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God’s Love: No Ulterior Motives

By Shea Oakley

God has no ulterior motive for loving us because God has no ulterior motives at all. Among His many intrinsic attributes are two that prove this statement. One is absolute self-sufficiency and the other is absolute purity of intention.

Most people, believers among them, never take the time to think about what is logically implied about their Creator by the very concept of monotheism. The Bible’s testimony certainly proves out these logical implications, but even a secular thinker can conceptualize them and recognize who and what we are talking about when we name any being as the God of all things.

We will only need to examine the two qualities of our Lord mentioned above to prove that He loves us with a perfect purity unattainable by any created person. Knowing such love is, in the end, perhaps the single most compelling reason to give ourselves to Him, body and soul, for all eternity.

For God to be God He must be absolutely self-sufficient. Any being that must rely in any way on an outside source for both existence and power is not God by definition of the word. Since He has no needs, He does not exploit anyone for what they can give Him. Neediness of any kind is not a divine attribute. This means that what C.S. Lewis once termed “need-love” is never part of the equation in the Lord’s love of His creation, including the creatures known as human beings. We need His love, but that love is not contingent on our love for Him. In fact it is not contingent on anything. God does not love because He needs love in return. He loves because it is in His essential

nature as God to do so. As Martin Luther wrote, “God’s love does not find but creates that which is lovely to it.”

Relating to, and backing, this proposition is absolute purity of intention. God embodies truth. There is “no shadow of turning” with Him. He does not lie because He has no need to, and that implies a purity of character which is absolute. God can only love us in the perfect sense of the word. The idea of an impure, imperfect love emanating from Him is not reasonable in any sense once we come to see that He cannot be flawed (again by definition of what is implied in the very use of the word, “God”).

The total lack of ulterior motives can be applied to all acts of God, but this truth is especially sweet to the ears of flawed and needy men and women. We love each other imperfectly and sometimes in a very “calculating” way. We can never provide the kind of love that is absolutely necessary to our existence and flourishing, not only now but throughout eternity. God loves us with the perfect love we need, not because He has to but because He wants to.

In addition we can be assured that this is true, and will be forever true, by the unalterable purity of everything God does owing to who He must be as God. In these realities we can find unspeakable comfort; but more importantly we find a profound part of the motivation we have to love Him in return, and in that mutual love is our salvation.

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The Seven Churches of Revelation—Part 6

Sardis: The Lazy Church

By Ray P. Burriss

Sardis was already living on past glory by the time the church there was founded. Even though in decline, it was still a wealthy city. Sardis was well known for its manufacturing skills, the making of jewelry, and a dye system. Sardis was located, geographically, in such a position that any of the major cities in Asia could be easily reached. Sardis was located 46 miles east of Smyrna, 28 miles west of Philadelphia, and 31 miles south of Thyatira, and there was a good road system connecting the cities. But the people of Sardis had become lazy, morally corrupt, and hedonistic. Perhaps the things that the Lord chastised the church for were the same features that caused the city as a whole to decline.

Sardis was divided into two sections: Part of it was located on top Mount Tmolus. The wealthy and royal members lived there. This location was also very advantageous from a military point of view. From the top of this mount, an invading army could be seen on the plains of Hermus as it approached Sardis. The other part of the city was at the base of Mount Tmolus, where most manufacturing and economic activity occurred, and most of the citizens lived.

Another fact that made Sardis wealthy was the Pactolus River that ran through the lower part of Sardis. This river actually contained gold particles, probably brought downstream from the gold deposits in the mountain, and the collecting of this gold also contributed to the wealth of Sardis. Here is a little piece of legend: The phrase, “The Midas Touch,” probably got its start here at this river because it is stated that King Midas bathed in this river in hopes of getting rid of the curse of everything he touched turning to gold, thereby leaving the gold particles.

Because the people of Sardis were under the false impression that they were safe from attack, they became overconfident, thinking no enemy could storm the city because of its steep terrain. But it was conquered. An enemy soldier noticed that one of the soldiers of Sardis dropped his helmet and it rolled to the bottom of the mount. This soldier from Sardis came down the mount to retrieve his helmet by way of a secret path that went up the top of the mount. The enemy soldier reported this to his leaders, and now, knowing how to get into the city unnoticed, Sardis was conquered. The city was captured by the Cimmerians in the 7th century B.C., by the Persians in the 6th, by the Athenians in the 5th, and by Antiochus III at the end of the 3rd century B.C.

A different type of enemy destroyed Sardis in 17 A.D. by means of an earthquake. Nevertheless, the city was

always rebuilt and restored after each conquest or disaster, this time with financial help from the Roman Emperor Tiberius. To show their appreciation for the help given by Tiberius, Emperor worship began in Sardis.

As part of the larger Greco-Roman culture, many false gods found followers in Sardis. Though history records the city as less religious than most, it did have two prominent cults: Those of the goddess Artemis, also known as Diana, and the goddess Cybele (or Sybil). The worship of Diana has been noted in our article on Ephesus. Cybele had various titles, and the one most used by the Romans was a “mother goddess” or goddess of nature. This basic idea lives on in indigenous religions (such as the Pachamama of the Andean peoples) or neopagan religions like Wicca.

There was one more influential non-Christian faith in Sardis: the Jews. Unlike most pagan temples, which were built on the outer edges of a town, the Synagogue was in town, which indicates the importance of the Jewish influence in the city. No evidence of persecutions of these new Christians is noted, and this may have also been because of the influence of the Jewish population and their position of power in Sardis.

Now, to the text: *“To the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: “I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”*” (Rev. 3:1-6).

So what happened that caused Christ to not be satisfied with this church? This is the only church to which John was instructed to write that does not get some sort of commendation from Christ. The only thing He had to say on a positive note was that there were still *“a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.”*

Christ condemns the church at Sardis because they thought they were alive, but were dead. They had an

inflated opinion of themselves, and “*had a name*” in the community. Perhaps the church was active in social works, and those outside of the church thought they were doing a great job. In spite of the church’s good deeds and being highly regarded in Sardis, spiritually they were dead.

Christ’s correction of this church was pointed right at their particular sin: wake up, obey what you have heard, and repent.

If they ignored His correction, Christ promised to come “*like a thief*” upon them. The Christians of Sardis could relate to this because of the aforementioned captures of the city. Sardis was captured because they were asleep, Sardis did not even have any guards posted to sound the alarm when the enemy entered the city. The Lord could also be referring to Jewish customs that were part of the

marriage ceremony, in which the bride was always to be watching and waiting for the groom’s arrival unannounced (See the author’s “Marriage Supper of the Lamb”, *Disciple Magazine*, May 2013).

