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If I'm A Solder, Where's the War?—Part 2

By Gerald Robison

It is amazing to me how many times we refer to "Christian Soldiers", not only in the Scriptures, but in our songs. Yet, typically, these references are not given much more credence by our minds than a mere poetic thought. However, this is not what the Scripture pictures for us. Rather, the Bible uses specific language that describes a **real battle** of mind, will and spirit.

Two important sections of Scripture will draw our attention in this article, specifically, Ephesians 6 and 1 Peter 5. So, let's look at them now to see what conclusions we can draw from them.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the ruler of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Eph. 6:10-11).

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walks about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

From these two short portions of Scripture we can draw four conclusions: **1)** There is a battle going on; **2)** you will either be strong or weak in that battle; **3)** if you're going to be strong, then you must be strong in the Lord; **4)** There is a definite enemy—Satan.

However, as we showed in the last issue, important questions arise from such conclusions and must be dealt with in a credible way. Those questions come about like this: If there is a God (and there is), and if He can do anything (and He can), then why does He allow Satan to pester, frustrate and tempt His people? Why doesn't God just call "Time Out" on the field and expel Satan?

Discovering Purpose: Ours and Satan's

To understand this, we have to start with other information. We must understand God's purpose in all creation, His purpose for human beings, in particular, and

His purpose for the beings in the spiritual world (angels and demons).

The easiest way to do this is to look at the "final product", just as we would look at the final product in a pizza shop. You might ask, "Why is all this cheese here? What's the purpose of the workers behind the counter? Why are all the onions and pepperoni kept the way they are?" Or you might ask similar questions of an automobile plant: "What's the purpose of the big buildings? Why are all these people here? What's the big idea of all the charts on the walls, the paint in sprayers and the grease in tubes?"

Both purposes are easily discovered by looking at their end-product. That is, the purpose of all the "makings" in the pizza shop is to produce a pizza. And the purpose of all the workers, paint, grease, etc., in the automobile plant is the car that rolls out at the end of the assembly line.

In the same way, we can look at the end product of creation to find its purpose and the end product of mankind to discover his purpose. There, in the book of Revelation, we find at the close of this world, that God's purpose in creation is to **prepare a people for Himself**. It was not to create a perfect world, with perfect people inhabiting it; rather it was to prepare a people that will be conformed to the image of Christ.

It would seem logical to say that God knew what He was doing and that He had a purpose in all that He did. Therefore, if God knows what He is doing and has a purpose behind His actions, then it must be within His purpose for Satan and the rest of the spiritual world to be around and to have impact on our lives!

Our goal now is to discover God's purpose in allowing Satan, demons and other spiritual forces to have such an influence upon us. For certainly, if we understand God's purposes, we will be better prepared to deal with all the trying times and difficult situations that confront us.

Our task is to discover and understand that God's ultimate purpose is to "prepare us" and that all that occurs within our life is for this end. God "could" stop Satan, but He hasn't! God "could" keep us from demons, pain, and tragedy, but He hasn't! God "could" spare us from heartache and head colds, but He hasn't! He hasn't because

He uses these things for the achievement of His purpose in our lives.

This would explain the often quoted passage in Romans 8:28-30, “*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*” God desires to glorify you, fulfill and fully prepare you for His purposes!

Consider how a bodybuilder builds his body, how he adds those inches of muscle and sinew to build what many would call a “perfect specimen”. None of this is accomplished by making the body safe, soft easy and comfortable. It is not achieved by taking leisure time. It is not made possible by removing the pain. Instead, the strength is found through the suffering of strain and the effort of force pushing against force. Or, as my trainer used to say, “Feel the burn!”

Now consider how God will build the perfect specimen of His body—the body of Christ. In preparing us for eternity, He accomplished our growth and strength through force meeting force, through the suffering and strain that every one of us faces. He achieves this through

the battles of everyday living as physical meets obstacle, as mental encounters frustration, as emotional faces disturbance and as this world encounters the spiritual.

Two worlds (physical and spiritual) do encounter each other, impact each other and influence each other. Note how the book of Job begins. It describes scenes alternating between earth and heaven and how what happens in each brings repercussions in the other.

Scene 1: Job on Earth (Chapter 1:1-5). Scene 2: Satan and God in Heaven (Chapter 1:6-12a). Scene 3: Job on Earth (Chapter 1:12b-22). Scene 4: Satan and God in Heaven (Chapter 2:1-6). Scene 5: Satan and Job on Earth (Chapter 2:7-13).

Is this series of events an aberration? Is it a fairy-tale, a myth? Or was it real and does it continue even today? Are we impacted by what happens in heaven, in the spirit realm? We’ll look at those questions in the next article in this series, “Know Your Enemy”.

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Exegetically Speaking—by Spiros Zodhiates

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

Matthew 14:13–21

From the Exegetical Commentary on Matthew, AMG Publishers, 2006.

[13] When Jesus heard these things, He went to a “*desert (érēmon [2048]) place for Himself*” (a.t.), but a crowd of people followed Him from several cities.

We can surmise that Jesus, having been told of the murder of John the Baptist, wanted a private place to pray and recover from grief over this personal loss. Mark explains that He was accompanied by His disciples, telling them to “*rest a while*” in the context of “*many coming and going*” (Mark 6:31). On other occasions, Jesus separated Himself from the hustle and bustle of crowds (Matt. 17:1; Mark 4:34; etc.).

[14] But as Jesus observed many coming and going, “[He] *was moved with compassion (esplagchnísthē, the aorist passive of splagchnízomai [4697], to show compassion) toward them, and he healed (etherápeusen, the aorist tense of therapeúō [2323], to heal with compassion) their sick.*”

Derived from *splágchnon* (4698), intestine, the verb *splagchnízomai* is frequently associated with action; that is, it is not a passive emotion that “feels but does nothing.” Because we can feel the pain of others as if it were deep within our own bodies (our “bowels”) and since we always do what we can about our own pain, the verb includes the complex idea of sympathetic action. The frenzy of people—here their “*coming and going*”—often moved Jesus as He thought of them as “*faint[ed]...scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd*” (Matt. 9:36).

The word “*sick*,” used here for the first time, is *arrōstous* (the accusative plural of *arrōstos* [732], from the privative *a* [1], without; and *rhōnnumi* [4517], to strengthen). The adjectival noun *arrōstos* means “without natural strength,” having some form of chronic illness. The sick here suffered from various chronic sicknesses that disabled them one way or another. The Lord was moved by both the sicknesses and the handicaps they produced.

The work of a *therápōn* moves beyond the work of an *iatrós* ([2395], a physician) in his attempt to restore the soul as well as the body. By analogy today, a physical

therapist (*therápōn*) seeks to restore a person to wholeness through a customized regimen of physical and motivational exercises, following the skilled procedures of a physician (*iatrós*). The therapist combines coaching with encouragement using both commands and incentives.

In his account of this scene, to emphasize the miraculous physics of healing, “*Luke, the beloved physician [iatrós]*” (Col. 4:14), replaces Matthew’s *therapeúō* with *iatō* (healed from sickness; Luke 9:11). John adds that the multitude grew in numbers as “*they saw (heōrōn, the imperfect tense of horáō [3708], to see and perceive) His miracles which he did on them that were diseased [asthenountōn, the present participle of asthenēō [770], to be feeble, sick]*” (John 6:2).

[15] The disciples, as usual, were long on advice and short on faith. Their suggestion here, however, was not unrealistic. Since no stores or markets were in the immediate vicinity, they suggested that Jesus send the people to nearby villages in order to buy food (*brōmata*, the plural of the noun *brōma* [1033], food).

