

Prepare^{the} Way

Preparing the Bride of Christ for the return of Christ

Issue No. 116

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**Can God really love
someone like me?**

**Freedom
from anxiety**

**Top liberal
church lies
about creation**

**The enrichment that
comes through giving**

Peter Pollock

**The Divine
bookends**

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Contents

Issue No. 116

- 3 Can God love me?
- 4 Divine bookends
- 6 Enrichment of giving
- 9 Freedom from anxiety
- 10 Conquerors & cowards
- 11 In prayer
- 12 Lies about creation
- 16 The power of God's Word
- 18 Bunyan: A suffering pilgrim
- 20 Prayer for a revived church
- 22 Humility & repentance
- 23 Watch & Pray
- 24 Consider Jesus...

COVER: "For you shall go out with joy and be led out with peace. The mountains and the hills shall break out into song before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap the hand (Isaiah 55:12)."

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Can God love someone like me?

by Ed Buch

Can God love someone like me? Does this question ever trouble you? Perhaps it comes up in those quiet moments when you're all alone. Maybe there was a time – in your childhood years, perhaps – when you could believe that God really did love you. But that was... before thoughts of God were overrun by the alluring pleasures and entertainments or athletic ambitions the world offered you... before the molestation... before that first sexual tryst in high school or college... before the abortion... before pornography became an obsession... before secret sin took over and began to dominate your life... before you crossed lines and engaged in things you swore you'd never do.

Whatever IT was that happened, it's now a mountain between you and God. If He ever loved you, it seems impossible to believe He could now.

I remember all too well being in that place. My carefully constructed life was demolished in quick fashion when my secret sexual behaviours came to light. I lost my job in ministry, lost my treasured pristine reputation, severely damaged my marriage and wound up exiled to a programme for sexual addicts in rural Kentucky. I wasn't just lost; I was a 38-year-old Loser at the lowest point of my life. Years of self-love had left me hardened outwardly and hollow inwardly.

One day, shortly after my unceremonious arrival at the Pure Life Ministries Residential Programme, I took a walk out on the ridge, to the place where a hand-hewn wooden cross stands amidst a small grove of cedar trees, and sat down on the bench overlooking the cross.

I began to pray. I told God how miserable and wretched I was. I confessed sexual sins, sins of deception, sins against others, sins against Him, sins too shameful to speak of here. I told Him how wrong I was; how sad I was; how lonely I was; how I felt like a failure my whole life; how nobody really loved me and I couldn't blame them.

I lost track of time but I'm sure I spent at least 30 minutes babbling on and on, admitting to God precisely how disgusting, vile and wretched I was. At some point, a vague memory came to mind of some preacher saying I shouldn't do all the talking but should allow God opportunity



to speak when I'm praying.

So I paused in pouring out my heart to God and said, "Sorry Lord; I've been doing all the talking." (In my thinking, this was just one more failure to add to the list.) "Do You have anything You want to say to me?"

It's hard to put into words what happened when I asked that question. But somehow, I felt – in a very literal way – the arms of God Himself draw me into a hugging embrace, and I heard Him say with perfect clarity in my heart, "I love you."

That was it for me. He won my heart. I had just spent a good half-hour or more telling the Lord all the reasons why no one could possibly love me, why He shouldn't love me or even have anything to do with me. And how did He respond? What did He want to say to me about all of this? "I love you."

Friend, that's what He wanted me to know above all else. Oh, to be sure, He fully intended to deal with my sin, my selfishness, my pride and self-righteousness, my unfaithfulness, my utter lack of respect for His Word. But first, I needed to know a very, very vital piece of the puzzle that I had long been overlooking: He loves me.

Because of God's love...

There's a story in Genesis that helps to make the love of God come alive for me. Perhaps you remember how Jacob deceived Isaac and stole his brother's inheritance, then fled to the distant home of his mother's relatives. In exile, Jacob wound up agreeing to tend the flocks of his Uncle Laban. He also happened to fall in love with Rachel, Laban's younger daughter.

Soon enough, the arrangement was made that he would work for Laban for seven years, at the end of which time Rachel would become his wife. Here's how the Scriptures summarise Jacob's years of toil: "So Jacob served seven years for Rachel,

and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her (Genesis 29:20)."

Wow! "...and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her." Can you imagine love like that?

There are two sides to consider from this profound statement about love.

Our Love for God: While it's easy to sing "I love you Lord" while participating in the congregational hymns and worship songs of the church, and perhaps even to utter the words in prayer now and again, the truth for most of us is that we do not love God – at least, not like we ought to. Not like Jacob loved Rachel.

If we did, then years of serving Him would seem as nothing more than a few days to us. He would truly be the centre of our affections. Doing what we know would be pleasing to Him, wouldn't be such a struggle. Obeying Him wouldn't seem burdensome or restrictive. It would be exhilarating!

If you spent time studying Scripture about what it means to truly love God, you just might discover that your love for Him is pretty weak and superficial. If that is the case, the best response is to begin by confessing the truth to God. Be honest. Be sincere. Pour your heart out to Him. He can handle the truth. And He can help you change.

God's Love for Us: There's another side to this divine portrait of love between Jacob and Rachel. This passage also provides great insight into the Father's love. God does love you. What if it meant serving seven years for you? Would He do it? Yes, He's willing.

And He proved it by coming as the Servant-of-All for us (Mark 10:44-45). Would He serve seven years? I suspect He would serve seventy-times-seven years. In fact, He would give His whole life. He did give His whole life: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16)."

Let these familiar words become full of new meaning to you. 🐟

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The Divine Bookends

by Peter Pollock

THERE are two books in the Bible that the devil really hates – Genesis and Revelation! Continuously Satan pursues his relentless “doubt-at-all-costs” conspiracy as he attacks these scriptures.

In many and varied ways, some subtle and some rather blatant, his agencies and their methods can be recognised by the underlining strategy of creating doubt and stirring unbelief. “Surely not!” was what the devil said to Eve in the Garden of Eden and that has been his motto, his battle-cry ever since.

In a nutshell, “Genesis” reveals the origin, the beginning of it all and “Revelation” reveals the final outcome, the end of it all. It is the alpha and omega of spiritual insight. They are the divine bookends of the Lamb’s “Book of Life” – and the devil hates them!

As we read chapter 3 of Genesis, the text reveals clearly what went wrong. Adam and Eve were “warned” but they “sinned” and “died” – all as God had promised. They were now “naked,” meaning minus His protection. They recognised their predicament, realised the truth of what they had done. And they hid away!

Verse 10 tells us they “heard,” in other words acknowledged their sin; were “afraid,” felt the guilt of what had transpired; knew that they were “naked” confirming that there were consequences and finally, they “hid” from God, the sad result of sin!

God had created Adam and Eve, and was pleased. The “spirit” in them represented the image of God making them superior to all other creations. The “spirit” was the means of communication between God and man. God had also given man his own will, as well as dominion of everything.

Part of the testing of that will was that God stipulated that they were not to eat

of the fruit of the central tree. If they were disobedient, they would surely die – so God promised. Along came the devil and his temptation, questioning whether a loving God would actually sentence them to death if they ate of the fruit.

The devil also promised that the fruit would make them like God, knowing the difference between good and evil. It was all too good to resist and so Adam and Eve succumbed, with devastating consequences to mankind. The devil is the father of fibs, falsehoods, fabrications and fake news – and all that is exposed as we read the tragic tale of Genesis 3.

The great lie that Satan keeps promoting is that sin does not reap consequences or incur the wrath of God. As we read John 3:16 we recognise the word “perish.” Yes, right there in this much-hallowed verse that is proclaimed as the greatest statement of love in the Bible. Perish means to die. In the biblical context, it means go to hell!

We stubbornly refuse to change

In John 3:18, we are reminded that if we don’t believe in Jesus we “remain condemned” and in John 3:36 it confirms that the “wrath of God” remains upon us. The consequences of the action of Adam and Eve ensured our spiritual death, our separation from God and our eternal condemnation so long as we stubbornly refuse to change our spiritual positioning.

John 3:19 sums it up: This is the condemnation (the verdict/the judgement) that the LIGHT (Jesus) came into the world and the world loved darkness rather than light. We received Him not!

“Adamic” man had thus been born in the sin and the disobedience of the Garden of Eden. We are all born sinners, thanks to Adam and Eve. We died spiritually. We separated ourselves from God. We lost the

image of God. God does not look like you and me! The image of God in Adam was the “spirit,” because God is Spirit.

Often I hear even preachers and church leaders, talking about us being made in the image of God. Indeed, Adam and Eve were – but you just can’t tell me that someone who has just raped an eight year-old girl or someone who has mowed down 10 people with a machine gun is made in the image of God!

Anyway, the damage had been done, and Adam and Eve responded by “covering up” with fig leaves. Excuses followed as they sought scapegoats and started finger-pointing, something that has become a favoured pastime for us humans.

They hid amongst the trees, amid the foliage. Hiding from God. Yes, even in His garden!

Are we not doing the same thing today, hiding in His church? We do so through “businesslike” religion, through the huge emphasis we place on good works, and through the deception and denial that sees us relegate the importance of the “lordship” of Jesus and the significance of the Cross.

When we are lukewarm, passive or apathetic it is confirmation that something is wrong, something is drastically missing. The “synagogue of Satan” is an oft-mentioned malady in Revelation’s look at the seven churches – “those who say they are believers but are not.”

Sadly, so many have become merely onlookers, bystanders or spectators in the church, certainly not boding well for its spiritual state. But God’s Word and His promises still stand! Sin reaps consequences and godlessness continues to see God’s judgement all around.

Presently, as we look around the world through many of the leading nations and even, dare I say it, within the church, we are seeing evil being exposed – a wonderful sign that the end is nigh.

With Adam and Eve, the curses were set – and they continue. God listed them! Women will have pain in child-bearing and will need to be in submission to men. More and more women are resorting to an operation rather than natural child-birth and, of course, women's liberation and feminism are enjoying world-wide activism.

Men must work hard and earn by the sweat of their brow – again something that is more and more frowned upon. And let's not mention the serpent. He is top of the hate list, enduring an endless hard time.

It is important to note that though God did clothe Adam and Eve, he did not remove the curse or the banishment. God drove them out and they lost fellowship as they went house-hunting East of Eden!

Verse 24 is interesting as it names God's two key protectors – the angels, the cherubim and the "flaming sword," which is the anointed Word.

Man's new garments were now material and physical. The "spiritual link" had gone and so the devil took over the world as he started dominating, controlling and manipulating the mind of man. God had set man in charge of the world, giving him dominion, so whoever controls man controls the world, as will be confirmed for you each evening as you turn your TV set on to the news bulletins. The God of this age, the devil, is calling the shots. Whether you want to believe it or not!

Man lost relationship, fellowship and intimacy with God. It's a mind-blowing concept, especially to the intellectual mind that does not have the spirit. God made man for fellowship with Him with the spirit – our aerial, the communication link. When Jesus died on the Cross He restored that contact, but obstinate, reluctant, foolhardy man does not want the gap bridged; he does not want to die to self; he does not want to give up his self-image or give up his independent right to himself.

They wanted an arms-length relationship

We just don't want to get too close to God. The people told Moses "You keep in touch and tell us what we must do." They wanted an arms-length relationship and were running scared of anything intimate.

Or maybe, it was just easier to ignore

Moses than it would be to ignore God if you were dealing directly with Him. That Wilderness church had miracles galore, but there was no fruit. Only Caleb and Joshua got into the Promised Land. That's quite a shaker!

Anyway, there is good news. Fellowship with God does have a healthy future because God will, as He promises, spend eternity with His own, those who love and adore Him and worship His Son Jesus Christ.

Now that is all clearly set out in Revelation, hence the devil's dislike of the clear-cut prophetic message. I must admit that in my early days as a believer and preacher, I did avoid the end-times stuff. Fellow preachers joked that it was for the lunatic fringe and that I should stick to the solid stuff, as they put it.

