busy making money, building a business, or chasing the American dream, or maybe we are simply caught in the rat race of our society. Brethren, stop the wheel; I want to get off.

We say in business, "You get what you pay for," and this is true. However, if it is true in business, how much more is it true with our families? You will get what you pay for although it *may* be 30 years before you see what you bought. 2 Corinthians 9:6 is a powerful verse when applied to the time we invest in our families. Listen to these words: "*But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.*"

For some of us, applying this verse to our homes calls for a major change in our priorities. True repentance is a change of mind that brings about a change of action. This is what is needed in many of our hearts. Old-fashioned repentance says, "Lord, I'm going the wrong way, and I turn." This is the kind of repentance that Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 7, an absolute change of heart and action.

Now It Is Our Turn

It is God's will that we have wholehearted households. You may not have much of this to look back to when you consider the home in which you grew up, but it is God's will that your children have it. Yes, maybe our parents have failed, but now it is our turn. There are two things we can do with our parent's failures in the home. We can let the memory of it make us bitter, as we complain about how bad it was. Or we can let the memory provoke us on to higher ground, and thus make us better. The choice is ours. Let us rise above their failures and march to the beat of a different drum. Let us chart a new course for the sake of our children, so that we can give them a different kind of heritage—a godly heritage.

Dear parents, now it is our turn. Raising children is no sideline issue with God. It is a major part of the Christian life. This is evident from all we have considered thus far. Besides the work of the ministry, rearing my children for God is the most challenging, maturing, self-denying, time-consuming thing I do. It must be so for all of us. In fact, the longer I ponder the responsibilities of raising a family, the more I realize that they prepare a man for ministry like nothing else can. We need to follow the words of Paul in Philippians 3:13b, 14, *"Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal..."* Surely, the raising of our children is part of the *"upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*



Come and Help Us, Lord...



God our Father, what shall we do? We live in America, and we have lost sight of Your vision for our children. Please come and help us to regain the desires we once had. How do we do these wholehearted things in our fast-moving society? We open our hearts and homes to You right now. Redirect our hearts and our homes. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Blessing of Work

Tommy Clayton

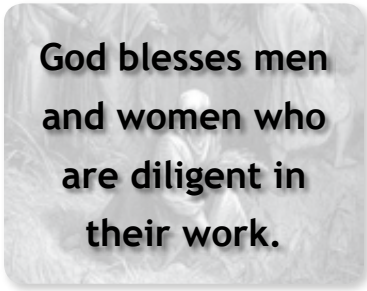
Can you imagine how much your life could change if you were given 100 million dollars? What would you do? Hiring a slick appeals attorney might be high on your spending list. After that you might want to buy a mansion, a few nice vehicles, and a private jet.

The list could go on, but for most this would mean the ultimate prize of never having to work again. This is the dream of a greater part of the population of America, possibly the world; but does this type of life satisfy? Is it a sign of God's blessing?

After God created the universe, He put Adam, the first man, in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it (Genesis 2:15). This simple responsibility of Adam is often overlooked by the casual observer, but here is a wealth of insight into God's will for all mankind.

Dressing and keeping the Garden doesn't mean much to

the average person, but an avid gardener or horticulturist will understand the vast amount of time and work it takes to care for a garden, orchard, vineyard, or greenhouse. They may feel tired just thinking about it. There would be fruit trees to prune, vines to cut back, and a harvest of nuts to gather, fruit to pick, and vegetables to bring in.



**God blesses men
and women who
are diligent in
their work.**

Many believe that working is part of the curse which came after the fall of man and the curse of sin, but God put Adam to work in the Garden before

that. The Holy Scriptures show us that, from the beginning, it has been God's will that we work. God has always blessed men and women who were diligent in their work.

For our first account, we want to examine the life of Ruth, someone who likely thought she'd never have the chance to do anything of value or importance.

Ruth, a Diligent Servant

This is an account from the Bible of a young widow named Ruth. She had married one of the sons of Elimelech, a Jew, who had moved from Bethlehem to the pagan land of Moab because of a famine. In time her husband and her father-in-law both died. Naomi tried to send Ruth away, having decided she would return to the land of the Jews, but Ruth came to believe in the God of Naomi. Try as she would, Naomi could not persuade Ruth to stay in her home country.