[16] Jesus immediately responded by saying, “*They have no need to depart; you give (dōte, the aorist imperative of didōmi [1325], to voluntarily give) to them something to eat*” (a.t.). Jesus wanted to teach His disciples two lessons. First, He can provide anything anywhere; and second, when He provides, He does so through His people. This applies to both physical and spiritual needs, immediate and remote, temporary and eternal. When we are tempted to think that we have to go somewhere else at some other time to find the Lord’s will, these words remind us to “*Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you today*” (Ex. 14:13).

[17] The first English word “and” is actually a translation of the Greek adversative *dé* ([1161], “but”). We always use “but” when our scope of God’s sovereignty is too narrow. The verse summarizes the recurring alibi of the Lord’s disciples throughout the church age: “We don’t have enough!”

So it seemed to me, when the Lord challenged me at sixteen years of age to advertise the gospel message in secular Greek magazines and in Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Communist magazines and newspapers throughout the world. Today, we at AMG International can point to former notorious enemies of the gospel who are now witnessing to a persecuting majority in their native countries.

John tells us that the five barley loaves and two fish mentioned here belonged to a “*small child*” (*paidáron* [3808]) and were most probably his lunch (John 6:8-9). We know that bread made from barley was cheaper than that of wheat, so the child was carrying little of any value. John adds that Andrew asked, “*But (allá [235], an adversative like dé) what are they among so many?*” *Allá* is sometimes used as a continuative having one of the following meanings: but now, but further, moreover, or but indeed. In

this verse, *allá* probably means the latter: “But indeed, how could so many be fed from so little?”

Jesus Christ can take the naturally insufficient and make it supernaturally sufficient-plus. If all the insufficient resources of a local congregation were put on the altar of God, how much more would God grant sufficiency plus to physically and spiritually feed numbers far beyond five thousand (John 14:12–14)? Let us have faith in His ability “*to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think*” (Eph. 3:20).

In the phrase, “*but five loaves, and two fishes,*” the “*but*” (*ei* [1487], the “if” of supposition; and *mē* [3361], the relative “not”) highlights the inadequacy of the food to match the overwhelming need.

[18] The present tense of “*bring*” (*phérete*, the present imperative of *phérō* [5342], to carry) means to keep bringing, that is, continue bringing to God what you think is insufficient. What a blessed invitation this is!

The “*here*” (*hōde* [5602]), coupled with the unqualified, present imperative, implies “now.” It is important for us to put what we have in the hands of the Lord Jesus immediately. To delay is disobedience.

[19] Jesus immediately blessed what was brought to Him, “*Having looked up to heaven, He blessed (eulogēse, the aorist indicative of eulogēō [2127], to speak well to) [the food] and having broken (klásas, the aorist participle of kláō [2806]) [the food], He gave (édoken, the aorist indicative of didōmi [1325]) the loaves to His disciples*” (a.t.).

The blessing must be taken as a divine command. Jesus did not “speak well of” bread and fish. Rather, He “spoke well to” the bread and fish; that is, He determined the multiplication of the bread and fish. Contrary to those who think Jesus fed the crowd with miniscule portions of food, the disciples later gathered twelve baskets of fragments. That many baskets could not be filled with scraps from a small original volume that would not occupy such space. As the record stands, the Lord did many miracles that no human could do (see Matt. 15:32-38; Luke 5:1-9; John 2:1-11).

[20] The multitude, we read, “*...ate and were filled to satiety (echortásthēsan, the aorist tense of chortázō [5526], to satisfy), and they took up of the fragments that remained (perisseúon, the present participle of perisseúō [4052]) twelve baskets full (kophínous, the accusative of kóphinos [2894], a small wicker basket used by women for shopping)*” (a.t.). Note the present participle *perisseúon*, “the abounding remains,” which characterizes God’s grace. God always provides a surplus, and He tells us to gather up the remainder, since He does not want us to waste His gifts.

[21] The word “*about*” translates *hōsei* ([5616], approximately), and gives an estimate of the crowd size—5,000 men, in addition to women and children (the total size of the crowd could have been quite significantly larger).

The Gospels accurately record this detail to show unequivocally that feeding this massive crowd was an act of God.

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The Demands of Courage

By Alan Stewart

In the early morning hours of February 25, 1956, future Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev stood before a closed session of the Twentieth Party Congress in what became known as the “Secret Speech.” During the speech, Khrushchev denounced late Premier Joseph Stalin’s abuse of power and repressive style of leadership. For Khrushchev, who had played an intimate role in Stalin’s corruption, it was a moment of truth and cleansing.

However, while he was speaking, a note was passed through the audience and up to Khrushchev which asked, “What were you doing when Stalin committed all these atrocities?” Khrushchev shouted, “Who sent up that note?” Not a person moved or spoke a word. Khrushchev shouted again, “I’ll give him one minute to stand up!” The one minute of time passed and still no one moved. Khrushchev then said, “All right, I’ll tell you what I was doing. I was doing exactly what the writer of this note was doing—exactly nothing! I was afraid to be counted.”

From time-to-time, flags are flown at half mast around our country. It is a reminder to us that someone important has died. Perhaps the reason our generation of Christians are flying the flags of their profession so lowly is because something vitally important is dying within our ranks. When you compare our twenty-first century brand of Christianity with that possessed by first century Christians you can easily see that courage is dying a slow death.

Courage is no longer demanded from our leaders, and our leaders no longer demand courage from us. Our lack of courage is both our failure and our fault. As Joshua assumed the leadership role after Moses’ death, the Lord encouraged him in Joshua 1:9, “*Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage...*” God has the right to both command and demand courage from the lives of those who serve as His ambassadors.

In our generation, there are Pharaohs we must face, mighty giants we must fight, and many steep mountains we must climb for the sake of the Gospel. The challenges and struggles that lie ahead of us can only be met with “good courage.” Do you have the mettle it takes to keep standing tall when everyone else around you has already sat down?

Courage is a trait that demands we hold no reserves. In Daniel 6, when Daniel defied the decree of King Darius and prayed, he not only exposed himself to the potential of peril and pain, but he also laid his position and popularity on the line. For Daniel, spiritual courage was

never a risk because a man who has surrendered the whole of his life into the hands of God no longer has anything to lose!

Several years ago, a missionary in India watched as a woman approached the Ganges River with a crippled son in her arms and a healthy son by her side. To his amazement, she sacrificed her healthy son into the crocodile infested waters. When asked why she had not sacrificed her crippled son instead, she replied, “In our country we always give our gods our best.” If only more Christians had such faith!

Saul kept “*the best of the sheep and of the oxen...and all that was good*” for himself, but lost his courage, his mind, and ultimately his kingdom. Ananias and Sapphira “*kept back part*” of the offering for themselves, but lost their reward, their credibility, and ultimately their lives. Nineteenth century evangelist George Mueller said, “God judges what we give by what we keep.” Anytime we are holding back something from God, it might just surprise us what God is holding back from us!

Courage is a trait that demands we honor no retreats. In Nehemiah 6, when enemy messengers tried to distract, discourage, and defeat the project of rebuilding the wall, Nehemiah said, “*...I cannot come down...*” He kept pressing forward and refused to back off, back up, or back down! Spiritual progress is never achieved from hearts that are always moving backwards.

During the heat of a difficult battle, Napoleon shouted to his drummer, “Beat a retreat!” Standing heroically and saluting loyally, the drummer said, “Sir, you never taught me to beat a retreat. I can only beat a charge!” With renewed courage, Napoleon then shouted, “Then beat a charge, drummer boy!” A sure defeat was quickly turned to victory.

Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather a fixed resolve in the face of panic. Because David refused to run from the intimidating shadow of Goliath, he became the tallest man left on the battlefield. Because the three Hebrew children would not budge on their conviction, they could not be not beaten, blemished, or burned. When his enemies demanded that he recant his writings, Martin Luther said, “Here I stand! I can do no other! God help me.” True faith does not commit in the face of confirmation, but rather it surrenders and presses forward in spite of the consequence.

