

Prepare^{the}Way

Preparing the Bride of Christ for the return of Christ

Issue No. 113
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Peter Pollock
**Possess
the land**

Heavenly rewards

**And why they should make
a difference in your life**

**Would Jesus need
a \$54 million jet?**

**Rescuing the
Christian who's
gone astray**

**Are you
terrified or
trusting?**

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COVER: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the Lord our God (Psalm 20:7)."

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Would Jesus require a \$54 million private jet?

by J. Lee Grady

FAITH preacher Jesse Duplantis told the world recently that God wants him to own a \$54 million (R750 million) Falcon 7X private jet. And he's challenging donors to help him buy it.

"Some people believe preachers shouldn't have jets," Duplantis said in a video he posted online on May 21. "I really believe that if Jesus was physically on the earth today He wouldn't be riding a donkey... He'd be in an airplane preaching the gospel all over the world."

The popular Louisiana minister, who is 68, is known for his folksy Cajun accent and down-home humour. But he was not cracking a joke when he announced his need for the pricey three-engine plane, which can fly up to 950 kilometres per hour. He was dead serious.

Duplantis' request didn't go over well when his video went viral.

Secular news reporters called him a charlatan. Some Christians condemned him as a con artist. In a social media post, gospel singer Kirk Franklin accused Duplantis of exploiting poor people.

"Many of these 'ministries' (like Duplantis') built their wealth on the backs of poor, rural minorities that put their trust in the hands of 'God's shepherds,' only to see the prosperity benefit those doing the preaching," Franklin said in an Instagram post.

Duplantis' fans, however, weren't shocked by his request. They have helped him buy three previous jets. The jovial preacher, who lives in a \$3 million, 3 000-square-metre mansion, believes financial prosperity is his reward for preaching the gospel. He tells his followers that they, too, can be rich if they give generously.

In a response to the jet controversy, which was posted on YouTube, Du-

plantis said God clearly spoke to him about acquiring the jet to replace an older one. "The Lord said, 'I didn't ask you to pay for the plane, I asked you to believe for it.'" The evangelist is fully expectant that the money he needs will be provided.

I won't be surprised if Duplantis gets his Falcon 7X. A wealthy donor is likely to fork over the entire \$54 million. But as a travelling minister who has flown to 32 countries on commercial airlines – usually in cramped tourist class seats – I still don't believe Duplantis' theology about private planes is sound.

In fact, I believe Duplantis is in danger of hurting the cause of the gospel.

Here are the top reasons I wouldn't support his private jet plan:

Private jets are a wasteful use of donor funds. Preachers can give you a litany of reasons why they need to fly direct to their destination: Time saved, less stress, no worries about lost luggage (Not to mention more legroom!).

But the Bible calls us to be good stewards of God's resources.

Private aircraft cost an exorbitant amount of money compared to commercial flights because owners must provide service and upkeep on the vehicles. If a preacher insists on renting a private jet, the cost to fly from Fort Lauderdale to New York would be in the ballpark of \$59 000, compared to a \$652 ticket on a commercial plane. People who own private jets spend as much as \$4 million a year just on maintenance.

If an evangelist needs to fly to the most remote village of Borneo, and there are no commercial planes going there, then I can understand the need for a private plane. But Duplantis is not going to Borneo. According to his website, some of his upcoming meetings are in Nashville, Tennessee; Detroit,

Michigan; and Tacoma, Washington. Even first-class seats on Delta Airlines to those locations are a fraction of the cost of private air travel.

Ministers who demand luxury deny the core of the gospel. We are confronted every day by the reality of poverty and suffering in our world, and we know that true followers of Christ are called to give and share, not take and hoard. We also know that a preacher who gets rich off the offerings of poor people is actually involved in exploitation – a sin which Scripture strongly condemns. When the sceptical younger generation sees this, they assume all Christian ministers are fakes and frauds.

The world doesn't need a message of greed. The prosperity gospel became hugely popular during the 1980s, when many Christians in the United States were riding a wave of American capitalism. But many of the get-rich preachers of that era either landed in jail or fell morally, and we reaped a whirlwind of bad fruit.

We were supposed to learn a lesson from that failed experiment. God blesses us not so we can become selfish consumers but so we can become selfless channels of His blessings to others.

Jesus did indeed ride a donkey. If Jesus had used Jesse Duplantis' logic during His ministry on earth, He would have asked His disciples to collect money from the crowds to buy a gold chariot drawn by Caesar's best horses. But He didn't do that. He rode on the back of a rented donkey, the transportation of a poor man. He didn't require a first-class seat or a luxury vehicle.

Jesus took the lowest seat and invited all of us to model servanthood. I pray we will rediscover humility.

Let's show our cynical culture that God's ministers don't demand luxury treatment. 🐴



Possess the land

by Peter Pollock

ON the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year, Moses spoke to all Israel and reminded them what God has spoken to them in Horeb: “See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to your forefathers” And Moses reminded them personally: “I alone am not able to bear you.”

God had made a promise that He alone was able to complete – Moses never understood it any other way. Only God could do the job!

There had to be no doubt, no denial and no delay and the task needed to be understood and done God’s way. An immutable, meticulous God has never tolerated any other options or any other interpretations, as much as we simply don’t want to accept that it’s so direct and straight forward spiritually speaking.

Let’s look at Deuteronomy 1:8 in three sections, concentrating on three key words – namely “SEE”, “THE LAND” and “POSSESS.”

Verse 1:8 says “See” in verse 1:21, it says “look” but in the original King James translation, the word used is “behold!” Now I love the old KJV translation and some of those archaic words because they carried so much more meaning than the modern upgrades.

“See” suggests little more than a glance; “look” directs a bit more concentration and conscious effort, but “behold” conveys strongly to “look intently” with all

heart, soul and mind! That’s the direction we need to go as we remember John 1:29 where John the Baptist declared “Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

John was not just suggesting that maybe they should cast their eyes upon a man called Jesus. No, he was bold in declaring that they should look intently at the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the Messiah. Not just Jesus – but THE CHRIST!

It’s not just an Easter story, made up of a Good Friday and an Easter Sunday. It’s not just a death and a resurrection. It’s not just a weekend that’s celebrated once a year by religious adherents. It’s so much more than that. It is the greatest weekend in the history of man! It is the greatest event affecting mankind!

Every year I have a problem with Christmas, and let me explain nicely just why. The celebration and recognition of the birth of Jesus is a huge plus, even if it’s the wrong date. Its holiday time and I don’t think God has a problem with holidays especially if it draws families together because God is in the family business!

Mostly, though, the family time is forced on the businessmen and tycoons because the warehouses and factories close down – and they have no option but to focus on home and the family. There is a spirit that prevails – it’s not the Holy Spirit, but it inspires generosity and goodwill and ushers in Bony M singing their annual Christmas ballads.

Anyway, my point is this: Christmas is

what most of the world construes Jesus and Christianity to be all about and with the church participating so wholeheartedly, it sadly misrepresents the true Gospel. Jesus Christ is so much more than Christmas! The Gospel is so much more than just a Christmas message! Easter is so much more than a religious weekend, a convention or a conference. We need to look, see and behold this truth!

It’s more than what we see with our eyes, think with our brains and construe with our minds. It’s a vision! It’s a revelation and a spiritual understanding that it written, yes, firmly etched on our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible tells us that my people perish for lack of a vision, but that vision is a holy vision. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The vision, the seeing and the understanding are all dependent on the “entering,” as it was so succinctly explained to a rather shattered Nicodemus. How can it be? he asked. How can a man be “born again?” Must he climb back into his mother’s womb? The man without the spirit sees everything in the material and the physical, as does the church without the Spirit, translating everything humanly, physically and socially. Beholding, looking and seeing begins and ends with Jesus Christ and the Cross – and understanding their full and profound significance is impossible outside the ambit and working of the Holy Spirit.

Holy Communion we celebrate to

“Remember Me,” as Jesus ordered. And we are warned not to do it “unworthily” or presumptuously or try to translate it differently in any way. It is all about Jesus, his broken body and the shed blood. Something we should never ever forget! It is foundational to our faith.

In Matthew 16:13-19 Jesus asks the disciples “who do men say that I am?” John, Elijah, Jeremiah and a prophet are some of the answers! Peter burst forth with “You are the CHRIST, the SON of the LIVING GOD.”

Jesus responded by saying that flesh and blood had not revealed this, but My Father in heaven. The revelation of THE CHRIST is a Holy Spirit thing and it’s hugely significant. On this rock – that revelation – I will build my church, said Jesus and the gates of hell shall not prevail.

These “revelation” truths are the very keys to the Kingdom! JESUS is the Son of God, the Chosen One of God – THE CHRIST.

Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus? Placing “Jesus” first emphasises His “humanity,” placing “Christ” first emphasises His deity. Either way He is THE CHRIST; hallowed be His name, honoured and awed be His name because it is the name above every other name; the only name by which man can be saved.

One day every knee shall bow and tongue confess that JESUS CHRIST IS THE LORD!

Behold, look intently that you may understand. And that God may etch this truth indelibly on your heart. This is the vision that the church needs to see, look and behold if it’s even going to begin to possess the land.

Secondly there is a need to understand about THE LAND.

“You would not go up but rebelled against the command of the Lord your God... you complained in your tents... saying the Lord hates us... you have been brought out of Egypt to be delivered into the hands of the Amorites... The people are taller and greater... The cities are great and fortified up to heaven... moreover the sons of Anakim are there,” related Moses in summing up their moans.

Attempts were made to encourage the people but they would not listen to Moses. “You did not believe the Lord your God... except Caleb and Joshua.” God had set the land before them. The land had giants. Indeed the Amorites were there, as were the sons of Anakim. Of course, there were mountains there. Their people were greater and taller and their cities were more fortified!

That is an absolute truth about the world we live in, and the land we need to possess. We are to be “in” the world and not “of” the world and that’s the truth of it. But we need to look them straight in the face and above all, never try and deny that they are there or believe that they are just going to go away, or that God is just going to physically remove them!

Jesus never ever promised an easy road. He never promised that things would be easy, a triumphal cakewalk. When God says the His yoke is easy and burden light, we can never translate that into an easy road. It has always been a narrow road for the few!

Joshua and Caleb no doubt also saw the Amorites and the Sons of Anakim – but despite that, their eyes were fixed firmly on God and His promises, not on how the land lies physically and materially.

It is absolutely vital that we understand this part of God’s promise because the key element is that it’s NOT going to be easy but “I will be with you, always, even until the end of the age.” God will fight for us and with us, but we have to trust and obey and be partakers in the overcoming.

Chased like bees

False presumptions are from the pit of hell as they found out later in the chapter when Moses reminded them of how they “presumptuously” went up into the mountain and how the Amorites chased them as bees and drove them back. They returned with their tails between their legs and they wept before the Lord but “the Lord would not listen to your voice or give ear to you.”

There is still no change in the land or in the world and we still face the same old challenges. God requires holiness and He requires that we should take note of His true prophets, men God raised to warn us of our godlessness and wretchedness and tell us to return to Him.

We have steadfastly refused to heed God’s prophetic warnings and insights. There is deception and delusion as we refuse to see and stubbornly close our ears!

Jeremiah 5:30&31: “An astonishing and horrible thing has been committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely and the priests rule by their own power and my people love to have it so.”

The prophet Habakkuk was in deep anguish about what he was seeing around him. He cried out to God in divine anguish. God’s reply was mind-boggling: “You have seen nothing yet. Be amazed! Be astounded! Write it down.”

God then proceeded to tell the prophet what was going to happen. It certainly was not good news for them. They were heading off into exile and judgement! Nobody listens to the true prophets.