Ruth plainly declared to Naomi, "I will go where you go, and live where you live. Your people will be my people, and your God is my God!" Thus they began their journey to Bethlehem.

They arrived in the beginning of barley harvest. They did not have much money and their possessions were few. After they had found a small place to live, they faced the next pressing need—

food to eat. Since Naomi was too old to work, Ruth was the sole source of support. Ruth got up early the next morning and went to the fields where the threshers were harvesting the grain.

In those days the poor, who were willing to work, could follow the threshers to gather stalks of grain that the harvesters left behind. It meant long hours under the hot sun, bending low to pick up those precious grains with

one hand while holding open the bag over your shoulder with the other.

That day Ruth was in the field, humbly, diligently working to support Naomi and herself with enough grain for bread and perhaps hoping to get a little extra to

trade for the essentials of life. This was a meager way to earn a living and the harvest would not last forever, but on she worked, faithfully trusting God.

Later that day, Boaz the land owner came to check on the progress of the harvest. He was



also a hard worker and a just man, respected by his workers, and known to serve the Lord God. As he managed his threshers in the field, he noticed Ruth and her steady, purposeful gathering of the grain. Her willingness to work hard impressed him and after asking his servant about her, he invited her to eat and drink with his workers. Imagine how good the hearty meals and cool refreshing water was to one who was hot, tired, and hungry. Ruth, we are told, was even able to take some of these good provisions to her aged mother-in-law, Naomi.

Ruth had no hopes of being rich and successful; she only purposed to earn that which they needed to live. She was content serving God and Naomi. What a lesson this is for all of us—to work hard, be faithful to the Lord, provide for others, and to be content with much or little. There is more fulfillment in this kind of life than money can ever give.

We are not the only ones to notice the beautiful character in Ruth—Boaz had noticed it as well. At first he had mercy on her when he allowed her to eat and drink with them. Then he showed favor to her by instructing his threshers to purposely drop handfuls of grain for her. From there it pro-

gressed to something better than mercy and favor.

Isn't that how it is with God? When we are doing all we can to serve Him and working hard to provide for our families and others, He shows mercy and favor to us. He blesses our work and makes the little bit we have suffice our needs. Consider Ruth; she could have gone to work in the market, looked for another man to marry, or gotten into some terrible mess of sin and wickedness; but she was spared many perilous endings by working.

Boaz was not married, and although he was fairly successful, he had come from humble beginnings. His mother was not born a Jew, but was the harlot in Jericho that was spared when the Jews destroyed that city. However, we have no doubt that she was converted and believed in the God of the Bible; her life is another testimony of the life-changing power of God.

Knowing the change in his mother's life, and then seeing Ruth come from a pagan country, serving God and working hard, Boaz clearly saw God's hand in all of this. Naomi's response shows that it was also clear to her. Ruth was submissive as always, ready to serve, and willing to do whatever God wanted her to do.

Therefore, after making the necessary arrangements, Boaz took Ruth the Moabitess as his wife. How different it must have been for her to go from gleaning the fields of the leftover grain to standing with Boaz overlooking the fields that would be the inheritance of their children for generations to come. The lowly Moabitess widow, that didn't seem to have a chance, was now very blessed.

Praise God, the story goes on. Boaz and Ruth had a son named Obed. When he was grown, Obed married and had a son named Jesse. Jesse had a son named David. This same David went on to become king and the writer of many psalms and was called by God Himself "a man after God's own heart." David is named in the gospels as being in the lineage of Jesus Christ Who is the Son of God and Savior of the world. The faithful worker Ruth is in the family tree of Christ.

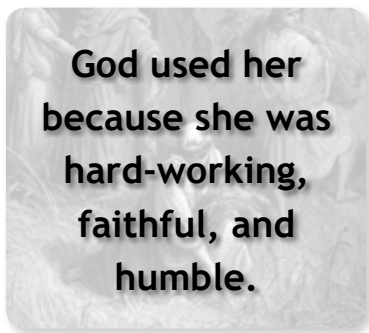
Why her? Was it the color of her skin? The family she was born into? Or the place she was from? No, God used and blessed

her in a special way because she was diligent, hard-working, faithful, and humble. What an amazing story!