Courage is a trait that demands we harbor no regrets. In Esther 4, Israel is facing annihilation and only Queen Esther is in a position to save them. After weighing out the consequences, Esther says in verse 16, “...I will go in unto the king...and if I perish, I perish.” That’s living with your mind made up!

Twentieth century pastor and author Clarence McCartney once wrote, “Men who hesitate and linger are left behind by the men who have decided and who bind what shall be to their will.” Life can often produce sudden and strategic moments that demand our courage. However, to delay or hesitate in that moment can leave you holding a lifetime of regret. Lot had the chance to leave Sodom courageously, but “while he lingered,” he lost the respect of his family. David had the chance to be courageous on the battlefield, but while he “tarried still at Jerusalem,” the enemy pierced his soul with a sword that ran throughout his

family. Gifted preacher Tom Elliff recently reminded me of an old saying, “A man knows he is growing old when his regrets outnumber his dreams.” The courageous are never guaranteed fame and fortune, but cowards never have monuments erected in their honor either.

In his 1978 Harvard Commencement address, Russian novelist Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said, “Must one point out that from ancient times a decline in courage has been considered the beginning of the end?” Jesus said in Matthew 12:30, “*He that is not with Me is against Me...*” The implication is clear that a third position of neutrality is not given to us! Can the Lord count on you?

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Legalism, License, and the Spirit of the Law

By Shea Oakley

The “spirit of the law” spoken of in the New Testament (in passages such as Rom. 2:29 and 2 Cor. 3:6) is revealed to and in a believer through the Holy Spirit, not through self-indulgence, not through self-righteousness, not, in fact, through “self”-anything but through God Himself.

Knowledge of the difference between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law is at the very core of the new life granted to the children of God through Christ. It is part and parcel of the freedom bought for us at the cross and absolutely essential to fully experiencing that freedom. The opposite errors of legalism and license that have plagued so many Christians through the centuries are both derived from a functional ignorance of what Jesus came to deliver His people from, and both lead back to spiritual bondage.

In the case of legalism this ignorance manifests itself in a futile attempt to earn our way to God through self-righteous moral scrupulosity. Legalism may be based on codes of conduct obvious or implicit in either the Old or New Testaments, but in each case it is manifested by works that originate in the self rather than in the enabling power of God.

Furthermore, the motivation behind legalism is often found in a combination of pride and fear of punishment rather than love of Christ. Because of this faulty motivation those caught up in it cannot please God no matter how holy their conduct may appear. They are out of touch with the grace and kindness of God, the only things that lead to true repentance in humility of spirit. People who are bound up in legalism have bypassed the cross to their own harm and the harm of those under their sway. To be completely given over to legalism is to exhibit

the same alienation from the Son of God for which the Pharisees were condemned.

Licentiousness, meanwhile, shows an ignorance of the continued destructive power of sin. This is the error that says that Jesus came to abolish the law rather than fulfill it. To be licentious is to be morally self-indulgent, to commit obvious or subtle sins in the mistaken belief that one can somehow avoid sin’s wages because one has been released to do so by grace.

But, as Paul said in Romans, “*Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?*” (Rom. 6:1-2). License does not prove freedom from the law of God, but only defiance of that law. Its end is the same slavery to sin that held us before we came to know Christ, and, like unrepentant legalism, licentiousness begs the question of whether we ever knew Him at all.

Standing over and against both these potentially deadly errors is living in a state of harmony with the “spirit of the law”. This is the hallmark of the truly surrendered and Spirit-filled Christian. Such a person is no longer ruled by the opposite poles of self-centeredness apparent in legalism and license, but by the Spirit of Christ Himself. This kind of believer is not sinless, no Christian this side of Heaven is, but the law is in the process of being written on his or her heart.

This can only happen when the Holy Spirit has so shifted our attention off ourselves that Jesus is before our spiritual eyes more than we are. He then progressively fulfills the law in us and makes us truly holy as He is holy. We come to embody the fulfillment of the law that our Lord and Savior achieved on Calvary.

True freedom from sin is the lasting fruit of this vicarious fulfillment. The Spirit behind the law now becomes resident in our deepest hearts and we are set free to live in the true righteousness we once tried to either simulate or reject.

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Points to Ponder—by David Olford

There is Mercy with the Lord

Text: “*O Israel, hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption*” (Psalm 130:7).

Thought: This Psalm moves from being intensely personal (vv. 1-6) to a call for all God’s people to hope in the Lord (vv. 7-8). I am viewing this Psalm through the lens of the phrase “*there is mercy with the Lord.*”

There is mercy with the Lord, and we can experience the Lord’s mercy. Indeed, without the mercy of the Lord, we are hopeless and helpless when we find ourselves in the depths of need and despair. This is a Psalm that gives God’s people hope even in the midst of the most difficult and desperate circumstances.

1) Our cry from the depths can be heard—because “*there is mercy with the Lord.*”

“*Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications*” (v.1).

The Psalmist is personally sensing distance from God, and speaks of himself as being in the depths. What are these “depths”? This seems to refer to the personal experience of an individual who senses that his sin has distanced him from God. Not only so, the crier seems to be in the midst of circumstances that are hard to bear.

We hear the Psalmist pleading for a hearing from the Lord. Indeed, (as the ESV translates it,) he is pleading for mercy (v. 2). He would agree with Jonah who stated that those who regard worthless idols “*Forsake their own mercy*” (Jonah 2:7). Our Lord is the only one who can do anything about our experience of “depths” due to our sin. There is no point in seeking help from anyone else than the true God.

This is true initially as a person turns from sin and self and seeks the Lord, sensing their need of Christ’s salvation; but the believer in Christ can find himself in the depths as well, and needs to seek the Lord early for His mercy, forgiveness, and abundant redemption. The good news is that the Lord chooses to be attentive to the cry of the humble who seek His mercy and His Face. The genuine cry from the depths is heard by the merciful God. The

Lord’s ear is open to those who earnestly seek Him in the midst of their distress.

2) Our sins can be forgiven—because there is mercy with the Lord.

“*If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared*” (vv. 3-4). The Psalmist moves forward from his initial plea to a purposeful question and a positive affirmation, ending with a practical conclusion.

The **purposeful question** places us at the mercy of God. This question in verse 3 should cause us to take account of the real situation we face because of our sins, our iniquities. The real situation is that our sins are worthy of God’s marking, and not only marking, but marking for judgment.

No one can stand on his own merit before God, but let’s not generalize. The Psalmist speaks in this way, not for us to turn attention away from ourselves, but for each one of us to consider the holiness and righteousness of God, and our plight in the absence of the mercy of God.

Do we really believe that we are at the mercy of God? God has every right to do away with us. He has every right to keep track of every wrong thought, mixed motive, ungodly desire, prideful attitude, or selfish act. No word we speak that is unkind or untrue or unclean or unworthy of Christ, no sinful act, no act controlled by the flesh and for fleshly gains, no act of disobedience or half-hearted Spiritless service, no aspect of hypocrisy, no judgment with evil intent escapes His notice. Maybe we need to mark our own iniquities to realize the importance of what the Psalmist is saying.

This question is followed by a **positive affirmation** that is at the heart of this Psalm, the gospel and the Christian Life. It reminds me of 1 John 1:5-2:2, and note that the word translated “*propitiation*” in 1 John 2:2, is the same Greek word used to translate the term for “*forgiveness*” in verse 4 here. The Lord has provided forgiveness—indeed, our Lord Jesus became our forgiveness. The Lord in His mercy has made a way of forgiveness available for those who would seek it. He didn’t

have to do it; it has never been automatic or cheap. Forgiveness has always been costly because of who God is.

The **practical conclusion** of forgiveness being with the Lord in this Psalm is not just a quick list of sins to be forgiven and praying a prayer without thought. No, a true understanding of God's holiness, His mercy, and His provision of forgiveness should lead to a respect, a reverence for God that realizes that, were it not for the mercy of God, we would be consumed. Seeking forgiveness should not lead to anything other than a greater appreciation for the mercy of God that His Holiness necessitates and His love activates. God is to be worshipped and revered, "That You may be feared" (v. 4).