Did Sardis heed the Lord’s words? The record of the church there continues until the era of the Eastern Roman Empire, but its importance continued to fade. The city declined and was neglected by the Byzantine Rulers and was destroyed by Mongols in 1402. Today, it is only an uninhabited ruin. One cannot serve the Lord and seek the praise of men at the same time.

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The Best Things in Deuteronomy—Part 5 of 5

By Joe McKeever

XXI. Not Every Able-Bodied Male Is Allowed into Battle (Chapter 20)

“*When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them, for the Lord your God is with you...*” (20:1). “*Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them...*” (20:3). Fear is contagious.

One of the oddest aspects about Israel’s armies is that certain people were exempt from conscription. A man with a new house that has not been dedicated may stay home (20:5). A farmer with a new vineyard from which he has not eaten may stay home (20:6). A groom who has not finalized his marriage may stay home (20:7). And then, there is this one: “*What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his home, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart*” (20:8). If you’re afraid, you may leave.

Later, Gideon was to send the fainthearted home (Judges 7:3). By that one loophole, his army was instantly reduced from 32,000 to a paltry 10,000. Even that was too many, the Lord said. God wanted to do something for which He alone would receive credit. 300? That would be perfect.

Clearly, the Lord God does not form armies like anyone else in the world. Compare this with the New Testament’s constant commands for the disciples of Jesus Christ to be focused and fearless (see Matthew 10:16-42, for starters).

XXII. Where To Dig Your Latrine (23:12ff.)

“*Also, you shall have a place outside your camp where you may go out; and you shall have an implement*

among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse. For the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp.... Therefore, your camp shall be holy....”

You have to love the practicality of God’s Word. Here and in Leviticus 15 and in a few other places, we see God’s attention to the sanitation needs of His people. Here’s why that is interesting. God had promised Israel that “*none of the diseases*” which He put on the Egyptians would be on them (see Exodus 15:26 and Deuteronomy 7:15). And nothing breeds disease like poor sanitation.

In the Middle Ages, an era notorious for plagues, people emptied their chamber pots out the window or into the same streams from which they took drinking water. Shallow wells were dug for drinking water, in many cases too near the toilets which drained into them. So, the already-unhealthy people grew sicker and sicker.

In 1963, S. I. McMillen, a missionary doctor, wrote *None of These Diseases* to show how the Lord’s teachings through Moses were to protect Israel from disease. Even today, he said, by obeying the teachings of the Jewish law, people would be far healthier. That book went through many publications and is still in print today. McMillen devoted a chapter to the black plague of Europe which decimated such a huge part of the population in the Middle Ages. Every conceivable remedy was tried without success. Finally, someone thought to ask the Church. The priests turned to scripture and saw how God had commanded Israel that on touching a dead body, they were to burn their clothing and quarantine themselves. This, Dr. McMillen wrote, stopped the plague in its tracks.

McMillen wrote of Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis, a European physician who was concerned over the high

mortality rate in maternity hospitals. He tells how doctors would arrive in the mornings and perform autopsies on patients who died the previous day, then, without so much as washing their hands, move into the adjoining wards and do pelvic examinations on women patients. On nothing more than a hunch, Semmelweis put a basin of water in the autopsy room and required the physicians to wash their hands. Later, seeing the drop in the deaths, he installed basins of water at the foot of every bed and insisted that the physicians wash after *each* examination.

Two things resulted. 1) The death rate dropped almost off the scale. 2) The doctors were so infuriated by the infernal hand-washing that they got Semmelweis fired. Today, the University of Chicago Medical School has a life-sized statue of this brave doctor holding a young mother and baby. Dr. McMillen points out that God had covered all these things in Leviticus 15, literally thousands of years earlier. If people had only read the Word. The teachings of God's Law here in the middle of Deuteronomy and throughout Leviticus were, among other things, a sanitation code for Israel.

In Sinclair Lewis' book *Elmer Gantry*, an apostate minister scoffs about "all the miracles Jesus did, which had such a temporary value." He asks, "If He was really from Heaven, why didn't he do something of lasting benefit to mankind like give us a sanitation code?" That seemed such a logical question to Lewis. I imagine he converted large numbers of gullible readers to his brand of ignorant skepticism. God had already given mankind a sanitation code. If we are too ignorant or too lazy to read it and heed it, that's our problem. One wonders how much agnosticism is driven more by laziness than intellect.

XXIII. Some Monuments Would Be Nice (27:1-8)

"*You shall write very plainly on the stones all the words of this law*" (27:8). The stones were to be set up on Mount Ebal and whitewashed, and "*all the words of this law*" were to be written on them. The impermanence of this is interesting, but we have no word on it.

There were two other monuments of stones worth mentioning here. When Israel crossed the Jordan under Joshua, they were to a) erect a pile of stones on the dry riverbed floor, and b) take another 12 stones with them a day's journey for a permanent memorial. The first, the stones in the river, would be invisible except during times of great drought when the water level dropped low. Then, God's people would see the stones and remember what the Lord had done for them in the past and be inspired to trust Him for the future. The second, the pile of stones a day's journey, would be a visible, constant reminder of God's faithful leadership. Joshua 4 tells how they were gathered and erected at Gilgal. But almost as an after-thought, Joshua 4:9 tells of the memorial stones in the middle of the river. That was a brilliant touch.

We need our memorials. "*This do in remembrance of me*" can be found on tables in a zillion churches across the world. Our Lord instituted baptism and the Lord's Supper to keep before His people forever His sacrificial death and His supernatural resurrection. Throughout our land, and I suppose every other land, there are memorials erected to honor brave citizens and soldiers of the past, all with the heading "Lest we forget" or something similar. Alas, that generation dies off and people do forget. Forgetting is what humans do best, to our detriment.

XXIV. You'd Rather Be the Head and Not the Tail (28:13)

"*And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath....*" Here's a fascinating promise to God's people. Upon the condition of their obedience to His teachings, not only would Israel be free from all diseases but they would be in the power position in their world. They would be the lender but not the borrower (28:12), the head but not the tail, and on top but not underneath.

Proverbs established that the borrower is a servant to the lender (22:7), a truth for all ages, as we can all bear witness. That book of wisdom repeatedly warns God's people from co-signing loans (becoming "surety" for them), which if followed could have spared many a good man or woman a great deal of grief.