Blessings for You

Friends, this blessing from God is available to you, too! He is not looking for the rich and strong, the famous or best. He wants to bless faithful and productive servants.

As more people are developing a welfare mentality, there is a great need of those who will rise up and become honest and diligent hard workers. When you do this, I believe you will find that there is a way to serve God through your work.



This call affects each of you in different ways. For those of you looking towards a release date in the coming months or years, this message rings clear in your minds as you consider supporting your families and others. These are the ones that depended on you and the ones you disappointed, but you want to make it right. With a true commitment to and relationship with God, you can



God will use you if you will humble yourself and be faithful in the everyday disciplines of life.

be that worker God blesses and the provider your family needs you to be. The job market is suffering, but friends, it's not only that there is a lack of jobs; there are not enough workers that will do what they're told, show up on time, and be honest and dependable. There will almost always be openings for that kind of workers.

My heart goes out to those of you who are facing longer sentences, where release seems far away. However, I have good news for you! God wants to bless you too, and one way He wants to do that is through your work. There is work to do right where you are in jail or prison. Back in my time in the Texas prison system (TDCJ), there were a lot of jobs to be done. We worked in the fields turning them over with an aggie and picking cabbage and carrots in rows as long as the eye could see. There was also janitorial work, maintenance, kitchen, and laundry work to be done. If a man wants to work, there is work to be done.

Work Is Healthy

There are also natural blessings that come from working diligently and loyally. The Bible tells us that sleep is sweet to the laboring man (Ecclesiastes 5:12). It is healthy for the body to work and makes the rest we have more appreciated. Work keeps us busy and thereby keeps us out of many troubles that arise through idleness. Work teaches us disciplines that are applicable in many other areas of life.

Joseph, a Worker in Prison

In conclusion let's take a brief look at Joseph (Genesis 37-50).

Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and later purchased by a wealthy Egyptian named Potiphar. God blessed Joseph and made whatever he did to prosper. He was hardworking and diligent in all he did. Now when his master saw this, he promoted him over all that he had and it flourished. Then his master's wife, a wicked, adulterous woman, tried to entice him to

sin. When he would not give in, she testified against him falsely, and he was cast into prison.

Did Joseph give up? Did he have a pity party and become bitter against those who wronged him? Did he start to hate everything and everybody? No, Joseph did what he knew God wanted him to do. He served the Lord, he helped the other inmates, and he worked for the jailors. Soon they saw that through diligence, hard work, and God's blessing, everything Joseph did prospered. So they put him over all that was in the prison. By this he was blessed and enjoyed a measure of freedom while in captivity. In time there arose an opportunity for Joseph to help Pharaoh, and by God's blessing, he was brought from prison and made the second in command over all the kingdom of Egypt, which was one of the most powerful nations in the history of the world.

Friends, do you see that God can work in you and through you in the most impossible situations? No matter where you are or what you have done or how long you will be on the inside, God will use you if you will humble yourself

and be faithful in the everyday disciplines of life.

Maybe you cannot change where you are, but by the grace of God you can change who you are. God has done and is doing His part. Are you doing yours?

Prayerfully reflect on the following Scripture verses in the coming days, weeks, and months.

"But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (Galatians 6:4).

"Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise" (Proverbs 6:6).

"And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands." (Psalms 90:17).

"The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever" (Isaiah 32:17).

"That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you," (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

□

Maybe you cannot change where you are, but by the grace of God you can change who you are.

Pilgrim's Progress

Part 15

Welcome to John Bunyan's classic story of Christian's journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City!

Pilgrim's Progress was written over 300 years ago by a faithful street preacher, who was confined 12 years in a loathsome British prison for preaching without a license. As you read this allegory, remember who wrote it – a man who was free on the inside. God could use him in a great way even while he was in prison!



What Happened So Far...

In their long journey to the Celestial City, Christian and Hopeful have escaped many dangers, but they have also learned some lessons the hard way. In the last issue, the wise shepherds warned the travelers about great dangers still ahead of them. Now, refreshed and confident, Christian and Hopeful are making good progress, but are they alert enough to avoid the traps of their enemies?

The Flatterer

Christian and Hopeful continued their journey, and Ignorance followed. After some time they came to another path connecting to theirs – a path so straight and parallel to their own that although they stopped to consider it, they could not tell which was which.