3) Our hope should be in God's Word—because there is mercy with the Lord.

"I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope" (vv. 5-6).

The **personal, earnest resolve** of the Psalmist is revealed in these words: "I wait...my soul waits...I do hope." These are not the words of a demanding person expecting God to fix his life. No, there is a commitment on the part of the Psalmist to wait, to submissively depend upon the Lord for His action according to His Word.

Notice that at the center of this waiting and hope is God's Word. Our Psalmist not only reveals his earnest resolve, but his **eager anticipation**. Watchmen look for the morning to come as they stand guard, and the Psalmist is more eagerly longing for the revealing of God's deliverance. What a picture of single-minded dependence and desire! Nothing else really matters in the darkness of the night than the coming of the morning.

Hope is a common word these days, but what are we hoping in? The words of men? The only true source of hope is the Lord and His Word. The Psalmist's hope was in the One who could hear his cry from the depths, could forgive his sins, and bring restoration and deliverance to his life.

4) Abundant redemption is available—because there is mercy with the Lord

"...with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption..." (vv. 7-8).

These are beautiful words, wonderful words. There is a redemption big enough for all Israel and all the sins of Israel. In New Testament language, Jesus "is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (John 2:2). There is redemption, indeed a Redeemer, who is sufficient for our sins. Even though this is enough for our hope and our praise, I think the phrase "abundant redemption" means more. It is in line with Paul's words, "where sin abounded, grace abounded more" (Rom. 5:20).

This abundant redemption can bring one out of the depths and into life and liberty in the Lord. The Psalmist is anticipating a work of God that will deliver His people. God will reach into the depths of the personal and broader crises that are the results of sin, and deliver God's people. Why? Because He is a merciful God, and abundant redemption is with Him.

God is not a stingy God. He does not hold back. He is generous in His mercy and in His work on our behalf. This was the prodigal son's experience when he returned to the Father. He had hardly been seen by the Father when He came running to receive him and lavish His love upon one who was not worthy (Luke 15). This is the experience of countless believers down through the centuries—it is my experience.

Thrust: There is mercy with the Lord. Seek Him. Hope in Him. Trust Him for what His Word declares He will do.

David Olford teaches expository preaching at Union University's Stephen Olford Center in Memphis, Tennessee

Story Behind the Song—by Lindsay Terry

A Change of Heart

Song: "Change My Heart, O God"

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit" (Ps. 51:10-12).

Baudel and Guadalupe Espinosa had four sons, one of whom was Eddie, born in Los Angeles in 1953. "There was always music around the house when I was growing up," Eddie told me. "We listened to a lot of different kinds

of music. I grew up on everything from the Everly Brothers to The Lawrence Welk Show. My dad loved that show, especially Myron Floren and his accordion. Consequently, I started accordion lessons early on—about 1960. That lasted until about 1964, when the Beatles came on the scene with their guitars."

Eddie shared the testimony of his conversion experience:

“At age fifteen, I was playing in a high school age band. The bass player and his family were Christians, and they invited me to their church, the Faith Assembly Church in Garden Grove, California. On my third visit, the pastor taught from the Scripture story of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. After the Sunday school lesson, the pastor looked me square in the eye and asked, ‘Would you like to drink of the Living Water?’ I said, ‘Yes,’ and I was saved that very morning.”

Now for the story behind Eddie’s tremendous song, as he told it:

“The year was 1982. I had been a Christian since 1969, but I saw a lot of things in my life that needed to be discarded. The closer you get to the Lord, in all of His brightness, the better you can see the things in your life that need to be changed. But, I had slowly become very complacent. I remember thinking of the illustration about the frog that was placed in a pan of cold water and boiled to death, because the water was heated ever so gradually, causing him not to realize what was happening.

“I acknowledged my complacency, and at the same time I was like Paul, the apostle, who said, ‘*O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me...?*’ I prayed to the Lord, ‘The only way that I can follow you is for you to change my appetite, the things that draw me away. You must change my heart!’

“Shortly thereafter, I was in my car on the way to my work, feeling a desire to draw near to God, but with the wrestling was still going on in my heart. Suddenly, a melody and some words began to flood through my mind. As I stopped at a stop sign I reached for something to write on, and the first thing I found was a small piece of yellow paper (which I still have) and began to write as rapidly as I could. It was like taking dictation. I wrote the words on the paper, and kept the melody in my mind.

“During those days I taught a weeknight home Bible study group, and during a communion time I shared my song with them. Our church home was the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Anaheim, California, and someone from the group told the pastor that I had written a song that would be good to use during an altar call. The pastor asked me to play it for him, and afterwards asked if I would share it with the congregation, which numbered about 200 at that time. From that point on I began to get reports that my song was being taught in San Diego, the Los Angeles area, and in many other places. Sharing a song in that manner was a common occurrence in those days. Vineyard decided to put several of those songs, one of which was ‘Change My Heart, O God,’ on an album and distribute them. That was the vehicle that God chose to launch my song to a vast audience.”

Eddie has had many great experiences with his song, one of which was to lead thousands of men as they sang it at a Promise Keepers meeting in Texas Stadium in Dallas. I asked Eddie what was the most notable time that he ever heard of, when his song was a blessing to the hearts of people. He thought for a few moments and then excitedly told me this heart-warming story:

“I was in England directing the music for a conference. After one of the services I was standing on the floor level in front of the podium, when an elderly gentleman approached and asked, ‘Are you Eddie Espinosa?’ I said, ‘Yes sir.’

“He hugged me, and he was weeping and said through his tears, ‘I just want you to know that I gave my heart to Jesus while singing your song. My wife had been wanting me to go to church for a long time. I finally consented to go, and as the words of your song came up on the overhead I read them and began to weep. As we sang the song, I joined in the singing with real meaning in my heart. I said, ‘God, I need you. Change me.’ That is the reason I am walking with the Lord today.’ My wife Elsie and I began to weep—I was almost beside myself with joy.”

The essence of Eddie’s song is a prayer asking God to change us, making our hearts “true,” and to mold us into His own image—“like You.”

At the time I interviewed him, Eddie was a counselor at Orange High School in Orange, California. He also oversees a federally funded program for children. He has written scores of songs with thirty-eight of them being published. He was a pastor for a number of years, one of the churches he served was even a Spanish-speaking congregation, Iglesia La Vina.

As his other duties will allow, Eddie and his wife Elsie often travel as a team, leading worship in conferences and special services. The Espinosa family is still active in the Vineyard Christian Fellowship. They have two children.

As we have seen in this story, asking God to change us calls for a very definite and resolute decision—asking Him to change our hearts—not the red muscle pumping blood through our bodies, but the control center of our beings, the place where all of the decisions are made, causing us to say the words we say, think the thoughts we think, and do the things we do.

Lindsay Terry has been a song historian for more than 40 years, and has written widely on the background of great hymns and worship songs including the books *I Could Sing of Your Love Forever* (2008) and *The Sacrifice of Praise* (2002).

Living Out the Living Word—by Justin Lonas

Be Holy: Living in the Reality of Salvation

(1 Peter 1:13-21)

Part 3 in an expositional series on 1 Peter.

Halfway through the first chapter of 1 Peter, we see a transition from description to prescription, from extolling the wonders of God’s work of salvation to telling us what to do with it. In truth, it is less of a shift and more of a building block—Peter is saying, “because all these things I’ve just told you are true, live this way.”

Peter has spent the previous 10 verses reminding his readers of the story of their salvation, the “*things into which angels long to look*” (v. 12). Here, he tells them, “*Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘you shall be holy, for I am holy’*” (vv. 13-16).

