

Loaves & Fishes

Volume 8 • Issue 1 • 2010

Prisoner Writings
Discover a True Friend
Putting off Anger

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



D. Hill

Loaves & Fishes is published by Lighthouse Publishing as the Lord provides. Our goal is to point those in prison to Jesus Christ and help them experience the life, hope, and freedom of a daily walk with Him.

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Loaves & Fishes

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Discover a Friend Who *Really* Loves You

Lavern Gingerich

Have you ever felt ignored or rejected by people you thought should love you and be your friends?

Do people in authority treat you with disrespect? Do your acquaintances misunderstand you and unjustly blame you?

Has your family given up on you, thinking you are a permanent failure as a husband or wife, a father or a mother?

Do memories of physical and emotional abuse flood your mind? Were there times as a child when you longed for just one hug from your father or your mother?

Have you been mocked for being ugly, clumsy, slow, or ignorant?

Have you lost all hope of finding even one person who truly loves you?

• • • •

I have good news for you! The Lord Jesus is waiting to be your friend. He loves you and

longs for you to know His love. He is the best Friend you will ever find.

Jesus is especially attracted to nobodies. He is a Friend to the ignored, the rejected, the despised, the weak, the slow, the last, the ignorant, the sinners, and the failures.

Jesus knows what it's like to be the least and the unloved. He understands your past and shares your pain as no one else can.

Jesus has promised to never leave or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). Even when He seems a million miles away, He is near you when you pray to Him with an humble, trusting heart.

Jesus calls His followers friends instead of servants (John 15:15). Jesus did not redeem us from sin just so we would work for Him, but so we could be friends and have a close relationship with Him.

In John 8, Jesus was teaching in the temple when the Pharisees brought in a woman who was caught in adultery. Under the Old Testament law, this woman should have been stoned, and these self-righteous Pharisees were hoping Jesus' verdict would violate this law, so they could accuse Him. At first, Jesus just ignored them, stooping to write on the ground with His finger. When the Pharisees pressed Him for an answer, He replied, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first" (verse 7). Jesus again stooped down and wrote on the ground.

Convicted of their own sin, the Pharisees were so ashamed that they walked out one by one until Jesus and the woman were left alone. Jesus looked up and asked the woman, "Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." His next words must have deeply touched her heart, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." *No condemnation? Jesus offered me mercy! I'm forgiven, I'm free!*

Jesus went on to say, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." That day this lady found



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Have you given up finding one person who loves you?

a friend who not only loved her and had plans to restore her life, but also offered to lead her and light her pathway forever.

Jesus came to save us from our sins. God cannot tolerate sin, but He forgives sin when we repent and walk in the light of Jesus. Jesus is never too holy to give you mercy. He is ready to erase your condemnation when you humbly ask Him.

Jesus is never too busy for you. He lives outside of time, in the realm of eternity. You'll never need to wait in line to talk with him. He is always available.

Jesus is never too sleepy to hear your heart and give you encouragement in your difficult times. Even in the middle of the darkest night, when others are



When your life seems beyond hope, Jesus plans to restore you.

sleeping the most soundly, Jesus is there to support you.

Jesus is a gentle and compassionate friend. He will not snuff out a smoldering wick or break a bruised reed (Isaiah 42:3, 4). When you have been injured and your life seems beyond hope, Jesus plans to restore you.

Today we can have God's presence within us by His Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:14). The Holy Spirit is a down-payment for our entire inheritance that we will have throughout eternity. In the next life, we will sit down with Christ our groom to enjoy the marriage feast and Christ Himself will serve us. If all the friendship, love, joy, peace, victory, and grace Jesus gives in this life are only a portion of this wonderful inheritance, the relationships we will know in heaven are beyond our human comprehension. Our marriage to Christ will be more wonderful and fulfilling and exciting than

the best marriage ever known on this earth!

Jesus is looking forward with great joy and anticipation to that blissful wedding day when we will finally be united and see each other face to face. It will be a time of great rejoicing, and I expect we will hardly be able to contain the joy of spending eternity with such an amazing friend as Jesus Christ Himself.

If you find yourself without a friend who truly loves you, if you feel rejection and disrespect from all your family members, friends, acquaintances, and authorities, allow the love of Jesus to capture your soul. Trust Him. He will never leave you. He will never despise you for your sin when you come to Him with humility, ready to leave it all behind. He is waiting for you now.

*For Christ,
Lavern Gingerich*

PAID IN FULL

I found myself sitting on a bench in the waiting room of what seemed to be a court house. The doors opened and I was instructed to come in and have a seat by the defense table.

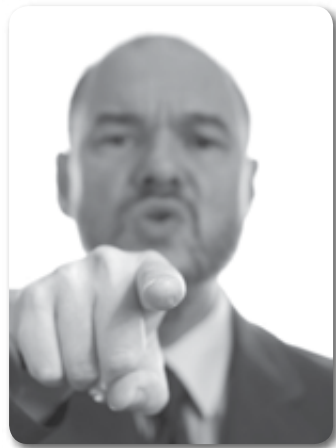
As I looked around I saw my “prosecutor.” He snarled and stared villainously at me. He definitely was the most evil person I had ever seen. I sat down and looked to my left. There sat my Attorney, a kind and gentle-looking Man Who looked familiar to me. The corner door swung open and the Judge appeared in a full, flowing robe. His presence commanded awe, and I couldn’t take my eyes off Him as He moved across the room, took His seat behind the bench, and said, “Let us begin.”

The prosecutor rose and said, “My name is Satan, and I am here to show you why this woman belongs in hell.”

He proceeded to describe my lies, thefts, and cheating, as well as other horrible perversions that were once in my life. The more he spoke, the deeper in my seat I sank. I was so embarrassed that I couldn’t look at anyone, not even my

own Attorney, as the Devil told of sins I had completely forgotten about.

I was upset at Satan for telling all these things about me and upset at my Attorney for sitting there silently offering no defense at all. I knew I had been guilty of those things, but I had done some good in my life; couldn’t



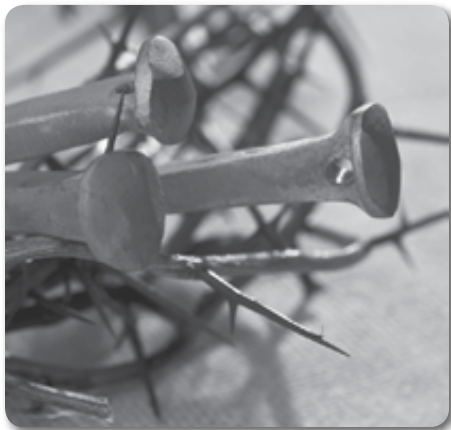
**“This woman
belongs in hell.
She is guilty.”**

that at least cancel out part of the harm I’d done?

Satan finished with a fury and said, “This woman belongs in

hell; she is guilty of all that I have charged and there is not a person who can prove otherwise.”

When it was His turn, my Attorney asked if He might approach the bench. The Judge beckoned Him to come forward in spite of strong objections from



“This woman is not to be given justice, but mercy.”

Satan. As He got up and walked forward and I saw His full splendor and majesty, I realized why He seemed so familiar – this was Jesus, my Lord and my Savior, representing me!

He stopped at the bench and softly greeted the Judge as His father, then turned to address the court. “Satan is correct in

saying this woman has sinned,” he said. “I won’t deny any of these allegations. The wage of sin is death, and this woman deserves to be punished.” Jesus took a deep breath, then turned to His Father with outstretched arms and proclaimed, “However, I died on the cross so that she might have eternal life, and she is one of Mine. Her name is written in the Book of Life, and no one can snatch her from Me. Satan does not understand: This woman is not to be given justice, but mercy.”

The Judge lifted His mighty hand and slammed the gavel down. The words thundered from His lips, “This woman is free. The penalty for her has already been paid in full. Case dismissed.”

As my Lord led me away, I could hear Satan growling, “I won’t give up. I will win the next one.”

I asked Jesus, “Have you ever lost a case?”

Christ smiled at me. “Never,” he replied. “Everyone who has come to Me in repentance and asked Me to represent them has received the same verdict as you, *Paid in Full.*”

– Author unknown



Bible Reading

John 8:2-12

²Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. ³Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, ⁴they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. ⁵Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" ⁶This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

⁷So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." ⁸And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the

oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. ¹⁰When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"



"Where are your accusers?"

¹¹She said, "No one, Lord."

And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

¹²Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." □

Christ Loves the Unlovable

Tommy Clayton

Have you ever wondered if there was someone too evil for Jesus to love and forgive? Have you ever felt that you were unlovable? Consider the following story of a man some people thought was beyond the reach of God's love.

When Jesus walked the earth, the Jewish nation of Israel was occupied by Rome. The Jews in his day were required to obey

not only the laws God had given Moses, but also the government of Rome. As you can imagine, having foreigners rule over them, telling them what they could and couldn't do, caused many hard feelings among the Jews.

Everyone under Roman rule, including the Jews, had to pay tribute to Caesar, the emperor of Rome. To add insult to injury, the Roman government even hired Jews to collect its taxes. These tax collectors,

also known as publicans, often became rich, not only from their government wages but also from cheating their fellow Jews. Men who chose to work as publicans were counted among thieves and robbers, the lowest of the low. Their society rejected them, and their friends turned on them; even their own families sometimes disowned them.

One of these publicans,

named Zacchaeus, was so successful he was known as a chief of publicans. He had wealth most men could only dream of. Yet he had a problem riches could not solve, a debt money could not pay, and an emptiness worldly pleasures could

not fill. He had turned on his own nation, and they had rejected him. His heart was so hardened and his conscience so dulled that he no longer heeded God's Law. He seemed beyond



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reach and without hope in the world.

What a heart-rending story this would be if we left this poor man in his misery and despair, lost among many others like him. Many people today, perhaps some who are reading this story now, can identify with Zacchaeus; some may say they are much worse than he, and farther gone, too. Even if that is true, no one is out of the reach of Jesus and His love.