Go and take the little book...

Eschatology, end times theology, was not an exact science I had been warned, so I didn't get involved. But I did keep a special New Testament NKJV Bible as my "revelation" book. "Freaky" stories said some, but I was always a fervent believer!

Then, the turning point. One morning in my quiet time I felt convicted as I read Revelation 10:8-11: "Go take your little book (I took that to be my carefully marked and underlined version). Take it. Eat it. Honey in the mouth. Bitter in the stomach. Prophecy again. It's the ultimate prophetic Word. It is going to happen. Ignore at your peril. Preach it! In season and out of season!"

I received all of that as if God had spoken it directly to me. Stick to the biblical principles and do not get caught up in the symbolic complexities. As I delved, my heart thumped and my first-love excitement returned. As I looked around I could see all over the place the Laodicea church, the mega-gatherings with their listed problems.

I recognised Ephesus – word-based religion that had forgotten about Jesus. Philadelphia – I could see those smaller groups who refuse to get caught up in the numbers, music and money gospels.

And of course, abounding is the Synagogue of Satan – the goats, not the sheep. But there is a real church, a real Kingdom that is alive and well and is not to be mixed

up with what we see out there. It's not about the big, the rich and the famous but the "real church" is there being both marshalled and protected by the true Holy Spirit. It is waiting for the rapture and the glorious return of Jesus.

The four horses of the apocalypse strut – the white one representing political power, delusion, deception, false hope in mankind and an anti-Christ message. The red represents war and that is all over the world, as are famine and death, the black and pale horses.

Among deep-discerning prophetic spirits there is a sense of foreboding, as what is being seen is only the beginning for what is to follow – too horrendous and unspeakable to mention.

The "multi-seven terror" with the seals, the angels, the trumpets, the plagues and, the bowls of wrath are all meticulously documented and certainly ring true as daily we experience tsunamis, terrorism and so-called global warming – all a small foretaste of what is in store!

It gets so bad that men will seek death as they flee, says the Bible!


Look at all the road rage, racism, anger and intolerance and you are a fool if you don't recognise the spiritual aspect involved in it all.

There is no repentance or even the faintest qualms emanating from arrogant man. Shaking fists at God!

A state of intellectual paralysis

Christian debate and counsel has no standing in the world anymore; the Bible, even to some preachers and teachers these days, is just there for your own interpretation and misuse; and there is a state of intellectual paralysis in the world of law and order where expensive high-flying lawyers ensure judicial logjams.!

We are not up against flesh and blood, it is principalities and powers. Revelation 12:10-12 warns a time of great woe to the inhabitants of the earth because the devil knows that his time is short. God's day of wrath is coming. The nations will mourn. It's going to happen!

Revelation 22:18&19: Don't add or subtract. It is no small wonder that the devil hates Genesis and Revelation – the divine bookends! 

THE ENRICHMENT OF GIVING



by Stephen F. Olford

IN 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, Paul climaxes his treatment of the grace of giving with some weighty words on the enriching ministry of Christian stewardship. He is determined not to leave his readers until he has impressed upon them the all-important fact that the grace of giving is God's supreme method of enriching both those who dispense gifts as well as those who receive gifts. So he speaks in these verses of four important matters.

"But this I say, He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully (2 Corinthians 9:6)."

There are laws of harvest that operate not only in the natural, but also in the spiritual realm. Paul is illustrating this fact by drawing attention to the farmer who sows his spring crop. This man knows that what he has sown in the spring he will harvest in the autumn. It is just one of those unalterable laws that he will reap what he has sown.

Moreover, the farmer is cognisant of the fact that the proportion of his reaping will be determined by the proportion of his sowing. If he is foolish enough to sow sparingly he will reap sparingly; on the other hand, if he is wise enough to sow bountifully he will also reap bountifully.

This is a profound principle in all areas of Christian experience, and especially in the area of giving.

The believer is to understand that giving is not a question of scattering, but of sowing. It is not a contribution; it is an investment. Thus, all giving constitutes a challenge to our faith. No farmer sows without exercising simple faith in the law of harvest.

Indeed, if he had no faith he would not sow at all.

In his letter to the Galatians Paul speaks specifically of this enrichment of fruitfulness in giving:

"Do not be deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he who sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Galatians 6:7-9)."

In this passage, which is primarily associated with the subject of giving, the apostle points out that there are two kinds of sowing and also two kinds of reaping. There is a sowing which reaps a carnal harvest – "He who sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption (Galatians 6:8)." There is no enrichment in this kind of giving. A carnal Christian sows to his flesh by spending his resources to gratify his own personal desires. Such a person must expect nothing less than the reaping of corruption.

NOT ONLY WHAT WE GIVE...

In other words, that which might have been rewarded by being invested in the Lord's work will be nothing but "wood, hay and stubble" at the judgement seat of Christ (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). Careful thought will reveal that this matter of carnal giving impinges upon motives as well as means, for it is not only *what* we give but *how* we give and *why* we give that matters in the presence of God.

Having dealt with the negative aspect, the apostle then indicates that there is a sowing which reaps a spiritual harvest – "He who sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Galatians 6:8)." Here is the enrichment of fruitfulness in giving which is possible for all who will venture out in faith in the ministry of Christian stewardship.

Nobody can merit the gift of eternal life by personal works of righteousness, "for by grace you are saved through faith; and not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

not of works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8&9)."

But having made that clear, there is a whole body of Scripture which reveals that we can add to our spiritual capital by a continuing enrichment through the ministry of giving.

In fact, there is no area of Christian experience which deepens the capacity for more of the gifts of God than that of sacrificial giving.

Introduce me to a stingy Christian and I will show you a person whose Christian life is shrivelled up! On the other hand, lead me to a believer who knows the joy of sacrificial giving and I will point out a person whose life is one of fruitful enrichment.

I am convinced that one of the reasons why the devil has caused the subject of giving to stir up resistance and resentment among God's people is that he knows there are few ways of spiritual enrichment like the exercise of faithful stewardship.

Let us never forget that at the very heart of the Gospel is the whole principle of giving.

Heaven could never be enriched with the company of the redeemed if Jesus had not given Himself, even to the death of the cross. And by the same token, we can never enrich the church or our personal lives without sacrificial stewardship. There is no fruitfulness without the ministry of giving.

But let us proceed to observe the second principle which Paul lays down in this passage.

"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7)."

Giving not only develops a capacity for fruitfulness but also for joyfulness. Miserableness is always linked with miserliness, whereas merriment is indissolubly involved in magnanimity.

To know such joyfulness, however, Paul says that giving must be exercised without casualness – "Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give."

God has given careful instruction as to how we should develop holy habits of "laying by in store (1 Corinthians 16:2)," as we have been prospered, and so give out of a true sense of purposefulness and planning.

Casualness implies carelessness and heartlessness and, therefore, joylessness.

Furthermore, we are to give without complaint – "So let him give; not grudgingly." This is truly a searching word to all our hearts.

Who among us has not to confess that

when the challenge of stewardship has come to us, there has risen up within us a spirit of unwillingness and even rebellion? There is no joy in this, and therefore no enrichment. God enables us to bring the unwillingness to give (what God demands and deserves) to the cross, until the joy of giving is born in our souls.

Notice once again in our text that we are to give without compulsion – “There should be no reluctance, no sense of compulsions; God loves a cheerful giver.” The believer must not have as his main motive the consideration of what others will think of him if he refrains from giving.

As we have been reminded so often, the word “cheerful” here can be rendered “hilarious,” suggesting a spirit of real enjoyment which sweeps away all human restraints.

The Lord Jesus summed up this enrichment of joyfulness in giving when He said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).” Interestingly enough, this astonishing statement is not found in the gospels, and yet Paul uses it in his address to the elders at Ephesus to press home the enrichment which comes through the sacrifice of giving. He says, in effect, that if only these brethren would learn the deep principle of joyfulness through giving their lives would be truly blessed.

In every local church of Jesus Christ there are people who would rise to testify to the outworking of this spiritual law in their lives. They never knew what it was to be joyful until they learned how to give without casualness, complaint or compulsion.

There is a lovely story told of the saintly Frances Ridley Havergal who wrote the famous lines:

*Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.*

It is on record that this hymn was both autobiographical and actual. Frances Ridley Havergal did what she sang. In her writings is this personal testimony: “‘Take my silver and my gold’ now means shipping off all my ornaments – including a jewel cabinet which is really fit for a countess – to the Church Missionary Society... I don’t think I need tell you I never packed a box with such pleasure.” This was giving with hilarity!

But now let us move on to the next thought in the apostle’s development:

“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work... now may he who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness

(2 Corinthians 9:8-10).”

The miracle of giving is that it produces a ministry of giving. In other words, when God can trust His people with money, He sees to it that they always have plenty for themselves and more for others. So the apostle quotes Psalm 112:9 to support this divine principle: “He has dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”

As we give to God He meets our personal requirements. The God of Elijah is still the same today. When the prophet put himself at God’s total disposal he never lacked anything, even though the land was scourged with famine. And even when the brook Cherith dried up and the ravens ceased to bring his daily meal God provided his daily bread (1 Kings 17).

In the days of our Lord’s earthly sojourn, He could challenge His disciples with the words, “‘When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and shoes, did you lack anything?’ And they said, ‘Nothing (Luke 22:35).’”

The Apostle Paul sums it up when he says:

“I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I have learned to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need (Philippians 4:11&12).”

And again:

“My God shall supply all your need (Philippians 4:19).”

So we see that God commits Himself to meet our personal requirements. But more than this, He multiplies our actual resources – “Now he who gives seed to the sower and bread for your food, supply and multiply your seed sown.”

Indeed, the Lord Jesus affirms that giving is an assurance of gaining. He says, *“Give, and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure you use, it shall be measured to you again (Luke 6:38).”*

This, of course, must not be our motive for giving – but our Lord offers this assurance, that giving is never a one-way street: it is the door to plenty.

Score of examples could be cited at this point to illustrate how God multiplies the resources of those who give in the right measure and with the right motive.

I think of the late Robert A. Laidlaw, well-known businessman of Auckland, New Zealand, and author of *The Reason Why*. As a young man of 18, he made a covenant with God that he would give a 10th of all his earnings. Later, at the age

of 25, he decided to change that amount to 50 percent of all his earnings. God continued to multiply his resources until he was giving even more to the work of the Lord. Later, writing at the age of 70, he could say: “I want to bear testimony that, in spiritual communion and in material things, God has blessed me one hundred-fold, and has graciously entrusted to me a stewardship far beyond my expectations when, as a lad of 18, I gave God a definite portion of my wages.”

The same could be related of William Colgate who joined a church in the city of New York. As a boy, he gave 10 cents to the Lord’s work out of every dollar he earned. As his business prospered he gave two-tenths, rising to five-tenths. Then when his children were educated he gave all his income to God.

Then we could mention God’s prospering hand on men like Heinz, of “57 Varieties” fame; H.P. Crowell of Quaker Oats; Kraft, of Kraft Cheese, and many others. The fact that all Christians do not become famous does not alter the principle that God multiplies our actual resources when we learn how to give sacrificially to God and His work.

SHE SUPPORTED 93 MISSIONARIES

The names I have just mentioned are world-famous, but “the history of Christian giving has demonstrated that there is none so poor that he cannot give.” There was a woman with no money and too old to work. She began to pray, “Teach me how to obtain. Give me someone to send out and support as a missionary.” Before her death she was supporting 93 missionaries.

Timing counts, too, so our obedience must be prompt. A businessman went to a missionary society with \$280 toward sending a new recruit overseas, but he was told that he was too late as they had just cancelled her passage for lack of money. In tears he then confessed: “God told me to give it some days ago, but I delayed.”

We must not expect to be untested in this act of faith. Job gave generously to God (Job 1:5), and to the poor; but for a time he was stripped of everything, though later he received it back again in richer measure.