As they wondered which path to take, a man in a white robe came up and asked why they were standing there.

"We're going to the Celestial City," they answered, "and we're not sure which road to take."

"Ah, the Celestial City!" he answered. "How fortunate that I myself am going that way! Follow me, my boys." He hurried confidently down the path.

Christian and Hopeful followed him, but little by little the path curved away from the city they hoped to reach, until they

were walking in the opposite direction, still following their new guide. Before they knew it, he had led them into a net, where they became hopelessly tangled. Then the man let the white robe fall from his back, and they saw that they had been fooled. Finding no way to escape the net, they lay on the ground, weeping.

Then Christian said to Hopeful, "Now I see my mistake! Didn't the shepherds warn us to beware of the flatterers? Today we have found it as the wise man said: '*A man who flatters his*

neighbor spreads a net for his feet' [Proverbs 29:5]."

"They also gave us a map," said Hopeful, "but we forgot to consult it. David was wiser; he wrote, '*Concerning the works of men, by the word of Your lips, I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer*' [Psalm 17:4]."

The two men sank into a gloomy silence. After a long time, they saw a shining one approaching with a woven whip in his hand. "Where are you from," he asked, "and what are you doing here?"



After a long time, they saw a shining one approaching with a woven whip in his hand.

"We're unfortunate travelers," they answered. "We were on our way to the Celestial City, but we were led astray by a man clothed in white, who said he was going there too."

"It was that Flatterer!" said the man with the whip. "He's a false apostle, but he can appear as an angel of light" [Proverbs 29:5; Daniel 11:32; 2 Corinthians 11:13, 14]. He tore the net open and released them. "Follow me," he said, "and I'll get you back on the right road."

As their rescuer led them back along the way they had just come, he asked them, "Where did you stay last night?"

"In the Delectable Mountains, with the shepherds."

"Didn't they give you a map?"

"Yes."

"Did you try looking at the map when you came to the fork in the road?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I guess we forgot."

"You forgot. Didn't they warn you to watch out for the flatterer?"

"Well, yes, but this man seemed so charming and educated, we never imagined it might be him!" [Romans 16:18].

Then I saw in my dream that the man with the whip ordered

Christian and Hopeful to lie on the ground and gave them a beating they would long remember [Deuteronomy 25:2; 2 Chronicles 6:26, 27]. As he punished them, he said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent" [Revelation 3:19]. Then he sent them on their way, warning them to pay attention to the rest of the shepherds' instructions.

Christian and Hopeful thanked him for his kindness and set off up the right path at last, singing as they went:

"Come here, all you who walk along the way; see how it goes with travelers who stray!

"They find they're snared in an entangling net because good counsel lightly they forget.

"True, they are saved at last, but you can see they're whipped as well. Let this your caution be!"

Atheist

After awhile Christian and Hopeful saw up ahead a lone man strolling toward them. "Look," said Christian, "that man has his back to Zion; he'll be meeting us soon."

"I see him," Hopeful answered. "We'd better watch

ourselves; what if it's another flatterer?"

As they expected, the man kept approaching, and soon they met on the road. The stranger, whose name turned out to be Atheist, asked Christian and Hopeful where they were going.

"We're on our way to Mount Zion," they answered.

Atheist burst into loud laughter.

"What's that all about?" asked Christian when Atheist had quieted down again.

"Oh, me," gasped Atheist. "Sorry, I can't help it. Imagine the ignorance, to take off on a dangerous journey looking for imaginary rewards! I surely hope you've enjoyed the scenery along the way."

"Man, what are you talking about?" said Christian. "Do you think they won't let us in?"

"Let you in! Let you in? No, chap, I guess they won't. In this entire world there's no such place as Mount Zion!"

"No, but in the next world there is."

"Listen, boys, when I was young, they were passing those same stories around my town. Just like you, I got wanderlust and left home, but guess what? Twenty years I've been looking for that city, and



Let you in? No, chap, I guess they won't. In this entire world there's no such place!"

no closer to it now than the day I started" [Jeremiah 17:15, Ecclesiastes 10:15].

Christian replied, "We've heard enough that we believe it can be found."

"Oh, I believed too, or I would never have come this far. I've been much farther than you have; trust me, if it existed I would have found it. Now I'm going home to enjoy the things I left behind when I started this crazy expedition."