One day this hated publican, whose name was Zacchaeus, heard that a Man named Jesus was traveling from city to city healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, and preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins. People said He was a Friend to publicans and sinners. Imagine the hope and happiness this brought to Zacchaeus, who had all but given up. There is a reason to hope! There is a way to find release from the prison of sin that binds the hearts and lives of those who have given up!

Soon news reached Zacchaeus that Jesus had arrived in Jericho, his own town. Eager for just a look at Jesus, Zacchaeus hurried to where He was, only to be disappointed. Jesus was already surrounded by masses



Jesus was a Friend to publicans and sinners.

of people; Zacchaeus couldn't push through the crowd, and he was too short to see over them. Just then he had an idea. Ahead of Jesus, a big sycamore tree stretched its branches above the street. If Zacchaeus could climb that tree ahead of time, he could see the Man who had given him so much hope. Quickly Zacchaeus climbed the tree and waited for Jesus to pass.

As Jesus walked under the tree, something amazing happened. He looked up and called Zacchaeus by name. "Hurry and come down," He said. "I need to stay at your house today."

That moment transformed the life of this lowly publican, just as every person is transformed who comes to Jesus.

When Jesus called him, Zacchaeus hurried down the tree to welcome Jesus into his home. He longed to talk with Jesus and satisfy his deep need for forgive-

to his deep needs. He saw a lost man who truly longed for love and forgiveness, with a heart that deeply needed healing.

We are not told much of what was said in the home of Zacchaeus that day, but I well remember the day I sought the Captain of my salvation. I knelt before Him as I confessed my sins, small and great. I cried out for mercy and grieved for how I had sinned against the One Who died for me. I lost all track of time, but when I had no more words to speak and no more tears to cry, an overwhelming sense of peace took the place of remorse and a joy welled up within me, driving away my sorrow. When I stood up, I was a different man. Thus began a life-long journey with Jesus, my Lord and Savior.

Jesus showed love and acceptance to Zacchaeus when no one else would, and it broke his formerly selfish and covetous heart. Before Jesus and other witnesses, he promised to give to those in need, and to pay back everyone he had cheated. He said, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." This meant he would not only return his dishonest money, but he would give four



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Jesus saw beyond Zacchaeus's past sin to his deep needs.

ness, love, and acceptance. Some of the people who heard what Jesus had said to Zacchaeus began to grumble that Jesus was going to be the guest of a sinner. Jesus knew how much Zacchaeus was hated in the city of Jericho, and He knew the reasons. None of it mattered to Jesus because he could see past Zacchaeus's sin

times that amount! Zacchaeus was a new man, and he meant business. Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house... for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”



Friend, are you lost? Can you identify with Zacchaeus’s need for love, forgiveness, and acceptance?

Have you been rejected by your family or friends? It hurts; I know it hurts. There was a time in my life when my family had all but forsaken me and my so-called good friends forgot all about me. In times like that it is easy to harden your heart and become bitter, but that will never fill the hunger deep within your soul. The need for God is built into each of us and nothing in this world can fill the place reserved for Him. The good news I have for you today is that “Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15).

He loves people everyone else has given up on. The love of Jesus reaches down to the depths of despair and lifts the fallen, the weak, and the sick. His love never fails. It is measureless, true, holy, and perfect. He gives



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The love of Jesus reaches the fallen, the weak, and the sick.

a new life, a clean heart, and a transformed mind.

The love of Christ causes people like Zacchaeus to make right the wrongs they have done and to apologize to anyone they have hurt or mistreated. Jesus’ love leads to repentance, a turning away from sin and worldliness, and a turning toward God, the reading of the Bible, and fellowship with His people.

What will you do with Christ’s love? Choose today, for tomorrow may be too late.



Bible Reading:

The story of Zacchaeus is found in Luke 19:1–10.



The Lesson of the **CLAY BALLS**

A man exploring caves by the seashore found in one of them a canvas bag full of sun-baked clay balls. Mildly intrigued by his find, the man took the bag out of the cave with him. As he strolled along the beach, he amused himself by throwing the balls far out into the ocean—until he dropped one and it cracked open on a stone. A beautiful gem glittered in its heart!

Amazed, the man broke open the remaining clay balls. In the twenty or so he had left, he found thousands of dollars worth of jewels.

Suddenly he remembered all the balls he had thrown into the ocean. 50 or 60 clay balls with their hidden treasures had vanished in the waves. He had thoughtlessly thrown away tens of thousands of dollars in treasure!

People are like those clay balls. Sometimes when we look at someone, maybe even our-

selves, we see only the outer clay. Because the outside appears dull and colorless, we might consider that person less important than someone more beautiful, stylish, famous, or wealthy.

But inside each of us, there is a treasure. When we learn to know someone and ask God to let us see them as He sees them, the clay will fall away to reveal

***There is a treasure
inside each of us.***

a brilliant gem within.

Let's not come to the end of our lives only to find that we have thrown away a fortune in friendships just because the gems were hidden by clay. We can harvest many rich treasures in unexpected places when we see the people around us as God sees them.

—John and Ramona Rohrer



Prisoners in the Old Testament

To solve this puzzle, fill the blank squares with the names listed below, arranging them so that each row and column and each of the 3x3 grids contains all nine of the names.

Answers will be in next issue.

		Joseph				Samson	Daniel	Simeon
		Daniel	Samson	Hanani			Micaiah	
Baker		Micaiah	Daniel		Hoshea			
Micaiah	Simeon		Hoshea					
Samson				Micaiah				Hanani
					Hanani		Simeon	Samson
			Hanani		Simeon	Joseph		Baker
	Hanani			Daniel	Baker	Butler		
Joseph	Baker	Butler				Simeon		

Joseph
Genesis
39:20-23

Simeon
Genesis
42:24

Samson
Judges
16:21

Hoshea
2 Kings
17:4

Hanani
2 Chron.
16:7-10

Daniel
Daniel
6:16-17

Micaiah
1 Kings
22:27

Butler
Genesis
40:1-3

Baker
Genesis
40:1-3

Puzzle by James C. Hart • Federal Correctional Complex • Forrest City, AR • Used by permission.

Putting off Anger

John Coblentz



Emotion-Based Responses Versus Bible-Based Responses

“You know, I thank God for my depression.” Sandra’s eyes misted even as she spoke. “I believe He is using this experience to accomplish things in my life I don’t fully understand at this point.”

Five months earlier, Sandra had felt rejected at home. Though an excellent teacher, she had felt rejected by the school board, by her fellow teachers, by her students, and by their parents. Sandra had developed emotion-based response patterns that spiraled deeper and deeper into depression. When her psychiatrist lightly brushed off her feelings, Sandra had angrily taken a lethal overdose of pills.

Learning new responses to difficulties did not come easily for Sandra, but over time she

found answers. People bound by anger and bitterness can find freedom. An important step is understanding the difference between emotion-based responses and Bible-based responses.

Understanding Emotion-Based Responses

In *Loaves & Fishes* volume 5, issue 2, we learned emotions act as reflectors. Our internal feelings reflect what is going on around us. We also noted that the kind of emotional reflections we have in any situation depends on the kind of person we are. We are constantly responding emotionally to our circumstances. Let’s explore this further.

1. *Everyone faces situations that stir deep feelings.* Some situations are more painful than

others, and yet no one's life is free from deep feelings of pain, frustration, or grief. It is not wrong to feel deeply. Many of the psalms are expressions of the writer's deep feelings, feelings that rose out of terrible situations.

2. *Some difficult situations are ongoing.* David was hounded by Saul for years. Abigail lived with a husband so quarrelsome that his servants avoided speaking to him if possible. Life seemed to dish out one injustice after another to Joseph. It is one thing to go through a difficult experience. It is definitely worse when the difficulty doesn't go away and there is no end in sight. In ongoing suffering, deep feelings of frustration, confusion, and anguish multiply.

3. *Deep feelings press for verbal and behavioral responses.* Feel-

ings are powerful motivators of behavior. They call for words. They demand action. They urge us to change the situation, correct it, punish the offenders, and set things straight. But usually there are forces at work beyond our control. We have little power to change wrong behavior in people around us. We cannot control storms that destroy property. We have no authority over disease and death. The knowledge that we are helpless to change a situation may deepen our frustration into rage; and the stronger the feelings within us, the more urgently they call for action.

4. *Responses based on feelings develop into patterns.* When a person is angry, he will be urged to act in a certain way. What he does and says, based on anger, will easily be repeated the next

**People bound by
anger and bitterness
can find freedom.**



time he feels angry. With repeated provocations to anger, he will likely develop habitual responses. Consider the following illustrations of emotion-based response patterns:

- Perry has another argument with his dad; he squeals his tires going out the driveway.
- Starla's husband is late for supper the third night in a row; she is silently angry all evening, giving only monosyllable responses to her husband and children.
- Lisa gets a poor grade on a test; when she comes home, she goes straight to her room, slams the door, and shuts herself in for the rest of the evening.
- George's wife does not comply with his standards for her appearance; he heatedly calls her liberal and unsubmitive, and she lashes back that he is ultra-conservative and a dictator.
- Jane feels people are always slighting her; inwardly she reviews her hurts in detail again and again. She talks and looks wretched most of the time.
- Carla was sexually abused as a child; she regularly

challenges men, points out where they are wrong, and projects an image of competence. But underneath she is hurting and angry.

- Wade was regularly put down in his home and among his peers while growing up; today he is demanding of his wife and children. They can do nothing quickly enough or well enough to avoid his criticism.

These individuals have developed predictable response patterns based on deep feelings. They have developed their emotion-based response patterns over a period of time as they faced trying situations.