We read in the Bible how accurate were their messages but the people did not listen. Isaiah laments in chapter 9:8-13 about how the people always want to fix things up their own way. “Hewn” stones and cedars – that’s how we respond, relentlessly and steadfastly refusing “to turn and seek the Lord of Hosts.”

Finally, having had the vision and been clear on the make-up of the land, we have to go in and actually POSSESS it!

How do we do that God’s way? Deuteronomy 10:11&12 clearly defines the road and action to be taken:


“The Lord said to me, ‘Arise begin your journey before the people that they may go and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. What does the Lord your God require of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?’”

Verse 20, puts the bow on the show: “You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name.” You cannot get it stated more clearly than that.

As King Solomon sums up in Ecclesiastes: “Now all has been said, here is the conclusion of the matter. Fear God and keep His commandments. This is the whole duty of man.”

My Kingdom is not of this world. Possessing the land is not of the world but a spiritual condition. It is not about beating up the Amorites or the brothers of Anakim. It’s not about building temples. Denominations! TV ministries!

“Our battle is not against sin, difficulties or circumstances but being so absorbed in our service to Jesus Christ... the greatest need is not facing our beliefs and doctrines... but the need to face Him... It’s a readiness brought through intense spiritual reality... expecting Jesus at every turn... this sense of expectation will give our life the attitude and child-like wonder He wants us to have... Stop being religious... or following some lofty lifestyles... we must be spiritually real,” so writes Oswald Chambers.

No doubt about Christ; no denial about the land; and no delay about possessing it spiritually with heart, soul, mind and all strength. Believe it! Go for it! 



Except you repent

by Harry Ironside

THE Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ fittingly closes the volume of Holy Scripture. It deals with both the present age and the coming era, climaxing all God's ways with man, and bringing before us the eternal issues of the long conflict between good and evil.

It is the Lord's last word to mankind until the voice of the returning Saviour is heard from the heavens, calling His redeemed to meet Him in the air, preparatory to taking His great power in order that the kingdoms of the world may become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ.

And, significantly enough, it contains a most urgent summons to repentance. In fact, the call to repent is found seven times in the letters to the seven churches, and four times we are told of men whom God had visited in grace and in judgement who did not repent, and thus refused to give Him glory.

One thing is very evident, and that is, that in these letters the Lord has given us a diagnosis of every state or condition in which His churches may be found at any time throughout the Christian epoch.

We see in Ephesus a thoroughly orthodox church that has failed because it has left the freshness of its first love. Smyrna is a suffering church, true to Christ despite persecution and poverty. Pergamos is a worldly church, yet reasonably sound in doctrine, though tolerating much that is very unsound in practice.

In Thyatira superstition and gross immorality prevail, except among a very small minority who grieve over conditions, but do not seem able to remedy them. Sardis is

cold and formal, with very little evidence of divine life, though even in it a few are found whose garments are undefiled.

Philadelphia is a true Bible church, where the authority of the Lord is owned and His name revered. Consequently there is an open door for testimony and faithfulness is manifested in maintaining the truth of God. Laodicea is lukewarm. Its members play fast and loose with eternal truths and, while professing to have Christ in their midst, He is actually seen outside the door.

Now to all of these churches there comes the voice of the Lord, declaring, "I know your works (Revelation 2:2)." Everything is open to His searching gaze.

It is noticeable that in each letter the order is the same: First, the Lord presents Himself in some special way suited to the spiritual condition of the church addressed. Second, He gives His own diagnosis of the state of that particular assembly. Third, there is a special exhortation or warning, as needed in each case. Fourth, we have the promise to the overcomer and the summons to listen.

In five out of the seven letters we find the exhortation to repent. Smyrna and Philadelphia are both without rebuke, so there is no such command given to them. Let us note carefully, however, what is said to the other five.

The Loss of First Love

Ephesus is rebuked because of having left her first love. Orthodox to the core, this church seemed to pride itself on its jealousy for fundamentals. But there may be great zeal for doctrinal standards where there is very little manifestation of the love of the Spirit.

It is a grievous mistake to suppose that

the Lord delights in correct dogma and ignores the lack of love. A cold, hard, censorious devotion to a creed, however correct, will never make up for lack of brotherly kindness and a tender Christ-like spirit.

So we get the exhortation, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come to you quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of his place, except you repent (Revelation 2:5)." How solemn is this! It is not a question of one who has been a Christian losing his soul, but of a church that once witnessed boldly for Christ now in danger of losing its testimony.

Mere doctrinal correctness is not enough to keep the Gospel light brightly burning. It is as the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit that our words count with others. Emerson said once, "What you are speaks so loudly, I cannot hear what you say."

An inconsistent, un-Christlike church will cause the world to turn in scorn from its message. So the Lord calls for repentance. That this is more than a mere change of opinion is evident, for He adds, "and do the first works."

He would have them turn from their supercilious self-satisfaction to the love and earnestness of their early days, when He Himself was precious to their souls and for love of Him they could toil and suffer that others might know Him too.

Surely to many of us today the same call comes, coupled with the warning that unless there be a new attitude, a turning back to the Lord in contrition and confession, He will take away the candlestick, and we shall be useless so far as witnessing for Him in a dark world is concerned.

Toleration of Sin

The condition of the Pergamos church is even worse. For there, positively evil things were tolerated and unholy alliances formed, which were an affront to the One they professed to serve. Again comes the call to repent.

Note the words, "Repent; or else I will come to you quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth (Revelation 2:16)."

What a solemn alternative. Repent, or I will fight against you! He cannot tolerate unjudged iniquity in His professed people. To boast of salvation by grace while living in sin is detestable to Him. The sword of His mouth is His Word. That Word is positively against all who make a pretence of godliness while walking in unholy ways.

It is indeed a serious matter when the

Lord has to take sides, as it were, against His people. But He refuses to condone sin in His saints. Surely we all need to heed the call to repent.

Gross Immorality

When we turn to consider the Thyatira church we are confronted with conditions so grave and wickedness so shocking that we might naturally hesitate to recognize it as a church of God at all. Yet the Lord addresses it as such.

It bore His name. It professed to represent Him in the world. Yet it condoned iniquitous practices that were below the level of ordinary decency. On the other hand, this church had once been characterised by love and devotion of an unusually high order, and there were in it still a faithful remnant who mourned over its fallen condition and who were as the salt preserving it from utter corruption.

Are there not many such churches today? Is it not true that in scores of instances known evil of the vilest kind is tolerated in Christian communities, and no attempt made to cleanse the leprous house? How often have wealth and prominence protected wrongdoers and seemingly made it impossible to deal with them, lest whole families be disgraced or the church be actually disrupted. But desperate diseases require drastic treatment. The voice of God is still calling to repentance. Until there be a changed attitude toward unholy practices there can be no blessing.

In Thyatira there was open immorality, and that of the most revolting type. That wicked princess Jezebel, who brought her hateful Phoenician idolatry over to Israel and grafted it into the perverted worship of Jehovah (1 Kings 16:30-33), is used as the symbol of what had crept into this church. Degrading and revolting behaviour was thus linked with the holy Name of Christ.

It had gone so far, and the proponents of this corruption had been so persistent and so determined, that the Lord says, "I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she did not repent. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds (Revelation 2:21-22)."

The last words indicate that there was hope still. He had not utterly rejected them. But blessing and restoration were conditioned upon repentance.

The Loss of Divine Life

In the church in Sardis we see a very different condition prevailing. There, all is outwardly correct. There is no intimation that vile practices of any kind were being

tolerated. But all is cold and formal. It is the respectability of spiritual death.

Yet it is evident there was a time when this church was aflame with passionate devotion to Christ. Hence the admonition, "Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore you shall not watch, I will come to you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you (Revelation 3:3)."

One thinks of many churches founded in revival days or reformation times where the light of truth shone brightly and the members were marked by intense zeal and energy. Evangelising the lost and building up believers were characteristic under a Spirit-filled ministry that made such churches centres of blessing.

But little by little all this has been changed. Formality has taken the place of living power. Coldness has succeeded the old time spiritual fervour. And smug self-complacency now holds sway where once deep concern for the souls of others was manifest.

Oh, that in such places there might be a great turning to God, a repentance that would again fill nearly vacant prayer rooms and bring the churches to their knees in brokenness of spirit until God should open the windows of heaven and pour out life-giving showers to revive the barren wastes and give the world to see again a mighty movement of His Holy Spirit!

Such a revival is sorely needed, but it can only come in the wake of sincere repentance.

With the church in Philadelphia the Lord finds no fault. He commends it for its faithfulness and promises rich reward, so we find here, as in the letter to Smyrna, no call to repent.

The Loss of Spiritual Fervour

But it is otherwise with lukewarm Laodicea. Someone has remarked that "a lukewarm state is not a passing from cold to hot, but from hot to cold." And this is what has so often taken place. Moreover, it is a state easy to fall into. Most of us realise that true, spiritual fervour is maintained only where there is a constant sense of our weakness and the need of much prayer and of nourishing the soul upon the Word of God.

If private devotion be neglected we will soon become lukewarm, and the church itself is just what its members make it. These Laodiceans did not seem to know that their condition called for any rebuke. Like Israel in Hosea's day it could be said,

"Grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knows not (Hosea 7:9)."

Like Samson, their strength had departed and they did not know it. Backsliding begins so insidiously that one may get far from God in heart and mind before some terrible failure reproves and arouses him. Hence the need of constant watchfulness.

The believer out of fellowship with God may be quite satisfied for a time, boasting of being rich and increased with goods and needing nothing. Yet all the while the Lord detects the sad lack of practically everything that makes for vital godliness. In His grace He sends trial and affliction to draw the wayward heart back to Himself. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent (Revelation 3:19)."


No halfway measures will do. There must be positive, earnest endeavour to trace the evil to its source and to take the right attitude toward it and to the One who has been so grievously wronged. For He stands outside the door knocking and seeking restoration of fellowship.

The door is unlatched only by repentance; it can be opened in no other way. So long as there is pride and arrogance He remains outside, for He has said, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word (Isaiah 66:2)." He delights to dwell with those who fear Him and cleave to His truth, but He knows the proud afar off.

Oh, the shame of keeping Him outside the door! "Be zealous therefore, and repent." Conditions are worse than we know. Lethargy and drowsiness have blunted our sensibilities.

The hour is late. The end of the age draws on. And we are indifferent and lukewarm still. Repentance, if it be worthwhile, must come soon. Otherwise it will be too late, and He will say of us as of Thyatira, "I gave her space to repent... and she did not repent (Revelation 3:21)."

Oh, what God might yet do with a truly repentant church, aflame with loving devotion to her adorable Lord!

Billy Sunday, the eccentric evangelist, used to relate a graphic story of a well-known village atheist who was seen running vigorously to a burning church building intent on joining with others in subduing the flames. A neighbour observing him exclaimed facetiously, "This is something new for you! I never saw you going to church before." The atheist replied, "Well, this is the first time I have ever seen a church on fire." 



A practical definition of faith

by Greg Hinnant

MY Dear Friend,

The Word of Faith movement that arose among Charismatics in the last decades of the 20th century produced much good – but far more errors, follies, and destruction.

Certain valid New Testament Scriptures and principles were misapplied to invalid purposes. God's promises were seen as the means to my selfish ends while kingdom goals were largely ignored. Consequently, thousands of new converts were turned aside from the deep things of God.

Specifically, they were taught by instruction and example to seek worldly wealth and success instead of Christ's values and goals, kingdom riches, and eternal or spiritual success, which is knowing God and doing His will.

Appalled by this error, millions of evangelicals, though saved by faith themselves, began rejecting faith.

In typically tragic human fashion, they threw out the baby with the bath water. Specifically, they not only rejected the errors of the Word of Faith movement but also the genuine, wonderful, vitally necessary New Testament Scriptures that

were associated with it: precious promises for God's provision, healing, and deliverance in times of troubles.