Then there are times when God may accept our gifts and lay them up as treasure in heaven, as He promised the rich young ruler.

So we would say in the words of another: “If you want to be rich, give; if you want to be poor, grasp! If you want abundance,

THE ENRICHMENT OF GIVING

Continued...

scatter; if you want to be needy, hoard!"

The Word of God supports this by saying:

"There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, And he who waters will also be watered himself (Proverbs 11:24&25)."

But the third thing that follows from this enrichment of usefulness in giving is that He motivates our spiritual responsibility – "God is able to... increase the fruits of your righteousness."

In other words, He motivates our giving and then uses the gifts with which He has blessed us to become the fruits of righteousness to others. Thus the people and causes to which we give are not only materially blessed, but spiritually blessed because our giving is the fruit of righteousness.

This, in the highest sense, is sowing to the Spirit.

It is one thing to dispense a gift; it is quite another to impart a spiritual blessing by the act of giving!

We have all had experiences of this sort. There is a kind of giving which may have enriched materially, but left us dead spiritually; whereas there is another quality of stewardship which may not have been enriching materially, but has blessed us spiritually. God teach us the enrichment of usefulness in giving until "our very hearts overflow!"

This brings us to our last consideration: *"Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causes through us thanksgiving to God... Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift (2 Corinthians 9:11&15)."*

Thankfulness is the ultimate in all Christian stewardship. When God has so worked in our hearts that giving turns to worship, then we have truly experienced the grace of giving. There is no greater evidence of a Spirit-filled person than a praising Christian. When Paul exhorts the believers at Ephesus to "be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)" he adds immediately, "Giving thanks always for all things to God (Ephesians 5:20)."

And so the Bible makes it plain that there is no greater enrichment of the total human personality than the spirit of thankfulness. Let us remember that in one of the most profound statements we find in the New Testament, the apostle tells us that God has "predestinated us... accord-

ing to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace (Ephesians 1:5&6)." So our chief occupation in heaven is going to be worship and praise to God.

In this passage the apostle makes it evident that the enrichment of thankfulness comes by way of the ministry of giving. Thus, he concludes his great teaching in these two chapters on Christian stewardship with this high concept of thankfulness. He shows that this enrichment of thankfulness in giving satisfies the soul – "Being enriched in every good thing to all bountifulness, which causes through us thanksgiving to God."

There is nothing more satisfying in all the world than the God-given thankfulness which comes through our ability to enrich others. It is a level of thankfulness rarely found in Christians today, but it is part of God's purpose for His children. Just as His own heart was never satisfied until He had given His all to redeem mankind, so the true believer can never be truly satisfied until he reaches the point where living for others fills him with thanksgiving to God.

Paul expresses this gratitude when he says:

"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has enabled me, because He has counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man (1 Timothy 1:12&13)."

In other words, the supreme cause of his thanksgiving was that God delivered him from bigoted self-centredness and religious cruelty to serve others to the glory of God.

But this enrichment of thankfulness in giving not only satisfies the soul but also edifies the church:

"For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men (2 Corinthians 9:12&13)."

These two verses are quite remarkable in that they show how the enrichment of thankfulness in giving teaches the church both to praise and to pray. Paul points out that the saints at Jerusalem would be inspired to praise God because of the evident working of the Gospel.

And so thankfulness through giving not only edifies the church in the ministry of praise, but in the ministry of prayer, for Paul goes right on to say, "And by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you."

Nothing develops the capacity for prayer

in the life of Christians as does the spirit of thanksgiving. Wherever you find thankful people you will find praying people, and we might well add that praise and prayer are the outstanding marks of an edified church.

I want you to observe that the enrichment of thankfulness in giving ultimately magnifies the Lord – "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift."

THE CLIMAX OF THE WHOLE SUBJECT

This is truly the climax to the whole subject of giving. With depth of insight Paul concludes his treatment of this subject of giving with this glorious doxology. What he is saying is that every time we give with thankfulness we only reflect the unspeakable act of God when He gave His only begotten Son for the salvation of men.

Already the apostle has touched upon this profound subject by declaring:

"You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich (2 Corinthians 8:9)."

Here is divine giving at its highest and deepest. At its highest level we are lifted to the great concept of the unmerited favour of God in sending His Son from heaven's glory down to earth's gloom. At its deepest level we are introduced to the unutterable poverty to which our Lord descended.

Paul is so careful about this that he uses a Greek word which means "pauperism." In other words, the Lord Jesus became a pauper on this earth that we might be introduced to all the richness of His grace. Now, says Paul, whenever we give, remember that we are only reflecting the self-giving of God, and this should fill us with unspeakable thanksgiving to our Lord.

It is hard to understand how any sensitive and reasonable Christian can hold back from all that God demands and deserves in the light of such teaching.

Who among us does not long to live a life of fruitfulness, joyfulness, usefulness and thankfulness? But Paul maintains this cannot happen and will not happen until we know how to give, not only of ourselves and our service, but also of our substance.

Indeed, the more we have studied this subject, the more it has become apparent that the true measure of yieldedness to the Lordship of Christ is the measure of our discipline and devotion in Christian stewardship. We can talk until doomsday about being surrendered Christians, but we virtually lie until we give evidence of our surrender through our stewardship. ☞



Freedom from

by George Müller

"Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6&7)."

BE anxious for nothing. This is one of the privileges of the children of God. They are permitted, not only permitted but invited, not only invited but commanded, to bring all their cares, sorrows, trials, and wants to their heavenly Father. They are to roll all their burdens upon God and to cast all their cares upon Him.

And because they are permitted, yes, commanded so to do, they have no need to be anxious about anything. However many or varied our difficulties or necessities may be, we should commit them all in believing prayer to God.

We are not to be anxious. And why not? Because it is impossible to be anxious without dishonouring God.

If the men of the world see that we Christians are anxious like they are, they will have ground for saying that our profession of having an Almighty Friend and Helper in heaven is only a profession. Therefore, we dishonour God by not trusting in Him in the hour of need.

We have, however, such a friend. He is willing and able to help us and to deliver us in His own time and way. This is the very reason why we need not be anxious about anything.

And, thus, with every matter regarding our children, for instance, who are unconverted. We have to be careful to train them in the fear of God, to set a holy godly example before them, to pray much for them and, at suitable times, bring the truth before them. But even regarding them, we are not to be anxious. We are to roll the burden, the whole burden, upon God. He will carry the burden for us.

So we are to take the promise literally, "Be anxious about nothing." Thus we shall walk in holy confidence. Trust in your heavenly Father, look to Him, confide in Him, knowing that He will help in His

own time and way.

But while the commandment is not to be anxious about anything, at the same time, we are exhorted to bring everything before God. It is not to make us careless but to teach us to lean upon Him alone.

We are here exhorted to bring the matter before God. "In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

Notice especially the word "everything." It is not simply great matters we are to bring before God, not simply small things – but "everything." Therefore, all our affairs, temporal or spiritual, let us bring them before God. And this for the simple reason that life is made up of little things. If we attempt to stand in our own strength under little trials we shall find them too heavy for us and we shall fall, which is dishonouring to God.

We do not have the strength to carry any of them...

When a Christian attempts to carry the little burdens in his own strength I know he will soon dishonour God. We have not a particle of strength to carry any burdens, little or great. Therefore we must bring them all to God. And if we attempt to carry them we shall find that they will increase in weight.

When we have any little burdens let us all tell our heavenly Father, "I have no strength for this weight, I cannot carry the burden." Our heavenly Father is ready to do this for us. He has commanded us to roll all our cares on Him and not attempt to carry them in our own strength.

Let us then cast all our cares and burdens upon God and He will carry them for us.

Therefore, it is so deeply important "in everything, by prayer and supplication, to let your requests be made known to God." That is, with prayer, and not only with prayer but with supplication, with earnestness and with entreaty.

Sometimes beggars ask for alms and you seem not to listen and pass on. But they go after you, perhaps 20 steps and sometimes

even more. They follow you still asking until they obtain the alms they desire.

Now this is what we may have to do: not simply to mention our request before God but to go on asking again and again with earnest prayer and supplication until we receive. Just ask as a beggar would.

Will not our heavenly Father give it to us seeing that He has bestowed His greatest gift, even His Son, upon us? "He Who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things (Romans 8:32)?"

Again, we especially have to notice that prayer and supplication is to be coupled with thanksgiving. We should lay the foundation in the way of thanksgiving and upon that place the superstructure of prayer and supplication. We should praise the Lord for what He has given us already, while asking Him for more blessing.

We are frequently very remiss in this. We forget to render praise for the mercies already received from our heavenly Father. This should not be so.

In the next verse we have the precious result if we do offer thanksgiving. Our hearts are at peace instead of hurrying hither and thither as men beside themselves. Instead of great excitement our hearts will be at peace as the result of prayer and praise. We shall have the peace which passes all understanding. The peaceful calm which is so precious and which no words can describe shall be in our hearts.

"The peace of God, which passes understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." The idea of a garrison is in that word "keep." It means that our hearts shall be kept by the peace of God, as a garrison keeps a fortress.

The men of this world and even some children of God who do not know these truths and do not ask for this peace, are wretched, anxious and hurrying about like people beside themselves when great troubles come. We, the children of God who know these precious truths, are able calmly to wait on the Lord and leave ourselves quietly in the hands of God.

Thus the peace which passes understanding will rule in our hearts and minds and shall not merely give help but shall keep us from false ways. It will bring honour to God before the world, comfort the children of God and bring praise, honour and glory to Him. This peace of God, thus obtained and continued, will keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus and keep us in the right road. 🐟



Conquerors & Cowards

by Steve Gallagher

"The one who conquers will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But to the cowards... their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur (Revelation 21:7&8)."

SATAN is currently mustering an Army of cowards that will one day champion his evil purposes. The people I am referring to are not outside the evangelical movement but within it. The Bible calls it the Great Apostasy.

Whether one believes they will be professing Christians who were never truly converted or that they have known the Lord but will backslide into open apostasy, we can all agree that they will prove to be turncoats to the Lord before it's all over.

The truth is that it often takes a crisis to prove the mettle of a person's character. Heroes and cowards don't always stand out in everyday life. It often isn't until some calamity occurs that their true character emerges.

The movie *The Hiding Place* provides a classic example of this truth. Corrie and Betsy Ten Boom would certainly have been considered unlikely heroines, but when terrified Jews began showing up at their doorstep looking for shelter, they threw themselves into meeting the need – in spite of the terrible danger it exposed them to.

A contrast to their bravery was the spineless behaviour exhibited by a local minister who showed up one day to get his watch repaired. Betsy saw him as a perfect candidate to care for a newly-arrived Jewish infant, but the man did not have the spiritual wherewithal to look beyond his

own interests. "It's illegal!" he exclaimed. "I have a family to think of."

What these three individuals experienced during the years of Nazi oppression is a portend of what end-time Christians will face. "But you must realise," Paul wrote, "that in the last days the times will be full of danger (2 Timothy 3:1)."

How will you and I react when facing overwhelming pressure to abandon our faith? The example of the Ten Boom family makes it clear that the kind of courage needed in such a time will not come from one's natural disposition but from the life we have in God.

Our relationship to the Lord will determine how we will handle the adversity and danger of that time. If this is true, then we should be able to predict how we will carry ourselves during those times that "will be full of danger." I believe the issues reflected in the following questions can help us accurately assess the level of our readiness.

What is the level of my selfishness or selflessness in my interactions with other people?

One common characteristic of cowards (naturally or spiritually) is an inordinate preoccupation with themselves. When calamity strikes, the attitude that prevails within such people is, "Every man for himself!" Yet, when you think about it, this statement reflects the way they live during normal times. If someone goes through life looking out for "Number One," you can be sure he will do the same during a crisis as well.