The patterns demonstrated above could be listed in various ways, but notice the following categories of emotion-based patterns:

a. *Temper patterns: an explosive outburst or an inward seething against something or someone who displeases me.* When expressed outwardly, words are harsh, loud, and accusing; actions are rash and destructive. If held inside, it is no less a temper pattern than an outburst. The major difference is that the explosive temper damages everyone nearby; whereas, the person who

internalizes his anger primarily harms himself.

b. *Blame patterns: focusing on all the ways others are responsible for my problems.* Words are critical and loaded with accusations and insinuations; actions revolve around the desire to exact a price. Blame patterns are accompanied by defensiveness and a super-sensitivity to what others are saying or doing in relation to the bitter person.

c. *Victim patterns: finding security in not being responsible.* Words drip with self-pity, sadness, and complaint; actions are often restrained, even lethargic. The victim is constantly on the lookout for hurts and slights.

d. *Control patterns: manipulating or pressuring people by causing emotional misery until they do what I want.* Words, actions, and attitudes are combined in countless ways to make others feel guilty or afraid or miserable, pushing or pulling them into place. Angry, bitter people are ALWAYS controllers in some way.

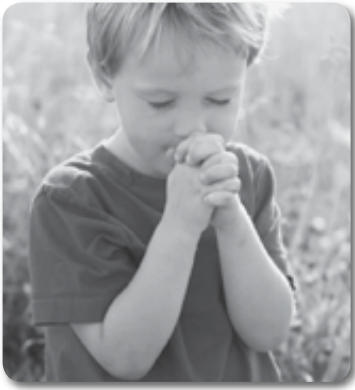
Let's return to understanding more about emotion-based responses.

5. *Emotion-based responses are natural.* We do not need to develop a pattern of behaving and speaking based on how we feel; it comes naturally. Because

it is natural, it feels right. And because it becomes habitual, we are hardly aware of how we are responding. Others, however, are keenly aware of our emotion-based patterns and generally resent them.

6. *When our behavior and words are based on our emotions, we will do and say things that add to our problems.* Looking back over the examples of emotion-based responses, we can easily see they do not make for good relationships. Each person's response is now making things worse for himself and for others. In fact, each is no doubt stirring deep feelings in other people, feelings that have the potential of developing into similar emotion-based responses in them.

7. *Patterns of emotion-based responses lead to bondage.* Habits in word and action based on emotions such as anger, frustration, and resentment become more and more ingrained as the months and years go by. As they progress, so do their consequences. Emotion-based responses bog people deeper and deeper into the mire of carnality. Frustration becomes a prison. Self-pity shackles its victims. Resentment, ill will, pouting, a critical spirit, and jealousy forge chains around the



Spiritual bondage demands spiritual deliverance.

mind and will until the person cannot break out of his patterns even when he wants to.

Sometimes in the misery accompanying these emotion-based response patterns, people do want to change. They come to see themselves for what they are – angry, depressed, and miserable. They suddenly see they have been pouting, accusing, controlling others, and pitying themselves; and they resolve to change... only to find themselves two days later as deeply mired in their patterns as ever.

There is hope! Some people attempt to change through education and discipline. Those efforts are not all bad, but spiritual bondage demands spiritual deliverance. Jesus Christ is the Deliverer. No bondage is too difficult for Him. Every fetter of sin

and Satan must yield when Jesus takes charge of one's life.

Understanding Bible-Based Responses

When we face difficult situations, it is natural to respond to our feelings. It is not wrong to feel deep emotions when we face difficulty, but it is dangerous to base our responses on these feelings. Our feelings will drag us into the mire of carnality.

How then should we respond? Bible-based responses often stand in contrast to emotion-based responses as we will see in the following points:

- 1. Bible-based responses come to us from the Scriptures.** God is vitally concerned about how we speak and act in difficult situations—situations that would naturally make us angry, resentful, or bitter. God's Word

provides us with alternatives to our natural responses. In the midst of trial, injustice, and pain, how we feel is not the only consideration. Let's be balanced in acknowledging that God cares about how we feel. He is not insensitive to our frustration, confusion, grief, or pain. But we need far more than our feelings as a base for discerning how we should respond under such conditions. We need the sure Word of God. We need direction that does not change with circumstances, guidance that does not go up and down with our emotions. We need wisdom beyond our limited understanding. The Word of God is rock-sure, and it does give practical guidance for God's children when they are in the fires of difficulty.

2. Bible-based responses often go against our natural sensibilities. Following God's directions in trying circumstances does not always make sense to us—specifically, it does not make sense to the natural man. For “the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). Furthermore, following God's directions may mean doing

exactly the opposite of what we feel like doing. We follow God's directions, then, not because we feel like it, but because God's directions are right.

3. Bible-based responses do not ignore reality. The Bible is not naive or flippant. It does not require that we deny our pain, nor does it excuse the wrongs and sins of those around us as “all right.” We will look at this further in the next issue of *Loaves & Fishes*. For now let's be clear that Bible-based responses allow us to face our situation honestly, but in the context of the larger truth of God. When we view difficulty apart from an awareness of God, we get one picture; when we include God, His wisdom, His higher purposes, and His grace, we see the same situation, but in a light that completely changes the perspective.

4. Bible-based responses develop into patterns. Just as we noted earlier that carnality becomes habitual when we base our responses on feelings like anger, resentment, or self-pity, so it is with Bible-based responses. The more we exercise ourselves in God's ways, the more they become our pattern of behavior. Even as people come to expect a pouter to pout when things don't go as expected, so people come

As we exercise ourselves in God's ways, they become our pattern of behavior.



to expect a believer to look to God when faced with the same disappointment. Bible-based responses become a way of life.

Just what kinds of patterns develop when we base our responses on God's Word instead of on our feelings? Following are several examples:

a. *Faith patterns: believing that God is in total charge of my life and that He will allow nothing in my experience that will frustrate His good purposes for me. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on*

your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5, 6).

b. *Forgiveness patterns: releasing those who do wrong to me on a personal level and laying down the demand for a "price" for their wrong. "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.... For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:12, 14, 15).*

c. *Love patterns: speaking and acting toward people in ways that convey kindness, goodwill, and compassion; being committed to the highest good of others even at personal cost. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).*

d. *Gratitude patterns: expressing appreciation to God and others for how they have contributed to my life. "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).*

e. *Intercession patterns: bringing the needs of others to the Father, making request for them as if the needs were my own.* “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men” (1 Timothy 2:1). “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18).

We could continue with examples of Bible-based patterns, but to see them even more clearly, contrast them with the emotion-based patterns discussed earlier. Note that each of the preceding examples is based on clear direction from God’s Word and that the direction is specifically for God’s children when facing unpleasant situations—situations that would naturally make us feel angry, frustrated, bitter, etc.

Let’s return, now, to a few more points about faith-based responses.

5. Patterns of Bible-based responses are liberating. Emotion-based patterns result in bondage—patterns of resentment, for example, bind up the heart in blame and self-pity and shackle the mind to perform endless routines in

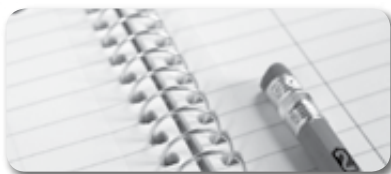
misery. Bible-based patterns, in contrast, free the soul. The heart is set free to praise and worship the Creator and Sustainer of life. The mind is free to be creative and purposeful in following the will of God. “I will RUN the course of your commandments” the psalmist exults (Psalm 119:32).

6. Bible-based patterns result in an entirely different emotional atmosphere. The natural feelings we have in times of difficulty are unsafe grounds for action. They lead into more and more misery. When, in spite of those feelings, we choose to respond according to God’s directions, a surprising change results in our feelings. We have the rich awareness of the Lord’s presence, the joy of His blessing on our responses, the wonder of His grace and goodness, the pleasant surprise of insights into God’s higher ways, and the satisfaction of knowing we are doing right.

7. Bible-based responses release God’s power in our behalf. “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him” (2 Chronicles 16:9).

When God's people trust in Him, He works powerfully in their behalf. This is in contrast to when we follow our own inclinations, based on our natural feelings. At such times, we only make matters worse. Bible-based responses honor the Lord, and thus they have His blessing.

Many people are hurting. Unfortunately, by following their natural feelings in response to their hurts, they only add to their problems. Hurting people easily develop patterns of responses that hurt others. The vicious cycle of sin, carnality, and pain is broken only when people turn in faith from their own ways to the Lord. As they learn to base their responses on God's Word, they receive grace not only to break the bonds of anger and bitterness in their own lives, but also to become agents of healing and help in the lives of others.



Study Questions

1. In 1 Samuel 25 we have an account in which people felt strong emotions and acted on them. Look at each of the following verses and describe how the person felt, and how that feeling affected his or her response:

- a. Nabal, vv. 10, 11
- b. David, vv. 13, 21
- c. Abigail, v. 18
- d. Nabal, v. 36

2. Read Abigail's logic in vv. 30, 31. She understood that responses based on anger actually add to the problem. What would have happened if Abigail had not intervened?

3. What emotion-based pattern do we see operating in Nabal (v. 17)?



**Bible-based
responses release
God's power
on our behalf.**

4. Looking at Simon (Acts 8), how do we know that bitterness had progressed to a form of bondage?

5. What signs betray bondage to anger or bitterness?

6. What particular form of anger or expression of anger do you struggle with?

7. Bible-based responses often go contrary to how we feel. In each of the following verses tell how we would naturally feel, and then tell how the Bible directs us:

- a. Matthew 5:11, 12
- b. Matthew 5:44
- c. James 1:2
- d. James 1:9

8. In each of the following Scriptures, tell what the natural feeling would have been, and then tell how the person(s) responded according to the teaching of Jesus.

- a. Acts 4:21–24
- b. Acts 5:40, 41
- c. Acts 7:59, 60
- d. Acts 13:50–52
- e. Acts 16:19–25

9. List the Bible-based response patterns given in this chapter and find additional verses that give similar direction.

10. Now find a Biblical example for each of these responses.

11. Describe some of the feelings that may follow obedi-



Do you have a Bible?

If not, we would like to send you one! On a separate sheet of paper, clearly print your request for your free KJV Bible and send it to us, including your name, ID, and address.