Their revulsion became so strong some recoiled at even the very mentioning of faith.

Years ago, while doing a radio interview introducing one of my books I casually quoted Mark 11:24 – "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."

Immediately the interviewer – who had heartily agreed with everything I had said – went to a commercial break. Afterwards it was apparent his attitude had changed as he finished the interview in a very matter-of-fact way.

My sin? I dared to mention a Scripture Jesus taught, but which was also famously used by Word of Faith teachers. And I wasn't one of them! My point?

A Christianity that rejects faith Scriptures is just as wrong as one that misapplies them!

If, after being saved by faith, we refuse to teach faith we cannot live by faith.

It's time we redefine and recover biblical faith.

Here is a working definition of faith: *deep confidence, quiet utter assurance, in the unfailing faithfulness, love, wisdom, and power of Jesus Christ.*

His **faithfulness** confirms He will keep all His covenant promises, prophecies, and plans in His time and way.

His **love** assures He is working all things – however strange, painful, or unfair – for our good if we will only patiently endure the things that contradict this.

His **wisdom** is always superior to ours, and that of all Adam's children, and in the end will be seen to be the wisest of all alternative counsels, methods, or plans.

His **power** is, well, awesomely superior to all human strength and satanic force – nothing and no one can stop His hand when He rises to act in our lives or world.

That's a definition of faith that is theologically correct and also practical. It's of heaven, yet down to earth. It is Christ centred, yet also Christian friendly.

You can take it to work with you every day, use it in every test, be comforted by it in every perplexity, and quietly live by it... until the One whose unfailing faithfulness you trust in comes for you, and me, and every other true child of biblical faith on this planet. 🐟



Haven't we waited long enough?

by Jan Markell

THE malady goes by many names: **End-time weariness; Rapture fatigue; Israel burn-out. The results are the same: The scoffers and skeptics are gaining too much territory and too many followers. The fact that the King is coming is boring and just old news. What Hal Lindsey wrote in 1969 in his classic *The Late-Great Planet Earth*, in the eyes of many, did not come to pass.**

Thus, there is a collective so-what sigh.

Haven't we waited long enough?

It is the tragedy of my lifetime – and I never thought I would see the day.

Late-Great Burn-Out?

Recently I read a revealing article in *The Guardian* recommended by Bill Koenig. It talks about the destruction of the new Christian progressiveness. This article suggests:

**The Late-Great Planet Earth* and the *Left Behind* series prophesied a lot of things that have not yet come to pass. Haven't we waited long enough? Isn't it time to move on from their message?

*Those who hung onto the words of the popular 1970s Larry Norman song, *I Wish We'd All Been Ready* have also waited long enough. Life has always been filled with guns and war and everyone gets trampled on the floor as the song goes, but so what? Almost 45 years have passed and the world is still groaning. It's time to move on.

*"We've been through all of this before" has replaced apocalyptic fervor! There is

nothing new under the sun. Your words of warning are now falling on deaf ears.

*Maybe you evangelicals have sided with the wrong players. Don't you know that hundreds of innocent Palestinians are being killed daily by apartheid Israelis?

End-time weariness. Rapture fatigue. Late-Great burn-out. The Chosen People have lost their chosenness. The article in *The Guardian* suggests all this and more!

The Spoilers: Date-Setters

Add to this mix that some date-setters have been wrong. Edgar Weisenhunt and Harold Camping not only set dates, but reset dates when nothing happened the first time. Hal Lindsey never said 1988 was the date of the Rapture but that was the accusation. He suggested 40 years after 1948 was an intriguing date. That's all.

The Bashers

Then came the bashers who are respected in some circles. Hank Hanegraaff said there was no Rapture to be found in the Bible. Who knew? Well, he's no Bible Answer Man to me.

Lynne Hybels and *World Vision* teamed up to condemn Israel as almost barbaric persecutors of the Palestinians in their one-sided "Hope for the Holy Land" tours across America.

What's in the water Frankie Schaeffer is drinking? When he, like Hanegraaff, joined the Eastern Orthodox Church, he went sideways. He now goes into tirades on *MSNBC* against what his parents – Francis and Edith Schaeffer – might have

believed about the end-times.

He slams his "good friend" Jerry Jenkins for coming up with the *Left Behind* books that belong in the Twilight Zone category according to Schaeffer. "What's in them can only be believed by white evangelicals who support Donald Trump," says Frankie.

Internet broadcaster Rick Wiles consistently says that Dispensationalists and Christian Zionists are the root of the world's problems and also the church's problems. *We are destroying the world.*

Destructive Social Justice

If your teen or twenty-something kid goes off to a *Justice Conference*, they will likely hear Marxist Cornell West rather than any pro-Israel speaker. The *Catalyst Conferences* aren't much better when it comes to promoting end-time theology. A persecuted Palestinian might be an honoured guest so that the social justice cravings of the Millennials can be satisfied.

Social justice has gained ground over good old-fashioned evangelical support for Israel and her God-given land. The under-age-40 crowd is listening to voices that are not telling the truth. They are hearing that Israel is illustrative of a new form of apartheid; that the Palestinians had their land stolen; and don't you know that the Church is the new Israel? Most reject what their parents grew up on: Israel is the apple of God's eye and the key to the end of the age.

These are just a few of many reasons why this glorious message that years ago had nearly every Christian excited that today might be *the day* is now a big yawn. It is now a wake-me-when-it's-over sentiment. Add to that the fact that our churches have dropped this message!

Deja vu All Over Again!

So when stunning events take place such as the moving of the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, the aligning of the nations in the Mideast that could be a part of the Gog-Magog War, and the convergence of dozens of end-time signs, there is a collective sigh. Some will say it's *déjà vu* all over again. You said that 40 years ago. Nothing happened.

So the fact that things are all coming together excites only a tiny remnant who will never grow weary of keeping their eyes on the sky!

If you are among them, hang in there. He is coming soon and Israel remains the apple of God's eye! 🐟



Was your humility showing today?

by A.W. Tozer

“Yes, all of you clothe yourselves with humility, to subject yourselves to one another; for ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5).’”

THE Apostle Peter, advising Christian believers to be clothed with humility in all of their relationships with one another, actually infers that genuine Christian humility should be their identifying uniform from day to day!

In that ancient culture, men dressed according to their status and place in society.

In our own day, we also are accustomed to identifying many public servants by the kind of uniform they wear. If we suddenly need help or assistance, even in a strange city, we look around quickly to find a helpful man in the policeman’s uniform.

We have no fear of the mailman. His uniform tells us that he is a servant of our government and that he has a responsibility for helpful public service.

So, the Holy Spirit through the apostle cites the necessity for members of the Body of Christ to be subject to one another in the bonds of love, mercy and grace. This honest posture of submission and humility becomes our uniform and adornment really, indicating that we are the redeemed and obedient disciples of Jesus Christ and that we belong to Him!

Peter’s request is not strange when we remember that it was Jesus Christ our Lord who dressed Himself in humility and then took that difficult course down, down, down – to the death on the cross!

It is a scriptural and divine example that we have in the person of Jesus, *“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name (Philippians 2:6-9).”*

I think it is most important for believers to acknowledge the fact that because Christ Jesus came to the world clothed in humility, He will always be found among

those who are clothed with humility.

He will be found among the humble people. This is a lesson that not all of us have learned.

I want to refer to a striking passage in the Song of Songs which I think throws practical light upon the desire of the heavenly Bridegroom to be in fellowship with those dear to him in places of humble service.

The illustration is in chapter five and the bride is telling of her distress because her beloved had called her during the evening to go with him and she was slow to respond. He called to her saying that his head was covered with the dew and his locks with the drops of the night, for he had been gathering lilies and myrrh and caring for his sheep.

In a kind of summary, she recalls that she was garbed beautifully for the night chamber but not in the attire which would allow her to respond quickly to his call, for he wanted her to join him in his humility and service among the sheep and in the duties of the gardens and fields.

Then she confesses: “I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone... I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer (Song of Solomon 5:6).”

By the time she was willing to put on the proper garment to join him in his humble duties, he was gone.

Now, the Scriptures are conclusive in teaching that God is always on the side of the humble man and Peter is in full agreement with the statement that God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.

Perhaps human beings are generally of the opinion that they will find Jesus Christ wherever they are; but I think there is such a thing as finding Christ wherever He is – and that will be in the place of humility, always!

God resists the man who is proud – and stubborn. I believe God has to consider the attitude of the proud man as being resistant to Him. It is not very often – perhaps once in a hundred years – that a person will actually raise his face to God and exclaim: “God, I resist you; I defy you!”

There is no general pattern of that kind

of defiance among men. We are much more likely to oppose God by resisting the side He is on and resisting His ways.

But the Scriptures plainly teach that when a proud and stubborn man resists God, he may expect to find that God is resisting him.

The man who sets his jaw and takes action against a Christian, even though he may be right in point of fact, nevertheless will find God in resistance to him because he is wrong in spirit and attitude.

I think God looks beyond the situation to the spirit and attitude. I think He is more concerned with how we react to abuse and mistreatment than to the fact that we have been abused by someone.

If you are His child taking some abuse or persecution for His sake, His great concern is the attitude that you will show in return.

Will you reveal a stubborn spirit intent upon revenge? If you resist the Spirit of God asking you to demonstrate the love and grace of Jesus Christ, your Saviour, you can be sure of one thing: God will resist you!

He doesn't switch sides

Now, that doesn’t mean that God is going to switch and take the side of the other man who has abused you. It just means that God will have to resist you because He will always resist the stubborn man.

Even if you have the facts on your side, God will know whether you are wrong in your spirit. When God resists a man for his pride, it is not likely that He will send immediate and dramatic judgement. God probably will not signal His resistance to the stubborn man by a judgement that will come in the public place.

Rarely does God send His judgement dramatically. I have wondered if we might learn our lessons of humility and obedience more quickly if God were to resist a man as one soldier to another, with the clash of sword and the letting of blood.

But it does not work that way. When God resists a man for the sins of his spirit and attitude, a slow, inward spiritual de-

generation will take place as a signal of the judgement that has come. A slow hardening that comes from unwillingness to yield will result in cynicism. The Christian joy will disappear and there will be no more fruits of the Spirit. That man will sour as a jar of fruit sours – and it is not an exaggeration to say that the man who has earned the resistance of God will continue to sour bitterly in his own juice.

God does resist the proud and I think the significant factor is this: the man may not have been wrong in point of fact, but he failed the test in his spirit!

It is significant, too, that the Scripture assures us that the same God who must resist the proud always stands ready to give grace to the humble. The Bible advises men and women to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. It is my opinion that if our humility had to show itself only under the hand of God, it would be a relatively easy gesture.

If the Lord should say to me, “I am coming and will stand at the front of the church and I will expect you to come and kneel before me and humble yourself,” it would be an easy thing for me to do because I know that no one will ever lose face in kneeling humbly before God Himself.

Any man would feel just as proud as ever even though kneeling before the eternal Majesty on high. But God knows our hearts and He doesn't allow us to fulfil His demands for humility with a mere gesture.

God may use people whom you think are not worthy to shine your shoes and in a given situation He will expect you to humble yourself meekly and take from them whatever it is they are pouring on you. In that spirit of meekness you would be humbling yourself under the mighty hand of God!

Think of the example of our Saviour, cruelly beaten and cut with the lash. That whip was not wielded by an archangel but by the hands of a pagan Roman soldier. The abuse that was heaped on Jesus did not come from any multitude of the heavenly host – but from wicked, blasphemous and dirty-tongued men who were not worthy to clean the dust from the soles of His sandals.

Jesus willingly humbled Himself under the hand of men and so He humbled himself under the hand of God.