Christian turned to Hopeful. "Do you think he knows what he's talking about?"

"Take care," said Hopeful, "he's a flatterer. Remember what it cost us already when we listened to one of these rascals. No Mount Zion indeed! Christian, didn't we see the city gate ourselves from the Delectable Mountains? Aren't we supposed to be walking by faith? Let's get going before that fellow with the whip finds us loitering here. Let me remind you of the lesson you should have remembered on your own: *'Cease listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge.'* Stop listening to him, brother, and let's believe for the salvation of our souls" [Proverbs 19:27; Hebrews 10:39].

"My brother," replied Christian, "I didn't ask you that question out of any doubt of my own, but to test you, and to harvest some fruit from your honest heart. This man is blinded by the god of this world. You and I must travel on, for we believe

in the truth, and *'no lie is of the truth'*" [1 John 2:21].

"I rejoice in the hope of God's glory!" shouted Hopeful. They turned their backs on Atheist, and he walked off, still laughing.

The Enchanted Ground

Then I saw in my dream that Christian and Hopeful traveled until they reached a region where the air made visitors drowsy. Hopeful became more and more dull and sleepy. "Christian," he said, "I can barely keep my eyes open. Let's just take one little nap and then we'll travel on."



"Not a chance," Christian answered. "We'd never wake up!"

"Come on, brother, sleep is sweet to the working man. A short nap is just the thing to energize us."

"Don't you remember the shepherd who warned us about the Enchanted Ground? He meant that we should avoid sleeping here; *'therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober'* [1 Thessalonians 5:6]."

"You're right," said Hopeful. "If I had been here alone, I'm afraid I would have risked my life and gone right to sleep. The wise man spoke truth when he said, *'Two are better than one'* [Ecclesiastes 4:9]. Your companionship has been a blessing, and you will be well rewarded."

"We should talk about something worthwhile to keep us from getting drowsy," said Christian.

"I'd be glad to."

"Where shall we start?"

"Start where God started with us," said Hopeful. "But you speak first."

Christian replied, "First listen to this song:

"When saints grow sleepy, then let them come hither and hear how these two travelers talk together."

"Yes, let them learn by questions and replies to keep from sleep their drowsy, heavy eyes."

"Saints' fellowship, if it be handled well, keeps them awake, even in spite of hell."

Then Christian said, "I'll ask you a question: What first made you consider living as you do now?"

"Are you asking how I first started looking out for my soul's well-being?"

"That's what I mean."

"For a long time I was delighted by the things sold and displayed at Vanity Fair," began Hopeful, "things which would have drowned and destroyed me if I had stayed."

"What things?" asked Christian.

"I followed the world's treasures and wealth. I also greatly enjoyed carousing, partying, drinking, swearing, lying, uncleanness, Sabbath-breaking, and more, all of which worked toward destroying my soul. But at last I heard from you and from Faithful, who was killed at Vanity Fair for his faith and good living, that the end of those pleasures is death, and that *'because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience'* [Romans 6:21-23; Ephesians 5:6]."

“Did you have the conviction then that we spoke the truth?”

“No, I didn’t want to admit the evil of sin or the punishment that follows sinful deeds, so when my mind was first shaken with the truth, I tried to close my eyes against the light.”

“Why do you say then that this was the beginning of the Spirit’s work in you?”

“First, because I didn’t know God was influencing me. I didn’t realize that God begins the conversion of a sinner by awakening him to the evil of his sin. Second, sin was sweet to my flesh, and I hated to leave it. Third, I liked being with my old friends and doing things together, and I didn’t know how to break with them. Fourth, whenever I was convicted about my sin, I was so miserable that I couldn’t bear even the memory of it.”

“So there were still times when it didn’t bother you?”

“Yes, but it always came back, and every time it returned it was worse than before.”

“What reminded you of your sins?”

“Lots of things – if I met a good man on the street; if I heard someone read the Bible; if my head ached; if I heard that a neighbor was sick; if I heard bells ringing for a funeral; if I thought

of dying myself; or if I heard of someone who had died suddenly. But the worst was when I thought about how I would soon face the Judgment.”

“When one of these things was bothering you, was it easy to shrug off your feelings of guilt?”