On the other hand, adversity and persecution will also provide the opportunity

for selfless people to show their courage. Such people typically have a long track-record of putting the needs of others before their own. Why would anyone expect them to act differently under duress? It's often common laypeople – such as the Ten Booms – who show real courage in dangerous situations.

How concerned am I about what people think of me?

One of the prevailing characteristics of false prophets – during both biblical days and modern times – is the need they feel for secular society and its leaders to accept them. That desire for acceptance is what motivates them to offer the teachings of "cheap grace" and "easy believism." Such leaders are already traitors to the Cross.

This needy attitude can also infect laypeople. Those who are afraid to openly confess Christ or share their faith with family members and co-workers are also setting themselves on a course of spiritual disaster. Jesus seemed to be referring to such end-time pseudo-Christians when He said, "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory (Luke 9:26)."

The way we interact with the world today should serve as a telltale sign of how we will respond to the persecution of the future. If a believer cannot handle the world's criticism now, how will he or she hold up under harsh and hate-filled persecution (Jeremiah 12:5)?

What is the quality of my devotional life?

It has been said that a Christian is only as strong as his prayer life. Jesus expressed as much when He said, "He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." He went on to say, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you (John 15:5,18)."

Corrie and Betsy knew what it meant to live in daily dependence upon the Lord long before the Nazis showed up. Indeed, some scholars argue that reliance on God is the defining characteristic of saving faith.

Those who think they will develop a devotional life when things get bad are very mistaken. The time of crisis is not the time to institute a spiritual discipline such as ongoing prayer. Spending time in prayer and in the Word of God are signs of a healthy relationship with the Lord.

Believers who are accustomed to going to the Lord about the issues of life in normal times will find that they will have a quick and solid connection to Him in the day of calamity.

The long and short of it all is that spiritual cowards are unwilling to fight for a real life in God. "Strain every nerve to force your way in through the narrow gate," Jesus said, "for multitudes, I tell you, will endeavour to find a way in and will not succeed (Luke 13:24)."

That lazy, apathetic multitude describes the people of the apostasy. They are un-

willing to deny themselves for the sake of others because it means they will have to give of themselves. They are unwilling to stand against the world's criticism because they want everyone's approval. They are unwilling to enter the struggle of a *bona fide* devotional life because it requires too much effort.

Jesus called them "lazy slaves (Matthew 25:26)." When the time comes that it will cost them something to be a Christian, they will – like all traitors – go over to the enemy's side. This is the army that Satan, the greatest of all cowards, is currently

assembling.

But God is putting together an army of His own, as well. His will be an army of heroes, because Jesus Christ, the most courageous of all heroes, is leading them into battle. It is because of what He accomplished on the Cross that believers can live selfless lives, can endure the world's disdain and can fight through in prayer to touch the heart of God.

And by the time this protracted war is over, many of God's people will have proven themselves to be heroes to His cause, to His kingdom and to His glory. 🏹



❧ In Prayer ❧

O LORD, in prayer I launch far out into the eternal world, and on that broad ocean my soul triumphs over all evils on the shores of mortality. Time, with its gay amusements and cruel disappointments never appears so inconsiderate as then.

In prayer

I see myself as nothing; I find my heart going after You with intensity, and long with vehement thirst to live to You. Blessed be the strong gales of the Spirit that speed me on my way to the New Jerusalem.

In prayer

All things here below vanish, and nothing seems important but holiness of heart and the salvation of others.

In prayer

All my worldly cares, fears, anxieties disappear, and are of as little significance as a puff of wind.

In prayer

My soul inwardly exults with lively thoughts at what You are doing for Your church, and I long that You should get Yourself a great name from sinners returning to Zion.

In prayer

I am lifted above the frowns and flatteries of life, and taste heavenly joys; entering into the eternal world I can give myself to You with all my heart, to be Yours for ever.

In prayer

I can place all my concerns in Your hands, to be entirely at Your disposal, having no will or interest of my own.

In prayer

I can intercede for my friends, ministers, sinners, the church, Your kingdom to come, with greatest freedom, ardent hopes, as a son to his father, as a lover to the beloved.

Help me to be all prayer and never to cease praying. 🏹

From an old Puritan prayer

The top 10 liberal church lies about creation

by Russ Miller

I WANT you to know right up front that I used to be what you would call a Theistic Evolutionist. That's a Christian who thinks God used evolution and millions of years of death and suffering to get us to where we are today. You won't find that God in the Bible. Fortunately, someone straightened me out, and that's what I now try to do for others – to help people understand their origins.

The Bible tells us that all scripture is given by the inspiration of God – **all scripture!** Now, that should make being a believer extremely easy. You read God's Word, and you believe the Word of God. Sounds pretty easy doesn't it? But the problem is that Satan and his minions are throwing out all kinds of stumbling blocks to get us off the narrow path and on to the broad path that leads to destruction.

I get a lot of weird e-mails. Here's one: "You're such an idiot!" And I thought, "My wife's in the next room. Why is she e-mailing me?" And then I thought, "Oh, I see, this actually came from a Liberal Christian." And he goes on to say, "The Bible is not God's inspired Word. It contains man-made stories that hold moral and spiritual lessons." And hence begins the slide on to the broad path.

A favourite saying among Liberal Christians is, "We take the Bible seriously, but not literally." Well, you know, the problem with not believing what it says is that you end up inventing what you want it to say. I mean, literally, you invent your own teachings, your own doctrine. And that is a dangerous place to be, my friends.

In 2 Timothy 4:3 we are told, "A time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. They will heap to themselves teachers that will teach their itching ears what they want to hear." This prophecy is being fulfilled before us today in the lies being told by liberal churches.

Let's consider what I believe are the top 10 lies.

1. The first of these lies is that "we should ignore what the Bible teaches about Creation because it is divisive." In fact, these liberal churches tend to avoid all biblical issues that might be divisive. They don't want to step on any toes, so they focus on presenting inspirational, psychological, self-help lessons.

This leads to very little spiritual growth among the members of these churches. Thirty years down the road, their members are about as mature as the first day they accepted Jesus. They are always fed nothing but milk. And the result is that they don't know what the Bible says about much of anything.

2. The second lie liberal churches teach is one that you will find shocking. It is the idea that "the biblical concept of the Gospel constitutes 'cosmic child abuse.'"

The foundation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is found in Genesis 1-3. Right up front God lays down the foundation for the Gospel message. If you are going to build a structure you start out by laying a solid foundation, and then you build upon it. When the quality of the foundation is ignored, then the structure built upon it will be flawed and unstable.

The initial chapters of Genesis explain the origin of sin and its resulting corruption of the Creation. They also reveal God's plan for correcting this terrible situation (Genesis 3:15). Without belief in the opening chapters of Genesis, liberal churches have concluded that it is appalling that God would allow His Son

to die on a cross, and they call this "cosmic child abuse."

They say the loving God of the Bible would never do such a horrible thing. But the fact is that God's love is what motivated Him to take on human form and come to this earth to die for our sins (John 3:16). They argue that Christians stole the idea of blood sacrifices from pagans and applied it to what they call the Jesus story. As you can see, when you don't believe what the Bible says, you just start inventing your own doctrine – your own theology. And you can be miles and miles off of that narrow pathway.

3. The third lie of the liberal churches is they believe that "the Bible is full of myths and superstitions." They think that secular science proves the Bible is not the inspired Word of God, leading them to make up whatever they want it to say. They believe that it is full of errors, and therefore it is not authoritative.

Now, one of the main things I want to emphasise to you is that real science is a believer's best friend. Have you ever heard that if you believe the Bible, you are "anti-science?" That's all propaganda. Don't fall for that. Real science is your best friend. Real science is knowledge derived from the study of observable, testable evidence. Most people don't realise that more than 80% of the branches of modern science were started by Christians to





study God's creation.

4. The fourth creation-related lie of liberal churches is their contention that "there never was a global flood." They claim it was just a local flood.

Well, Moses told us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that God has judged man's sin once already with a flood of waters that covered all the high hills under the whole heaven – and that would certainly be a global flood (Genesis 7:19&20).

Now, if God's Word is really true, and there was a global flood that covered all the high hills under the whole heaven, wouldn't there be evidence that would be hard to argue with? And wouldn't you expect the evidence to be overwhelming?

I mean if there had really been a global flood, I would expect the outer crust of the earth that we live on and walk on would be made up of sedimentary layers of rock that have been stratified out by moving water – separated by grain size, weight and density. So, you would have all shale layers, all mudstone layers, all sandstone layers, separated by grain size, weight and density. And I'd expect those layers to be full of billions of dead things. You would expect to find things that were buried so quickly they didn't even have time to rot away or get eaten by scavengers.

So, what do we actually see today? Well, the outer crust of the earth averages 1.5 kilometres

deep of sedimentary layers of rock stratified out by grain size, weight and density. And those layers laid down by water are full of billions of dead things that we call fossils – dead animals that were buried so quickly they didn't have time to rot away or get eaten by scavengers.

I live in northern Arizona, and a few weeks ago, I left my home driving to a church in California where I was scheduled to speak. A few kilometres down the road someone had run over a raccoon right in the middle

of the road. Squashed it. Deader than a door nail.

When I returned home four days later, scavengers had already eaten the thing. I thought it was going to lay there for millions of years, waiting for strata to build up around it. You see, things have to be buried immediately to be preserved if they are to become fossils.

The Word of God says that in the last days "scoffers will be willingly ignorant," and they will deny that the ancient world "perished when it was flooded (2 Peter 3:6)." This prophecy says point-blank that scoffers in the last days will deny the global flood.

In fulfilment of this prophecy, starting just 200 years ago, scientists began to deny that a global flood ever occurred, and out of that denial, Old Earth beliefs were born. And Liberal Christians, who compromise God's Word with Secular Atheist beliefs, began to argue that the global flood was really only a local flood.

So, let's consider for a moment where this "scientific" view of the flood comes from. It is based upon the manmade geological column, which is also where the Old Earth concept comes from. This column was invented about 200 years ago.

What they did was to make a drawing of 12 primary geological layers. The drawing

was based on the belief there was never a global flood and that the layers formed slowly and uniformly over millions of years of death and suffering.

They gave each of the 12 layers a name, assigned an age to the layer, and assigned index fossils to the layer. The index fossils supposedly went extinct while that layer was forming, so they wouldn't be found in the newer layers above because they were what? Extinct. Exactly!

Now, where did they come up with the ages that they assigned to their column? They made them up. Where else could they have come up with them? And the fossils in each layer are the key to the chart. I have a science textbook here that tells the reader, "We date the rock layer by the fossils in it." That's why they are called "index fossils."

Okay, fair enough, but where do they get the date for the index fossils? The book says, "We date the fossil by the rock layer it's in." So they date the rock layer by the fossil, and the fossil by the rock layer. It is a total circular argument, all based on the manmade geological column or time scale.

For instance, lobe-finned fish are index fossils for rock up to 325 million years old. So, if a layer is found with a lobe-finned fossil in it, *everything* in the layer is dated up to 325 million years old. But, unfortunately, lobe-finned fish have been found alive today – not extinct for 300 plus million years!

In fact, there are index fossils showing up alive today by the dozens. These discoveries have totally destroyed the reliability of the Old Earth dating methods.

This brings us to a crucially important point. People ask me all the time, "Russ, what evidence do you have that the Bible is true?" I always say, "Well, the same evidence Atheists use to say it's not true."

Don't we all live in the same world? Don't we have the exact same evidence? It's never been about the evidence. It is about who gets to interpret the evidence.

The geologic column, with the 12 primary layers in the correct order and with the correct order of index fossils in them, has only been found in three places in the world – school text-books, museum displays and in Liberal Christian theology!

In like manner, the radiometric dating techniques are based on multiple wild guesses that throw off their dates by millions and billions of years. They have to get a date that matches the column to have it published. All the dates really just come

The top 10 liberal church lies about creation

Continued...



from the column.