Christians have often asked: “Must I humble myself and meekly accept every situation in life?”

I think this is the answer: As Christians, we must never violate morals or truth in humility.

If in humbling ourselves we compromise

the truth, we must never do it. If it means a compromise of morality, we must never do it.

I am confident that no man is ever called of God to degrade himself, either morally or in truth. But we do have calling from God to humble ourselves under His mighty hand – and let the other party do the rock-throwing!

God's due time

In this call to His people for true humility, God adds the promise that He will exalt us in due time. “Due time.” I think that means a time that is proper to all of the circumstances. It will be the time that God knows is best suited to perfect us and a time that will bring honour to God and the most good to men. That is “due time.”

It may be that in God's will He will expect us to wait a long time before He can honour us or exalt us. He may let us labour in humility and subjection for a long period because it is not yet His time – due time.

Brethren, God knows what is best for each of us in His desire to make us the kind of saints that will glorify and honour Him in all things!

Many of us have harmed our own children in such ways as these: teaching them to drive our cars before they were old enough; giving them too much freedom before they knew the meaning of responsibility and maturity.

These things come out of our misdirected kindnesses, but they will harm the child. To reward a man for things he has not earned and does not deserve will surely harm the man.

Likewise, for God to come too quickly to the defence, before the saint has gone through the fire, will harm the saint.

We are faced here with Bible truth and not with the fiction of men.

A modern book of fiction would have had Daniel well protected. As he was about to be placed in the lions' den, a voice out of the sky would have spoken and every lion would have dropped dead.

But what actually happened? God allowed Daniel's enemies to put him in the den of lions and he slept there with the lions until morning because God's “due time” for Daniel was in the morning, not the night before!

I would also like to see how the modern fiction writers would handle the story of the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. They could make a whole book out of that!

They would be forced to some climactic

human trick to put out that fire just before the three young men were to be tossed into the furnace – but that would be putting out the fire too soon!

For God to have His own way and to be glorified in due time, those saints had to go into the fire and stay there – until the due time.

God has said He will exalt you in due time, but remember, He is referring to His time and not yours.

Some of you are actually in a fiery furnace right now. You are in a special kind of spiritual testing. The pastor may not know it and others may not know it, but you have been praying and asking the Lord: “Why don't You get me out of this?”

In God's plan it is not yet “due time.” When you have come through the fire, God will get you out and there will not be any smell of smoke on your garment and you will not have been harmed.

The only harm that can come will be from your insistence that God must get you out sooner than He plans.

The Lord has promised to exalt you in due time and He has always kept His promises to His people.


As children of God, we can always afford to wait. A saint of God does not have to be concerned about time when he is in the will of God.

It is the sinner who has no time. He has to hurry or he will go to hell, but the Christian has an eternity of blessedness before him.

So, if you are in a furnace, don't try to come out too soon! Wait it out in the will of God and He will exalt you in due time – time proper to the circumstances. It will be a time properly designed to glorify God and to bless your own spirit.

One of our great weaknesses as Christian men and women is our continued insistence upon getting vindicated before the trial is over. God has said that He wants to try us and test us and when the trial is over, He Himself will bring in the verdict: “Tested – and found worthy!”

I only pray that we all may know how to conduct ourselves as trusting children of God during this period in which we await His return. Paul wrote that Jesus first came to earth in the fullness of time – it was God's time for Him to come that He might die for our sins.

Peter wrote that God will exalt us in “due time,” speaking of the fact that Jesus will again return to earth in God's time. God's plan for us in these days is to be subject one to another in humility in preparation for the return of His Son to be exalted with His saints! 

Heavenly Rewards ...and the difference they should make in your life

by Glenn Meredith

I'VE got to be honest with you about the fact that in the early part of my life, I wasn't real excited about the return of Jesus.

I could remember sitting in a revival meeting one time when I was a teenager, and the evangelist actually said that when Jesus returns, we are going to stand before His judgement seat and watch as our lives are flashed on a giant movie screen and all the sins that we have ever committed will be shown on that screen for all to see. To say the least, I really wasn't looking forward to that!

I have found since that time that many believers share the same feeling of fear and anxiety that I felt as a teenager. And if that is how you feel, then I have got great news for you! The great movie-show of your life is not what the Bible teaches.

Let's get into this issue by taking a look at 2 Corinthians 5:10 where the Apostle Paul says, "For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body whether good or bad."

Now, all my life when I would read that passage, I would think, "Okay, I'm going to stand before Jesus at His judgement seat, and He is going to talk to me about all the good things that I've done, but also all the bad or sinful things that I've done. And all those sinful things will be paraded before the world."

Now, the great good news I have for you is that this passage is teaching no such thing. There are several words in New Testament Greek that can be translated as "bad." A couple of them mean morally bad, referring to something that is sinful or wicked. But the word that is used here (kakos) is a different word, and its primary meaning in this context is worthless. It would be like if a person said, "The piece of fruit that I bought is bad." The word, bad, in that sentence doesn't mean the fruit is morally sinful or evil. It just means it is worthless.

That's what Paul is teaching in 2 Corinthians 5:10. When we as believers stand

before the judgement seat of Jesus, we are not going to be judged of our sins. Instead, we are going to be judged of the works that we have done for Jesus. And what will be evaluated are those works that we have done that are of value to the Lord. The Bible says that we will receive rewards for those things that we have done that are of value. And those things we have done that are worthless, that are of no genuine eternal value, will be burned up.

Good news about judgement

Now why is it that when we are standing before the judgement seat of Christ that somehow we don't have to give an account of our sins? Why is that? Is God just going to overlook them? Are we just getting a pass? No, the Scriptures say that we who are believers will never stand before Jesus and give an accounting of our sins. And that's because of another judgement that has already taken place. I'm talking about when the Lord Jesus Christ, our glorious Saviour, was hanging on the Cross. The Bible says Jesus' death for our sins cancelled the charge of the legal indebtedness which stood against us and condemned us. Jesus has taken it away, nailing it to the Cross.

The cross was like the electric chair of the Roman Empire. It was the means of public execution. And so when a criminal was crucified, they would nail to his cross the charges for which he was dying so that all who would walk by and see him would know the crimes for which he was being executed.

When our Lord Jesus was crucified, Pilate had a sign placed on His cross that read, "This is the King of the Jews." But the Bible says that's not really the crime for which He died. His death, according to Colossians 2:14, was for your sins and mine which God nailed to the Cross. Thus, while Jesus was hanging on the Cross, God began to treat Jesus like He would have treated you and me in judgement for our sins.

That is why Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?" Why? Because at that moment He was answering for your sins and mine.



And so, my sins and yours were judged upon the Cross. And because of the blood that Jesus Christ shed for our sins, because of the death that He died in our place, the Bible says that the record book of our sins was taken away, removed and cancelled. There is no more record of your sin if you're a child of Jesus Christ.

Isn't that great news? And, in fact, if you stood before God and He required your sins to be judged again, He would be unjust.

And because of that, when the Lord Jesus comes for His Bride, the Church, the first thing He's going to do is reward His Bride. He's not going to beat up His Bride with judgement. The Bible tells us there is a promise of rewards.

Now, I find that believers don't really talk about rewards very much. I'm really amazed quite frankly at the reaction I get when I bring up the subject. I cannot tell you how many times I have seen someone do something that is sweet or thoughtful or kind, and I will say something like, "Well, the Lord is going to reward you for that." And the person will say, "Oh, no, no, no, I'm not doing it for the reward. I don't want any reward."

It is like they turn a double back flip to get away from the idea of rewards. Well, why is that? I think it is a misunderstanding of something that they think the Bible teaches, that it doesn't teach. Many believers think that even if the Lord promises us over and over again in His Word that we are going to be rewarded for the good things that we've done, they think that if they are motivated by the reward, they will lose the reward! They think God promised rewards so we would be motivated to serve



Him, but if by chance we are motivated by those rewards we will lose them. Now, where do they get that strange idea?

I think it comes from Matthew 6:1-4 where Jesus made the following comment:

1) Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

2) So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

3) But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,

4) so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Because of this passage, many people think that if somehow they work for a reward, they will lose the reward. But that's not what Jesus was teaching. The point He was making is that our good works should not be done for the praise of men. Rather, we should do our good for the praise of Jesus.

We are supposed to be motivated by the hope that when we stand before the Lord one day, we will hear our wonderful Saviour say, "Well done, good and faithful servant (Matthew 25:21)." That would have to be the most beautiful thing that you could ever hear in your entire eternity – for Jesus Christ to look at your life and sum it up by saying, "Good job. Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord prepared for

you before the foundations of the world." What a great day that would be.

Another reason some believers are not really motivated very much by the promise of rewards is because they believe the rewards will be temporary. That's where I was for many years. I was taught that when I died, or when the Lord came, I would stand before Him and be judged of my works to determine my rewards. And when it was all over and I had received my rewards, I would cast them at the feet of Jesus and be done with them. Everyone else would do likewise, and from that point on, we would all be the same for all eternity.

This concept is based on a passage in the book of Revelation where the Apostle John is taken to Heaven – to the throne-room of God – where he sees 24 elders worshipping God. They cast their crowns before the throne, and they say, "You are worthy, our Lord and our God, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they were created and have their being (Revelation 4:11)."

Whenever...

But I want you to notice that this passage starts with a qualifier. It begins with the word, "whenever." It says that "whenever" the 24 elders worship God, they cast their crowns before His throne. That does not indicate a once-and-for-all action. Instead, it indicates that they put their crowns at God's feet each time they worship Him. Do you really think there is only one time when we are going to break forth in worship of God? No, this is going to be happening eternally.

Likewise, do you think it won't matter if you have no rewards with which to honour the Lord? Won't it be wonderful to be able to say to Him, "I thought You were worthy of living my life for You when I was on earth. Here now are the rewards You've given me for that which I believed was just my reasonable service. You gave me the rewards, and now I place them at Your feet because You are the one who deserves the honour, and the glory, and the praise, not me." And you will be able to do that over and over and over again throughout eternity.

So, some people don't think about rewards because they think they're not supposed to, and that is wrong. Others think they are temporary, and that is wrong. In 1 Peter 5:4 we are told that "when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."

I've also heard some people say, "Well, you know I don't really care about rewards. They don't really matter. I just want to make it to Heaven. And if I just get through the pearly gates and they slam the gates behind me I'll say, 'Whew, I made it!'" And they think they'll be totally cool with that. They think that Heaven is going to be so wonderful that it really won't matter to them for all eternity whether they have any rewards, because they have concluded, "We're all going to sort of be the same up there anyway. There's not going to be any distinctions between believers, so it doesn't really matter."

But 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 says: "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved – even though only as one escaping through the flames."

This is saying that at the moment you stand before the judgement seat of Jesus – when your life for Him is evaluated – your life's work could go up in flames.

Do you really think it won't matter to you? Do you think when your name is called and you are face-to-face with Jesus, you are not going to mind saying, "Well, Lord, I just wanted your salvation, and I am glad to have it. But I didn't think you were worth living for. I didn't think it was worth sacrificing for You."

Do you see what I mean when I say it's going to be a terrible thing for any believer to stand before Jesus with a wasted life?

Another reason some people are not motivated by rewards is because they have what I would call a Socialist view of Heaven. This is the concept that the rewards will be temporary, and once they are discarded, we're all just going to be the same, and there will be no distinctions in Heaven for all eternity.

They base this reasoning on the belief that if the rewards are permanent, they would motivate us to be jealous of each other, and there certainly cannot be any jealousy in Heaven. They think, "Well if I saw somebody who had more rewards than me, I'd be jealous." Now, that's flawed human logic, because it's not what the Bible teaches.