It's great to be the head, and awful to be the tail. Apply this to modern culture. God wants His people to be the trend-setters and not, as is more often the case, the copy-cats who ape the customs and language of the world. In our churches we see people dressing like the world, speaking the unholy language of the world, and adopting the world's standards as their own. Even worse, churches adopt the practices and methodologies of the pagan world. "*Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*" (Rom.12:2). A contemporary paraphrase makes that "do not let the world press you into its mold." God sends us forth to be trend-setters, not imitators, as leaders, not copy-cats. So long as we take our orders from the world, this is always going to be backward.

XXV. "Joshua, Be Strong and Of Good Courage. I Said, Be Strong and Of Good Courage. You Listening?" (31:7, 8, 23)

The silliness of this title is driven by the repetition of the command. Then, in the first chapter of Joshua, the same command to this new leader is issued another four times (1:6,7,9,18).

Clearly, Joshua was not a strong, courageous leader and needed to have a fire built under him (or within him). When we consider that he has just spent the last forty years as understudy to Moses, who was the original "I can do it by myself" leader, it makes sense. In sports terminology,

Joshua had sat on the bench for 40 years and now suddenly was being sent into the game.

Take Prince Charles of Britain. As the Prince of Wales, he is the heir-designate of the UK throne. However, as the years come and go, his mother, Elizabeth II, shows no sign of slowing down. Meanwhile, Charles sits in the wings, waiting for the call. Born in 1948, the prince is now 66 and a grandfather. And still, he waits. We can imagine if suddenly he was crowned king, his immediate thoughts would always be, “What would mother do?”

Strong and courageous is a great combination, and a requirement for those whom God will make “*the head and not the tail.*” The weak do not want to lead, to stand apart from the multitude, to set the pattern. The weak and cowardly want to take polls and find out what the followers want and feed that to them.

God, give us pastors and parents and presidents who are strong and courageous.

Conclusion

The wonderful book of Deuteronomy covers another hundred great subjects not touched on in these five articles. Anyone deigning to teach it will have to pick and choose what to emphasize and what to dwell on lightly or skip altogether. In a sense, this is what makes it such fun to teach, if we may be allowed to use that word. It covers the gamut of the lives of God’s people. If a pastor wants to preach on stewardship or personal cleanliness or love for one’s neighbor, this is his book. As New Orleans sandwich shops say about their poor-boys, “This one is overstuffed.”

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Exegetically Speaking—by Spiros Zodhiates

Obeying the Perfect Law of Liberty

James 1:25a

From Faith, Love & Hope: An Exposition of the Epistle of James, AMG Publishers, 1997.

“*But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty...*” (James 1:25a).

The Apostle James knew that not all men are mere hearers of the Word. There are also those who do what they hear, although they are in the minority. From the first reading of this verse we are apt to conclude that James is definitely reaching legalism, and therefore Luther must have been right in calling this epistle “an epistle of straw.” As we carefully examine this passage from the original Greek, however, we shall discover that such is not the case and that there is no contradiction between the teaching of James and Paul. In fact, there is full agreement.

The confusion, I believe, arises from the fact that most people take the word “*law*” always to mean the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament. This is not so. The word “*law*,” I believe, in this connection and many others, refers simply to the principle of rule or command that has to be obeyed. Thus, in the physical world, we have the law of gravitation and many others. So it is in the spiritual world. God has instituted a great many laws, the disobedience of which will bring upon us unavoidable consequences. Later we shall see exactly what James means by this “*perfect law of liberty.*”

The first word with which our verse starts is a participle which comes from the Greek verb *parakrúptō*. This is a compound word made up of the preposition *pará*,

which among other things means “near, close to,” and the verb *kúptō*, which means “to stoop down.” In the previous verse the Apostle spoke of the hearer of the Word of truth who looks at himself in the mirror and then goes away without doing anything about his condition. Now why is it that a person insists on being just a hearer of the Word and not a doer thereof?

One of the main reasons is pride. A man cannot be cleansed unless he confesses he is dirty. He cannot be healed unless he admits he is sick. Admitting that one is a sinner takes courage, a great deal of courage, which most men unfortunately do not have. This Greek word *parakúpsas*, used of the doer of the Word, carries with it a definite connotation of humility. Who is a doer of the Word? The one who is humble enough to stoop down from the high pedestal of self-righteousness and religiosity.

I was told of a great cathedral where there is a statue of Christ. As one enters the cathedral and stands before that statue, he is appalled at the ugliness and repulsiveness of the sculptor’s representation of Christ. He wonders whether that is what Christ really looked like. He is keenly disappointed. But then, as he comes closer to the statue, he can see an inscription on it which reads: “Kneel down and look up.” He kneels down and looks up, and lo, everything about it is different. The repulsiveness is replaced by a wonderful attractiveness. The face of Christ is

nor ugly anymore. What makes the difference? It is the position of the observer. If he stands up and looks at the statue, there is no beauty to it, but if he kneels down and looks up, he simply falls in love with that Person.

This, then, is the first message from our verse. If we want the Word of truth, in its incarnate or written form, to have attraction for us, we had better stoop down close to it, we had better humble ourselves and then, as we confess our needy condition, we shall be attracted to Christ, who can help us. F. B. Meyer once said: "I used to think that God's gifts were on shelves one above the other; and that the taller we grew in Christian character the easier we could reach them. I now find that God's gifts are on shelves one beneath the other; and it is not a question of growing taller but of stooping lower; and that we have to go down, always down, to get His best gifts." If the Christian wants to benefit in any way as he looks in the mirror of the Word of God, he must approach it with humility.

A man can counterfeit love, he can counterfeit faith, he can counterfeit hope and all the other graces, but it is very difficult to counterfeit humility. One soon detects mock humility. They have a saying among the Arabs that as the tares and the wheat grow together they show which God has blessed. The ears that God has blessed bow their heads and acknowledge every grain, and the more fruitful they are, the lower their heads are bowed. The tares lift their heads high above the wheat, but they only produce evil. The proud heart cannot possibly obey. Implicit in this Greek word given by James is also obedience to the Word of truth. A habitually disobedient child may hear and understand, but will not necessarily do. A person may have good listening ears, a good understanding mind, but if his heart is not inclined to obedience, he is unprofitable in the sight of God.

A doer of the Word is one who at all times says, "Yes, Lord," and goes ahead to do His bidding. A distinguished French officer asked Washington's mother how she managed to rear such a splendid son. She replied, "I taught him to obey." We too can be splendid children of God, if we simply learn to obey.