“No – not toward the end at least. After awhile, although I wanted to ignore my guilt, the very thought of sinning would torment me even more.”

“What did you do then?”

“I decided I would have to fix up my life, or I was sure to be damned.”

“Did you try to improve?”

“I did. I ran away from sin and from my bad friends too. I adopted religious practices, such as praying, reading the Bible, crying over my sin, telling the truth, and more. I could give you a long list of my improvements.”

“Did you think you were alright after that?”

“Yes, for awhile I thought it was working, but then the guilt came rushing back at me in spite of all my reforms.”

“How could that happen?”

“There were several causes, but I was especially troubled by sayings such as these: *‘All our righteousnesses are like filthy*

rags' [Isaiah 64:6]. 'By the works of the law no flesh shall be justified' [Galatians 2:16]. 'When you have done all those things... say, "We are unprofitable"' [Luke 17:10], and many others like them. I said to myself, 'If all my good deeds are like filthy rags; if no one can be justified by the deeds of the law; if, even after we have done everything we can, we are still unprofitable; then I'm a fool to think I can get to heaven by obeying the law. I thought about a man who runs up a thousand-dollar debt on his account with a store; even if he pays for each purchase from then on, his old debt still stands, and the storekeeper can sue him and have him put in prison until he pays it.'

"How did you apply that to yourself?"

"I thought, 'With all my past sins, I've run up a huge debt in God's books, and changing now won't pay it off. I've cleaned up my act, but how will I escape the punishment that's due for my earlier sins?'"

"Good thinking; go on."

"Another thing bothered me, too. Even after I reformed, if I was honest with myself, I could see that new sin continued to be mixed up with the best things I did. I realized that, although I had thought I was doing well, I still committed enough sin in

one day to send me to hell, even if my former life had been perfect."

"Then what did you do?"

"Believe me, I didn't know what to do! Finally I told Faithful about

my problem since I knew him well. He told me that unless I could gain the righteousness of Someone Who had never sinned, neither my own righteousness nor all the world's righteousness could save me."

"Did you believe him?"

"If he had told me that when I was still satisfied with my own improvements, I would have called him a fool, but now that I had seen my own weakness, and the sin that hung onto my best efforts, I was forced to agree with him."

"When he first told you that, did you suppose that there was

**Although I had
thought I was
doing well, I still
committed enough
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send me to hell.**

such a person—a man who had truly never sinned?”

“It did sound strange at first, but after discussing it further with Faithful, I was convinced.”

“Did you ask him who this Man was, and how you could be justified?”

“Yes, I did. He said it was the Lord Jesus, Who lives at the right hand of the Most High [Hebrews 10:11-18; Romans 4:1-25; Colossians 1:9-23; 1 Peter 1:3-21]. ‘The way to be justified by Him,’ said Faithful, ‘is to trust in what He has done by Himself in the days of his humanity, and His suffering when He hung on the cross.’

“I asked him, ‘How could that Man’s righteousness be strong enough to justify someone else before God?’ Faithful said that Jesus was God, and that the whole purpose of His life and death was not for Himself but for me. He said that Jesus’ good deeds and His worthiness would be transferred to me if I believed in Him.”

“Then what did you do?”

“I came up with reasons not to believe, because I didn’t think He was willing to save me.”

“What did Faithful say to that?”

“He told me to go to Him and see. I said it would be too presumptuous, but Faithful said I had been invited to come [Matthew 11:28]. He gave me a book from Jesus Himself to encourage me to come freely, and he said that every detail of that book was more solid than heaven and earth [Matthew 24:35]. I asked him what I must do when I came, and he told me I must beg on my knees, with all my heart, for the Father to show Jesus to me [Psalm 95:6; Daniel 6:10; Jeremiah 29:12, 13].

“I asked Faithful how I was to speak to Jesus, and he told me, ‘Go and you will find Him

where He always is—on a mercy seat, where He gives pardon and forgiveness to everyone

who comes’ [Exodus 25:22; Leviticus 16:2; Numbers 7:89; Hebrews 4:16].