It is certainly correct that there will be no jealousy in Heaven. But it's not because



Continued...

there will be no distinctions between rewards. It's because we will all be motivated by perfect love at that point. It will be like one of my children doing something special and becoming very successful in life. I would be exceedingly happy for them, not jealous of them, because I love them.

Likewise, in Heaven, we will love our brothers and sisters, and when we see someone who did devote their life to Christ, we will admire them. We will praise them. We will thank them for their service, and we will love them. We will not be jealous.

Believe me, there will be eternal distinctions in Heaven because what you do now in this life will have a profound impact on the rewards you will receive and the services you will be assigned.

Various Crowns

With regard to specific rewards, the Bible teaches that there are at least five different crowns that will be handed out by the Lord Jesus Christ.

One is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 where it says: "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? So, run to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; we do it to get a crown that will last forever."

This reward is often referred to as "The Incorruptible Crown" or "The Victor's Crown." This is a crown that evidently will be earned by those who demonstrate self-discipline in their service to the Lord. In other words, the person who receives this reward will be one who lived their life saying, "Not my will Lord, but Your will be done. I want to live my life for You."

A second crown is mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 2:19. It's called "The Crown of Rejoicing," or "The Soul Winner's Crown." In that verse, Paul says, "What is our hope? What is our joy? What is the crown in which we will glory in the presence of the Lord when He comes? Is it not

you?" He is speaking of the people he has brought to the Lord.

This verse makes it clear that there is evidently going to be a reward that will be given out to those who have been instrumental in leading other people to come to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that this crown will be given to those who have personally led others to Christ. But it may be given also to those who have been an evangelistic aide – those who have prayed for souls and who have given financially to evangelistic ministries.

There is a third crown mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:8. It is called "The Crown of Righteousness." The Apostle Paul wrote about this crown near the end of his life, shortly before he knew he was going to die a martyr's death. He said: "I fought the good fight, I finished the race, I've kept the faith, and now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge will award to me on that day; but not to me only, but to all those who have longed for His appearing."

Think of it, there is a special crown that will be given to those people who live with an eternal attitude, daily yearning for the return of Jesus.

A fourth crown is one I've mentioned already. It's found in 1 Peter 5:4. It is called "The Shepherd's Crown" or "The Crown of Glory." It is promised to faithful pastors and elders.

James 1:12 tells us of a fifth crown, called "The Crown of Life." The passage reads: "Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him."

This is a crown for those who have endured difficult trials, temptations, suffering, persecution, and maybe even have given their life for the cause of Christ. In Revelation 2:10, Jesus mentions this crown: "Be faithful even unto death, and I will give to you the crown of life."

So there are at least five different crowns, and these crowns are going to be marks of identification for all of eternity. People will point to a person walking by and say, "Look, that person has the Crown of Life, he suffered for the Lord. And here comes a faithful shepherd of the flock of God."

Heavenly Treasures

Not only will there be distinctions of crowns, but the Bible tells us we will receive different amounts of treasure. For example, in Matthew 6:19, Jesus says, "Do not store up for yourself treasures on

earth where moths and vermin destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourself treasures in Heaven where moths and vermin do not destroy, where thieves do not break in and steal, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

You need to understand that this statement by Jesus is a command. Jesus is not saying, "Well, let Me give you some good investment strategy that you can take or leave." No, He's giving us a command here. He's saying, "Do not store up your treasures on this earth. They are temporary. Thieves break in and steal them. Some rust, and some are eaten by moths. Instead, lay up your treasures in Heaven because they will last forever. Thieves can't break in and steal them, they won't rust, they won't rot, they are forever."

In 1 Timothy 6:17-19 Paul also speaks of treasures in Heaven. He says: "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life."

So, Jesus and Paul both exhort us to "lay up treasures in Heaven." How do we do that? Paul tells us how in the passage above. He says, "Do good. Do good to other people because you are a follower of Jesus Christ. Be rich in good deeds and what you do for other people. Be generous in your giving, your financial giving. Be willing to share." And in doing this He says, "That's how you send it on ahead." There will be treasures awaiting you in Heaven that you will enjoy forever.

Levels of Glory

The Bible also tells us that there will be distinctions of glory that will be revealed in us. Consider these words of Paul in Romans 8:18: "For I consider that the present sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us."

He adds in 2 Corinthians 4:17&18 "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all (our sufferings). So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

So Paul says that when trouble comes into your life, and you respond by con-

tinuing to trust God, continuing to have faith in Him, and continuing to serve Him with afflictions, those sufferings are working for you an eternal weight of glory. And he says no matter how hard it is right now, it is working such a weight of glory that you will look back one day and say, "What I suffered was no big deal."

In fact, it is interesting to me that when we go through difficulties, we usually spend much of our time praying for God to get us out of them. I think we are going to stand before the Lord one day, and when we see that all the troubles we went through while we were faithfully trusting Him were compiling for us an eternal weight of glory, we will wish we had experienced more troubles!

Degrees of Responsibility

Another type of reward the Bible mentions relates to different responsibilities that we will have during both the Millennium and the Eternal State. Jesus mentioned this reward in a very famous parable in Luke 19:11-27, called The Parable of the Minas. It is different to the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30).

A mina was worth about three month's wages. Jesus told a story about a nobleman who entrusted one mina to each of 10 of his servants and told them to do business with the money. Later, when he called them to account to him what they had done with the money, he rewarded each one a degree of ruling authority in proportion to what that servant had earned with the money. He put one over 10 cities, another over five, and so on.

This passage clearly indicates that one day we are going to rule and reign with Christ in His kingdom. But the responsibility that is assigned to each of us in both the Millennium and the Eternal State will be directly related to how faithful we are right now in this life. The more you do for Christ now, the more responsibility He will give you then.

It really does matter how you live today!

God's Memory

The Bible says in Hebrews 6:10, "God is not unjust; He will not forget your work, and the love that you have shown Him as you have helped His people and you continue to help them." This passage is saying, "God has not forgotten anything you've ever done for Him."

Well, some of you have been believers a long time. Many of you gave your life to Christ as a child. I gave my life to Him when I was eight years old. I remember

serving Him as best as I knew how. I remember as a teenager trying my best to serve the Lord in what understanding I had of what it meant to live a Christian life. But I'll be honest with you, I don't remember a great deal of it. But the Bible says God remembers every bit of it.

The Bible says in Malachi 3:16 that there is a Book of Remembrance in which God has written down all of the things that you have done for Him.

All those times you prayed for someone, but you've forgotten about it. God says, "I haven't forgotten."

All those times that maybe you walked up to somebody who was poor and needy, or somebody on the street walked up to you, and because you are a follower of Jesus you gave them something, and you don't even remember it. But Jesus remembers it.

And one of these days you are definitely going to stand before your Saviour, but your sins are not going to be thrown up on the screen. Rather, what is going to be brought to light are all the things that you did for Jesus in that secret place, in that closet where the Father saw you praying and nobody else knew you were praying. He will remember all those donations you made to advance His kingdom. He will remember all those times that you were kind, you were sweet, you were encouraging to someone.

In Matthew 10:41&42 Jesus tells us: "Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you that person will certainly not lose their reward."

Jesus is setting the bar really low. He is saying, "I'm going to remember every cup of cold water that you gave someone because you were a follower of Me, because you were trying to bless someone else because of your walk with Me."

He is promising that everything you do for Him will one day be rewarded. This means that what you do to serve Jesus really matters.

Service Rewards

The last passage I want to share with you is Ephesians 6:5&6.

In these two verses Paul is talking to slaves in the Roman Empire who are believers, and he's telling them how they ought to live and respond to their earthly masters. He wrote: "Slaves obey your

earthly masters with respect, and fear, with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favour when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ doing the will of God from your heart, serve wholeheartedly."

Now, Paul is talking about our work – our occupations. He's telling us, "Serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one of you for whatever good you do, whether you be slave, or free."

Maybe some of you have become bored with your jobs. Maybe you are no longer motivated to go to work because you feel like what you are doing is inconsequential. If so, you need to keep in mind you're serving the Lord when you go to work. So, serve your employer as if you were serving Jesus. If it's making widgets or making beds, whatever it might be, do it wholeheartedly as unto the Lord your Saviour. He will not forget it, and on that great day when He hands out those rewards, you'll be fully rewarded from the Lord for your faithful service.


A Plea

If you are a person reading this who has never given your life to Christ, then you're not prepared for eternity and you are not a candidate for rewards. But you can get prepared right this moment by giving your life to Jesus Christ.

How do you do that? The Bible says that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved (Acts 2:21)." Just call, "Lord, save me!"

But in order to call out properly, the Bible says you have to believe and repent. You have to believe and have enough faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that you're willing to call out to Him and say, "Lord, Jesus forgive me of my sins and save me from them."

And so, if you are reading this and you've never given your life to Christ, then right now, wherever you are, just call out, and God will hear your prayer. The record book of your sin will be cancelled, and you'll begin a brand new life. You can start living your life for something that will matter for all of eternity.

To the Saints of God who are reading this, I encourage you, brothers and sisters, to remember that your labours in the Lord are not in vain. Keep on keeping on. Live your life for Jesus, because what you do now has a profound impact on what you will have and what you will do for all of eternity. 

Rescue the Christian who is losing his way



by Steve Gallagher

“My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins (James 5:19).”

YOU see them at the Christian bookstore, sitting next to you in the pew on Sunday; you don’t realise it, but they are people hooked on masturbation, pornography, or illicit sex. They have strayed “from the truth,” and unless someone helps them get back on course, Scripture is clear that they will be destroyed.

A Slow Drift

What does the Bible tell us about this wayward soul? The writer of Hebrews likened him to a boat that has lost its moorings and is drifting down the river (2:1). The Psalmist said he has wandered away from the commandments (119:21). Jesus placed him among those who, “have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away (Luke 8:13).”

Peter said, “having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin... forsaking the right way they have gone astray (2 Peter 2:14&15).” They maintain “a form of religion” but have veered off course in their hearts.

Not only has this poor soul strayed from the Lord, but, in the process, he also has

accumulated to his charge “a multitude of sins.” Search the depths of his heart and you will discover the evil desires he has been unwilling to relinquish. Peek into his inner being and you will find an unseen “world of iniquity.”

Observe what he does when nobody is watching, and you will see a sordid and seedy life that will shock you.

Each and every day, since he turned away from the Living God, he has added to his guilt. Every month of every year the “Mount of Transgression” has grown larger. He has long-since forgotten most of his sins – but Heaven has not. Every deed has been recorded with terrifying precision. He has consistently grieved, resisted and provoked the Holy Spirit.

Leading to Death

The Bible tells us that the ultimate penalty for this “multitude of sins” is the death of his soul. But what exactly does this mean? Charles Finney described one aspect of it:

“When my last child died, the struggle was long; O, it was fearfully protracted and agonising; 24 hours in the agonies of dissolving nature. It made me wish I could not see it! But suppose it had continued till this time? I should long since have died myself under the anguish and nervous exhaustion of witnessing such a scene. Who would not cry out, ‘My God, cut it

short, cut it short in mercy!’

“The figure of our text supposes an eternal dying. Suppose a poor man cannot die! He lingers in the death agony a month, a year, five years, 10 years until all his friends are broken down, and fall into their graves under the insupportable horror of the scene: but still the poor man cannot die. He outlives one generation then another and another; 100 years he is dying in mortal agony, and yet he comes no nearer to the end. What would you think of such a scene? But it would still be a feeble illustration of the awful ‘second death!’”

Again, this refers to just one of many descriptive phrases concerning eternal separation from God. For example, who can truly comprehend Jesus’ meaning when He said that some would be sent into “outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12)?”

Or, what were the eternal implications of His warning that a sinner would be handed “over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed (Matthew 18:34)?”

What about those who would hear the terrifying words, “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41)?”