But the believer must have something to obey; he must have something to stoop down to. James tells us to stoop down to a law, a perfect one, a perfect law of liberty. That is the exact translation of the original text. James does not say "the law," because the definite article is missing. He definitely does not refer here to the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament. He says, "Follow a law, a perfect law, a perfect law of liberty."

There seem to be two contradictory words here—"law" and "liberty." How can we be free and under law at the same time? We who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior have been emancipated from the Law of Moses, and we are now under grace. Surely we are now free, but let us not forget that, in the exercise of our freedom in Christ Jesus, we are still under certain

unavoidable restrictive orders. In order to understand this we must remember what has gone before.

James has been speaking of the believer who has accepted the Lord Jesus, but who has forgotten his first love for his Master, and is therefore unwilling to do the things that please Him. He is satisfied with just hearing the Word. He is free, of course, just to hear. There is no freer individual than the Christian. The only perfect freedom is that which we have in Christ. However, to be in Christ is to do only those things which will please the One who has given us this freedom. What, then, is the perfect law of freedom described by James?

Let me illustrate what he means. There was a man who was saved by grace from strong drink. He was seen one day by the tavern keeper, whom he knew only too well, carrying a sewing machine to his wife. "Come and have a drink," cried the tavern keeper. "It will strengthen you." "No, no," replied the former customer. "I've seen the day when I could not carry a dollar past your door, but since God saved me I can carry a whole sewing machine." Now here we have a man who was saved by grace. Before his salvation he could not keep the Law of God under any circumstances. After he was saved, he was free to make his own choice concerning certain things pertaining to life.

Henry Ward Beecher once said: "Laws are simply aids to weak folks, to tell them where to go, to help them to go, and to make them remember the next time if they do not go. Laws are men's servants; and they are servants which serve them in that way, but if a man has a direct inspiration of God; or if his culture has gone so high that he does not need these external stimulants; or if he has another sphere of influence which leads him to the same things from a higher point of view, the lower ones drop, not because they are wrong, but because the man is doing the same things better by a different set of instruments. Therefore it is, that there is no law to some men. A man who needs a law is yet a child. There is not one man in a hundred who ever does live by the laws of the land. You do not know one-quarter of the laws that are on our statute books. A virtuous and honest man does not need to know what the laws are. The greatest proportion of men live and die without hearing once in all their life a tenth or a hundredth part of the laws that pertain to good conduct. They do right of their own accord, and therefore the Law has no force on them. So it is in regard to true manly living. As far as a real, upright man goes, he goes voluntarily. He does from spontaneity and from choice what men lower down do from necessity, or from fear of punishment. The consequence is, that men live toward freedom in proportion as they live toward fidelity."

That is exactly what the perfect law of freedom is of which James speaks. The more faithful we are to Jesus Christ, the more we do His will and His Word, the easier it becomes for us to choose that which pleases Him. There is no pleasure at all when we obey the Law because we have

to. But there is tremendous satisfaction when it is in our nature to obey.

Spiros Zodhiates (1922-2009) served as president of AMG International for over 40 years, was the founding editor of *Pulpit Helps Magazine* (*Disciple's* predecessor), and authored dozens of exegetical books.

Words to Stand You on Your Feet—by Joe McKeever

Our Lord's Songbook: Where He Got All Those Great Quotes

"The Lord is for me; I will not fear; What can man do to me? The Lord is for me among those who help me.... The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" (Ps. 118:6-7, 22).

The Book of Psalms was the songbook in use for worshippers during our Lord's lifetime. Many of those great hymns every Jew knew by heart, and Jesus would've been no different (of course, He knew them all on a much different level, too). We see this in the way He so easily dropped in lines and insights from them throughout His ministry of preaching and teaching.

Jesus' wonderful teachings on His being the Good Shepherd tie right in with the 23rd Psalm. That psalm ends with *"I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever,"* which dovetails with the opening verses of John 14 (*"In my Father's house..."*).

Psalm 118 is one of those rich deposits from which we can mine a fortune. Take verses 6 and 7. *"The Lord is for me"* is stated, then repeated. The Apostle Paul picks up on that line in Romans 8:31. Bear in mind that Paul has just spent the last 30 verses of that chapter establishing that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are all with us. When He says, *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* He was actually saying **"since** God is for us."

Hebrews 13:5-6 picks up on 118:6 also. The writer there wanted God's people to be free from greed and worry over money. After all, *"The Lord is with us"* and *"He is my Helper; what can man do to me?"*

When our Lord was nearing the final days of His earthly ministry, He quoted 118:22 to the chief priests and elders in the temple. In Matthew 21:42, He asked them, *"Did you never read in the scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; This came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"* He went on to add, *"Therefore, the kingdom will be taken from you and given to a nation that will produce fruit from it"* and *"He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but on whomever it falls it will scatter him like dust."*

Give the religious big-shots credit. *"They understood He was talking about them"* (21:45). They got it.

The Old Testament is a book of illustrations of New Testament teachings, true. But it is far more than this. It is the foundation for everything taught in the New.

Those young in the faith do not need to go too quickly into the Old, but to stay with the New Testament until they are well grounded. Then, and only then, should they go into the Old and see how it forms the basis for all they have in Christ. If they do this right, they will fall in love with the Old Testament.

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Living out the Living Word—by Justin Lonas

Ruin Vast as the Sea: God's Wrath

Lamentations 2

A few years back, the modern hymn "In Christ Alone" by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend stirred up no small controversy when it was rejected from inclusion in a new edition of *Glory to God*—the hymnal of the Presbyterian Church (USA)—after the songwriters declined to change a lyric. At issue, a line in the second verse: "Till on that cross as Jesus died/The wrath of God was satisfied." The denomination said that it did not want to celebrate the

idea that God would justly punish sinners without the atoning blood of Christ.

If you're tempted to believe that such a doctrinal quibble could only come from a mainline, liberal denomination like the PCUSA (which has other issues with accepting and applying scriptural teaching), think again. The wrath of God is not a joyfully taught topic in many

quarters. Even in otherwise conservative churches, it is something many would just rather not talk about.

The song's lyrics (and the theology behind them) stand up to the biblical test, though. Christ's sacrifice paid the penalty for our sins as God poured out His holy anger and justice on Him for our sakes (see Isa. 53:5-6, Rom. 3:21-26, 1 Thess 5:9-10, Heb 2:14-17, 1 John 4:9-10, and many other passages). Only in this way could God "*be just and the justifier of him who has faith in Jesus.*" God's wrath is not an embarrassment or a "necessary evil" but a central part of His character—without wrath against sin, His holiness is compromised and His love cheapened. In the whole context of God's nature as revealed in His Word, His wrath is beautiful and worthy of praise.