This series contains both positive and negative commands, a reminder that holiness (in God’s sight) is something much larger than simply avoiding conspicuous sins. Peter begins here by telling us to be vigilant, preparing our minds for action. The King James Version translates this phrase word-for-word from the Greek, rendering it as “*gird up the loins of your mind*”—the picture is that of a soldier in ancient times who would have to gather up his robes and tie them around his waist in order to run or do battle. Coupled with the next phrase, “*keep sober in spirit*,” the message is clearly that we are to be ready, mentally and emotionally, for whatever comes, a theme that is echoed later in the book when Peter urges believers to, “*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert, your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour*” (1 Pet. 5:8).

If it seems odd for Peter to turn sharply from soaring language about God’s great salvation to a warning to be ready for battle, consider to whom he originally wrote—believers in Asia Minor who were enduring fierce persecution for their faith. He first reassures them of God’s mercy and their secure, imperishable inheritance of salvation and then reminds them to stand firm on that promise. We are, he says, to “*fix [our] hope completely on the grace to be brought to [us] at the revelation of Jesus Christ*.” In other words, preparing our hearts and minds for action means keeping them clear of any vain hope. If we are trusting in anything other than Christ to rescue us from persecution, we are in danger of being overtaken by despair.

More than that, however, our “fixed hope” here is in more than the completed work of salvation or the present indwelling of Christ in us, but in His final victory and coming reign, “*the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*.” With Christ as our anchor, we are given both the reason and the ability to flee from sin and pursue the righteousness of God—when we hope in Him, why would we desire otherwise?

In that spirit, Peter likens his readers to “*obedient children*,” calling to mind their relationship with God as their Father through Christ. In obedience, they were to be modeling their lives after the Father’s will and no longer conforming to their “*former lusts*” of their pre-redemption “*ignorance*.” Peter, like Paul, draws a clear distinction between former deeds of the flesh and life in Christ, imploring believers to “put off” the old nature and “put on” the new (cf. Eph. 4:22-24). Our behavior should reflect our change of allegiance, flowing from our identity as children of God.

Peter then makes his first of many appeals to Scripture, quoting Leviticus 11:44, “*Be holy, for I am holy*.” His understanding of holiness from the Old Testament combines both righteousness and anointing. In the context of this passage, he is reminding us that a holy God demands and desires righteousness from His followers—we cannot call ourselves His if we are still living according to the world’s way. Through the rest of the book, he portrays believers as set apart for God for His work on earth, just as Israel was called, “*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of the darkness into His marvelous light*” (2:9). Holiness is the primary characteristic of God seen in Scripture, and it is, for Peter, the primary marker of the Church in the world.

Extending his appeal to his readers for holiness, Peter continues, “*If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth*” (v. 17). He brings another dimension, the fear of the Lord, to his readers’ reasons to pursue holiness. He builds on the “family layer” of our status as those “set apart”—if we are in the family of God (calling Him our father), we should strive to “uphold the family name,” living in the reverent, respectful fear children have of their fathers.

Thematically, he reaches a deeper level than just that family metaphor, echoing Jesus’ words of Matthew

10:28, “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Peter understood that his readers lived in constant fear under the shadow of persecution, and probably faced a pervasive temptation to hide their faith to preserve their lives. He pleads with them to correctly place their fear, forsaking earthly safety and comfort for the sake of the Gospel of the kingdom.

Peter then further restates the sheer glory of our salvation and directly ties that to our lives as believers. “Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (vv. 18-19). We have been redeemed from the “dead end” of life without God that has plagued generations of men. That is the inheritance of the world to which we are born, and contrasts the “imperishable and undefiled” inheritance of Christ (v. 4). Our purchase price is infinite—the blood of our very Lord—and is worth every measure of our devotion.

Peter completes this section by reiterating the “cosmic significance” of Christ’s coming, “For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in

God” (vv. 20-21). As Christians, we are the heirs and beneficiaries of God’s eternal plan for fellowship with mankind, the culmination of millennia of expectation. Christ was born, crucified, and raised from the dead so that we might fix our hope in Him to the glory of God the Father.

This multifaceted plea for holiness should stir us to take great pains to “give feet” to our salvation, rejoicing with our whole lives in the power and mercy of God. Peter’s argument is quite clear—because of the work of Christ, it behooves us to pour out our all in pursuit of His glory. For his original audience of persecuted believers, it sets the tone for his whole letter by calling them to devotion to God above all others and against all opposition. He implicitly reminds them here (elsewhere in this book, much more explicitly) that true holiness is both attitude and action and will be actively opposed by Satan and the world. For us, we should be reminded that a holiness that doesn’t demand sober spirits and hearts prepared for action may simply be a cloak of moralism. In light of what the Lord has done for us, can we possibly be content with anything less than absolute commitment to His purposes for us? The grace of God is too great a gift to be squandered for a “futile way of life.”

Justin Lonas is the editor of *Disciple Magazine*

Church Builders—by Bernard R. DeRemer

Prayer Warrior: E. M. Bounds

E. M. (Edward McKendree) Bounds (1835-1913) was a man of many skills. He was, at various points in his life, a lawyer, a chaplain, a pastor, an evangelist, and an editor. He also wrote many powerful, classic messages on prayer—and his commitment to the power and necessity of prayer is his most lasting legacy.

Typically he rose at 4:00 a.m. to intercede at least three hours. He founded the “Great While before Daybreak Band” to encourage others to spend extended times in prayer.

Born in Shelby County, Mo., Bounds studies law and began a flourishing practice. People were “impressed with his sharp mind and communication skills.” Indeed, he became his state’s youngest practicing lawyer at the age of 19.

He came to know the Lord at a young age, and joined the Methodist Episcopal Church South. In his twenties, Bounds sensed the Lord’s call on his life during a revival movement. In 1857, he closed his law office to devote himself to full-time ministry and enrolled in

Centenary Seminary in Palmyra, Mo. In 1859, at age 24, he was ordained as a minister of his denomination.

His first pastorate was at Monticello, Mo., and he later pastored other churches in Missouri, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia.

During the Civil War, although Missouri was not part of the Confederacy (and Bounds was opposed to slavery), he was accused of being a Southern sympathizer. When he refused to swear an oath of allegiance to the United States and pay a hefty fine, he was imprisoned in St. Louis for over a year. He was transferred to Memphis, Tenn., as part of a prisoner exchange.

Bounds made the most of his unfortunate circumstances by becoming a chaplain in the Confederate Army. He was wounded at the battle of Franklin in Tennessee, and recaptured by the Union. After his release, he felt God’s call to return to Franklin, and became the pastor of the local Methodist Episcopal church.

In 1876, Bounds married Emma Barnett, of Washington, Ga., and the couple had three children. During this time, they moved to St. Louis, Mo., where he became

the associate editor of the *St. Louis Christian Advocate*. Later, they returned to Tennessee, where he edited the *Nashville Christian Advocate*.

In 1886, Bounds mourned the death of his wife. However, less than two years later, he married Harriet (Hattie) Barnett, a first cousin of Emma. They were married until his death and had six children together.

After some time in publishing, Bounds retired to Washington, Ga., to a ministry of prayer, writing, and occasional speaking at revivals and conferences.

Following his daily early morning prayer time, Bounds spent the rest of an average day writing, praying, and studying Scripture. Though he wrote extensively, only two of his books were published before his death.

His best known book is probably *Power through Prayer*. Other titles include *Satan: His Personality, Power, and Overthrow*, and *Heaven: a Place, a City, a Home*. In 1990 Baker Books released *The Complete Works of E.M. Bounds on Prayer*.

The following is adapted from one of his classic messages:

“God has ordained prayer as a means through which He will carry out His gracious designs on earth and execute... His plan of redemption. Prayer is a specific divine

appointment whereby God will do things through His people as they pray that He would not otherwise do.