As if that’s not enough, consider the

frightening conclusion inferred by each of these biblical phrases:

* “for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever (Jude 1:13).”

* “they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Revelation 20:10).”

* “the wrath of God abides on him (John 3:36).”

* “eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 1:9).”

All of this and more must have been in James’ heart when he implored his readers to restore wayward souls. With the same passion, his brother, Jude, also urged his readers to save them, “snatching them out of the fire (Jude 1:22).”

Getting Involved

The grim realities expressed by these scriptural portraits should be sufficient to compel any sincere Christian to do everything within his power to redeem an errant soul from such a fate. And yet, let us not forget the positive aspects of such a deliverance. Not only is the sinner saved from hell, but he is saved into heaven!

Just imagine what awaits a restored sinner as he enters this enchanting paradise. One of his first experiences is to see his life played out before him on a “heavenly screen.” He sees the reality of the hell in which he lived and the eternal damnation from which he was rescued. Perhaps for the first time, he realises the horrible and certain destruction from which he has been saved.

As he watches all that occurred in and around his life, the “movie” reveals how he fell away from God and into sinful rebellion. At the same time that was happening, he observes the many different times that a loving saint was earnestly praying on his behalf – that person was you.

The next scene shows the moment when his life was turned around. He is reminded that you were the one who urgently shared a concern for his soul. He sees how you encouraged him along the way, reproved him when he wandered, and, above all, prayed for him throughout the process. He had no idea how much of a part you played in his restoration.

For seven long years, he waits for you to land upon the “shores of eternal bliss.” Finally, he hears of your entrance into the Celestial City and rushes to be the first to greet you.

Overwhelmed with love and gratitude, he runs to embrace you, covering your face with kisses. “Do you realise what you have saved me from?” he almost demands. Without even waiting for a reply, he grabs

your face and kisses you again. (There is no social awkwardness in heaven to prevent such displays of affection.)

Embarrassed, feeling as though you did very little, you protest, “You give me too much credit. It was the Lord who saved you.”

“Yes, but you were the one person concerned enough to help me get back on track,” he counters. “Where would I be today if you had not cared about me?” Again, more kisses.

Joy in God’s Work


Eventually, having escaped his outpouring of love, you too are brought before the Lord. Now it is your turn to watch your life played out. What you did for this one lost soul is shown before a vast multitude of angelic beings and redeemed souls.

“There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:10).” That joy and gratitude is now directed toward you. To them, you are every bit as much of a hero as a man who rushes into a burning house to save a child or a man who dives into icy, churning waters to save someone from drowning.

Your selfless actions are now to be honoured by no less than God Himself (1

Corinthians 4:5).

The earthly homage paid to Mordecai is a mere foreshadowing of what awaits you: “For the man whom the king desires to honour, let them bring a royal robe which the king has worn, and the horse on which the king has ridden, and on whose head a royal crown has been placed; and let the robe and the horse be handed over to one of the king’s most noble princes and let them array the man whom the king desires to honour and lead him on horseback through the city square, and proclaim before him, ‘Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honour (Esther 6:7-9).’”

Among the varied works in which a Christian may involve himself, winning souls and restoring backsliders surely must be considered among the noblest. May the words of James to us serve as a sobering reminder of the preciousness of souls. As we strive to keep ourselves in the love of God, let us never underestimate the importance of intercession and restoration. 

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Meditation

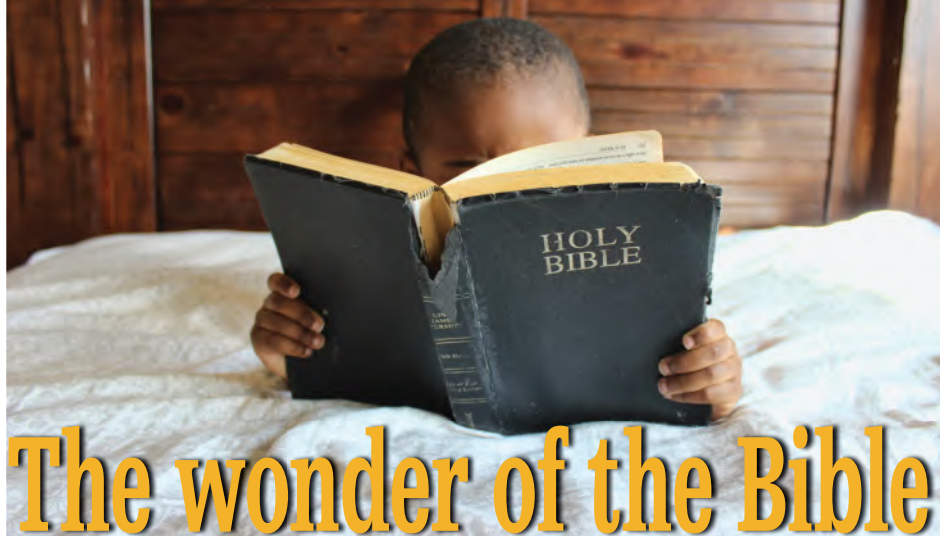
by John Bunyan

READ the Bible, and read it again, and do not despair of help to understand something of the will and mind of God, even though you think they are locked up from you.

Neither trouble yourself, though you have not commentaries and expositions; pray and read, and read and pray; for a little from God is better than a great deal from man. Also, what is from man is uncertain, and is often lost and tumbled over by man; but what is from God is fixed as a nail in a sure place.

There is nothing that so abides with us as what we receive from God; and the reason why Christians in this day are at such a loss, as to some things, is because they are content with what comes from men’s mouths, without searching and kneeling before God, to know of Him the truth of things.

Things which we receive at God’s hand come to us as things from the minting house, though old in themselves, yet new to us. Old truths are always new to us if they come to us with the smell of heaven upon them. 



by Dyson Hague

THE wonder of the Bible grows on us as our experience is enlarged, for the more deeply we search it, the more we feel that the Bible is not merely a book, but *the* Book. It stands alone; unapproachable in grandeur; as high above all other books as heaven is above earth, as the Son of God above the sons of men.

One of the first things about this Book that evokes our wonder is the very fact of its existence. Anyone who has studied the history and origin of the divine Word must be struck with wonderment at the mysterious method of its formation. That it ever was a book, and today *the* Book of the world, is really a literary miracle. For there never was any order given to any man to plan the Bible, nor was there any concerted plan on the part of the men who wrote, to write the Bible.

The way in which the Bible gradually grew is one of the mysteries of time. Little by little, part by part, century after century, it came out in fragments and unrelated portions, written by various men, without any intention (so far as we can tell) of anything like concerted arrangement.

One man wrote one part in Arabia, another wrote another part in Syria; a third wrote in Israel, another in Greece and Italy; some writers wrote hundreds of years after or before the others, and the first part was written many hundred years before the man who wrote the last part was born.

Now, take any other book; you know fairly well how it arose. In nine cases out of 10 a man determined to write a book, thought it out, collected the material, wrote or dictated it, had it copied or printed, and it was completed within four or six or more months or years.

The average book, we may suppose, takes from one to 10 years to produce, though books like Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, or Tennyson's poems, took longer to complete. But, generally speaking, a book has been produced by

one man within his own generation.

But there is a book that took thousands of years to write, spanning at least 60 generations of this old world's history. It enlarges our conceptions of God; it gives us new ideas of His infinite patience as we think of the wonder of His calm, quiet waiting as He watches the strain, the haste and restlessness of man across the feverish years, while slowly and silently the great Book grew.

Here a little and there a little of it came on; here is some history, and there prophecy; here a poem and there a biography – and at last in process of time, as silently as the house of the Lord of old (1 Kings 6:7), it came forth before a needy world in its finished completeness.

When Moses died there were only five small portions; when David sat upon the throne there were a few parchments more; one by one, prince, priest, and prophet laid on the growing pile their greater and smaller contributions, until in process of time the whole of the Old Testament Bible was written in its entirety.

Then, by the overruling design of the Almighty Spirit, without any concerted collaboration or unity of plan, fragment by fragment, here a biography, there a letter, the New Testament grew.

Yes! The Book is a marvel; it transcends all books; it is the miracle of literature in its formation. It is altogether unexplainable, unless God is its Author.

Another thing: We talk of this Bible as a book. We seldom think of it as a library consisting of 66 separate volumes, written by between 30 and 40 different authors, in three different languages, upon totally different topics, and under extraordinarily different circumstances.

One author wrote history, another biography; one wrote on theology, another wrote poetry, another, prophecy; some wrote on philosophy and jurisprudence, on genealogy and ethnology, and some, narratives of adventure and travel.

And the strangest thing of all is, that though their subjects are so diverse and

difficult – most difficult and abstruse to the natural mind – though there was no possibility of anything like concerted action, or transfer of literary responsibility (for it was impossible for the man who wrote the first pages to have the slightest knowledge what others would write about 1500 years after he was born), yet this miscellaneous collection of heterogeneous writings is not only unified by men in one book, but so unified by God, the Author, that we never think of it today as anything else than one Book!

And one Book it is indeed – the miracle of all literary unity.

Again, it is a wonder that that Book is here today. It is a wonder that we have a Bible at all when we think of its age. When we compare the Bible as a book with any other book, in this respect it is a perfect wonder.

You all know that one of the great tests of literature is time. Books that were the rage a few years ago are forgotten today.

They were born, they were boomed, and they died.

The cold hand of oblivion is laid upon them. Their force is spent. Their power is gone. Where, after all, is the book 500 years old and read by the masses today? You can put it down for a certainty that the older a book is the smaller is its chance of surviving, or of being read by people of diverse nationalities.

Still living today

But the marvellous thing about the Bible is that it is the only book in the world that has, in this way and to this marvellous degree, not only overleaped the barriers of time, but has also been able to overleap the barriers of nationality. The Bible, written by men who died thousands of years ago, is not only living today, but is the most widely circulated book in the world.

Another marvellous thing about this Book is that it is the only book in the world read by all classes and all sorts of people. It is a wonderful thing that one book so differs from all others – that it is read by the wisest of men, read to the little child, and read by the old man as he trembles on the brink of the other world.

Verily, it is without a parallel in literature. Boys and girls read and study it; and great scholars like Newton and Herschel and Faraday and Brewster, and great statesmen like Gladstone and Lincoln, have taken this Book as the joy and the guide of their life.

Another wonderful thing is that this Book was not written in Athens, the seat of learning in Greece, nor in Alexandria

in Egypt. It was not written by men who received their inspiration from the ancient sources of wisdom. It was written by men who lived in Israel.

One was a farm hand, another was a shepherd, and some were fishermen. They were men of no literary reputation. And yet from such men has come a Book that God in His mysterious power has so divested of all provincialism that it has become the standard of the language of the most literary nations of the world.

How do you explain then the fact that these unlearned men, unc cosmopolitan men, with all their provincialism, and exclusiveness, and insularity, were enabled to write a book which has become not only the book of the Jews, but the Book of the world today?

Another wonderful thing about the Bible is that it has stood ages of ferocious and incessant persecution. Century after century men have tried to burn it and to bury it. Crusade after crusade has been organised to eradicate it. Kings of the earth set themselves, and rulers of the church took counsel together, to destroy it from off the face of the earth.

Diocletian, the Roman Emperor, in 303 inaugurated the most terrific onslaught that the world has known upon a book. Almost every Bible was destroyed; myriads of Christians perished; and a column of triumph was erected over an exterminated Bible with the inscription: "Extincto nomine Christianorum (extinct is the name of Christians)."

And yet, not many years later, the Bible came forth as Noah from the ark to re-people the earth, and in the year 325 Constantine enthroned the Bible as the Infallible Judge of Truth in the First General Council!