In Christ we see the full picture of how wrath and love intertwine in His perfect grace, but even the Old Testament writers feared God's justice and praised Him for it. Even without a complete revelation of His eternal plan, they knew that God's wrath was not in conflict with God's goodness. In fact, His wrath showed His love when He protected His people by judging evildoers. This is how Asaph could write: "*You, even You, are to be feared; and who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry? You caused judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared and was still when God arose to judgment, to save all the humble of the earth. Selah*" (Ps. 76:7-9).

How can we praise God for His wrath, though, when it is poured out on us? As we have been looking at the book of Lamentations, this question arises time and again. In many ways, the book itself is an answer to that. God's wrath toward His own people is a chastisement for their sin designed to draw them back to repentance.

The biblical genre of lament (as seen in Psalm 38, Psalm 44, Psalm 51, and others) springs from a recognition of sin (whether personal or corporate) and God's righteous judgment on it. These psalms follow a pattern: the speaker describes a crisis or woe, cries out to the Lord for help, confesses his sins, praises God's justice, and calls down the same justice on God's enemies. Lamentations is an extended version of this form, written by the prophet Jeremiah at the great moment of crisis for the Jews—the destruction of Jerusalem and their exile to Babylon.

Chapter two puts us in the midst of the pain of that judgment with a withering description of God's wrath against Israel. The repentance, deliverance, and justice for enemies is not yet in view here: "*How the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger! He has cast from heaven to earth the glory of Israel, and has not remembered His footstool in the day of His anger. The Lord has swallowed up; He has not spared all the habitations of Jacob. In His wrath He has thrown down the strongholds of the daughter of Judah; He has brought them down to the ground; He has profaned the kingdom and its princes. In fierce anger He has cut off all the strength of Israel; He has*

drawn back His right hand from before the enemy. And He has burned in Jacob like a flaming fire consuming round about" (Lam. 2:1-3).

As we have already touched on, Israel had, in her continual violation of God's covenant, justly earned God's wrath. They refused to honor the Lord in their conduct and worship, and refused to put aside false gods. Instead of fulfilling God's design for them as His chosen people to be a light and a witness for the nations, they had followed after the wickedness of their neighbors and profaned His reputation before a watching world. As a result, His wrath against them was the righteous curse for their disobedience, and protected and exalted His holy name.

Even so, the Lord does not pour out His wrath lightly. The litany of sins, idolatries, and brutality perpetrated by Israel throughout the Old Testament dovetails with accounts of repentance and pursuit of righteousness. God's patience with His people was great—He could have acted to judge them many times over but relented until the time was right. Ultimately, there was a merciful, instructive purpose even in this judgment. Through the exilic prophets, He revealed His coming Messiah, and the people's loss of their land and kingdom made them long for a redeemer.

Because the people had forgotten God's plan, He used extraordinary measures to bring them back to it. The Lord, through Jeremiah, tenderly reminded His children that they had turned their ears away from Him and believed lies in regard to their future: "*How shall I admonish you? To what shall I compare you, O daughter of Jerusalem? To what shall I liken you as I comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your ruin is as vast as the sea; who can heal you? Your prophets have seen for you false and foolish visions; and they have not exposed your iniquities so as to restore you from captivity, but they have seen for you false and misleading oracles*" (2:13-14). The false prophets had promised prosperity without repentance, contradicting the Lord's decrees. Now, in the midst of "*ruin as vast as the sea,*" He asks "*who can heal you?*" knowing the answer and intending to turn them back to Himself.

The extent of destruction brought on the people through God's judgment is described in brutal detail in this chapter. "*See, O Lord, and look! With whom have You dealt thus? Should women eat their offspring, the little ones who were born healthy? Should priest and prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord? On the ground in the streets lie young and old; my virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword*" (2:20-21). The spiritual desolation also is described in all its darkness: "*The law is no more. Also, her prophets find no vision from the Lord. The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground, they are silent. They have thrown dust on their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth. The virgins of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground*" (2:9-10).

As in each of the chapters of Lamentations, the people recognize that even this is God's work in bringing them low so that they could see Him: "*The Lord has done what He purposed; He has accomplished His word which He commanded from days of old... You called as in the day of an appointed feast my terrors on every side; and there was no one who escaped or survived in the day of the Lord's anger*" (2:17, 22). There are no words of comfort in this chapter, no prayer for justice on God's enemies, only despair seems to percolate through the people.

It is always darkest before dawn, though. God's wrath displayed prepares the people to see His great and abounding mercy. Next month, we will begin to look at chapter three, which contains some of the most glorious words of faith and trust in God anywhere in the Scriptures.

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Following God—by Erik Christensen

As Christ Loved the Church

Ephesians 5:25-33

Through his letter to the Ephesians, Paul has beautifully shared Christ's work in salvation (chapters 1-3), and then showed Christians how to "*walk worthy of the calling*" with which we have been called. In chapter 5, he has taught that each believer should be submitting to one another in love. He then begins to express the relationship of a husband and wife. Simply put, a husband submits to his wife's need while a wife submits to her husband's lead.

Digging a bit deeper into the role of a husband, Paul makes it clear that a husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church. Wow! Only "*in Christ*" is this possible. Clearly, in the context of Ephesians, our life in Christ and His life in ours is what empowers us to be able to love as He loved. Husbands are to be Spirit-filled men of God who are being empowered by Christ Himself. As a husband yields his life to the Lord in every moment, the Lord's love begins to be revealed in and through him to his wife.

Paul brings out two important ideas specifically for the husband. The first is a **sacrificial life**. Husbands, in loving their wives, are to sacrifice their own needs and desires for the sake of their wives. Christ gave Himself up for the church. What a picture of love this is! He went to the cross. He died, even the death of the cross, for the church. Husbands are to love in this way, sacrificially, unselfishly living their lives for their wives therefore loving them.

Love in this way is not passive but active. Is there really such a thing as passive love? Love in its nature is always actively seeking out the best for the other person in spite of the cost. In 5:25, Paul states that Christ "*loved the church,*" and "*gave Himself up for her....*" This is clearly active; a wonderful picture of true love. "*Loved*" here is *ēgapēsen* (from *agape*), which involves a decision to put someone else first in spite of what the cost may be and in spite of what the person may think or want. Love is doing what's best for someone, no matter what. Christ did this for us freely, and Paul commands husbands that they are to

love their wives in this way. If a husband is yielded to Christ, then the love which is the fruit of the Spirit will be revealed through the husband toward his wife.