“While we in our weakness and poverty wait, trust, and pray, God undertakes the work. But if prayer moves God to work in this world’s affairs, then prayerlessness leaves us the mere creatures of circumstances. It leaves us in this world with its tremendous responsibilities and difficult problems, and with all its sorrows, burdens, and afflictions, without help from God.

“Prayer puts God’s work in His hands and keeps it there. It looks to Him constantly and depends on Him implicitly to further His own cause. Prayer is but faith resting in, acting with, leaning on, and obeying God. This is why God loves it so well and why He so highly esteems people of prayer.”

After a long and fruitful ministry, Bounds died in 1913 at his home in Washington. His works continue to bless readers to this day, and “*though he is dead, he still speaks*” (Heb. 11:4).

Bernard R. DeRemer chronicled the lives of dozens of heroes of the faith in more than a decade of writing for *Pulpit Helps Magazine*. He continues to serve in this capacity as a volunteer contributor to *Disciple*. He lives in West Liberty, Ohio.

Prayer is the Lever

By Charles Haddon Spurgeon

“*Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’*” (Acts 8:3).

We should be abler teachers of others, and less liable to be carried about by every wind of doctrine, if we sought to have a more intelligent understanding of the Word of God. As the Holy Ghost, the Author of the Scriptures is He who alone can enlighten us rightly to understand them, we should constantly ask His teaching, and His guidance into all truth.

When the prophet Daniel would interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, what did he do? He set himself to earnest prayer that God would open up the vision. The apostle John, in his vision at Patmos, saw a book sealed with seven seals which none was found worthy to open, or so much as to look upon. The book was afterwards opened by the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who had prevailed to open it; but it is written first—“I wept much.” The tears of John, which were his liquid prayers, were, so far as he was concerned, the sacred keys by which the folded book was opened.

Therefore, if, for your own and others’ profiting, you desire to be “*filled with the knowledge of God’s will in*

all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col. 1:9), remember that prayer is your best means of study: like Daniel, you shall understand the dream, and the interpretation thereof, when you have sought unto God; and like John you shall see the seven seals of precious truth unloosed, after you have wept much.

Stones are not broken, except by an earnest use of the hammer, and the stone-breaker must go down on his knees. Use the hammer of diligence, and let the knee of prayer be exercised, and there is not a stony doctrine in revelation which is useful for you to understand, which will not fly into shivers under the exercise of prayer and faith. Thoughts and reasonings are like the steel wedges which give a hold upon truth; but prayer is the lever, the pry which forces open the iron chest of sacred mystery, that we may get the treasure hidden within.

From *Morning and Evening*

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), “the Prince of Preachers,” was a renowned pastor and author who served as pastor of London’s Metropolitan Tabernacle for 38 years. His works are still widely read today.

Counselor's Corner—by James Rudy Gray

Helping People Simplify Life

People are busy these days. That is a true statement but it does not apply to everybody; it seems like some people work hard and others hardly work. Work, by a psychological definition, means the expenditure of time and energy.

By that definition, compensation is not included. Work is good, but too much work can be bad. The wrong kind of work can be disheartening. A bad work environment can be demoralizing. Lack of work can eat at a person's self-esteem—especially men.

I am convinced that if we are physically able, we should be engaged in work. We don't have to get paid. One of the subtle ways that work can debilitate us is when we try to do too many things. When this happens we often find ourselves stressed, overwhelmed, and discouraged. This can lead to burnout, feelings of hopelessness, and frustration that can give rise to anger. Life has, at this point, likely become more complicated in our minds that we can effectively handle. What can a person do? Simplify!

That sounds like such a straightforward solution, and it is. However, it is also very effective. A person can multi-task, but we cannot focus on too many things at the same time or life itself will get out of focus. The energy a person needs for living does not come from doing many things but from doing the things we can do effectively. Some things have to wait. We must say no to some things. Then, we can learn to simplify how we deal with the things we have to do.

Often, people who become overwhelmed with work or life struggle with trusting in the Lord's control over things and in others' ability to handle tasks. They believe that they have to control every last detail in order to

effectively complete a project. As counselors, we should strive to help people realize that God is in control of our lives and help them relinquish their grip on things.

For most people this process of simplification will involve eliminating some things and scheduling other things. It will mean arranging life with the proper priorities. Matthew 6:33 is a good start; 1 Corinthians 10:31 will give us our proper motivation for whatever we do. Time with God is essential for a Christian. Our time of prayer, Bible study, worship, and meditation must not be sacrificed at the altar of all the things we do in church. The best Christian is not the busiest Christian but the one who does what he or she does well to honor and glory of Christ Jesus.

Simplifying life does not just relate to work environment or church. It can also relate to our hobbies or our households. Maybe a person has too many hobbies and is annoyed because they don't have the time to do any of them in a way that brings fulfillment.

For most people a good spring cleaning of our "stuff" would do wonders for our state of mind. People usually feel better after they have thrown or given away what they don't use and organized what they will or do use.

Simplify. It is such a basic thought and yet it can bring such positive rewards. Life is simply profound but we can strive to make it profoundly simple.

James Rudy Gray is certified as a professional counselor by the National Board for Certified Counselors, and is a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors. He pastors Utica Baptist Church in Seneca, S.C.

Book Review

In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Crossroad Publishing, Chestnut Ridge, New York, 1989, ISBN 9780824512590, 107 pages, \$14.95, softcover.

Editor's Note: periodically, it is our practice to review books from years past that merit "re-discovery" and remain prescient to today's believers instead of the latest releases from Christian publishers.

If you have not encountered the work of Henri J.M. Nouwen (1932-1996), you are missing an incredible opportunity to deepen the spiritual understanding of your faith—his writing has a prophetic, soul-piercing quality seldom found in modern Christian authors. His work focuses on the spiritual/emotional side of Christian life in a

way that complements rather than diminishes the message of the Gospel.

The Dutch-born Nouwen studied for the Catholic priesthood and spent nearly 20 years teaching theology and psychology at Notre Dame, Yale, and Harvard before moving into the Daybreak L'Arche community for developmentally handicapped persons near Toronto. Much of his best theological writing comes from this experience caring for those the rest of society had abandoned—L'Arche gave him a unique perspective on the broken, childlike spirit that Christ requires of his followers.

In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership is just one of about 40 works Nouwen published. This short book (at barely 100 pages, really more in the pointed tone of an essay) was printed from the transcript of a speech Nouwen gave to a conference on 21st Century Christian leadership in 1989 (the speech was actually delivered while Bill Van Buren, one of the L'Arche residents sat on stage with Nouwen as a testimony to the ministry he was calling them to). In it he lays out, quite bluntly, that for the church to be effective in the future, its leaders must follow the example of Christ in resisting the three temptations Christ faced in Matthew 4:1-11: The temptation to be relevant, the temptation to be spectacular, and the temptation to be powerful.

The book is divided into three chapters (each dealing with one temptation).

Chapter one, "From Relevance to Prayer", likens Satan's tempting Jesus to turn stones into bread to the pastor's temptation to meet the felt needs of society, to become vital to the culture by obtaining knowledge of its workings and pointing out its failings. Nouwen asserts that Christ's repeated question, "*Do you love me?*" (John 21:15-17) is a challenge to the pastor to maintain our focus on Him through the discipline of contemplative prayer. He maintains that our goal should be to show Christ as He is (the suffering servant) to all people, regardless of their position, in such a way that allows us to diminish and Him to shine through.

"The leader of the future will be one who dares to claim his irrelevance in the contemporary world as a divine vocation that allows him to enter into a deep solidarity with the anguish underlying the glitter of success and to bring the light of Jesus there," he says.