And then there is the sacred mantra of carbon dating. This process attempts to measure the age of something by analysing the amount of Carbon 14 it contains. The determination is based on the fact that C14 decays over time, so the less C14 in an item the older it dates. That makes sense right? But considering its rate of decay, *all* C14 should be gone in less than 100 000 years in measurable amounts. So, you can't carbon date something older than a few thousand years because there wouldn't be any C14 left.

But recent studies show that organic materials right down to the bottom of the geological column – which we are told is up to 600 million years old – still have Carbon 14 in them!

Oh, and better yet, from a biblical standpoint, it's in the same range of amount from the top layer all the way through to the bottom layer. What does that mean? That means all those layers had to form in the same event – and recently. Only a global flood viably explains that, my friends. And that's why I point out that a global flood wipes out every Old Earth belief.

5. The fifth lie about Creation that is espoused by liberal churches is, of course, that "Darwin got it right." They think Darwin, through human wisdom, logic and what they refer to as "science" got it right, proving the Bible is incorrect.

Now if you ask me, "Hey, Russ, do you believe in Evolution?" I would say, "Absolutely. I believe in micro-evolution." You see, the word evolution has many meanings. Darwinian Evolution would be best described as macro-evolution.

So, let me just explain the difference

between micro and macro. Micro changes happen within the same kind, the same family. For example, if you start breeding dogs and do so for the next 100 years, you might come up with all 350 types of dogs we have on earth today. Those would just be micro changes – dogs producing dogs.

Now, this is different from Darwinianism or macro-evolution which would be a dog producing a non-dog like a whale, a porpoise or a turnip. After 100 years, how many examples of macro would you get if you are breeding dogs together? Exactly, none. Doesn't even make sense.

After millions of scientific experiments regarding these issues, the only thing that's been found – and it has been found in every single experiment – is that kinds will only bring forth after their kind. And the changes are caused by the loss of genetic information. It is called gene depletion.

Why is it vital for Christians, especially kids still in school, to understand it is a scientific fact that kinds bring forth after their kind? Well, 10 times in the book of Genesis we are told that plants or animals will bring forth after their kind. And here we are a few thousand years later, and after millions of scientific experiments, the only thing ever found is kinds bring forth after their kind. Real science is a Believer's best friend.

In secular school books kids are given lots of examples of biblically correct micro change. But then they switch the discussion to Darwinian macro-evolution. It is the old bait and switch con game, and they fool kids by the millions into thinking Darwinism is a fact. When the real fact is that it goes against scientific law and principle. That's why there is zero evidence that macro-evolution ever took place. They focus on biblically correct micro because there is no evidence of macro to show anybody.

If you ever go through a Biology book, up to the PhD level, you'll notice one consistent thing about their proofs for Darwinism – they are almost always drawings. There is an old saying that goes like this, "Darwinists are experts at drawing things that never existed to support their theory that never took place."

Honestly, you take away their box of crayons, and they've got nothing!

The Bible says, "Professing to be wise they are going to become fools (Romans 1:22)." That doesn't mean they are stupid. We can all be fooled. After all, I used to be a Theistic Evolutionist. The context of this verse makes it clear that it is talking about idolatry. And the highest form of idolatry

within the Church is to think you can put your beliefs and your knowledge above the Creator of the Universe and make up a different form of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:4).

I used to speak on college campuses, and the professors would give the kids extra credit to come and harass me. When I would walk up to the podium, the whole auditorium would just be glaring at me with their arms crossed. Just hatred. Which I always thought was weird. After all, I was just going to talk to them about truth, but they're all mad about it because they have been so indoctrinated.

I'd begin by saying, "I want to ask you guys some questions: How many of you have been taught Biblical Creation is a religious belief?" All of them would immediately raise their hands. They were not going to tolerate religion. Then, I'd say, "Okay, Creationism is a belief in how we came about. So, how many of you have been taught that Darwinian Evolution is science?" Up would go all the hands again.

Then I would say, "Wow, well, I'm kind of confused because when I ask you about Creation, you indicated it is a religious belief, but when I ask you about Darwinianism, you said it is science. But, aren't they both the exact same thing?"

At that point, everyone would get a puzzled look on their face. I would then explain: "Aren't they both beliefs on how we came about? Neither one is science. Science is knowledge derived from the study of evidence."

I would then proceed to crush Darwinism in four seconds flat. Would you like to hear that? *Gene depletion plus natural selection makes it impossible.* Sorry, that was two seconds.

Have you ever heard that 98% of your bio-chemistry is the same as a chimpanzee? This supposedly proves we are close relatives to chimps. But, real science, a Christian's best friend, shows there is as much as a 30% difference – so why are the advocates of Darwinism still saying it's 2%?

And furthermore, if similar bio-chemistry proves our evolutionary past, they should teach that we evolved from worms. After all, your bio-chemistry is 75% the same as that of some worms. And, oh yes, your biochemistry is 50% the same as that of a banana. Anyone evolve from a banana?

6. The sixth lie perpetrated by liberal churches is that "Adam never existed." This is, of course, a natural corollary to the belief that humans evolved out of millions of years of death and suffering.

Thomas Huxley, famous Darwinist and Christian hater stated, "If Adam may be held to be no more a real persona than Prometheus, what value has Paul's dialectic?" What he is saying is, "If Adam is just a mythical creature, Paul's writings are worthless." And he is absolutely correct! No wonder the Bible says, "Prove all things and hold fast that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21)."

You ever hear of the "Y Chromosome Adam?" You see, males have the XY chromosome. The Y is passed down from father to son. And a study of men from around the world indicates we've all descended from one man known as the "Y Chromosome Adam." Again, real science is a believer's best friend.

7. The seventh lie of liberal churches is that "there was no original sin." The Bible says God gave us a perfect creation but man's sin corrupted it, allowing death to enter, spiritually separating us from God. We get our redemption through Jesus Christ. All Old Earth believers say, "Oh, no, no, no! It was billions of years of death that brought us into the world." So, they can't accept an original sin bringing in death. But the Bible says, "Therefore, just as through *one man* sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned (Romans 5:12 – italics added)."

Here is a biblically correct quote from *American Atheist* magazine: "Destroy original sin and in the rubble you'll find the sorry remains of the Son of God." I agree with that statement 100%. The issue really comes down to this question: Did Adam's sin bring death into God's perfect world, separating us from God and requiring our redemption through Jesus, or did millions of years of death bring man into the world?

8. The eighth lie of liberal churches is the belief that "any old Jesus we want to believe in is sufficient for our salvation." Incredibly, this is a belief that is even creeping into what we call conservative churches today. So, I hope what I have to say here will wake a few folks up, especially pastors who have bought into this heresy.

You see, thinking that millions of years of death brought us here results in liberal Christians rejecting Biblical Creation, and the Biblical Creator. The true Jesus found in the Bible is the second person of the Triune God, and He created in six days and rested on the seventh.

But Adam's original sin destroyed the

perfect creation. So, after that sin separated us from God, our Creator became our Saviour and died on a cross, shedding His precious blood to cover our sin. That my friends is the Gospel message. The Gospel message is that our loving Creator sacrificed Himself to be our loving Saviour.

In Christendom today, many churches have adopted the "Gap Theory Jesus." This is the Jesus who made a different creation, not found in the Bible. I call it the "non-biblical creation." According to this unbiblical concept, after God created the universe, Satan and his minions messed it up so bad that God destroyed it and then made the current creation, calling it very good, while leaving Satan and his minions in it! That doesn't make any sense to me.

And then, of course, there is a "Theistic Evolution Jesus" and a "Progressive Creation Jesus." They are both very similar. One says Jesus used millions of years of death and suffering to slowly evolve us. The other says Jesus used millions of years of death and suffering to slowly create us.

All three of these Jesus' have two things in common: none are found in the Bible and each put death before Adam.

In 2 Timothy 3:1-5 we find this warning: "But realise this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self... boastful, arrogant... treacherous, reckless, conceited... holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these."

These are the people who today are saying, "Well, we believe in God, but not one who could create the universe in six days. And He certainly could never have judged the world with a global flood." You need to turn away from such people. Put your trust in the real Jesus. The one found in the Bible who produced the Creation in six days.

9. The ninth lie circulated by liberal churches is that "our Creator is a Radical Progressive." They downplay the Gospel because they are embarrassed by it. They are embarrassed by the shed blood of Christ. So, they focus instead on promoting social justice and good works – which evidently include abortion, euthanasia, gay marriage, radical environmentalism, prostitution and Socialism bordering on Communism.

The approach of these people to Bible believing Christians is to marginalise them with the intention of isolating them and

getting them to stand on their own. How do you do that? By ridicule. By name-calling. The person who will stand and not compromise will be called intolerant, a racist, a homophobe, a fundamentalist and an unloving idiot, among other derisive names.

And certainly, one of their favourite methods of ridicule is to mock the Bible's creation account. So, they ask sarcastic questions like, "Did God really mean six days?" "Surely you are not so naive as to believe in a global flood, are you?" "And don't you understand that so-called Bible prophecy is just inspirational poetry with no specific meaning?"


10. The final lie I'd like to mention that is being preached by liberal churches is one that is rapidly growing in popularity today, mainly because of the emphasis our society is placing on tolerance. The myth is that "all roads lead to Heaven." Actually, there is a sense in which that statement is correct. Yes, my friends, all roads do lead to God, but only one is for salvation. All others will be for judgement and condemnation. Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me (John 14:6)."

Liberal Christian theology is a lot like rat poison. It can seem very enticing. After all, doesn't everyone want to get along? Can't we just get along? Do you think I like having to go against the flow all the time? It's so much easier to sit back and just go with the world. Why cause trouble? Can't we just go along in order to get along?

No! Not when the truth and authority of God's Word is at stake. Furthermore, an attack on God's Word is an attack on the deity, dignity and trustworthiness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Believers need to get equipped so we can use God's Word to discern truth and thus guard ourselves, our families, our friends and our churches from heresies. We need to move past the milk and get to the meat because Satan is devouring the Church today.

Let me end with this verse: "Henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive (Ephesians 4:14)."

My friends, read God's Word. Put your trust in the Word of God, and I mean word for word and cover to cover. 

The power of God's Word in overcoming the adversary

by Mark I. Bubeck

THE sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. In keeping with John 1:1, the Lord Jesus is often spoken of as “the living Word” just as the Bible is the written Word.

We have to be careful, however, not to deify the written Word to the point that we worship it. We must worship not the Bible, but the God of the Bible. Yet, because it is the very Word of God and will never pass away, the Bible carries many of the attributes of God Himself.

It is the eternal Word just as God Himself is eternal. As God is omnipotent, so does His Word have all power to defeat Satan and to accomplish God's will. As God is immutable, so the Word of God will never change. As our Lord is omnipresent, so His Word is always there and ready to be used in every situation. As God is holy, so His Word is holy.

The writer to the Hebrews says: “The Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).”

The sword of the Word has the power to penetrate one's life. It is meant to do corrective surgery within the soul, spirit, thoughts, and attitudes of the believer. That is perhaps the secret of its power against Satan. As the believer uses it, the Word can penetrate, cleanse, and change the believer's life and in so doing, cut away Satan's grip upon that life.

Nothing is quite as important in spiritual warfare as getting the Word of God into the mind and heart of the believer. That one thing will accomplish more in setting

a person free from Satan's oppression and affliction than any other method I know.

A Christian brother who had come under severe oppression from the enemy was for years unable to work or to attend church. He withdrew from life and duty. Fear, depression, and torment seemed to rule his life.

Then victory began to come as he started memorising large portions of God's Word. Daily he meditated on Scripture portions and repeated their meaning. It was amazing to see the change that simple procedure effected in his life. Anyone who is serious about spiritual warfare must memorise the Word and meditate upon it daily, even hourly.