The second major idea that Paul brings out is the idea of **being sanctified**. A husband is to sacrificially give his life for his wife as Christ has done for the Church. Christ gave His life for the Church for the purpose of the church becoming holy and pure. Sanctification is what Christ is working toward in every believer. To be sanctified means to be cleansed, and Paul expresses that this cleansing is by the washing of water with the Word. The Word of God cleanses us. Jesus specifically states this in John 17:17: "*Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.*"

This cleansing, in turn, leads to the opportunity for the Church being presented to the Lord in the true intention and identity of all that He has in mind for her. No spot or wrinkle, holy and blameless. What an amazing privilege we have as the Church to be changed by the Lord Himself. In Christ's power, we are able to be cleansed from sin and walk with Him in purity. As the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, we have the opportunity of experiencing the work of the Lord in and through our lives.

In verse 28, Paul connects this to husbands in that they are to love their own wives even as their own bodies. The oneness of a husband and wife is a picture of Christ and the Church, which Paul calls a great mystery.

It's no wonder the world hates marriage. Marriage is a physical picture of a spiritual reality. Christ loving His Church, and the Church yielding to His headship, is a picture of the beautiful way in which God has ordained not only the relationship of marriage but also the roles within the marriage. "*Husbands, love your wives,*" Paul commands. What a picture of the love of our Lord for the Church!

As we yield our way to Him, He is doing an internal and eternal work within us transforming us more and more into His image. As a husband yields his life to

Christ, the Lord is transforming him and the husband begins to reflect the love of God toward his wife.

Husbands are we yielded to the Lord? Are we walking with Him, surrounded in our hearts, giving our lives to Him and then to our wives? The Lord bless you,

and may you experience His love in and through your life in a fresh way today.

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Points to Ponder—by David L. Olford

From “Went” to “Sent”: The Jesus Mission—Part 2

Text: “Then [Jesus] said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” (Matt. 9:37-38). “These twelve Jesus sent out...” (Matt. 10:5a).

Thought: We have been watching Jesus in action and on mission in Israel, and this text gives us a pattern to follow and principles to apply as we are on mission with Jesus today by the power of the Holy Spirit. We have seen already that, to be fully involved in Jesus’ mission today: **1) we must grasp the nature of Jesus’ ministry** (verse 35), and **2) we need to share the depth of Jesus’ compassion** (verse 36a). Now, we move on in our consideration of this historical and instructive text.

III. We Must Respond to the Accuracy of Jesus’ Vision (9:37)

“Then [Jesus] said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few.’” As Jesus assesses the crowd, He makes this simple and clear statement. This statement is not just a sociological description of what He sees, His statement is a missional vision that He is passing on to His disciples. Jesus is referring to the great and urgent opportunity for harvesting. He is speaking of kingdom harvesting, not judgment.

The task of harvesting “souls,” the task of kingdom ministry and mission is what Jesus is actually doing in these verses and throughout the Gospels. Jesus is describing harvesting as a big task due to the great need and the small number of people involved. Jesus is also describing the harvest positively since anyone involved in harvesting would want a “*plentiful*” harvest. What a great expectation!

At the same time, Jesus is contrasting the great opportunity with the small number of workers. This clearly points to the need for more to be involved in this divine mission. In summary, the opportunity and urgency for a plentiful kingdom harvest is now, but more workers are needed because “*the laborers are few.*” This is the vision that Jesus sees and presents that calls for response.

IV. We Must Join in the Completion of Jesus’ Mission (9:38, 10:5a)

“‘Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His Harvest....’ These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them....” Having presented the vision of a plentiful harvest and the need for workers, Jesus gives instructions to His disciples. But, instead of calling for all His disciples to get to the harvest immediately, Jesus calls for prayer.

1) Pray Earnestly. Notice that prayer is not an optional response, but the duty of the disciple. The prayer is to be offered to the Lord of the harvest. It is the Lord’s harvest and He is sovereign over the sending out of the laborers. So, prayer must be offered to the Lord to direct in the harvesting of His own harvest. The laborers are to be sent out by the Lord Himself. How this directive from the Lord should challenge us to pray fervently and continually for the mission of Jesus to be fulfilled today! And this will involve the Lord sending out more workers in our day. The important lesson for us to remember is that those who go out to labor must first be sent, and the laborers need to be sent by the Lord in the light of our prayers.

2) Expect Confidently (10:1-5a). It must be our expectation that the Lord will indeed answer the earnest prayer for laborers to be sent into the harvest. In our text the Lord calls His twelve disciples together. He gives them power, and He sends them out on a mission to the “*house of Israel*” with very specific instructions. Jesus is choosing the laborers for this specific mission, and Jesus continues to choose laborers in our own day. We must confidently expect that the Jesus Mission continues in our day, which means that Jesus still sends out workers today. So, we must be prayerful, and we must also be open to the Lord’s call if the Lord calls us into service.

When we consider the words of the “Great Mission” (Matt. 28:18-20) and other words of commission and mission by Jesus, we are all called into His mission work today. Not all will be called to go overseas or to cross-cultural mission, but all are called to “*make disciples.*”

Thrust: By the power of His Holy Spirit, we need to continue the Jesus Mission today.

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Jewels from Past Giants

The Attractive Power of the Cross of Christ

By Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Originally preached by Spurgeon as the second part of a sermon (the first part, "Christ Lifted Up", appeared in last month's issue of Disciple) in 1857. Edited slightly for modern spellings.

"And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me" (John 12: 32).

If Christ be faithfully preached, thus fully held forth, thus simply proclaimed to the people, the effect will be that He will draw all men unto Him.

1) Christ draws as a trumpet. Men have been wont to sound a trumpet to attract an audience to the reading of a proclamation. The people come from their houses at the well-known sound, to listen to what they are desired to know. Now, my brethren, part of the attractive power of the Gospel lies in the attracting people to hear it. You cannot expect people to be blessed by the preaching of the Gospel if they do not hear it. One part of the battle is to get them to listen to its sound. Now, the question is asked in these times, "How are we to get the working-classes to listen to the Word?" The answer is, Christ is His own attraction, Christ is the only trumpet that you want to trumpet Christ. Preach the Gospel, and the congregation will come of themselves. The only infallible way of getting a good congregation, is to do this.

"Oh!" said a Socinian once, to a good Christian minister, "I cannot make it out; my chapel is always empty, and yours always crammed full. And yet I am sure mine is the more rational doctrine, and you are not by any means so talented a preacher as I am."