Supplies may be limited. Offer for prisoners only.

ence to Bible-based responses. (You may consider some of the Biblical examples above.)

12. Name and describe several emotion-based responses you have struggled with.

13. Which of the Bible-based responses do you find particularly difficult, or which do you personally need to cultivate?

14. When we honor God's ways, He honors us. Give examples from the Bible or from your experience illustrating how obedience to God resulted in a remarkable work of God.

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The Perfect Mistake

My grandfather was a carpenter. One day, he built some crates for the clothes his church was sending to orphanages in China. On his way home, he reached into his shirt pocket for his glasses, but they were gone. Thinking back on the day, he realized the glasses must have slipped out of his pocket and fallen unnoticed into one of the crates he had nailed shut. His brand new glasses were heading for China!

The Great Depression was at its height and Grandpa had six children. He had spent twenty dollars for those glasses that very morning, and now he would have to buy another pair. "It's not fair," he complained to God. "I faithfully give my time and money to your work, and now this happens."

Months later, the director of the orphanage was on furlough in the United States. He wanted to visit all the churches that

supported him in China, so he came to speak one Sunday at my grandfather's small church in Chicago. The missionary began by thanking the people for their faithfulness in supporting the orphanage. "But most of all," he said, "I must thank you for the glasses you sent last



**His brand new glasses
were heading for China!**

year. The Communists had just swept through the orphanage destroying everything, including my glasses. Even if I had the money, there was simply

no way of replacing them. I was desperate. Along with not being able to see well, I had headaches every day without my glasses, so my coworkers and I were much in prayer about it. Then your crates arrived. When my staff removed the covers, they found a pair of glasses lying on top. The missionary paused to let his words sink in. Then, still gripped with the wonder of it, he continued, "When I tried on the glasses, it was as though they had been custom-made for me! I want to thank you for being part of that."

Although the people rejoiced at the miracle of the glasses, they thought the missionary must have confused their church with another; they had sent no glasses overseas. But sitting quietly at the back, with tears streaming down his face, an ordinary carpenter realized the Master

Sometimes we want to blame God instead of thanking him.

Carpenter had used him in an extraordinary way.

There are times in all our lives when we want to blame God instead of thanking him. Perhaps we should learn a new habit: "Thank you, God, for not allowing my car to start this morning." (He may have been saving you from a deadly car accident.) "Lord Jesus, thank you for letting me lose my glasses; I'm sure they'll be put to good use or You have a lesson to teach me."

Look for the perfect mistakes.

— Author unknown

**"My God shall supply all your
need according to his riches
in glory by Christ Jesus."**

Philippians 4:19





Free on the Inside!

Prisoners proclaiming Jesus, the source of true freedom.

Jesus Saves!

Testimony of Anthony E. Joiner
Dallas County Jail > Dallas, TX

At one time I was on a road to eternal destruction. I found myself mentally lost, living in Satan's world. I had no regard for myself, let alone others. For many years, I was battling alcohol and drugs, and living with terror in my heart. My mental state ultimately led me to violence, prison, and more crimes.

I was released in 1995 after serving time for aggravated robbery. Now at 45 years old I'm back in the Dallas County Jail for parole violation,

the result of giving way to pride again. If I had continued in the life I was living, I would have died in my sins. Even while deep in sin, I always desired a better way of life, but I was mentally and physically possessed and spiritually dead. Now Jesus has saved me and given me a miraculous conversion which I didn't deserve, but which I wanted deep within my heart.

I am free for the first time in my life, even though I'm in jail. I



I am free for the first time in my life.

have surrendered myself to God. I praise God that He has given me another life and a new start. He gives peace, strength, and the

ability to accept life as it comes. I know Jesus is real, and He has plans for us all.



My One Real Friend

Thomas Trumpeter, Jr. > Duel Vocational Institution > Tracy, CA

Who was murdered by sinners like you and me?
My one real Friend.

Who loves me unconditionally?
My one real Friend.

Who is my Rock in desperate times?
My one real Friend.

Who helps me up when I fall down?
My one real Friend.

Who is my Lighthouse in bad storms?
My one real Friend.

Who saved my soul and can save yours, too?
My one real Friend.

Who doesn't turn me away when I'm bad?
My one real Friend.

Who do you think Jesus Christ is to me?
My one real Friend.



For Our Creator

Nicole Buck > Central California Women's Facility > Chowchilla, CA

There is One Who lives up high;
He sits in a palace in the sky;
It's a place of majestic beauty and love.
God is the name of the One above!

He created us to be like Him,
But we turned on Him and began to sin.
With every wrong we cause Him grief
As we look on His Word in disbelief.

He asks not much, just to do what is right;
Honor Him, repent, have faith in His might.
For He is the One Who knows what is planned –
Where we have been and where we will land.

He controls our destiny,
And He forgives the bad, you see.
So why do we bring Him to tears,
Having so much hate within our years?

We need to stop and join His fight;
He gives us the armor to walk in the light.
It's in His Word – you'll find it there.
If we don't obey, He says, "Beware."

For life eternal wins the game.
Or we'll burn forever in a lake of flame.

Testimony of John M. White

John M. White > SOCF > Lucasville, OH

I was arrested when I was 27, and I'm 30 now. From the age of ten or so I believed there was a God. I just didn't consider Him a part of my life. I lived what the world would call both sides of life. For many years I stole, lied, lusted after women, fought, used drugs, and disobeyed all forms of authority. The whole time I was miserable and felt something was missing.

Everything changed when my daughter was born in the year 2001. On my own, I decided I needed to change my life around, and I set about doing it in my own strength. I stopped stealing, lying, and fighting, except now and then when I felt I had a justified reason. I compared my current life with my past life and saw that it was less disobedient. I deemed this to be living right. I was proud that I worked 9 to 5, providing for my daughter. I "patted myself on the back" each day.

It seemed to everyone around me that I had changed my life for the better. Unknown to them, I still had that feeling that something was missing. I was still miserable despite the smile I wore each day.

The day I was arrested I lost everything I valued — my daughter, my freedom, my girlfriend, my family, my money, my friends. I was in shock. After being booked into a single cell, I attempted to take the last thing I had — my life!

I had never cried so much in my life. I was utterly lost. I failed to take my life and this made me feel even more like a failure!

After hours of failed suicide attempts, crying, pain, anguish, and scrabbling for understanding, I heard a small Voice in my heart. The Voice said simply, "Remember Me." I knew right away Who this voice belonged to. I had ignored this Voice over the



I was finally home.

many years I tried to find my own way in this world. I remembered all the times this Voice had said to me, "Try Me," all the times I had turned down the offer, and all the times I had failed. Right then I came to the realization that I would never do anything right on my own. I knew I would lose my chance at life without this Voice on my side. I knew the Voice was Jesus Christ!

There in that little cell I cried out to God to help me. I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior Who died on the cross to

cover my sins with His precious blood, and Who was buried in sin but rose to life so that I will one day rise to life as well.

Immediately I knew I was no longer a slave to this body and this world. I was a citizen of heaven! Although I was still in a cell, still facing life in prison, still without my daughter, my girlfriend, my family, my money, and my friends, I was at peace. Nothing, absolutely nothing was missing. I was finally home! Praise God!



A Changed Life



I kept going on the path when I needed to stop;
This recklessness now has me in God's Repair Shop.

I was living a life that revolved around sin,
Which caused me to be really messed up within.

My heart had become so hard and cold
That God had to reshape it with a new mold.

My mind was consumed with evil and hate,
And God had to erase it, like you would slate.

After all of the changes that He had made,
I knew that none of them would fade.

David Garlock

Kilby Correctional Facility • Mt. Meigs, AL



Prison Time

Glenn M. Taylor > Western CI > Cumberland, MD

Lord, at first this prison time seemed like sinking sand,
I couldn't see your love for me, I couldn't see Your plan —
Your plan to draw me close to you through Your precious Word,
And show me many promises of which I'd never heard;
Your plan to wake me up each day to look upon Your Son
And start me now to witnessing of all you've said and done;
Your plan to give me peace and joy within my broken life
And take away my selfish pride, with all my sin and strife;
Your plan to give me wisdom, Lord, and knowledge from the King,
And put in me a different song, that only the saved can sing;
Your plan to build me up to see the good that I can be
If I serve You with my life for all eternity.
Yes, all eternity will be the story of this "mold" —
Of how You placed me in a cell to bring me forth as gold!

Vision of Hope

Mark A. Clark > Cherokee County ADC > Moss Point, MS

You came to see me in my darkest hour;
You appeared as a bright light and spoke with power.

I had lost faith and worried the whole day
Because of a few simple words the judge had to say.

I was alone and scared of what they might do;
I prayed the whole time and needed to hear from You.

I hoped to be freed and released from this time,
But for reasons unknown this day wasn't mine,

So I lay on my bunk back in my room;
I really needed to pray and it had to be soon.

I asked, "Dear Lord, what could have gone wrong?
I faced it like You said and tried to be strong."

So as I knelt and began to pray,
You spoke my name and I didn't know what to say.

Then You appeared in a bright light,
And I reached for my Bible and held it tight.

You said, "My dear son, why do you worry so?
I was there with you; I never let go.

"I've given you freedom; just look within and see—
Love, faith, and hope. Yes, it all comes from me."

So as the tears began to cease,
I lay awake hours later with a new sense of peace.

So now as I pray each and every day,
I look for the light and I'll know what to say.

Testimony of Brett Germann

Wells County Jail > Bluffton, Indiana

I grew up on a dairy farm in Ohio. I have three brothers, a sister, and parents whom I love dearly.

My parents have done an excellent job raising us. We were trained to work hard for what we wanted. I thank them for that.

I grew up going to church almost every Sunday. I have always “believed” in Jesus Christ as my Savior. I went through the

motions every Sunday, but going to church seemed like a chore.

When I grew up I started to miss church more and more until I quit going completely. I got married when I was 19 years old. I have two wonderful children whom I love and miss very much.