Then followed the prolonged medieval persecutions. You all know how the Church of Rome denied the Scriptures to the people. The Church of Rome never trusted the people with the Bible. For ages it was practically an unknown book. Martin Luther was a grown man when he said that he had never seen a Bible in his life.

Not only so: in consequence of edicts of Councils, and bans and bulls of Popes, Bibles were burned and Bible readers sent by the Inquisition to rack and flame.

Yet perhaps the worst opposition to the Bible has been during the last 250 years. Its bitterest foes, curiously enough, were men who claimed liberty of thought, and Bolingbroke and Hume and Voltaire seemed so confident of the extermination of the Bible, that the Frenchman declared that a hundred years after his day not a Bible would be found, except as an anti-

quarian curiosity.

Yet here the Bible is today, stronger than ever. It stands, and will stand. The adversaries have done their worst. They have charged their heaviest charge. They have fired their deadliest volley.

Yet, in spite of all these age-long persecutions and assaults, the Word of the Lord is having free course, and is being glorified.

Its depth is infinite; its height is infinite. Millions of readers and writers, age after age, have dug in this unfathomable mine, and its depths are still unexhausted. Age after age it has generated, with ever-increasing power, ideas, plans, schemes, themes, and books. The greatest minds have been its expositors. Myriads of students have studied it daily, and its readers from day to day can be numbered by millions.

The volumes that have been written on single chapters or even verses would fill the shelves of many a library, and today they are as fresh, as fertile, as inexhaustible as the day they were first written. The treasures yet to be found are as the stars of the sky, of infinite multitude.

A voice from heaven

This is another wonder. It breaks upon you as the Voice from heaven. Five hundred times in the first five books of the Bible it prefaces or concludes its declarations with the sublime assertions, "The Lord said," or, "The Lord spoke!" Three hundred times again in the following books it does the same; and in the prophetic books it does so 1200 times with such expressions as: "Hear the word of the Lord," or "Thus says the Lord."

No other book dares thus to address itself to the universal conscience. No other speaks with such binding claim or presumes to command the obedience of mankind, and men in every age and clime acknowledge this claim. The Book speaks to their inner consciousness, with authority, the authority of God Himself.

Men think of the Bible as a book that *was* inspired. But the wonder of the Bible is that it is vivifying and operative *now*. From the far-distant heights of time it comes sweeping into the hearts of men today, and the same breath of God that breathed into it its mystic life makes it living and energising today. It is the Living Word, vital with the life of the Living God who gave it and gives it living power.

The 23rd Psalm was inspired. But again and again today, as it is whispered in the hush of the death chamber, or read with the hidden cry, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law

(Psalm 119:18)," it is a living Word, and the Spirit breathes life through it once more.

And this is the most remarkable and unique feature of the Bible: I feel that it is mine. Its promises are mine. As I read the 103rd Psalm, it is not ancient Hebrew, it is present-day power; and I, a living soul, overwhelmed with gratitude, cry out: "Bless the Lord, O my soul."


It changes men's lives. It alters their destinies. It inaugurates worldwide movements. One of its texts transformed Luther and was the beginning of the greatest of modern epochs. It comes into communities of unrighteousness as a regenerate force. Great enterprises – philanthropic, redemptive, and educational – arise and stand as tributes to its vitalising power. Ten thousand times ten thousand are the evidences of the regenerative power of the Word of God which lives and abides for ever.

But the supreme wonder of the Book is Christ – He is its fullness, its centre, its great subject. Old Testament and New Testament alike tell of Jesus, the great Fact of history, the great Force of history, the great Future of history; for of this Book it can be said: "The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof (Revelation 21:23)."

And as long as men live upon the face of this globe the Book that tells of that Supreme Personality, the Centre of a world's desire – Christ, the great Arch that spans history, the Keystone of prophecy – Christ, the Revealer, the Redeemer; the Risen, the Reigning, the Returning Lord – Jesus, the Desire of all nations; so long will this Book draw men's hearts like a magnet, and men will stand by it, and live for it, and die for it!

When you come to this Book, come to it with reverence. Read it with a plea for the Spirit's help. "Take off your shoes from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground (Exodus 3:5)."

Other books are of the earth. This is from heaven. Do not think and do not say that this Book only *contains* the words of God! It *is* the Word of God!

Think not of it only as a good book, or even as a better book, but hold it in your heart and faith, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the Word of God; nay more, as the living Word of the Living God: supernatural in origin; inexpressible in value; infinite in scope; divine in authorship, though human in penmanship; regenerative in power; infallible in authority; personal in application; inspired in totality. 

Condensed from a pamphlet. Dyson Hague (1857-1935) was a Canadian clergyman, educator, and author.



The Greatest Prayer

by S. D. Gordon

THERE is a greatest prayer, the greatest that can be offered. It is the sub-stratum of every true prayer. It is the undercurrent in the stream of all Spirit-breathed prayer. Jesus Himself gives it to us in the only form of prayer He left for our use. It is small in size, but mighty in power. Four words – “*Thy will be done.*” Let us draw up our chairs, and brew it over mentally, that its strength and fragrance may come up into our nostrils, and fill our very beings.

“Thy...”

“Thy:” That is God. On one side, He is wise, with all of the intellectual strength, and keenness and poised judgment that that word among men brings to us. On another side, He is strong, with all that that word can imply of might and power irresistible.

On still another side He is good, pure, holy with the finest thought those words ever suggest to us in those whom we know best, or in our dreams and visions. Then on a side remaining, the tender personal side, He is – loving? No, that is quite inadequate. He is *love*. Its personification is He. Now remember that we do not know the meaning of those words. They mean infinitely more than we think. Their meaning is a projection along the lines of our thought of them, but measurelessly beyond our highest reach.

And then, this God, wise, strong, good, and love, is *kin to us*. We belong to Him.

In the words of an old hymn: “We are His folk; He doth us feed. And for His sheep, He doth us take.”

We are His children by creation, and by a new creation in Jesus Christ. He is ours, by His own act. That is the “Thy” – a God

wise, strong, pure, who is love, and who is a Father, and is *our* God.

“Thy will...”

“Thy will.” God’s will is His desires, His purposes, that which He wishes to occur, and that to which He gives His strength that it may occur. The earth is His creation. Men are His children. Judging from wise loving parents among men He has given Himself to thinking and studying and planning for all men, and every man, and for the earth. His plan is the most wise, pure, loving plan that can be thought of, and more.

It takes in the whole sweep of our lives, and every detail of them. Nothing escapes the love-vigilance of our God. Health, strength, home, loved ones, friendships, money, guidance, protecting care, the necessities, the extras that love ever thinks of, service – all these are included in God’s loving thought for us.

That is His will. It is modified by the degree of our consent, and further modified by the circumstances of our lives. Life has become a badly tangled skein of threads. God with infinite patience and skill is at work untangling and bringing the best possible out of the tangle.

What is absolutely best is rarely relatively best. That which is best in itself is usually not best under certain circumstances, with human lives in the balance.

God has fathomless skill, and measureless patience, and a love utterly beyond both. He is ever working out the best thing possible under every circumstance.

He could oftentimes do more, and do it in much less time if our human wills were more pliant to His. He can be trusted. And of course trust means trust in the midst of the darkest dark where you can-

not see.

And trust means trust. It does not mean test. Where you trust you do not test. Where you test you do not trust. Making this our prayer means trusting God.

“Thy will be...”

“Thy will be.” A man’s will is the man in action, within the limits of his power. God’s will for man is Himself in action, within the limits of our co-operation.

Be is a verb, an action-word, in the passive voice. It takes some form of the verb “to be” to express the passive voice of any action-word. It takes the most intense activity of will to put this passive voice into human action. The greatest strength is revealed in intelligent yielding.

Here the prayer is expressing the utter willingness of a man that God’s will shall be done in him, and through him. Here a man makes his own will as strong as it can be made, as a bit of steel, better like the strong oak, strong enough to sway and bend in the wind.

Then he uses all its strength in becoming passive to a higher will. And that, too, when the purpose of that higher will is not clear to his own limited knowledge and understanding.

“Thy will be done...”

“Thy will be done.” That is, be accomplished, be brought to pass. The word stands for the action in its perfected, finished state. Thy will be fully accomplished in its whole sweep and in all its items.

It speaks not only the earnest desire of the heart praying, but the set purpose that everything in the life is held subject to the doing of this purpose of God. It means that surrender of purpose that has utterly changed the lives of the strongest men in

order that the purpose of God might be dominant.

It cut off from a great throne earth's greatest jurist, the Hebrew lawgiver, Moses, and led him instead to be allied to a race of slaves.

It led that intellectual giant Jeremiah from an easy enjoyable leadership to espouse a despised cause and so be himself despised.

It led Paul from the leadership of his generation in a great nation to untold suffering, and to a block and an axe.

It led Jesus the very Son of God, away from a kingship to a cross.

In every generation it has radically changed lives, and life-ambitions. "Thy will be done" is the great dominant purpose-prayer that has been the pathway of God in all His great doings among men.

"Thy kingdom come..."

With this prayer go two clauses that really particularise and explain it. The first clause is this, "Thy kingdom come." In both of these short sentences – "Thy will be done," "Thy kingdom come" – the emphatic work is "Thy."

That word is set in sharpest possible contrast here. There is another kingdom now on the earth. There is another will being done. This other kingdom must go if God's kingdom is to come.

These kingdoms are antagonistic at

every point of contact. They are rivals for the same allegiance and the same territory. "Thy kingdom come," of necessity includes this – "the other kingdom go."

"Thy kingdom come" means likewise "Thy King come," for in the nature of things there cannot be a kingdom without a king. That means again by the same inference, "the other prince go," the one who makes pretensions to being rightful heir to the throne.

"Thy will be done" includes by the same inference this: "the other will be undone." "Thy kingdom come" gives the sweep of God's will in its broadest outlines.

"Deliver us from the evil one"

The second clause included in the prayer, and added to make clear the swing of action is this – "deliver us from the evil one." These two sentences, "Thy will be done," and "deliver us from the evil one," are naturally connected.

Each statement includes the other. To have God's will fully done in us means emancipation from every influence of the evil one, either direct or indirect, or by hereditary taint. To be delivered from the evil one means that every thought and plan of God for our lives shall be fully carried out.

There are the two great wills at work

in the world ever clashing in the action of history and in our individual lives. In many of us, no, in all of us, though in greatly varying degree, these two wills constantly clash.

Man is the real battlefield. The pitch of the battle is in his will. God will not do His will in a man without the man's will consenting. And Satan cannot.

At the root the one thing that works against God's will is the evil one's will. And on the other hand the one thing that effectively thwarts Satan's plans is a man wholly given up to God's will.

Simple, Yet Comprehensive

The greatest prayer then fully expressed, sweeps first the whole field of action, then touches the heart of the action, and then attacks the opposition.

It is this: Thy kingdom come... Thy will be done... deliver us from the evil one.

Every true prayer ever offered comes under this simple comprehensive prayer. It may be offered, it *is* offered with an infinite variety of detail. It is greatest because of its sweep. It includes all other petitions, for God's will includes everything for which prayer is rightly offered. It is greatest in its intensity.

It hits the very bull's-eye of opposition to God. ☩

Will you help us be a blessing?



Did you know that *Prepare the Way* is sent free of charge to church leaders in many African countries, as well as overseas missionaries and prisoners? But this **only** happens through the support and donations of people just like you.

If you have a heart for the nations and a desire to see churches built up through sound, Biblical teaching, then please would you consider supporting this ministry?

Prepare the Way is a 100% non-profit ministry. No-one associated with the magazine draws **any** form of salary or income from the magazine – so, very simply, every cent you give goes straight towards sending out more magazines! The more gifts we get in, the more magazines we give away – it's as simple as that.