There is no substitute

There is no substitute for persistent, steady, consistent application of God's Word against Satan. The Lord Jesus Christ used that approach in His dramatic encounter with Satan in the wilderness, recorded in Luke 4:1-3.

He had fasted for forty days. At the end of that time Jesus was hungry, and food was many miles away. Satan tempted our Lord, saying: “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread (Matthew 4:3).” In reply, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone (Luke 4:4).’”

Next, Satan tried to tempt the Lord Jesus to take a shortcut to the glory of His coming kingdom by worshipping him. Once again Christ quoted the Word: “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only (Luke 4:8).’”

The final temptation came at the high-

est point of the Temple in Jerusalem, where Satan tried to get Jesus to “throw Yourself down from here.” That time, Satan himself quoted the Scriptures, from Psalm 91:11&12. Once again the Lord Jesus Christ persistently used the weapon of the Word, quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, “It says: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test (Luke 4:12).’” At that point, the devil left Jesus “until an opportune time (Luke 4:13).” He was defeated by the Saviour's persistent use of the “sword” but was determined to try again.

He will leave when the Word is applied

The servant of Christ will find Satan using the same pattern of attack against him. And Satan will leave only as the Word of God is persistently applied against him.

One of the most obvious requirements for using the “sword” is to *know the Word of God*. It was the accepted practice for devout Jewish boys of our Lord's era to memorise the first five books of the Old Testament. For most of us, that would seem an impossible task, yet there are people living today who have committed the entire New Testament to memory. Others know large portions of both Testaments. It seems obvious that the Lord Jesus Christ's ability to quickly quote from the book of Deuteronomy was a key to Satan's defeat.

Scripture memorisation is one of the most urgently needed disciplines of the Christian home and the Christian church. If we are not equipping ourselves for battle by memorising the Word, our best weapon will be just out of our reach when we most need it. Satan is waiting to find “an opportune time” in each of our lives. That opportune time will arise when we have no Bible nearby, and our weapon will be out of reach if we do not have it memorized.

There are many ways to memorise. Some can memorise large sections of the Word by simply reading them many times. For many years, when calling on hospital patients, I read favourite passages of the Word that spoke of the Lord's comfort. One day, having left my Bible in the car, I discovered to my surprise that I could quote those portions almost perfectly.

Others find it helpful to write out verses or paragraphs on cards to carry with them, then work on memorising them in spare moments. It is helpful to work with another person when memorising, so you can check on each other. Most people

work more effectively under the principle of accountability.

It is equally important that you correctly understand the Word of God. One who memorises the Word must also be one who “correctly handles the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).” When Satan quoted the Scriptures to Jesus during His temptation, he misinterpreted them. That is one of Satan’s most clever tricks. He wants us to misunderstand the Word or misuse it. Some of the most effective human instruments Satan has are people who use the Bible effusively, but incorrectly.

When memorising the Word of God, it is effective to express in your own words what the text is saying. If you have any doubt about the meaning, use a trustworthy Bible commentary to arrive at a correct understanding.

Satan may use a wrong understanding of a passage of Scripture to paralyse a Christian’s effectiveness.

One day had a call from a Christian lady who was in severe distress. She was the wife of a prominent physician in a distant city and very active in a Bible-preaching church. She had got into a great deal of difficulty over two passages of Scripture in the book of Hebrews (6:4-6; 10:26-31).

Satan kept tormenting her into believing that she had “fallen away” and that she had lost her salvation and could not be saved again. In trying to help, I asked her if she had ever prayed over those passages, repeatedly read them, and sought to understand what they really said. “Oh, no,” was her reply. “They always frighten me too much, and I try not to read them.”

Her response was typical of how Satan tries to misuse the Word of God. By tormenting her, the enemy was able to keep her from mastering the Word. I urged her to make an exhaustive study of those passages. Admittedly, they are some of the most difficult texts to understand, and I assured her that she would find good Bible scholars differing in their approach to those texts. Yet the Word is the truth of God, and God wants us to know it.

Feelings won’t do it

We must know the Scripture and insist that the enemy acknowledge our stand. We can only do this effectively as we build our lives upon God’s Word, “rooted and grounded” in the truth.

We cannot build effective warfare upon anything else. Feelings will not do. Feelings are as changeable as the wind. Our own discipline and dedication will not do.

One day we are up, and another day we are down. Only the Word of God effectively dispatches the enemy.

Satan will not easily back off from you even when you use the Word against him. He will test you and try to get you to doubt the truth of the Word. He will challenge you. It is always important to establish your authority over him because of your union with Christ.

The enemy may deny that Christ has authority over him. But if you know the Word and quote the Word, establishing Christ’s authority, you can always force him to admit that Christ has authority over all principalities and powers (Ephesians 1:19-22; Philippians 2:9-11).

Behind the sword is a Person

We must not fail to recognise that behind “the sword of the Spirit” is a Person, the Holy Spirit. He is the one who makes our sword effective in battle.

Peter’s experience in the garden when men came to take Jesus is an example of a believer’s swinging the wrong sword (John 18:10). He used the wrong sword and was trusting in the wrong strength to be effective in battle. The only result was that Malchus lost an ear.

If our Lord had not been there to heal the ear immediately, not only would Malchus have suffered injury, but the entire company of disciples could have been arrested, perhaps imprisoned, or even crucified with Jesus.

Our Lord often has to rescue us when we go about swinging the wrong sword in spiritual battle. Later that same man, Peter swung the sword of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Instead of injuring one man’s ear, he captured and spiritually healed 3 000 “ears.” Three thousand people responded to the Word of salvation and were baptized as believers.

We cannot effectively use the Word of God in warfare unless the Holy Spirit is controlling us. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22&23).” We cannot fight spiritual battles in a fleshly way.

In the early years of my ministry, a member of the church I pastored was very difficult to work with. She had a sharp tongue, a quick temper, and she was somewhat overbearing. Through the years she had offended many people. It would have been fairly easy to have voted her out of the church, as some of the deacons wanted

to do. After a couple of sharp encounters with her myself, I felt that might not be a bad idea.

I went so far as to pray about it. Afterward, I remember thinking, *If I do that, God will give me two more just like her.* God had put her there for me to love, to nurture, to train, to feed, and to lead, not to kick out. How often we get into trouble when we resort to a method other than that “of the Spirit.” Satan moves in on such situations even when we feel we are right and the other person is wrong. He indeed may be very wrong, but we can never do good things in a fleshly way.

We must also remember not to resist the Holy Spirit in one area of life while trying to use the “sword of the Spirit” in another. Several years ago, a woman who was under severe assault from the powers of darkness came to me for counselling. I used all the methods of warfare I knew but was still not very successful.


After several weeks of counselling, I could see no improvement. She was memorising the Word, practicing aggressive resistance of the enemy, praying doctrinally-oriented prayers, but still seemed to be losing the battle. I finally concluded something was seriously wrong.

In kindness I asked her if she was resisting the Holy Spirit in some area. She hung her head and finally told me she had a smoking problem. She did not smoke heavily, but she was aware that it was a habit she would not submit to the Holy Spirit. We dealt with that, and immediate improvement began. The intensity of the battle subsided, and the last I knew, she was walking tall in victory.

It is the Holy Spirit who applies the power of the “sword” against our foe. If we are grieving or quenching His work in our lives in any area, Satan will take advantage of that opening.

All spiritual victory is essentially bound to the Word of God. Satan retreats as the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit, is used against him.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I lay hold of the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. I embrace its inerrant message of truth and power. I humbly ask the Holy Spirit to guide me into true understanding of the message of the Word. Grant to me the discipline and dedication to memorise the Word and to saturate my mind with its truth and power.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, grant to me the wisdom to always apply the Word against the enemy. May I use the Word to defeat Satan and to advance the cause of Christ into that very realm Satan claims. Amen. 

A Suffering Pilgrim

by Dr Michael Gleghorn

JOHN Bunyan is known to most people today as the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a book he began writing in prison. It tells the story of "Christian," who makes his way from the "City of Destruction" (which represents this world) to the "Celestial City" (which represents Heaven).

It's been described as "perhaps the world's best-selling book" (after the Bible), and has been "translated into over 200 languages." Written in the form of an allegory, it essentially relates the story of Bunyan's own Christian journey. And just as his life was full of trials and suffering, so also "Christian" must face many hardships and difficulties as well.

Bunyan was born in England in 1628 at a time of great political and religious unrest. In 1644, at just 15 years old, both his mother and sister died within a month of each other. Later that year, "when Bunyan had turned 16, he was drafted into the Parliamentary Army and for about two years was taken from his home for military service."

He married in 1648, at about the age of 20, but his wife died just 10 years later, leaving him with four children, the oldest of whom was blind. He married again the following year, in 1659, but incredibly, just one year after this, Bunyan was arrested and put in prison. His wife, who was pregnant at the time, suffered a miscarriage, probably because of the added stress which this ordeal created. She was then left to care for Bunyan's four children while he spent the next 12 years in jail.

As you can see, Bunyan was no stranger to suffering. Indeed, he had an intimate, firsthand acquaintance with heartache, trials, and difficulties.

But what crimes had he committed to be cast into prison? Essentially, the charges against him were two: first, "he refused to attend the services of the Established church" of England; and second, he "preached to unlawful assemblies."

You see, Bunyan had converted to Christianity during his first marriage

and had become a powerful and respected preacher. But in the volatile political and religious climate of that day, the freedom of Nonconformist preachers like Bunyan eventually came to an end. And when it did, he was arrested and put in prison.

In the remainder of this article we'll look at some of the trials this man endured, how he responded to them, and what they might teach us as we each make our own spiritual journey.

The Pilgrim's Conversion

The Pilgrim's Progress is one of the best-selling Christian books of all time. But as Bunyan tells us in another of his books, the autobiographical *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, before becoming a Christian he had few equals in "cursing, swearing, lying and blaspheming the holy name of God." Indeed, prior to his marriage, he says he was "the very ring-leader of all the youth... into all manner of vice and ungodliness."

Bunyan's young wife had a very godly father. When he died, he left her two books which she brought into her marriage: *The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven* and *The Practice of Piety*. According to Bunyan, although these books did not awaken him to his "sad and sinful state," they nevertheless did arouse within him "some desires to religion."

One of the practical effects of these new desires was Bunyan's regular attendance at a local church.

Soon Bunyan also began to read the Bible. He then came under such powerful conviction of sin that he scarcely knew what to do. "Sin and corruption," he wrote, "would as naturally bubble out of my heart, as water would bubble out of a fountain... I thought none but the devil himself could equalise me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind."

Bunyan was plunged into a state of despair over the greatness of his sin which, he tell us, "continued a long while, even for some years together."

Eventually, after years of spiritual and emotional agony, Bunyan described "what



seemed to be the decisive moment." He was heading into the field one day when suddenly this sentence broke in upon his mind: "Thy righteousness is in heaven." At this, he says, "I... saw... that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse: for my righteousness was Jesus Christ himself, the same yesterday, and today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8)."

"Now," he said, "did my chains fall off my legs indeed... my temptations also fled away... now went I... home rejoicing, for the grace and love of God."

After years of spiritual anguish, Bunyan had been set free by the grace of God from some of his worst fears and torments. But as we'll see, this was not to be the end of his experience with suffering. As one set of trials was ending, another was soon to begin.

The Pilgrim's Imprisonment

According to Bunyan, five or six years after his conversion, in about the year 1655, some of the believers in his local congregation began entreating him "to speak a word of exhortation unto them." Although initially hesitant, Bunyan agreed to their request "and suddenly a

great preacher was discovered.”

Apparently, word spread quickly through the English countryside. According to one author, “In the days of toleration, a day’s notice would get a crowd of 1 200 to hear him preach at 7 o’clock in the morning on a weekday.”

Unfortunately, it was not to last. In 1660, the same year in which Charles II was brought home as king in the Restoration of the Monarchy, John Bunyan was arrested and imprisoned “for preaching without state approval.”