My life got really busy, and I thought I was too busy for God. We weren’t rich, but we were making it. I thought I was handling everything pretty well.

To make a long story short, I have been divorced for a couple of years now. I don’t get to see my children like I want to, and to top everything off, I’m in jail for another two years.

Was it really worth putting God off to the side? If I would have gone to Him, I wouldn’t be here now. I thank God He allowed me to be put in here.

First of all, God answered my prayers, just not the way I thought He would. I asked Him for a break from my busy life. Look how much time I have now! He has given me all the time I need to study the Scriptures. It was not until I got in



**Was it really
worth putting God
off to the side?**

here that His Word really started to sink into my heart.

Yes, all my friends turned their backs on me and went the other way, but my family stayed right there with me, with God at the head of my family.

So if you are in a situation you can't get out of for awhile, stand back and look at what gifts God has given you and remember He is right there with you.



Prayer

Dennis Ward > Arkansas Department of Corrections
Tucker Unit > Tucker, AR

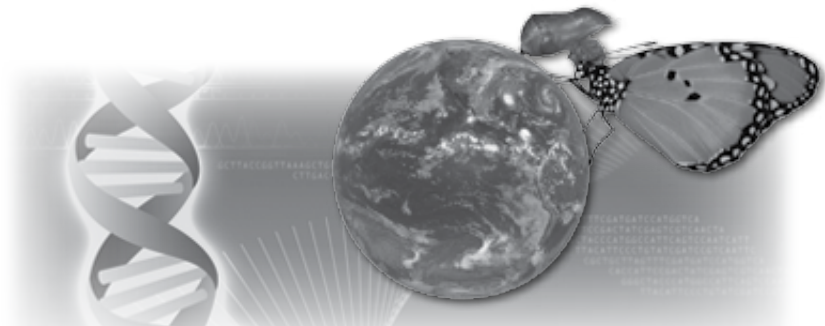


You are my Lord
The One most high,
To only You
I desire to be nigh.

Give me strength
To worship and obey,
Guide my earthly steps
Along life's way.

Forgive me, Lord,
Almighty One,
For my transgressions
Against Your begotten Son.

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.



Science in Creation

Miracles and the Laws of Nature

Andrew Zimmerman

Some of the most inspiring and compelling stories of Jesus' ministry here on earth are the accounts of His miracles. When I ponder His miraculous healings and His feeding crowds of thousands, I can't help but be impressed by the love He has for humanity. You and I still benefit from this great love today.

What is a miracle? A miracle is an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs—a special exhibition of supernatural power. It has been called a work wrought by a divine power for a divine purpose by means beyond the reach of man. A miracle overrides the laws of nature or uses the normal laws of nature along with a supernatural force.

There are many examples of miracles in the Bible. In this

article we'll look at some of the different types of miracles, their purpose, and what we can learn from them. There are four basic types of miracles. It is helpful in our study to classify them, but of course God is not limited

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
- children.



to working only these types of miracles.

There are miracles that control nature and natural forces, such as water and fire. The dividing of the waters of the Red Sea is an example of this type of miracle in the Old Testament in Exodus 14.

In Luke 5 there is an account of Jesus' disciples catching a multitude of fish. Simon and the other fishermen had toiled all night without catching anything. When Jesus told them to "launch out into the deep" they willingly obeyed, even though as experienced fishermen they had no good reason to do so. By a miracle they caught so many fish that the net broke. Sometimes God asks us to launch out into the deep, to leave our comfort zone to do some service for Him.

The second type of miracle is the supernatural control of disease. There are accounts in the Bible of the sick being healed, and of healthy people being struck with sickness. In Luke 17 you can read how Jesus healed ten lepers. Only one of them remembered to say "thank you" to Jesus. Sometimes we are the same way. We take things for granted and don't remember to thank God for His blessings.

Thirdly we have miracles that show God's power over life by raising people from the dead. Mark 5 tells us that when Jairus came to Jesus to request healing for his daughter, Jesus waited so long to respond that the girl died. Although his servants told him it was useless, Jairus had faith that Jesus could speak the word and his daughter would live. Because



of his faith, Jesus brought the daughter back to life.

The fourth type of miracle is the exercise of control over demons, the angels of darkness. The man of Gadara was tormented by demons night and day. Because of their control over him, he couldn't live a normal life, or even be around other people. When Jesus cast out the legion of devils, the man was back in his right mind. Read all about it in Mark 5.

Why would God bother with miracles? There are several purposes we can see for the miracles in the Bible. They are proof that the Bible is a supernatural book. In fact, the very existence of the Bible is a miracle. Its authorship through many different men, spread over a millennium and a half, the writings all complementary and pointing to a common theme, Jesus Christ as Redeemer, could not have happened without a divine Author.

Miracles are proof of Christ's divinity. There have been counterfeit messiahs, both before and after Jesus Christ. None of them had the power that Christ

has. Jesus' walking on the water, turning water into wine, stilling the storms, and feeding the thousands are proof that He is God.

While there have been counterfeit miracles, they lack the



power demonstrated by the works of Jesus Christ and the miracles of God. The magicians of Pharaoh could make their staves appear to turn into serpents, and could turn water into blood. But they couldn't create lice, and they couldn't protect themselves from the boils that struck the Egyptians when Moses sprinkled ashes toward heaven.

Can a scientist believe in miracles? Science is based on repeatable experiments with consistent outcomes. But when we understand that the entire universe, including its laws, was created by an all-powerful God,

then it is logical to accept that our *omnipotent* (all-powerful) God can accomplish things that cannot be explained by natural processes. God designed the laws of mass and gravity. Since iron is of higher density than water, it sinks in water instead of bobbing on the surface like a cork. But God was able to override the laws of gravity and mass to make an iron ax head float in 2 Kings 6:6. Numerous scientists, today and in centuries past, have believed in God's power to work miracles.

The book of Jonah is full of miracles. Even though the entire book of Jonah is only as long as this article, it contains a great account of a prophet refusing to follow God's call, then being brought back by a series of miracles to preach a salvation message to an entire city. As a result of Jonah's preaching, the people of the city were saved from God's judgment. Jesus, the greatest Teacher who ever lived, used the story to illustrate his lesson in Matthew 12.

The storm that God sent to the Mediterranean Sea where Jonah

was fleeing was no ordinary storm. We can clearly see God's hand at work. When Jonah was thrown out of the ship into the tempestuous waters the storm stopped. The great fish that God had prepared was waiting for Jonah. God miraculously preserved Jonah's life, or perhaps raised him back to life.



Jonah needed quite some calling, the storm and the great fish, to get him to respond. How much calling does God need to do for you? Are you going where God sends you?

Why are there no miracles today? Or are there? The miracles in the Bible usually occur during some special conflict with Satan, or during times of transition. In the Old Testament we read accounts of miracles that demonstrated God's power over man-made idols. Elijah's contest on Mount Carmel is a vivid example of this. The priests of Baal shouted most of the day for Baal to hear them. Although they cut themselves with knives, they couldn't get Baal's attention. Elijah, by



himself, prayed quietly to God and was answered in a most spectacular fashion. Read all about it in 1 Kings 18.

In the New Testament we see the miracles that prove the divinity of Christ. When Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee the disciples knew without a doubt that He was the Son of God. God also used miracles in establishing the New Testament church. The Jewish people needed evidence directly from God to see that they were in a new kind of relationship with Him. Today we have a history of the practical results of the Christian Church down through the ages. We also have the Biblical accounts of the

miracles of Jesus, and of the apostles.

This is not to discount or deny God's power to perform miracles today. When a person experiences the New Birth it is always a miracle, a supernatural work beyond the laws of nature. And in some cultures where the power of Satan is more manifest it seems that God uses more miracles to establish the Church as a divine institution, almost like the apostolic era all over again.

In the future, as we look for prophecies to be fulfilled, we can again expect a time of change. Will there be more miracles to establish God's power? A reading of the book of Revelation seems to indicate that will be the case.

God, as Creator, designed the laws of nature. As the Designer, He has the right and the ability to supersede, or temporarily suspend, those laws. Nature always obeys its Creator. Do you?



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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!

Garden Rules for Raising Children

“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Ephesians 6:4

The title of this chapter seems fitting in the light of some of the Bible pictures we have been considering. We have pictured our sons as plants, nurtured to fruit-bearing maturity. We have also pictured our children as olive plants, waiting for parents to bring them up to mature olive trees flowing with oil. “O God, grant us the wisdom and the grace to do it.”

The verse I have selected to begin this chapter is one of those all-inclusive verses in the Bible. It has a volume of admonitions hidden in it. I say this because of all the instructions we find in God’s Word preceding it. God does not say a lot in the New Testament about raising children because He has already said it in dozens of verses in the Old Testament. If we spent 30 minutes a day for an entire year meditating on and applying this simple little verse, we would not exhaust its wealth. That is the way God’s Word is: it has many applications tucked away inside

it. But we must meditate in order to draw them out for our lives.

The opening verse begins with a clarion call out of heaven to us men: “You fathers.” I am gripped again and again by the persistent call to the fathers to shoulder the burden and responsibility of the home. It is clear from the whole of Scripture that God has commanded patriarchy in the home and society. This word “patriarchy” is an older word, which simply means that the fathers are to be the heads of families.

Paul then presents us fathers with two contrasting ways that we can go: we can make our children angry or we can lead them in the ways of righteousness. Allow me to share my personal observations on how this verse shakes out in real-life situations. I have noticed that wherever the parents are neglecting to lead the children down the paths of righteousness, there is a very natural, continual provoking to wrath. Let me explain.



**Without caring,
positive direction,
there is
disorder,
disobedience,
and chaos.**

Where there is a neglect of caring, positive direction, there usually is disorder, disobedience, and chaos. When these three sisters dwell in any household, the parents begin to rule in frustration, anxiety, and anger. A child left to himself will quickly bring the parent to the place where they have “had enough.” This causes parents to scream at the children, spank in anger, and do many other abusive things.