“I told him I didn’t know what to say when I came, and he told me to say, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner, and teach me to know and believe in Jesus Christ, for I see that I’m

**Jesus gives pardon
and forgiveness to
everyone who comes.**

lost without His righteousness. Lord, I've heard that You are a merciful God, and that You've chosen Your Son Jesus Christ to be Savior of the world. I've heard also that You will give Him to a sinner like me (and I'm a sinner indeed). Lord, take this opportunity to exalt Your grace by saving my soul, through Your Son Jesus Christ."

"Did you do as he said?"

"I did it over and over and over."

"And did the Father reveal the Son to you?"

"Not the first time, and not the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth times either."

"What did you do then?"

"I didn't know what to do."

"Were you tempted to stop praying?"

"Yes, hundreds of times."

"Why didn't you stop then?"

"I believed what I had been told—that outside Christ's righteousness, nothing on earth could save me. So I thought to myself, 'If I give up, I'm doomed anyway, so I might as well die at the throne of grace.' Just then, I remembered these words: *'Though it tarries, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry'* [Habakkuk 2:3]. So I kept praying until the Father showed me His Son."

"How was the Son shown to you?"

"I didn't see Him with my physical eyes, but with the eyes of my understanding [Ephesians 1:18,19]. Here's how it happened: One day I was sad—sadder than I think I've ever been—because I had just had a fresh view of the grossness of my sins. I expected nothing but hell and eternal damnation, but suddenly I thought I saw the Lord Jesus looking at me from heaven and saying, *'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved'* [Acts 16:31].

"I replied, 'Lord, I'm a great, great sinner.'

"He answered, *'My grace is sufficient for you'* [2 Corinthians 12:9]."

"'Lord, what is believing?' I said, and suddenly I realized that believing and coming were the same thing. *'He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst'* [John 6:35]. I realized that whoever comes to Christ longing with all his heart for salvation has believed in Him.

"Tears filled my eyes, and I asked, 'Lord, will You really accept and save such a great sinner as I am?'"

"Then I heard Him say, *'The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out'* [John 6:37].

“Then I said, ‘But Lord, what should I believe about You to have proper faith in You?’

“Then He said, ‘*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*’ [1 Timothy 1:15]. ‘*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes*’ [Romans 4:1–25; 10:4]. ‘*[He] was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification*’ [Romans 4:25]. ‘*[He] loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood*’ [Revelation 1:5]. ‘*[He is] Mediator between God and men*’ [1 Timothy 2:5]. ‘*He always lives to make intercession for [us]*’ [Hebrews 7:25].

“I understood this to mean that I would find righteousness in Him, and payment for my sins by His blood. His obedience to the penalty of God’s law was not for Himself but for me and whoever would accept salvation. I must simply be thankful. I was filled with joy, my eyes were filled with tears, and I felt an overwhelming love for the name, the people, and the ways of Jesus Christ.”

“That surely was a revelation of Christ to you,” said Christian. “But how did this affect your spirit?”

“It showed me that our entire race, regardless of whatever righteousness we have, is condemned. It showed me that God the Father, because He is just, can justify any sinner who comes. It made me really ashamed of my previous life and astonished by my ignorance because I had never seen the beauty of Jesus Christ so clearly. It planted in me a love for a holy life and a longing to do something

for the honor and glory of the name of Jesus. I felt sure that if I had a thousand gallons of blood in my body, I could spill it all for the Lord Jesus.”

– *to be continued*

Tears filled my eyes, and I asked, “Lord, will You really accept and save such a great sinner as I am?”

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Questions / Prayer Requests / Comments

Your Name

Message

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.....

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.....

A wooden rocking chair is positioned on a wooden deck. The deck has a railing with vertical balusters. In the background, there is a dense forest of tall trees with green foliage. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating a warm, golden glow. The overall scene is peaceful and serene.

Music to God's Ears

Because God made His holy Son
Accursed upon a tree,
The veil no longer separates
The throne from you and me.

Boldly now we can confess
Our loss and grief with tears;
It's then our Saviour goes to work
To redeem our broken years.

For in our weak and broken state,
He comforts with His love;
And lifts us from our murky depths
With hope sent from above.

So let us near His mighty throne
With our deepest sins and fears;
For when we turn to Him in faith,
It's music to God's ears.

Chip Peterson

The fear of the LORD leads to life, and he
who has it will abide in satisfaction; he will
not be visited with evil. *Proverbs 19:23*

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