Officially, he was charged with being in violation of the Elizabethan Conventicle Act of 1593. According to this Act, anyone found guilty of “abstaining from coming to church to hear divine service, and... being a common upholder of several unlawful meetings... could be held without bail until he or she submitted to the authority of the Anglican church.” As a Nonconformist preacher, this Act applied to men like Bunyan.

What’s interesting, however, is that Bunyan could have gone free at any time, as long as he agreed to give up preaching. But as he was firmly persuaded that he had been called by God to this ministry, he was completely unwilling to abandon his calling.

He thus spent the next 12 years in prison, largely cut off from his wife, children, friends, and church.

I say “largely cut off” for, strange as it may seem, it appears that Bunyan was occasionally let out “to see his family or make brief trips.” Of course, this was the exception and not the rule. Nevertheless, by “the standards of the 17th century the conditions in which he was held were not particularly brutal.”

On the other hand, Bunyan was largely fortunate in this respect: “hundreds of Dissenters died in prison, and many more came out with their health broken by foul, over-crowded conditions.”

Although these qualifications must be admitted, we must never lose sight of the fact that Bunyan was willing to endure 12 long years of this suffering, rather than agree to give up preaching. And thankfully, God brought a great deal of good out of His faithful servant’s suffering.

The Pilgrim’s Writings

Most people today know John Bunyan as the author of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, but this is just one of many works written by the metal-worker turned minister. His

first book was written in 1656, when he was 28 years old. But by the time of his death, some 32 years later, he had authored 57 more!

John Piper notes: “The variety in these books was remarkable: books dealing with controversies (like those concerning the Quakers... justification and baptism), collections of poems, children’s literature, and allegory (like *The Holy War* and *The Life and Death of Mr Badman*). But the vast majority were practical... expositions of Scripture built from sermons for the sake of helping Christian pilgrims make their way successfully to heaven.”

What’s especially astonishing about the size and variety of Bunyan’s literary legacy is that it came from a man with almost no formal education. As a child Bunyan had been taught to read and write, but nothing more. He had no university or seminary degrees in which to boast.

And yet his diligent study of the Bible, born mainly out of a burning desire to find peace with God, made Bunyan mighty in the Scriptures. Indeed the Bible, more than any other book, would be the primary influence upon his many writings.

So evident was this to Charles Spurgeon, the famous 19th century Baptist preacher, that he once wrote of Bunyan: “He had studied our Authorized Version... till his whole being was saturated with Scripture; and though his writings are full of poetry, yet he cannot give us his *Pilgrim’s Progress* – that sweetest of all prose poems – without continually making us feel and say, ‘Why, this man is a living Bible!’ Prick him anywhere; and you will find that his blood is Bibline, the very essence of the Bible flows from him.”

Not even his suffering in prison could dampen Bunyan’s enthusiasm for the Word of God or for writing. Indeed, if anything, it increased it. Some of his best-known works were written from the confines of a prison cell. These include *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, written during his first imprisonment, as well as *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, apparently completed during a second, briefer period of imprisonment in 1677. Bunyan’s writings are surely one of his greatest gifts to the church.

Lessons from a Suffering Pilgrim

A thoughtful examination of John Bunyan’s reflections on the purpose and value


of suffering can give us much wisdom in how best to deal with it in our own lives. Near the end of his spiritual autobiography, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, he appended a brief account of his imprisonment in the Bedford jail. In it, he tells of how he tried to prepare himself for imprisonment, and possibly even death, when he realised that he might soon be called upon to suffer for the cause of Christ. Naturally, as one might well expect, one of the things he did was pray. He was particularly concerned to ask God for the strength to patiently endure his imprisonment, even with an attitude of joy (Colossians 1:11).

However, it’s the second thing he says that I find especially interesting and helpful. He reflects on the words of the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:9: “We had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead.”

Commenting on this verse, he then makes the following two observations: “By this scripture I was made to see that if ever I would suffer rightly, I must first pass a sentence of death upon everything that can properly be called a thing of this life, even to reckon myself, my wife, my children, my health, my enjoyments and all, as dead to me, and myself as dead to them. The second was, to live upon God that is invisible; as Paul said in another place, the way not to faint, is to look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal; but the things that are not seen, they are eternal.”

Bunyan realised that, like it or not, suffering, pain, loss and death would all come to him in one way or another. Indeed, sooner or later every single one of us must ultimately face these terrifying realities.

How, then, can we best prepare to meet them? As Bunyan reminds us, if we only prepare for prison, say, then we will be unprepared for beatings. But if we stop our preparation with beatings, then we will be unprepared for death. But we cannot evade or cheat death forever.

And thus, concludes Bunyan, “the best way to go through sufferings, is to trust in God through Christ, as touching the world to come; and as touching this world.” This was how Bunyan lived, and with God’s help it was also how he died. May the eternal and unseen God grant each of us the grace to follow his example. 

Prayer for a revived church



by Andrew Murray

“God be merciful to us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us; that Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations... God, our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him (Psalm 67:1&2, 6&7).”

IN speaking of and praying for revival, it is important that we understand what we really desire and ask for. To most Christians the word conveys the meaning of a large increase in the number of conversions. When that happens, they say, “There has been quite a revival in that church (or town).”

The true meaning of the word is far deeper. The word means making alive again those who have been alive but have fallen into what is called a cold, or dead, state. They are Christians and have life, but they need reviving to bring them back to their first love and the healthy growth of the spiritual life to which conversion was meant to be the entrance.

When the church as a whole – its ministers and members – is not living in full wholehearted devotion to Christ and His service, is not walking in the joy of the Lord and separation from the world, we need to pray that God’s people may truly be revived and have the life of God in power restored to them.

What the world needs above everything is not more men and women of the ordinary type of Christians but better people. We need Christians who are stronger in faith and holier in life, intensely devoted to Christ and His service and ready to sacrifice all for the salvation of souls.

When God’s Spirit is poured out upon the church, and men and women, who are now struggling on in feebleness, are clothed with the garments of praise and the power of the Spirit, the world will soon share the blessing. These revived believers will be ready to give themselves to God’s work at home or abroad; their word and witness will be in power.

Nominal Christians will be judged by the power of the revived ones’ example, and will confess that God is with them. And the world will, in the increased numbers and the burning fervour of the messengers of a quickened church, share in the blessing.

The greatest need of our day

A revival among believers is the great need of our day. A revived church is the only hope of a dying world.

The church has the charge of the world entrusted to it. The whole body of believers, and every individual believer, is to be like Christ, the light of the world, placed in the world with the one definite, exclusive object of enlightening its darkness and bringing men and women out of darkness into light.

To do its work the church has the promise of the power of the Holy Spirit of God. That Spirit is given to every believer to be within him the power of a divine and holy life. That Spirit is to be to him the seal of his worship and acceptance, the fountain of love and joy, the grace for conquering sin and the world, the power to do all that God would have us do.

That Spirit is to enlighten and guide and lead, to sanctify and fit for unbroken fellowship with a holy God, to reveal Christ the Son of God the Father within the heart. He is to be a fountain springing up within and flowing forth as streams of living water.

In what He thus works in personal experience, He equips the person to boldly testify about God’s power and to communicate to others what has happened in his own life. Without the power of the Holy Spirit fully recognised and experienced, the church cannot know or fulfil its calling.

It is because Christians live so much for this present world, and under its power, that the world’s spirit gets possession of them, and grieves and quenches the Spirit of God. They lose the power to conquer sin or live a holier life. They lose any intense desire to live for God and His kingdom. They lose the divine love that would enable them to live for or to have influence on their neighbours.

Their religion becomes that of the mind and not of the heart. They are willing to listen to beautiful words on religion, and count the pleasing impressions these make as religious feeling. And all the while they are quenching the life in them into impotence and death. This is the state in which multitudes of Christians live, making themselves and their churches powerless for good or for blessing.

It is out of this state that a revival is needed to lift the church into its true life, according to the divine pattern.

A true revival means nothing less than a revolution, casting out the spirit of worldliness and selfishness and making God and His love triumph in the heart and life. As every birth has its travails and its pangs, so this entrance of a new divine life in power into a church must be preceded and accompanied by the pains of conviction and confession, by the earnest searchings of heart in which sin is discovered, is held up to shame, and condemned.

In such a work of grace many will learn how little truth or power there has been either in their conversion or their spiritual life. They will see things that they tolerated to be vile sin that nothing but the blood of Christ can wash away and the power of Christ can overcome.

They will see that now, for the first time, they truly know what the power of grace is, what the blessedness of God’s love is, and what the joy of a heart given to His

service is. And work for Christ will be the spontaneous fruit of God's Spirit coming on them.

On those who believe that a revival is needed and is possible rests the solemn responsibility of preparing the way of the Lord in speaking to God and men and women about it.

To God we speak about it in prayer. We ask Him to open our own eyes and hearts, and those of our church, to what He thinks and says of the spiritual life He finds. We confess our own sin and the sin of our brethren. We give ourselves to stand in the gap, to take hold of God's strength. We ask the Spirit to give us the consciousness of being intercessors, who in tender love, and yet in holy zeal and truth, speak to God about the state in which His church is. Not in the spirit of judgment or self-exaltation, but in deep humility and the spirit of self-sacrifice, we ask God to show us if it is true what we think we see – that the spirit of self-will and the world is robbing the church of its power to continue to carry out the work Christ began.

We ask God to reveal to us if and how deliverance can come.

And so we are prepared to lift up our testimony and speak to our brethren. It may not happen at once: the fire may burn long in our bones. It may not be to large audiences, or with any marked result.

But if our speaking to men is the fruit of much speaking to God, of real waiting on Him for revival, it must tell. As one here and another there – this is usually God's way – begins to see what God's will really is concerning His church, the cause of her failure, and the path of restoration and what the certainty of the visitation of His grace, his prayer will become more urgent and believing, and the blessing will come.

All this must lead to the assured faith that a revived church is a possibility, a promise, and a certainty. As in the individual and his needs, so with the church and the mighty change to be wrought in it: unbelief is the great hindrance.

And faith can triumph only where it stands – not in the wisdom of men and in the hope they have of revival from all the agencies that are at work, and all the progress they see – but in the power of God and His direct intervention. Faith looks up to and worships the God of absolute omnipotence and infinite love. God can, God will – these are its foundational strengths, on the right hand and on the left.

Yes, God is able!

It needs but an act of His will; and His Holy Spirit, the mighty power of God working in His church, can give new life to all who long to receive Him. He can work conviction in those who are resting

content in external prosperity and human agencies. He can give the joy of the Holy Spirit, first in single churches and then in larger bodies. He can awaken His people, as out of sleep, to see, consent, and rejoice that they are indeed the hope of a dying world.

And God is ready!

As the sun pours its light and warmth on every tiny flower to give it growth and beauty, God's love is waiting and longing to pour itself into hearts that reach out after Him. Sometimes it may appear as if He waits long and delays His coming. But let us be sure of this: He does not wait one moment longer than is needful. We may depend upon it, with the utmost confidence, that if His children unite in praying for a revived church as the only hope of a dying world, He will hear the prayer.

As the solemn words "a revived church the only hope for a dying world" are borne in upon us and burned into us, prayer and intercession will become a transaction with God. Our utter helplessness will have to take hold of and cling to His almighty power. Our whole life must become possessed by the thought that there is nothing worth living for but the will of God in the salvation of men. ☩

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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.

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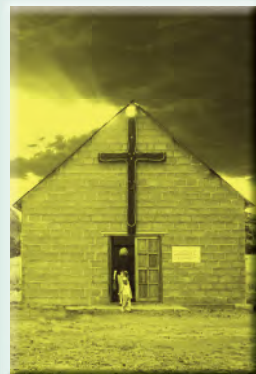
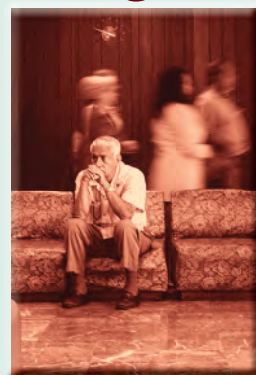
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Humility, repentance and the nearness of God

by Richard Owen Roberts

THE subject of revival is an incredibly important subject – and at the very heart of the subject is the manifest presence of God.