Obviously, the smart approach to family life is a well-thought-out plan of positive direction: “Bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” I say more about anger later, but let’s go on to the better way.

A couple of human examples illustrate the far-reaching scope of this verse. If I were to say to you gardeners, “Go and raise up a garden,” or if I were to say to a builder, “Go and build a house,” this is not a simple one-step command. There is a whole volume of lesser commands in each statement. This is exactly the kind of command that God is giving us here in His Word.

To the builder, dozens of activities come to mind. To the gardener also, dozens of sub-points immediately fall in line under the one all-inclusive command. In the same way, when God says, “Bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord,” dozens of principles should come to mind. When we hear this command, if our mind is relatively empty, we have a big problem. Just like the gardener does who cannot think of much to do when he hears the command to raise a crop. The gardener needs to get the books out and study. I think that is where many of God’s people

are. Their minds are rather blank when it comes to raising children. As I am writing the pages of this book, one of my goals is to help fill the blank mind with dozens of inspiring ideas on how to raise your children for Christ. This will not happen unless there comes up in you a strong desire to become a student in Child Training 101. Your response to what you read is the key to the future of your family.

I have had a tape set on the home in circulation for many years now. I have noticed the different ways people respond to those sermons when they hear them. Some people listen to them once and put them on the shelf. Some people listen, fall on their faces, repent, and are changed. But then, there is a smaller group of people who carefully listen to them a dozen times. Which group do you think gets the most mileage out of the tapes? We all know the answer. When I am in the home of one of those couples who became students of the Godly Home tapes, I immediately know something is different.

Back to the Garden

I want to consider another aspect of the garden illustration for a moment and stir some faith in our hearts for our homes. Our

God is the creator of all things, both in heaven and on earth. As the Creator, He also established laws, or principles, by which all of His creation functions. There are natural laws as well as spiritual laws, and we as human beings must learn to function within both sets of laws. The natural laws of raising a crop in the garden are well known by all gardeners. They know them well because the laws always operate in the same way. For example:

- If you don't plow and loosen the soil, the plants won't grow well.
- No water, no crop—plain and simple: This law never changes.
- If you don't enrich the soil, the crop will be poor.
- If you don't keep the weeds pulled out around the plants, you will have very small fruit.
- Corn seeds grow corn; bean seeds grow beans; and so forth.
- You must learn to plant at the right time of the year, or the seeds won't germinate.

I think I have listed enough examples to bring the point home to our hearts. God's laws of gardening are unchangeable. I am a city boy. I grew up in Omaha, Nebraska. When I moved to

the country twenty years ago, I jumped into gardening with enthusiasm and a teachable heart. I have learned firsthand that these principles do not budge. They work every time. God has set them in order just as He has the law of gravity. You follow them, and you can expect a harvest, without fail.

Receive and Believe

I would like to convince you that the principles of raising children work as surely as the laws for raising a garden. The question is, do you believe that? Many of God's people do not believe. In fact, they live in fear, doubt, and unbelief in the area of their children. The enemy has blinded God's people in

this realm, and they can hardly believe that God will save and sanctify their children.

Our heavenly Father has established spiritual promises and principles that apply to the raising of children and they work. We could call them "The Laws of the Harvest for Godly Children." I believe if we follow the principles God gives in His Word, we will see results, lasting results. If we go out into our garden and plant seeds in the ground, we know something is going to grow. We believe in, or have faith in, the laws of the harvest and confidently sow our seeds in the ground. My prayer for each of you is that God would infuse into your heart a believing faith for your home. We



**If we follow
God's principles,
we will see lasting results.**

cannot be full of doubt as we endeavor to nurture our children. We must be like Caleb of old who said, with a heart full of faith in God's promises, "I want that mountain."

My testimony is this: I believe, and I do not faint in my heart as I raise my children. I do not listen to the lies of Satan who comes along and says, "It's not going to work out." I have faith in the promises and the principles of God's Word. I believe if I do what the Bible says, then God will do what He said He will do, and I am confident about it! Raising my children is not a giant to me. It is a blessed opportunity.

May God give us a vision of faith—faith in what God will do if we will just simply follow His Word in raising our children. The promise is a harvest of godly children who love the Lord fervently and obey Him willingly. The elements of faith and a promised harvest will change our whole perspective. Instead of a new list of things we have to do, our hearts rise up with joy, and we say, "These principles work! Let's do them and get the harvest!"

The element of faith also changes how we receive instruction and correction. We can approach them with joyful antic-

ipation. Most people get rather touchy when you try to talk to them about their children. They are easily offended when you try to give them an admonition. Maybe you have tried before and have sensed that coolness of spirit, that quietness, that wall going up. I have noticed it many times as a pastor. I believe it happens because our children are a part of us, an expression of who we really are. I would like to encourage you as you read this book to open up your hearts to learn. If we really have our sights set on a godly home, we will welcome the admonitions that come our way.

Jackie and I receive much criticism concerning our home and our children. I often wonder about the motives behind some of the criticism, but nonetheless, we receive it with an open, learning heart. We are students of training our children, and we have much to learn. When somebody comes to me with some criticism about my home, I welcome it and receive it very seriously. I go home and think about it. I bring it to Jackie, and we sit down and take a look at it. We discuss the concern that has come and pray about it. Why do we respond this way? Because we don't want to make a mistake. We don't want

to find out ten years from now that we made a big mistake. We want to know now.

We humans do a lot of things that do not make much sense, and the area of the home is no exception. We readily take advice in many lesser things, yet ruffle at the advice given about the most important things. If a sister has found a way to clean spots out of a garment in half the time, or a way to get rid of potato bugs in the garden, we listen with attentive ears. If a brother has discovered a way to save three miles to the gallon on fuel, we men perk up our ears and tune in. No one would even think a negative thought about it. We rise up in faith, quickly make the change, and eagerly await the added benefit. But somehow, when someone comes with a helpful admonition about having peaceful children, we take it so personally, get offended, and

pass it off as nothing. I encourage each one of you to have the humble attitude of a learner. Come to each chapter with a teachable spirit, and with an open heart, willing to examine your home. Shall we give our gardens more openness and care than our children receive? God forbid.

Lessons From the Persecuted

The life and testimony of the persecuted church has been a rich blessing to me throughout my Christian life. I cannot begin to explain how much persecuted believers have influenced me and my theology. I read books about them whenever I have opportunity. They have been humbled and purified through suffering, and the beautiful life of Christ flows out of this. We have much to learn from these simple saints. I have been challenged by their diligent pursuit of godly children. Because of the elements



**Shall we give our
gardens more care
than our children?**

of persecution, they must attend to their little olive plants with careful zeal. Oh, what diligence they exercise in the training of their children.

Let's take Russia as an example. I know that persecution has eased there for a while, but it was intense for many years. In Russia, the children went to the Communist schools. At these schools, the Christian children were laughed at and openly mocked. They were beaten and had their Bibles torn up in front of the class. Things were very hard for them at school. Imagine what it would be like. The teachers were determined to tear Christianity out of the hearts and minds of these children and openly preached against it in the classroom.

The parents knew their children would have to go through these kinds of experiences when they sent them away to the Communist schools. What could they do? They didn't have the opportunities we have to send them to a Christian school or teach them at home. These hard circumstances wrought something in the hearts of the parents that we need here in free America. It made those fathers and mothers very earnest. They had to do right. They had to

train those children. They had to pray for their children. They had to live out a Christian example before them because they had to send those children out into an ugly, mean world that was set to destroy them. With brokenness and determination, they earnestly applied the garden rules for raising children.



**We must prepare
our children to face
persecution.**

I tremble at times when I think about our children facing persecution. Millions of them are not prepared for even a small amount of it. I am convinced that it will come to America. We must prepare. It would

do us good to meditate upon the example of the persecuted church as we examine how much time we are giving to the training of our children. And by the way, the Communists didn't get very many of those children. God's promises and principles prevailed even in the midst of Communism.

There is, however, a sad ending to the story of some of these Russian Christians. Many of them have now fled to America to escape future persecution. They haven't done so well here with all the freedom and worldliness of the "Christians" in this land. Many parents have let up, and even given up their responsibility to raise their children, and the results are tragic. They are losing them to the world by the hundreds. They have joined in with the "Christians" in America and have allowed their children to drift slowly into the world. How sad this is to me, after being so inspired by their fervent approach to child training.

I spoke to a sincere Russian Christian some time ago about the differences between Russia and America. He made this staggering statement. He said, "I have learned that the devil has put on different clothes.

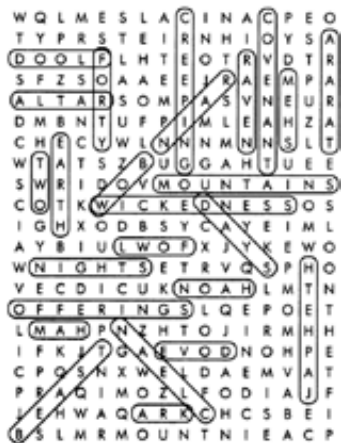
In Russia, he had a stick in his hand. But in America, he has a smile on his face." Maybe some of us Americans should learn the same thing.

"It's Just the Grace of God"

Many years ago we had the opportunity to spend some time in the home of a dear Mennonite couple who had twelve children. They had invited us over for a meal and a time of fellowship. We were so excited about the visit because of the opportunity to learn from them about their home. We had three small children at the time, and we were like sponges looking for water. We sat down at a long extension table prepared

Puzzle Answers for Last Issue

Noah's Ark Puzzle on page 41:



**True faith fills
the heart and
/// moves
the will.**



for twenty people. It was an inspiring scene to say the least. There sat father and mother and twelve olive plants around the table, all in lovely order. We had a nice visit at the table while we shared a meal together. Then came the words that I had been waiting for. When the meal was finished, the father spoke to me and said, “Let’s go sit in the living room and visit awhile.”