"Well," said the other, "I will tell you the reason why your chapel is empty, and mine full. The people have a conscience, and that conscience tells them that what I preach is true, and that what you preach is false, so they will not hear you."

You shall look through the history of this realm ever since the commencement of the days of Protestantism, and I will dare to say it without fear of contradiction, that you will almost in every case find that the men who have attracted the greatest mass of people to hear them, have been men who were the most evangelical—who preached the most about Christ and him crucified. What was there in Whitefield to attract an audience, except the simple Gospel preached with a vehement oratory that carried everything before it? Oh, it was not his oratory, but the Gospel that drew the people. There is a something about the truth that always makes it popular. For tell me that if a man preaches

the truth his chapel will be empty. Sir, I defy you to prove that. Christ preached His own truth, and the common people heard Him gladly, and the multitude flocked to listen to Him.

My good ministering brother, have you got an empty church? Do you want to fill it? I will give you a good list, and if you will follow it, you will, in all probability, have your chapel full to the doors. Burn all your manuscripts; that is number 1. Give up your notes; that is number 2. Read your Bible and preach it as you find it in the simplicity of its language. And give up all your Latinised English. Begin to tell the people what you have felt in your own heart, and beseech the Holy Spirit to make your heart as hot as a furnace for zeal. Then go out and talk to the people. Speak to them like their brother. Be a man amongst men. Tell them what you have felt and what you know, and tell it heartily with a good, bold face, and, my dear friend, I do not care who you are, you will get a congregation.

2) Christ acts as a net to draw men unto him. The Gospel ministry is, in God's Word, compared to a fishery, God's ministers are the fishermen, they go to catch souls, as fishermen go to catch fish. How shall souls be caught? They shall be caught by preaching Christ. Just preach a sermon that is full of Christ, and throw it unto your congregation, as you throw a net into the sea—you need not look where they are, nor try to fit your sermon to different cases, but, throw it in, and as sure as God's Word is what it is, it shall not return to Him void, it shall accomplish that which He pleases, and prosper in the thing whereto He hath sent it.

The Gospel never was unsuccessful yet, when it was preached with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. It is not fine orations upon the death of princes, or the movements of politics which will save souls. If we wish to have sinners saved and to have our churches increased; if we desire the spread of God's kingdom, the only thing whereby we can hope to accomplish the end, is the lifting up of Christ; for, "*I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.*"

3) Christ Jesus draws as the cords of love. After men are saved, they are still apt to go astray, it needs a cord to reach all the way from a sinner to heaven, and it needs to have a hand pulling at him all the way. Now, Christ Jesus is the band of love that draws the saint to heaven. Oh child of God, you would go astray again if Jesus did not hold you

fast, if He did not draw you to Himself you would still wander.

Christian people are like our earth. Our world has two forces, it has one tendency to run off at a tangent from its orbit, but the sun draws it by a centripetal power and attracts it to itself, and so between the two forces it is kept in a perpetual circle. Oh! Christian, you will never walk rightly, and keep in the orbit of truth, if it be not for the influence of Christ perpetually attracting you to the centre. You feel, and if you do not feel always, it is still there—you feel an attraction between your heart and Christ, and Christ is perpetually drawing you to Himself, to His likeness, to His character, to His love, to His bosom, and in that way you are kept from your natural tendency to fly off and to be lost in the wide fields of sin. Bless God, that Christ, lifted up, draws all His people unto Him in that fashion.

4) Christ Jesus is the center of attraction, even as a standard is the center of gathering. We want unity in these days; we are now crying out, “away with sectarianism.” Oh, for unity! There are some of us who truly pant after it. We do not talk about an evangelical alliance; alliances are made between men of different countries. We believe that the phrase “Evangelical Alliance” is a faulty one—it should be “Evangelical Union”—knit together in union with Christ. Why! I am not in alliance with a brother of the Church of England; I would not be in alliance with him if he were ever so good a man! I would be in union with him, I would love him with all my heart, but I would not make a mere alliance with him. He never was mine enemy, he never shall be; and, therefore, it is not an alliance I want with him, it is a union. And so with all God’s people, they do not care about alliances; they love real union and communion one with another.

The only standard of union that can ever be lifted up is the cross of Christ. As soon as we shall begin to preach Christ and Him crucified, we shall be all one. We can fight anywhere except at the foot of the cross—there it is that the order goes forth, “sheath swords”; and those that were bitter combatants before, come and prostrate themselves there, and say, “You dear Redeemer, You have melted us into one.” Oh! My brethren, let us all preach the Gospel mightily, and there will be union. Let all of us begin to preach the Gospel, and we shall soon see that the Gospel is self-supporting; and that the Gospel does not want entrenchments of bigotry and narrow-mindedness, in order to make it stand.

No, we shall say, “Brother, there is my pulpit for you. You are an Episcopalian; preach in my pulpit, you are right welcome to it.” The Episcopalian will say, “You are a Baptist, and my brother, there is the parish church for you.” And I just announce that the first chance I get to preach in a parish church, I will do it, and risk the consequence. By

what law of Christian love is one denomination to shut its pulpit doors against every other? Many of my dear friends in the Episcopal Church are willing to lend their edifices, but they dare not. But mark you, when the Gospel is preached fully, all those things will be broken down. For one brother will say, “My dear friend, you preach Christ and so do I, I cannot shut you out of my pulpit.” And another will cry, “I am anxious for the salvation of souls, and so are you, come into my house, come into my heart, I love you.”

The only means of unity we shall ever get will be all of us preaching Christ crucified; when that is done, when every minister’s heart is in the right place, full of anxiety for souls—when every minister feels that, be he called bishop, presbyter, or preacher—all he wants to do is to glorify God and win souls to Jesus, then we can maintain our denominational distinctions, but the great bugbear of bigotry and division will have ceased and schism will no more be known. For that day I anxiously pray; may God send it in His own time.

Conclusion

And now I close by noticing the last sweet thought—“*I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.*” Then Christ Jesus will draw all His people to heaven; He says He will draw them unto Himself. He is in heaven; then **Christ is the chariot** in which souls are drawn to heaven. The people of the Lord are on their way to heaven, they are carried in everlasting arms, and those arms are the arms of Christ. Christ is carrying them up to His own house, to His own throne, by-and-by His prayer, “*Father, I will that they, whom you have given me, be with me where I am,*” shall be wholly fulfilled. And it is fulfilling now, for He is like a strong courser drawing His children in the chariot of the covenant of grace unto Him.