One of the words of Scripture I have delighted in and been immensely encouraged by is found at the end of Psalm 73, when the psalmist declares, “But as for me, the nearness of God is my good.”

When we are speaking about revival, that is exactly what we are talking about – the nearness of God. This is truly our greatest source of good on earth and, of course, in glory His nearness will be our greatest good also.

So we often, in describing revival, say that earth never comes closer to heaven than in a season of revival when God draws near.

There is a great deal of vibrant instruction on the subject of revival in Scripture, but I want to share Psalm 80:1-3, “Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who are enthroned above the cherubim, shine forth! Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up Your power, and come to save us! O God, restore us, and cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved.”

In the first two verses, three terribly tragic matters are brought to the fore. First, it becomes necessary for those who are interceding to plead with God to listen. Second, the One who filled the Holy of Holies with such incredible, glorious presence that it was necessary



to put in an incense pot in order to obscure the glory, is being pled with in this psalm to shine forth. And indeed, the God of all power is being urged to stir up His power and come and save His people.

Now you obviously do not ask someone to listen when you know that they are. You do not ask that the glory shine forth when indeed the glory is so great that it is blinding. You do not ask for a stirring up of power when all power is functioning, at work warming the hearts of the people of God and indeed subduing the wrathful hearts of the impenitent bringing them to faith in Jesus Christ.

When we are talking about the need for revival we are talking about a season such as the psalmist has described – a season when it appears God is not listening, when indeed the glory of God is obscured, when also the power of God is not working as it can and is so desperately needed.

And, of course, the reason why there is this withdrawal of the manifest presence of God and of these graces is because sin has occurred that has not been repented of.

There is a very clear and real way in which sin erects a bar-

rier between the people of God and Himself. So when we are speaking about revival, we are speaking about repentance at the very heart. We are speaking about repentance not merely of those fruits of sin that appear in the life, but repentance at the very root of sin.

And, of course, the Scriptures do specify certain root sins including pride and stubbornness, rebellion and unbelief.

Isaiah expressed the matter in the most powerful fashion in saying, “Thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, ‘I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite (Isaiah 57:15).’”

When the Chronicles deal with the subject of revival, and in that section where Solomon is at the forefront and he is dealing with God after the dedication of the temple, the Lord so clearly declares, “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves (2 Chronicles 7:14)...”

You know, there is a sense in which we almost need to stop right there. Prayer does not come first, as vitally important

as it is – but humbling ourselves.

The problem in Psalm 80, from which we have read but three verses, is that the arrogance of the people and the sin that followed their arrogance has grown to that point where it has created a barrier between God and themselves.


So much so, in fact, that we read in verses 4&5, “O

Lord God of hosts, how long will You be angry with the prayer of Your people? You have fed them with the bread of tears, and You have made them to drink tears in large measure.”

So prayer is not first. It is of great consequence, as already stated. It is, indeed, of such considerable consequence that speaking of revival without the earnest birthing kind of prayer that has already been described is just simply foolish.

But, the people of God must first humble themselves and set aside anything and everything that has grieved our Father in heaven and then indeed we can pour out our hearts in prayer.

What an awesome thing to remember that prayers can so offend God that He sends tears to drink in great measure rather than the desired answers.

But brothers and sisters, at the very heart of revival is the nearness of God. All of the little ones in our world, the ones just born and all the crawling ones, and all the walking children, and all the young people – indeed, everyone in the world needs the Lord. Let us turn to prayer now with a spirit of urgency that is appropriate at an hour like this. 

Thanks to
Elizabeth Kendal

WATCH & PRAY

UGANDA: MINORITY CHRISTIANS UNDER PRESSURE

Uganda is a predominantly Christian country with a secular constitution that guarantees religious freedom. It is also Africa's most decentralised country with some 130 districts that are largely self-governing. In the Muslim-dominated Eastern Region, minority Christians are persecuted with impunity. In October last year, Emmanuel Nyaiti (12) was beaten, strangled and left for dead after he refused to convert to Islam; and the church building established by Pastor Mustafa Waseke for his congregation was razed by a Muslim mob.

In December, after losing his home, wife, children, livelihood, parents and inheritance, convert Muhamud Gusolo (28) appealed to local authorities – but to no avail; and Deborah Gimbo was hospitalised after being violent attacked in her home for praying with other women in Jesus' name.

May God intervene for Eastern Region's minority Christians.

SHARIA LAW DESCENDS IN THE PHILIPPINES

On January 21, some 2.8 million voters in western Mindanao participated in a plebiscite organised to facilitate the establishment of an Islamic sub-state in southern Philippines. Once the "yes" victory is confirmed, a three-year transi-



tion period will follow. During that time a Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)-dominated council will govern the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and facilitate the decommissioning of tens of thousands of MILF fighters.

If all goes to plan, polls to elect an 80-seat parliament will then be held in 2022. The Bangsamoro Basic Law will impose Islamic Sharia Law on all of the BARMM's Muslim residents. Consequently, Islamic zeal and repression will escalate, with serious repercussions for Christian ministry, witness, freedom and security.

Please pray for the Philippine Church, especially for Mindanao's minority Christians.

THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY'S WAR ON RELIGION HEATS UP

Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu city, Sichuan Province, is committed to open ministry irrespective of circumstances. Though unregistered and under pressure, the church has continued to worship openly, run a school and seminary, conduct street evangelism and publish ser-

mons on-line.

Undeterred by arrests and threats, Pastor Wang Yi (45) openly continues to challenge Communist Party policy. On Sunday, December 9 last year police launched co-ordinated lightning raids on the homes and workplaces of Early Rain members, pressuring them to sign a document agreeing to never again visit Early Rain Covenant Church, which it labelled an "evil cult."

More than 100 members and key church leaders were arrested for refusing to sign. Two have since been released. Chinese prisons are cruel; violence is routine and normal. Please pray for China and its Christians.

IRAN: BELIEVERS MONITORED AND ARRESTED

Behnam Ersali and Davood Rasooli, Iranian Christian converts from Karaj (50 km west of Tehran) were arrested on November 16 last year. Ac-

cording to Middle East Concern, the men had arranged to meet in Mashhad (900 km east of Tehran), where Behnam was staying at a friend's house. However, it seems Iranian intelligence was monitoring the men, having intercepted their phone calls. The men were arrested before they could meet; Behnam in Mashhad and Davood in Karaj.

They remain in detention, their condition and whereabouts unknown. Friends suspect that Davood Rasooli is in solitary confinement and undergoing interrogation in Karaj's infamous, maximum security Rajai-Shahr Prison. As Rob Duncan, regional manager at Middle East Concern notes, "It reveals how closely the Iranian authorities are monitoring the Christians."

Please pray for Behnam Ersali, Davood Rasooli and all Iran's Christian prisoners. May Christ continue to build his Church in Iran.

Make a date with us! February 3, June 2, November 3

These are the dates for this year's Prepare the Way days at Mount Zion Church, Merrivale (near Howick in KZN) at 9.15 am. Peter Pollock will be preaching at all three events. Bring a friend, make a day of it and stay for (free) lunch!



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Consider... Jesus

by B. McCall Barbour (1865-1943)

"Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2)..."

THE greatest and the grandest of all themes is Jesus. Jesus is the source, the substance and the sum of all genuine and lasting joy. It is in Jesus that reality is found. It is contact with Jesus that makes our own lives real.

Jesus alone satisfies God. Jesus only can satisfy us. To be satisfied with Jesus makes us very simple. More than that, to be simple delivers us from what is artificial, superficial, and merely sentimental. Blessed deliverance indeed!

Jesus is a universal Saviour. There is that in Him which meets all human needs. Less than Jesus will not do. Other than Jesus will not suit. More than Jesus is not possible. He is "the fullness of the God-head bodily (Colossians 2:9)."

The claims of Jesus are stated and His appeals are made in the simplest of terms, that all may understand, accept and enjoy Him and His salvation. Who Jesus is, what Jesus says, what Jesus does and is going to do, is the confidence, the comfort and the encouragement of all who put their trust in Him.

Jesus is the solace, the supply, the satisfaction for every human heart oppressed by sin and sorrow, suffering and care. This then is what Jesus is and does. This He alone can do. He is able. He is willing. He is ready.

Listen then, O soul! Are you in sin? Are you in sorrow? Are you wounded by the cruel treatment of the world? Are you misunderstood and misrepresented? Is your spirit crushed? Is your heart perplexed? Have your oft-repeated failures cast you down? Is life to you a mystery, a weariness, a dread? Are you fearful about the future? Have you a hunger and a thirst for something – yes, rather for a someone who will satisfy?

"You shall call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21)." Yes, it is in Jesus, and all that that blessed name implies, that weary hearts and weakened wills and worn-out frames find true abiding rest. Just in Jesus and nowhere else.



In Jesus all the problems of earth's suffering are solved, its sorrows soothed, its sin is "washed away." In Jesus is the stimulus, the strength, the stay for every present need. In Jesus is the only hope there is for future bliss (1 Timothy 1:1).

O wonder not, my soul, that hearts – when they have tasted of the sweetness and the all-sufficiency of His great love – are weaned away from all the profitless pleasures of this passing world and find no sweeter theme of thought, or speech or song than "Jesus, blessed Jesus!"

Jesus! Behind that precious name is the peerless person Himself. It is the Person who satisfies. It is not what others say about Him that can meet our need. It is not a system or a creed, not His gifts, however generous, nor His glories, however grand, that can comfort us. It is not for things our hearts are hungering. It is for Him – Jesus Himself.

As we experience the intimacy of His person and know His presence with us in our hearts, the joy that the Lord gives becomes our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Only as He comforts are we made confident. Only as Jesus fights for us are we made conquerors. Only as Jesus speaks is there power. Only as Jesus rules is there peace. Such is the blessedness of having Jesus in our lives!

O weary soul, in search for satisfaction, pursue your quest no further. Delay your decision no longer! Receive Him! Past efforts may have failed to bring the rest you have reckoned on, the peace He promised, and the power He offered. That must surely be because your heart was set

on them, and not on Him. The blessings have been sought rather than the Blessor.

So often in groping for the "gifts" we fail to grip the Giver. Learn now, O soul, that Jesus is the embodiment of all His gifts. When He is our portion, and our experienced possession, then is our every need supplied in Him.

O soul, what hinders you from knowing Jesus in this sweet, this simple, and this satisfying way? Is it the burden of your sin that makes the barrier that holds you back? Yet this burden is your greatest plea to come to Him.

"Jesus... He shall save His people from their sins." Jesus is the great, the only sin-bearer. "There is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12)." Jesus has settled the sin question for those who put their trust in Him.

"(He) loved me, and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20). Start there! There is no other start. That alone settles it. When it is settled by Jesus as our substitutionary Saviour, it is settled forever. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, that cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). "It is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul (Leviticus 17:11)." "(He) made peace through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20)."

The blood of Jesus is the entrance door into the Father's presence, and into the experience of all the riches of His pardon, peace and power. Come then, O soul, come to Jesus! Seek not salvation in any other way. There is no other. It is Jesus who saves. "By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture (John 10:9)." Then Jesus will be sweet to you – yes, even you!

Just as there is no salvation apart from the acceptance of Jesus and the possession of Him as the Saviour, so there can be no success in service or support in suffering apart from submission to Him and following closely in His steps.

O soul, make no mistake! He is your life (Colossians 3:4). If today your hopes are blighted, your heart is weary, your lot is hard, and your future dark – trust Jesus! Trust Him! Trust Him!