You can imagine how I felt inside. This man has what I want, what I want with all my heart—a godly family. The ages of his twelve children ranged from three to twenty-five. I was thinking, “I am sitting on a gold mine, and now it is time to ask questions.” We went into the living room and sat down, and I proceeded to glean all I could. I began, “Please tell me, sir, what principles did you follow to produce these lovely, obedient children?”

I’ll never forget what he said. He said, “Well, I didn’t do anything. It’s just the grace of God.” I thought to myself, “What? Is it just the grace of God? I know there is more to it than that.”

Now I know it sounds like a good and humble thing to say, but it’s not true. It’s not just the grace of God. If you leave it all to the grace of God, you will be sadly disappointed. Could this be one of the reasons why things have not turned out very well—because we have left it all to the “grace of God” when God gave us principles to follow? It’s not just the grace of God. I agree, when we get all finished, and we are old, and all our children are raised, yes, we will say, “If it wasn’t for the grace of God, we never could have done it.” But we also will have to acknowledge that there were many things that we did,

according to the Word of God, in order for the children to turn out right. In reality, God's mysterious grace has no platform on which to work if we do not pick up our tools and go to work.

Imagine going out into the garden, planting the seeds, and then sitting down on a lawn chair and trusting the grace of God to take care of the rest: no hoeing, no weeding, no fertilizing, no cultivating or watering. Imagine how foolish that would be. If you plant a garden like that, and just trust the grace of God, you will have a weed patch, with a little bit of fruit on some very small plants.

So let me encourage you. There are many things that we must do. It takes a proper balance of faith and works to produce a healthy garden, and it is the same with our families. The truth is, true faith fills the heart and moves the will to get up and do something with joyful expectation. Israel trusted in God, but they also went out to battle. Abraham believed God, but he still commanded his household after him. We need to trust in God, believe His promises, and "bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4b).

□

Prayer...



Our God and Father, hallowed be Your name. We see so clearly that You have not left us here without good instruction about the children. Make us students of child training. Give us the openness and brokenness we need to be teachable. Put a fervent spirit in us and help us to see the urgency that is reality. We are so often asleep. Please wake us up to the promises and the provisions You have made. In Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

Pilgrim's Progress

Part 16

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...

Their long, dangerous journey is almost over, but Christian and Hopeful aren't out of danger. To avoid falling asleep on the Enchanted Ground, the pilgrims have been staying alert through lively conversation. Listen in as they consider why new Christians backslide – and how. And if they do make it through the Enchanted Ground, what awaits them on the other side?

Ignorance Demonstrates His Ignorance

Then I saw in my dream that Hopeful looked back and saw Ignorance, whom they had left behind, following them. "Look how far that youngster loiters behind," he said.

"Yes, I see him," said Christian. "He doesn't seem to enjoy our company."

"It wouldn't have hurt him to at least keep up with us."

"No doubt he thinks otherwise."

"I suppose he does. But let's wait and let him catch up."

So they paused, and when Ignorance caught up to them, Christian called, "Come on, man, why do you hang so far back?"

"I like walking alone better than with people unless I like the people."

"I told you he doesn't like us," whispered Christian to Hopeful.

“Come walk with us,” he said to Ignorance. “Talking will help us pass the time in this lonely place. How is it going between you and God by now?”

“Fine, I hope,” said Ignorance, “Because my mind is always full of good ideas that comfort me as I travel.”

“What good ideas?” asked Christian. “Do you mind telling us about them?”

A man's heart can comfort him with hope of getting something for which he has no reason to hope.

“Oh, I think about God and heaven.”

“The devils and damned souls do that, too.”

“But when I think about them, I desire them.”

“Lots of people desire heaven who will never go there. ‘The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing’ [Proverbs 13:4].”

“But I’ve left everything for them.”

“I doubt that; leaving everything is harder than most people think. What makes you so sure you’ve left everything for God and heaven?”

“My heart says so.”

“A wise man has said, ‘He who trusts in his own heart is a fool’ [Proverbs 28:26].”

“That’s talking about an evil heart; my heart is good.”

“How do you know?”

“It comforts me with the hope of heaven.”

“Maybe that’s because it’s deceiving you; a man’s heart can comfort him with hope of getting something for which he has no reason to hope.”

“But my heart and my life agree, so I do have reason to hope.”

“Who told you your heart and life agree?”

“My heart tells me.”

“I see. Would you trust my friend here to tell you whether I’m a thief? Your heart tells you, does it? If the Word of God doesn’t agree, no other testimony counts.”

“But isn’t a heart good if it has good thoughts? Isn’t a life good if it follows God’s commandments?”

“Sure, a good heart has good thoughts, and a good life follows God’s commandments, but it’s one thing to have these things, and another to merely think so.”

“Oh, please, tell me what you consider good thoughts and a

life according to God's commandments."

"There are different categories of good thoughts: thoughts about ourselves, thoughts about Christ, and thoughts about other things."

"What are good thoughts about ourselves?"

"Those that agree with the Word of God."

"When do our thoughts about ourselves agree with the Word of God?"

"When we judge ourselves the same way the Word of God does. God's Word says about people in their natural condition, 'There is none righteous... there is none who does good...' It also says, 'Every intent of the thoughts of his heart [is] only evil continually' [Romans 3:9-18, 23; Genesis 6:5]. It also says, 'The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth' [Genesis 8:21]. When we understand that, and see ourselves accordingly, our thoughts are good, because they agree with the Word of God."

"I'll never believe my heart is that bad."

"Then you've never in your life thought one good thought about yourself. I'll continue. The Word passes judgment not only on our heart, but also on our actions. When we agree with

the Word concerning both our hearts and our actions, then we are thinking good thoughts."

"What are you getting at?"

"The Scriptures say our ways are crooked—bad, not good. It says we're so far off the right path that we're strangers to it [Psalm 125:5; Proverbs 2:15; Romans 3:9-18]. When someone agrees with that—when he really comprehends it and humbly accepts it—he has good thoughts about his actions, because he agrees with the Word of God."

"Okay, so what are good thoughts about God?"

"As I said before, when our thoughts about God agree with what the Word says about Him; when we think of His existence and character as the Word teaches. I won't go into details of that now. But as far as our thoughts about God concern us, we have right thoughts when we think that He knows us better than we know ourselves, and that He can see sin in us even when we don't see it in ourselves; when we understand that he knows our most secret thoughts, and that the deepest parts of our hearts are always exposed to His eyes; also when we understand that our own righteousness is such a stench to Him that He can't bear to have us stand be-

fore Him counting on our own performance.”

“Do I look like such a fool as to think God can’t see any farther than I can? Do you think I would come to God trusting my own performance?”

“Well, tell me what you do think.”

“The short answer is that I know I have to believe in Christ for justification.”

“What makes you think you should believe in Christ when you don’t think you need Him? You don’t see your own weaknesses, and you hold such a high opinion of yourself and the things you do, that it’s quite clear you never felt any need for Christ’s righteousness to justify you before God. How can you say, ‘I believe in Christ?’”

“I think I believe well enough.”

“How do you believe?”

“I believe that Christ died for sinners; I believe I will be saved from the curse through God’s gracious acceptance of my obedience to His law; I believe Christ makes my religious duties acceptable to the Father because of His righteousness, and that is how I’ll be justified.”

“Let me answer that confession of faith,” said Christian. “First, your faith is a fantasy,

because it can’t be found in the Scriptures. Second, it’s false, because it looks for justification in your own righteousness instead of Christ’s. Third, you don’t believe that Christ justifies you, but that He justifies your actions, and then justifies you because of your actions, which is false. Finally, because of all these things, your faith is deceitful and will place you under God’s wrath on the judgment day. True faith is when a soul truly realizes that it is doomed under the law and flees to Christ’s righteousness for protection. The righteousness of Christ is not an act of grace by which He makes your obedience acceptable to God; it is His own personal obedience in paying everything the law required of us. True faith accepts this righteousness, and once the soul is shrouded in it, we can appear before God spotless, so that He accepts us.”

“What?” said Ignorance. “Are you saying we should trust what Christ did completely without us? If we believed that, we would be free to yield to our lusts and live as we please, because no matter what we do we can be justified by merely believing in Christ’s personal righteousness.”

"Your name is Ignorance," said Christian, "and it fits you well, as your answer shows. You are ignorant of the nature of justifying righteousness, and you are ignorant of how to use it to save your soul from God's wrath. What's more, you're ignorant of the effects of saving faith in Christ's righteousness; saving faith wins the heart to God in Christ, so that it loves His name, His Word, His ways, and His people, contrary to what you imagine."

"Ask him if he has ever had Christ revealed to him from heaven," suggested Hopeful.

"You're into revelations, too?" said Ignorance. "Really, I think you people's ideas are the fruit of confused minds."

"Of course I believe in revelation," replied Hopeful. "Christ is so well hidden from our natural mind that no one can come to know Him unless God the Father reveals Him."

"That's your faith, not mine. I'm sure my beliefs are as good as yours, even if I don't have all your quaint ideas."

"Allow me to remark on that," said Christian. "You shouldn't pass it off so lightly; I'll confirm what Hopeful says, that no one can know Jesus Christ except by the revelation



"I'm sure my beliefs are as good as yours, even if I don't have all your quaint ideas."

of the Father. Even true faith, by which we grasp Christ, must be created by His mighty power [Matthew 11:27; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Ephesians 1:18, 19]. I can tell, Ignorance, that you are ignorant of such faith. Wake up to your own wretchedness and flee to Jesus; by His righteousness, which is the righteousness of God Himself, you will be rescued from condemnation."

"You travel too fast," said Ignorance. "I can't keep up with you. Go ahead and I'll come along behind."

So they left him, and as they walked they spoke these words:

“Well, Ignorance, what a foolish thing to do, to scorn good counsel ten times given you!

“And if you keep refusing, you will know quite soon your great mistake in doing so.

“Remember this; don’t be afraid to bow. Good counsel saves the wise, so listen now.