The second chapter, "From Popularity to Ministry", addresses the temptation to be spectacular (as illustrated when Satan urged Jesus to leap from the temple spire and be caught by angels); to make a difference in the world and to appear stoic, resourceful, and driven while doing so. This, Nouwen says, is a twisted perspective on ministry that flows both from the Western business model of church organization and the age-old distinction between clergy and laity. As he points out, "Stardom and individual heroism, which are such obvious aspects of our competitive society, are not at all alien to the Church. There, too, the dominant image is that of the self-made man or woman who can do it all alone."

He counters that by extrapolating on Christ's repeated command to "*feed my sheep*" in response to Peter's confession of love in the aforementioned passage. Nouwen's perspective (heavily influenced by his years at

L'Arche) is that real Christian leadership involves caring for the flock from within, from a position of honesty and commonality developed through the disciplines of mutual confession and forgiveness. He rejects the notion of a pastor or church leader "maintaining his distance" from the congregation or reveling in authority over them. He says that "a new type of leadership is asked for in the church of tomorrow, a leadership which is not modeled on the power games of the world, but on the servant-leader, Jesus, who came to give his life for the salvation of many."

The final chapter, "From Leading to Being Led", is based on John 21:18, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you to where you do not wish to go.*" Nouwen uses this verse as a rebuttal of the temptation to be powerful; that is, the temptation to own and rule rather than to love and serve. He reminds us that it is not our place but the Lord's to guide the steps of His followers. This temptation is particularly attractive because it appeals to our weakness. As he says, "What makes the temptation of power so seemingly irresistible? Maybe it is that power offers an easy substitute for the hard task of love. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life."

The antidote to this is what Nouwen calls theological reflection; not a study of God's person but a meditation on it. Only when we draw near to Christ and allow His spirit to fill us, he says, are we humbled enough to shepherd the flock. He says that the Church's greatest need is "a leadership in which power is constantly abandoned in favor of love...people who are so deeply in love with Jesus that they are ready to follow Him wherever He guides them, always trusting that, with Him, they will find life and find it abundantly." He adds "If there is any hope for the church in the future, it will be hope for a poor church in which its leaders are willing to be led."

In the Name of Jesus should shake your understanding of what it means to lead, and draw you into the deeper fellowship with Christ that will give you the grace to follow Him into servanthood. This is a must-read for pastors, church leaders, and anyone called to ministry.

Justin Lonas

Target: Pastors/Leaders

Type: Spiritual Discipline

Take: Highly Recommended

News Update

Demand for Bibles Outstripping Supply in China

Christian Today reports that the need for Bibles in China grew again in 2009, when an estimated half million people converted to Christianity.

“As more and more people are joining the Church they are asking for a Bible,” says Bible Society’s China Partnership Coordinator Kua Wee Seng. About 4 million Bibles were distributed across China last year, but continued growth means that more are needed. According to official numbers, about 28.6 million Christians live in China, but that figure could be as high as 90 million if unregistered house churches are included.

“Every year we have to raise funds for Bible subsidy. The reason is that in the rural areas where most Christians are found, they are living in relatively poor conditions. In order for them to have a copy of the Bible we have to provide paper so that a Bible is affordable for most of the Christians in China.”

Religion Today Summaries

Christians in Laos Forced from Church at Gunpoint

Members of a church—both adults and children—in Laos’ Saravan Province were forced at gunpoint from a Sunday worship service in mid-January while officials confiscated their personal belongings and destroyed six of their 11 homes.

Later, an estimated 100 local officials, police and villagers marched the believers to an open field, where they demanded the Christians renounce their faith, Human Rights Watch for Lao Religious Freedom reported. When the Christians refused, they were forced to walk nearly four miles down the road and police were posted at the village entrance to keep them from returning.

The Christians have been sleeping on the ground in nearby woods with hardly enough food supplies, equipment or tools to survive, the Compass Direct news service reported.

In July 2008, a Christian in the village was killed by other villagers and when family members placed a cross on his grave officials accused them of “practicing the rituals of the enemy of the state” and seized livestock from them as a fine, Compass reported. A few days later, officials detained 17 of the village’s 20 Christian families in a school compound, denying them food until they signed documents renouncing their faith. All the families eventually complied but some later began assembling for worship again. In spite of the persecution, more households accepted Christ in the village this past year, bringing the total of Christian households to 11.

“These tactics of starvation and destruction of personal properties as well as the use of force employed by the Lao officials in order to put pressure on the Katin believers to renounce their religious convictions should be condemned,” a statement from the human rights group said.

Baptist Press

Church of England Recognizes Breakaway U. S. Anglicans

Christian Today reports that the Church of England’s General Synod has voted to welcome the breakaway Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) with open arms.

The motion, passed yesterday, does not commit the Church of England to formal relations with the breakaway province. Instead, the motion was designed to “recognize and affirm the desire of those who have formed the Anglican Church in North America to remain within the Anglican family” and recognize “the distress caused by recent divisions within the Anglican churches of the United States of America and Canada.”

The ACNA officially formed in summer 2009 after a protracted schism from The Episcopal Church in the U.S. over issues of homosexuality and scriptural orthodoxy.

Religion Today Summaries

The Algerian Church Speaks out for Religious Freedom

Abdallah Ghoulamallah, Algerian Minister for Religious Affairs, organized on February 11 a conference on the topic “Freedom of Worship: Between Divine Legislation and Positive Law.” The ministry invited the four bishops of Algeria, members of the clergy from France, and other prominent figures from different background to the event. The purpose of the event was, ostensibly, to show that Algeria is a tolerant country.

Jordanian-born Monsignor Ghaleb Moussa Abdallah Bader was ordained archbishop of Algiers in July 2008, and is familiar with the system of religious tolerance in place in the Kingdom of Jordan. In a speech full of nuances, he spoke about an ordinance which strongly limits non-Muslim worship, expressing a desire to see things get “back to normal.” Such legislation might be justified under exceptional circumstances, he said, but that was not the case in Algeria. “Why go back to a normal situation? Is it not time to review, if not repeal this regulation?”

For more than three years, the right of Christians to worship in Algeria has come under tight government control. The minister claims that Christians are not the target, but in fact, they are the ones who are affected by it. Recently, on the night of January 9, the Tafat Protestant

Church in Tizi Ouzou was ransacked and then set on fire. Despite complaints by Reverend Krireche, the authorities did nothing.

In Algeria and other Muslim countries, the churches, and more broadly Christians, simply want to be left alone. They want the same right to announce the Gospel to anyone willing to listen to their message as Muslims have the right to announce the Qur'an to anyone willing to listen to theirs. It is good that the bishop of Algiers, following the example of Pope Benedict XVI, had the courage to tell everyone, quietly but with resolve and clarity, that freedom of religion remains as fundamental a right as freedom of conscience and the equality of citizens.

Institute on Religion and Public Policy

Olympics' Opening Ceremonies Signal Start of Athlete Ministry

Mission News Network reports that the opening ceremonies in Vancouver, British Columbia, welcomed hundreds of chaplains as well as athletes to the 2010 Winter Olympics. Ministries such as Athletes in Action, a sister ministry of the Jesus Film Project and a part of Campus Crusade for Christ, hope to present the Gospel to both athletes and spectators.

"We'll be part of a contingent of chaplains that will be working with the athletes. We'll be working with various community ministries for those that are coming to Vancouver to watch the games," said Tim Pitcher of

Athletes in Action. "Whenever you bring in athletes from around the globe, there are always great opportunities to get connections with people from closed countries, from open countries, and people that need to hear the Gospel. So we just really try to take advantage of that."

Religion Today Summaries

Iran's Anniversary Pushes Some Away from Islam

Mission News Network reports that Iran's inner tension did not ease for the 31st anniversary of the founding of the Islamic Republic on February 11.

According to Christians in country, however, increased oppression has many Muslims looking for more than political freedom. "There was a revolution that took place that brought the people back to Islam and made this an Islamic republic," said evangelist Sammy Tippit, who reaches Iranians with satellite TV. "As a result of that, the people have now seen Islam for what it is, and they are rejecting that."