If you are able to help, please fill in the form below, or simply do a direct deposit into the magazine's account (Prepare the Way, Standard Bank, Howick Branch, Branch code 058325, Account number 052449815)

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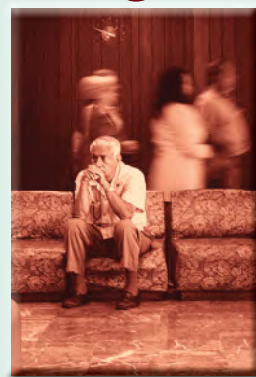
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Terrified, or trusting?

by W.C. Moore

Jesus said, "You shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that you are not troubled (Matthew 24:6)." "When you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified (Luke 21:9)."

Our Lord warns us concerning fearful things such as now threaten us. We are not to permit these things to upset us. "See" that you are not troubled, Jesus says. The rumble of rumours is almost as damaging as war itself if we are not trusting and obeying God.

We watch TV, see headlines and read reports of the frightful moral condition of the world. We hear of aggressive, cruel plans of enemies – enemies of all that is good in the world today.

These things have a tendency to instil fear and anxiety and dread into us, if we are not putting our trust in God. Our Lord has specifically foretold us of coming horrible events and He has warned us – yes, commanded us – to SEE that we are not troubled in the very midst of things calculated to cause an unsaved person to be filled with fear and dread.

God loves His people, and has made ample provision for our journey through life – through this pilgrim land, until we are at last safe with Him. Notice that these commands to be not terrified and to see that we be not troubled, are to saved people, to born-again children of God and not to unsaved people.

"As he thinks in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7)."

Do not let your thoughts dwell too much on rumours or realities of disasters, but think of God and meditate on what His Word has to say.

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night (Psalms 1:1&2)."

"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you: because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever: for in the Lord is everlasting strength (Isaiah 26:3&4)."

So the first thing about these end-of-the-age terrors is that we are to look to God, and see to it that we keep our eyes on Him, and that we do not become engulfed in the terror that unsaved people may feel and express. This is the first testimony our life and our speech should give to unbelievers, and to other and perhaps weaker Christians.

The fact that we are not to be terrified by no means implies that we are not to be alerted! We are indeed to be stirred by present-day events, and roused to the very depths of our souls. This climactic hour – this end-of-the-age harvest season is a time for all true followers of the Lamb of God to roll up their sleeves like men do in harvest time, and go all-out for God, and seek first the advancement of God's cause on earth, and the presentation of His righteousness, and His mercy to sinners bound for hell (Matthew 6:33)!

"Awake you who sleep... Arise (Ephesians 5:14)." *"He who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame (Proverbs 10:5)."*

How many children of God today are sleeping away the golden

days of earth's harvest season? They think primarily of themselves, and how they are going to come out in the midst of changing events in a changing world – with no real concern, no sacrifice that costs them something, no wholehearted effort to do all they can to get souls saved before the harvest season is over and gone forever.

They go to meetings and enjoy the sermons. They are thrilled by the singing. Yet they avoid the prayer room and never really get under the burden of God's work in any way. Shame on you if this picture fits your case! There is always work to do if a person is willing to do the work that needs to be done.

Some people have such a tendency to pick the pleasant jobs, that the heavy, disagreeable, humbling work of the Gospel must plead and beg for those who are willing to do the work that apparently brings no honour and no recognition to the one who does it.

What army would make any progress if all the soldiers were forever striving to get the "soft" jobs, the easy assignments? Oh, for an army of soldier saints with a spirit like the Scottish company we have read about: as the men stood lined up before him, the commanding officer spread before them the facts and the dangers of a very difficult and desperate detail, and called for volunteers.

Volunteers – and no volunteers?

"I will turn my back," he said, "and any who desire to volunteer for this dangerous detail, step forward one pace while my face is turned." The officer turned, and then faced about to see who had volunteered – and to his amazement, the line was unbroken.

"What!" he shouted, "the Scottish Volunteers – and no volunteers?" A soldier stepped forward immediately, and saluting the commanding officer, said, "Sir, the whole line stepped forward!"

Are there not those who will do away with finery that they may furnish the sinews for spreading the Gospel around the world? Are there not those who will forget themselves in an all-out effort for Christ's Gospel to go forth to the ends of the earth? Surely there must be in God's army volunteers who are not looking for easy jobs, who are not so much as considering themselves – but whose hearts burn with a flaming desire to fit in wherever there is a need.

Someone has said that you can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," Jesus says (Matthew 6:21). And He says:


"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matthew 6:19-21)."

Our precious Lord, foreseeing the terrible time of the end, warns His followers not to be carried away by fear and dread. That is His first warning. Then He follows this up with further commands to watchfulness and to prayer. He says:

"Therefore be also ready: for in an hour you do not expect, the Son of man comes (Matthew 24:44)."

Are YOU ready for the coming of the Lord?

"But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:34-36)."

Read the entire 24th chapter of Matthew, and the entire 21st chapter of Luke, and notice how our Lord Jesus, the Head of the Church – after first telling us to see that we be not troubled – goes on to command urgent watchfulness, prayer, preparation and readiness for His coming! "Occupy" – keep busy in My service – "till I come (Luke 19:13)." 

WATCH & PRAY

Thanks to
Elizabeth Kendal

INDIA IS A DANGEROUS PLACE FOR CHRISTIANS

Hindu nationalism – which exploits religion for political gain and establishes religious apartheid – makes India one of the most dangerous places in the world for Christians. Because India's Christians are mostly poor and down-trodden, they are particularly vulnerable.

Fuelled by Hindu nationalist ideologues and legitimised by repressive anti-conversion laws, anti-Christian hostility has escalated to the point that violent persecution with impunity has become the order of the day. Many Indian Christians face violence and exile.

Worship and prayer meetings – be they in official buildings or private homes – are routinely attacked. Pastors and evangelists – men, women and youths – are routinely beaten, falsely accused and arrested for witnessing, worshiping or even praying. Impunity is a problem domestically and internationally; the global silence is deafening. Please pray for change.

ETHIOPIA & ERITREA OPEN DOOR TO PEACE

Eritrea is one of the world's most dangerous places for Christians; thousands have suffered imprisonment. Its brutal dictator, Isaias Afwerki has long used the pretext of "the Ethiopian threat" to legitimise his cruel, despotic, totalitarian rule. On June

5, Ethiopia's Prime Minister, Dr Abiy Ahmed (41) – a Protestant Christian convert from Islam – offered to accept the border ruling of 2002 pursuant to peace.

Aware that peace with Ethiopia would de-legitimise his dictatorship, Afwerki is treading cautiously. On June 26 an Eritrean delegation arrived in Ethiopia for the first high-level meeting in 20 years. It appears to have been extremely positive.

It has since been confirmed that PM Abiy and President Afwerki will meet "soon." For the sake of the long-suffering, severely persecuted Eritrean Church, please pray!

REMEMBER PRISONERS AND CAPTIVES

Thousands of Christians are in prison for their faith, while others are held captive by jihadists. Men and women, who are Pakistani, Chinese, Indonesian, American, Indian, Nigeria, Colombian, European, Central Asian, Australian, Vietnamese, Iranian, Eritrean, Laotian, Burkinabe, North Korean and more.

They include human rights lawyers like Gao Zhisheng (China), humble labourers like Asia Bibi (Pakistan) and foreign nationals like Andrew Brunson (an American pastor imprisoned in Turkey), Sister Gloria Narvaez (a Colombian missionary taken captive in Mali) and Dr Ken Elliot (an Australian missionary doctor taken captive in Burkina

Faso). Christian prisoners and captives suffer physically, emotionally and spiritually, and are often exhausted and confused. Imagine yourself in their shoes – and pray!

"Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them (Hebrews 13:3)."

NIGERIA: CHRISTIAN CRISIS IN MIDDLE BELT

Violence exploded across Barikin Ladi Local Government Area (LGA), Plateau State, on Saturday, June 23. As is all too common now, nomadic Fulani herdsmen (Muslims) had led their cattle to graze on the crops of settled ethnic Berom farmers (Christians). Besieged and abandoned, the Berom farmers had two choices: surrender their crops or defend themselves. Clashes ensued in which five Fulani herdsmen were killed. The Fulani retaliated by launching a massive pogrom against 11 villages across Barikin Ladi LGA as

well as some villages in Bokkos and Riyom. So far, more than 200 bodies have been found, although many more local people are still missing. Hundreds more were wounded and dozens of homes were torched and farms ravaged.

The next day, furious Berom youths set up barricades on the Jos-Abuja highway and attacked motorists who looked Fulani or Muslim. While no deaths have been reported, one eyewitness claimed to have seen six bodies on the road. Berom families are furious over military moves to restrict access to the affected areas, thereby preventing families from collecting their dead.

Whilst the killings are perpetrated mainly by Fulani herdsmen, they are orchestrated and supported by powerful Muslim elements in the mosques, the security services and the government.

It is a Christian crisis of monumental proportions. Please pray.

Final Prepare the Way day of 2018

November 4 is the date for this year's final *Prepare the Way* day at Mount Zion Church, Merrivale (near Howick, KZN). Please come and join us as we bring the ministry of this magazine before the Lord. Peter Pollock will be ministering, and you're welcome to stay for (free!) lunch.



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The love of Christ which passes knowledge

by F. B. Meyer

"The love of Christ, which passes knowledge (Ephesians 3:19)."

IWOULD that you should hear the Bridegroom say to you, "I love you."

The whole wealth of Christ's heart, the infinite wealth of Christ's infinite heart, is yours today as though the sun should shine to light one firefly, or the Amazon flow to water the roots of one daisy. Jesus Christ, who combines the sympathy and tenderness of man with the infinite capacity of God, loves the lowly, weary, sinning, worthless soul with all His force and gentleness and strength.

It passes knowledge, and yet we may know it.

You may not feel it, but you must believe it. You may have no responsive emotion, but that does not alter it. The earth may wrap itself in clouds, but that does not affect the sunshine; and that you feel weary, depressed, sin-stricken, almost helpless, does not alter or affect the fact that the whole Deity is pouring out its tides towards you through the channel of Jesus Christ.

Is that not enough to banish loneliness,

depression, and the fear of ultimately being cast away?

It is conceivable that a settler should receive many acres, and even square miles, of territory of which he knows but little in its whole expanse – but he may know something of the character of the soil in the few acres which he first enclosed and cultivated.

Can't you see him arriving there? Selecting some corner of it, he will erect a shanty to shelter himself and his dear ones; and when he has done all he can in a few weeks of labour, he says to his wife, "Wife, I am going to survey our property."

He climbs some mountain, and looks far away to the horizon, or the flashing waters of lake and river, and all is his. How little he knows of the wealth of his estate.

But presently he goes back and says, "Wife, we shall be old and grey before we know all that we possess in this place. But we will begin to cultivate the little plot round our house, and every year put the fence further back, bringing the limit of our experience ever nearer to that of possession."

So, men and women, we are settlers upon

the continent of the love of God. We only know a little of its coastline, we fringe its shores; but what the wealth of that continent is we shall never know, for it has no limit, no bound, no end. Let us, however, follow on to know and enjoy this wonderful love.

Perhaps there are men and women who are saying, "Well, well, my life has been so dreary, so perplexed, that I cannot think God loves me." I pray you remember a text which says that "we have known and believed the love that God has to us (1 John 4:16)."

Standing upon the granite block of redemption and providence, and the blessings which have come to our life, we must dare to face the inexplicable, the dark, and the mysterious; and reason that the pathway of love lies through these also, and when we have traversed them we shall look back on a trail of light.

The love of God has never once failed me, and though I cannot see it, or how that trouble which menaces me is consistent with it, it is only the text over again, "The love of Christ, which passes knowledge." 