“But if you choose to scorn it, you will be the loser, Ignorance, I guarantee.”

Christian turned to Hopeful and remarked, “Well, good Hopeful, it seems you and I are by ourselves once again.”

Right Fear

So I saw in my dream that Christian and Hopeful hurried ahead, and Ignorance hobbled behind them. “I really do pity that man,” said Christian to his friend. “It won’t go well with him in the end.”

“In our town,” said Hopeful, “there are plenty of people like him; whole families, even whole

streets of them, many of them pilgrims. If there are that many where we come from, how many do you suppose there must be

in his homeland?”

Christian answered, “The Bible says, ‘He has blinded their eyes... lest they should

see’ [John 12:40]. But now that we’re by ourselves, what do you think? Do such men never experience conviction of sin, and fear that they might be in danger?”

“No,” said Hopeful. “Answer the question yourself; you’re older.”

“Then here’s what I think,” said Christian. “I think they feel conviction sometimes, but as they are naturally ignorant, they don’t understand that conviction is for their own good; so they desperately try to stifle such feelings, and continue to flatter themselves in their own ideas.”

Hopeful replied, “I agree with you that fear can be good for people, and helps to prepare them properly for going on pilgrimage.”

“Undoubtedly it does, if it’s the right kind of fear,” said Christian, “for the Bible says, ‘The fear of

**Ignorant people
don’t understand
that conviction is for
their own good.**

the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' [Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 9:10]."

"How do you describe the right kind of fear?" asked Hopeful.

"True or right fear can be recognized by three things: first, it's caused by saving conviction of sin; second, it drives the soul to seize hold of Christ for salvation; third, it brings forth and maintains in the soul a deep reverence for God, His Word, and His ways, keeping the soul tender and making it afraid to turn aside left or right to anything that might dishonor God, destroy its peace, grieve the Spirit, or cause the enemy to find fault."

"That's well spoken," said Hopeful. "I believe you are right. Are we almost past the Enchanted Ground yet?"

"Why? Tired of this conversation?"

"Not at all; I'd just like to know where we are."

"No more than two miles and we'll be out. But let's return to the subject we were discussing. As I said, ignorant people don't know that conviction which brings fear is for their good, so they try to stifle it."

"How do they do that?"

"First, although their fears are produced by God, they think they are brought by the devil, so they resist them as something destructive. Second, they think these fears will damage their faith (although, poor people, they have no faith at all), so they harden their hearts against them. Third, they presume that they shouldn't be afraid, so in spite of these nagging fears,

they become more and more presumptuously confident. Fourth, they notice that these fears tend to draw them out of their pitiful old self-holiness, so they resist them with all their might."

"I know something about that myself," said Hopeful. "Before I understood myself, I was exactly like that."

**Right fear drives
the soul to Christ
for salvation.**

Backsliding

"Well," said Christian, "let's leave our neighbor Ignorance alone for now and consider another profitable question."

"With all my heart," said Hopeful, "but you begin."

"Did you know, about ten years ago, a man named Tempo-

rary in your region, who was a bold man of religion then?"

"Did I know him? Yes, he lived in Graceless, a town about two miles from Honesty, and he lived next door to one Turn-back."

"Right; actually, those two lived under the same roof. Well, Mr. Temporary was really awakened once. I believe he had some understanding of his sins and the wages they deserved."

Hopeful replied, "I agree with you. My house was only about three miles from him, and he often came in tears to visit me. I truly pitied that man, and had a lot of hope for him; but you can see that not everyone who cries 'Lord, Lord!' enters the kingdom."

"He told me once," said Christian, "that he had decided to go on pilgrimage as we are now, but soon after that he got to know a man named Save-Self, and he became a stranger to me."

"Now," Hopeful suggested, "since we are talking about him, let's consider the reason for the sudden backsliding of him and others like him."

"That could be very profitable," said Christian, "but you begin."

"The way I see it, there are four reasons for it. First, although the consciences of such people are awakened, their minds are not yet changed; therefore, when the strength of their guilt fades, their reason for pursuing righteousness is gone and they naturally return to their old path.

In the same way, when a dog eats something that makes it sick, it vomits it all up, not by choice, but because of

an upset stomach. However, as soon as it is finished vomiting and its stomach feels a bit better, the dog, seeing nothing unpleasant about its vomit, turns and licks it up again. So it is true what is written: 'A dog returns to his own vomit' [2 Peter 2:22].

"Since their desire for heaven is driven only by their sense and fear of the torments of hell, when their sense and fear of damnation cool off, their desire for heaven and salvation cool off too. As soon as their guilt and fear are gone, their desire for heaven and happiness dies and they return to their old ways.

**Not everyone who
cries "Lord, Lord"
enters the Kingdom.**

“Second, other inferior fears take control of them. I mean especially the fear of men. ‘The fear of man brings a snare’ [Proverbs 29:25]. So, although they seem hot for heaven as long as the flames of hell are crackling around their ears, when that terror is somewhat past, they begin to have second thoughts. They tell themselves it’s good to be wise, and not risk losing everything or bringing unnecessary trouble on themselves for unknown rewards, and they go back to the world.

“Third, the shame that comes with religion is a hurdle to them. They are proud and haughty, and they see religion as low and poor. Because of this, when they lose their sense of hell and wrath to come, they return to their former path.

“Fourth, guilty and terrifying thoughts are troublesome to them; they don’t want to see the misery ahead of them. If they were glad for a glimpse of what is ahead, it might motivate them to flee to safety, but as I said, they avoid thoughts of guilt and terror. Therefore, when their first awakening to the terror

and wrath of God is past, they harden their hearts gladly, and adopt habits that will harden them more and more.”

“You’re pretty close to the heart of the matter,” said Christian, “for at the bottom of it all is the lack of any change in their

heart and will.

They are like the convicted felon who stands before a judge; he trembles and appears full of remorse, but under all his repentance

is a fear of punishment, not disgust at his own wrongdoing. Just let him go free, and he’ll steal as before, proving that he’s still a crook. This wouldn’t happen if he had had a true change of mind.”

“Okay,” said Hopeful. “Now I’ve explained why such people turn back; you explain *how* it happens.”

“Certainly,” replied Christian. “First, as much as they can, they avoid thinking about God, death, and coming judgment. Next, they begin to neglect their personal duties, such as private prayer, controlling their lusts, alertness, sorrow for sin, etc. Soon they begin to avoid being with warm and fervent

**When their fear
cools, so does
their desire for
salvation.**

Christians. After that they grow cold toward their public duties, such as hearing, reading, godly fellowship, and the like.

“Then they begin, as we say, to ‘pick holes’ in the coats of some godly people, devilishly using the faults of Christians as an excuse to throw righteousness behind their backs. Next they begin associating with carnal, loose, immoral people. They give way to carnal and immoral talk in secret, and are glad if they see such behavior in anyone who is considered upright, using their example as an excuse to sin even more boldly. After this they begin dabbling in small sins openly.

“Finally, they are so hardened that they show themselves as they really are. So, launched once more into the gulf of misery, unless a miracle of grace prevents it, they die eternally in their own deception.”

The Country of Beulah

Now I saw in my dream that by this time the pilgrims were past the Enchanted Ground and were entering the country of Beulah (Isaiah 62:4), whose air was sweet and pleasant.

Since the path led directly through this country, they rested and comforted themselves there for awhile. All day they heard the singing of birds and saw the

flowers appear on the earth, while the voice of the turtle-dove could be heard in the land (Song of Solomon 2:10-12). In

**God rejoiced
over them like
a bridegroom
over his bride.**



All day they heard birds singing.

this country the sun shines day and night, placing it beyond the Valley of the Shadow of Death and out of reach of the giant Despair. In fact, they could no longer even see Doubting Castle in the distance.



They were now actually within sight of the Celestial City, and they began to meet some of its citizens since this country was on the borders of heaven and the Shining Ones often walked here. Here also the covenant between the bride and the Bridegroom was renewed; and as the bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so their God rejoiced over them (Isaiah 62:5).

Here they never lacked corn and wine, for they found plenty of everything they had longed for during their pilgrimage. They heard loud voices calling from the City, "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Surely your salvation is coming; Behold, His reward is with Him'" (Isaiah 62:11). The citizens of the country called them "the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord, sought out" (Isaiah 62:12).

As they walked through this land they rejoiced far more than they had when they were far from the Kingdom, and as they drew near the city they could see

it better and better. It was built of pearls and precious stones, and the streets were paved in gold. The natural glory of the City, as it reflected the sunbeams that struck it, was so tremendous that Christian became ill with desire. Hopeful also had a bout or two of the same sickness. They two of them thus lay for awhile, crying out in their pain, "If you find my Beloved, tell him I am lovesick!" (Song of Solomon 4:8).

After they had regained a little strength and were better able to tolerate their sickness, they walked on, coming nearer and nearer, past orchards, vineyards, and gardens with gates opening onto the highway. They met the gardener on the road, and asked him, "Whose fine vineyards and gardens are these?"

He answered, "They belong to the King, and are planted here both for His pleasure and for the comfort of pilgrims."



The City was built of gold, pearls, and precious stones.

The gardener led them into the vineyards and invited them to refresh themselves with fine food (Deuteronomy 23:24). He showed them the walks and arbors where the King loved to spend time, and the two stayed there to sleep.

Now I saw in my dream that they talked more in their sleep here than they ever had before in their travels. This puzzled me until the gardener asked me, "Why are you puzzled about this? It's the nature of grapes from these vineyards to settle so sweetly as to cause people to speak in their sleep."

Then I saw that the pilgrims woke and prepared to go up to the City. However, as I said,

the reflection of the sun on the City, since it was pure gold, was so incredibly brilliant that they could not yet look at it with unprotected faces, but only through a device made for the purpose (Revelation 21:18; 2 Corinthians 3:18). As they went on, I saw that they were met by two men whose clothing glowed like pure gold, and whose faces seemed ablaze with light.

– to be continued

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