He continued, "The greatest freedom in the world is in Christ, so that's why so many people are turning to Christ." One Iranian leader says the most effective evangelist in Iran was the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. "When he came in, it exposed what real Islam is all about." The government of Iran even publically executed two opposition leaders as "enemies of God" last week.

Religion Today Summaries

Sermon Helps—Fresh from www.sermonhall.com

Sermon Outline

When Jesus Prayed for His Church

John 17:20-21

Intro.: After praying for Himself (v. 1-5) and His disciples (v. 6-19), Jesus prays "for those who in distant lands and far-off ages will also enter the Christian faith" (William Barclay). Jesus' prayer for His Church was:

I. Unselfish

A. "I do not pray for these alone."

B. Jesus did not limit His prayer to His disciples.

II. Expectant

A. "But for those who will believe"

B. Jesus had a firm faith in the future because He is One with Him who holds the future.

III. Exclusive

A. "For those who will believe in Me."

B. Our belief must be centered in Christ, "the way, the truth, the life."

IV. Validated

A. "For those who will believe in Me through their word."

B. Apostolic teaching validated the claims of Christ, who delegated His authority to them (see v. 8).

V. Inclusive

A. "That they all may be one."

B. By **one** Spirit we are baptized into **one** body where we are **one** in Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:26-28).

VI. Modeled

A. "As You, Father, are in Me, and I in You."

B. The Father and Son are one in nature, aim, and destiny.

C. While we do not possess divine nature, we are partakers of it (2 Pet. 1:4).

VII. Universal

A. "That the world may believe."

B. The world is mentioned 17 times in John 17.

C. "God so loved the world" (John 3:16); "Go into all the world" (Matt. 28:19).

D. The world at its worst needs the Church at her best.

Conclusion: How are we to be the answer to Jesus' 2,000 year-old prayer?

A. Believe in Christ and be added to His body.

B. Maintain unity; don't divide over non-crucial issues.

C. Evangelize the world.

Victor Knowles

Illustrations

Freezing to Death

By J. Wilbur Chapman

A man was making his way over the mountains through a terrible snowstorm. He gradually got weaker and weaker, until at last he stumbled and fell. He said to himself: "This is the end. I shall never be found." He was too weak to rise, but as he fell his hand struck the body of another man who had fallen in the same place.

This first man was unconscious, and the man who had just fallen rose to his knees and, bending over the prostrate form, began to chafe his hands and to rub his face, until by and by the man's eyes opened. He had saved another's life, but he had also saved himself, for the exercise had kept the life in his own body.

When you have a passion for souls, when you go seeking the lost, when you lift the burdens of others, your own vision of Jesus is clearer, your own hope of eternity is stronger, your own assurance of salvation is greater.

The Better Day That Is Coming

The Christian's hope for the overthrow of war and selfishness in the earth and the coming triumph of the Christian spirit is beautifully set forth by the English poet, Lewis Morris: "There shall come out of this noise of strife and groaning a broader and a juster brotherhood, a deep equality of aim, postponing all selfish seeking to the general good. There shall come a time when each shall to another be as Christ would have him—brother unto brother."

Bulletin Inserts

On Sin

The next time the devil comes to remind you about your past, remind him about his future.

Unknown

Opportunity may knock once, but temptation bangs on your door for years.

It is unlikely there'll be a reduction in the wages of sin.

These two from Sky Findlay

Forbidden fruit creates many jams.

Eventually secret sins will make the headlines.

These two via the *Old Union Reminder*

Puzzles and 'Toons

Church 'Toons
By Joe McKeever



Hidden Wisdom & Father Abraham

By Mark Oshman

(Originally Published in *Pulpit Helps*, March 1995)

Next page

ANSWERS

1. Seventy-five years old (Gen. 12:4).
2. In the plain of Mamre, in Hebron (Gen. 13:18).
3. Eliezer of Damascus (Gen. 15:2).
4. Ninety-nine years old (Gen. 17:24).
5. Jehovah-jireh (Gen. 22:14).
6. Forty years old (Gen. 25:20).
7. Gerar (Gen. 26:1, 6).
8. Seven years (Gen. 29:20).
9. Galed (or Mizpeh) (Gen. 31:46-49).
10. Succoth (Gen. 33:17).

ACROSTIC #43: ANSWERS

FIRST SAMUEL (12:24) — "Only fear the LORD and serve him in truth with all your heart, for consider how great things he hath done for you."

- A. FIFTYTWO
- B. INUIT
- C. RUTH
- D. SHORTHAND
- E. THEORY
- F. SHADRACH
- G. AHOLAH
- H. MONSOON
- I. UNHOLY
- J. ENGRAVER
- K. LIELOW
- L. THIRDEGREE
- M. FERRET

Last Issue's Answers

HIDDEN WISDOM: BIBLE ACROSTIC # 44

BY MARK A. OSHMAN

Solve the acrostic by using the clues listed below to guess the words and by transferring the letter above each number to its appropriate place in the diagram. The result will be a Scripture verse of admonition, comfort, or instruction. Further, the initial letters of the answers will contain the name of the book from which the verse was taken. Happy hunting!

HAPPY SOLVING!!

1I	2C		3F	4H	5B	6K	7C	8L	9M		10B	11C	12E		13A	14F		
15I	16C	17H	18D	19G		20N	21M	22J		23K	24Q		25D	26A	27B	28C	29G	
	30M	31E	32I	33L	34J		35F	36K		37H	38B	39F	40N	41C	42D			
43EC	44K	45C			46L	47J	48G	49B	50I	51F	52H	53G	54E	55D	56M	57K		
58C	59B	60L	61F			62Q	63H	64A	65N	66I	67J	68G	69E	70M	71L	72K	73B	
		74E	75N	76H			77M	78C	79J	80G			81B	82M	83L	84Q	85H	
86C	87K	88J				89Q	90A		91E	92J	93M	94B		95A	96N	97E	98C	99D
		100J	101B	102H	103C				104E	105I	106F							

- A. Rogue 95 13 64 26 90
- B. "In honour _____ one another" 49 38 94 10 27 81 5 59 101 73
- C. What the Gibeonites became for Israel (3 wds.) . . . 16 2 58 41 28 86 103 7 98 78 11 45
- D. "Be strengthened with might in the _____ man" . . . 55 18 99 25 42
- E. Exponent of a number to a specified base 74 97 104 43 12 69 54 31 91
- F. Eli's posthumous grandson 51 3 61 39 35 14 106
- G. An unclean animal (Deut. 14) 48 29 68 53 80 19
- H. Pitiful 37 4 102 63 85 76 17 52
- I. Feature of the Rorschach test 32 44 66 1 50 105 15
- J. His decree caused Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem 92 100 34 47 67 22 79 88
- K. Sarah's age at Isaac's birth 57 23 72 6 87 36
- L. Sidelong glance 46 83 8 71 33 60
- M. In an earnest manner 93 82 70 56 21 30 9 77
- N. U.S. comedian (1894-1974) 20 75 96 65 40
- O. Middle section of a square sail (naut.) . . . 89 84 24 62

Father Abraham's Question Box

"Deliverance From Egyptian Bondage"

1. What were the two treasure cities the Children of Israel built for Pharaoh?
2. Who were Moses' parents?
3. How did the angel of the Lord first appear unto Moses?
4. For what purpose did Moses ask Pharaoh to let the Children of Israel go three days journey into the wilderness?
5. What was the first miracle Moses and Aaron showed Pharaoh?
6. How long did the first plague last?
7. Which was the first plague Pharaoh's magicians couldn't duplicate?
8. Which was the first plague in which God differentiated between Egyptians and Israelites?
9. What carried the plague of locusts into Egypt?
10. Where were the Israelites encamped when Pharaoh's chariots overtook them?

See answers on page 27.