Oh! Blessed be God! The cross is the plank on which we swim to heaven, the cross is the great covenant transport which will weather out the storms, and reach its desired heaven. Now, poor sinner, I would to God Christ would pardon you, remember His death on Calvary, remember His agonies and bloody sweat—all this He did for you; if you feel yourself to be a sinner. Does not this draw you to Him? You have rebelled against Him, and revolted, but He says, “Return, backsliding children.” Will not His love draw you? I pray that both may have their power and influence, that you may be drawn to Christ now, and at last be drawn to heaven.

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

Aging Well: The Graying of America

Robert Browning wrote a poem (actually more like a philosophical text) from the perspective of a 12th century person, Rabbi Ben Ezra—also the title of the poem. He begins, “Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be, the last of life, for which the first was made; Our times are in His hand, who saith, ‘A whole I planned, youth shows us half; trust God; see all; nor be afraid.’”

Growing old is a reality of life—if we are fortunate enough to be blessed with many years on earth. How we deal with aging is a question of attitude and faith. Growing old has implications beyond who we are as individuals though, it affects health care, the economy, the church, our family, and more. If we continue to live, old age, like death, is inevitable. America is growing older. The graying of this nation, sometimes referred to as the “silver tsunami,” is upon us. The first baby boomers, the generation born between 1946 and 1964, began reaching retirement age in 2011. This group of 78 million has changed culture at every juncture of their life stages and they will likely affect how we interpret “retirement,” too.

The website “Policy and Politics” asked the question, “Is the graying of American an economic time bomb?” A 2014 Gallup Poll reported that only 1/3 of baby boomers age 67-68 were still employed. The pollsters concluded that this indicates boomers are not staying in the work force longer than those before them. If this is true, a shrinking work force could spell trouble for America. Business Journal says there is an “impending talent vacuum” as boomers, while working longer, are still retiring at a steady pace. A 2014 Harris Poll shows that 74 percent of boomers are concerned about having enough money in retirement while 86 percent say the country is facing a retirement crisis. 74 percent of those surveyed said it was important for them to feel financially confident before they retire, and 70 percent expect to work following retirement in some capacity. Retirement, it appears, is going to be defined more as a stage of life than the end of work.

A subgroup in the boomer generation has been tabbed the “sandwich generation” because they are assisting both older children and aging parents. This means the boomer generation, which is sometimes referred to as the entitlement generation or the generation of great expectations, as a whole, will be forced to deal with pressure and sacrifice unlike they have previously known.

The cost for treating and caring for elders with dementia is growing. Alzheimer's care is projected to exceed \$1 trillion annually. By 2025, one in 26 Americans is projected to live to age 100. The Council on Social

Education says that 30 percent of people age 65-74 and 45 percent of those 85 and over suffer some type of dementia. By 2050, projections indicate that the number of people 65 and over will rise to 88 million, meaning that one in every five Americans will be over 65. The average amount a 65 year-old can anticipate in medical expenses during his or her golden years is \$220,000.

The statistics and projections could go on and on. The point is our nation is aging and entering a time of unprecedented challenge. The largest generation in American history, the millennial generation at 95 million (age 18-34), faces even greater challenges, but they are not currently entering the retirement years.

The church today needs older people teaching, mentoring, and helping younger people as we move forward. 1 Timothy 5:1-3 gives us wisdom that can be applied to our time and our future, “*Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, to the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, all in purity. Honor widows who are widows indeed.*”

The time in which we live is the best time to live because it is the time God has ordained for us. A change is coming in America and this country is more disconnected from Christ and the church than at any time in our history. Our population is aging. American Christians are getting older, too, but we can and should be wiser and more useful in serving God and others. We can and should encourage, listen to, and help disciple younger Christians who are not just the future of the church but part of the health and vitality of the church today.

David wrote in Psalm 71:18, “*Even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Thy strength to this generation.*” The baby boom generation has had a tendency to think of themselves above everything else. Now is certainly the time for this generation to think more of the next generation as they enter the “retirement years.” Boomers can be such a force for godliness if they know God and are committed to making Him known to future generations. If they do, we all may be able to agree with Browning that, “The best is yet to be.”

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The Story behind the Song—by Lindsay Terry

Strength from Sorrow

Song: “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus”

Originally published in Pulpit Helps, February 2009.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness” (Eph. 6:13-14).

The year 1858 will long be remembered in Philadelphia as the year when great revival came and when a great Gospel song was written. Dudley A. Tyng was one of the prominent leaders in this great spiritual awakening. He was speaking, early in that year, to a crowd of five thousand men, using as his text, “Go now ye that are men, and serve the Lord” (Exod. 10:11). One report tells that conviction was so great that at the close of the service two thousand men fell to their knees. Two other writers say that at least one thousand men made confession of Christ as Savior.

A few days after that service Mr. Tyng was at work in his study. For a few moments of relaxation he decided to walk down to his barn to watch a corn-shelling machine in operation. While he patted a mule being used to operate the machine, the animal became frightened and leaped forward, knocking Tyng in the machine. This caused his sleeve to be caught in the cogs. Before they could stop the mule, Tyng’s arm was pulled in and so badly lacerated that it was amputated. He lived only a few days after the accident. Just before he died, his father, leaning over his son, asked him if he had a message for the young men with whom he had been working.

He replied, “Tell them...to stand up for Jesus.”

George Duffield, Jr., a young pastor, and a close friend of Tyng, was so moved by that message he preached a sermon the following Sunday, exhorting his congregation to stand firm for Jesus Christ. His text was Ephesians 6:14, “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness.” At the close of the sermon he read a poem he had written:

Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Ye soldiers of the cross;
Lift high His royal banner,
It must not suffer loss.
From victory unto victory,
His army shall He lead,
Till every foe is vanquished
And Christ is Lord indeed.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
The trumpet call, obey.
Forth to the mighty conflict,
In this His glorious day.
Ye that are men, now serve Him,
Against unnumbered foes,
Let courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose.

There were six stanzas in all. Benedict D. Stewart, the superintendent of the Sunday Church School, had some leaflets printed for the children containing the poem. A copy found its way to a Baptist paper and it was set to music written some time earlier by George J. Webb.

Almost every hymnal today contains this great song, and it has found its way into the hearts of men everywhere, in many lands, causing them to have courage—courage to Stand up for Jesus!

As in 1858, our day needs men who are willing to stand up for Jesus—men who are willing to be leaders. Remember: when you follow the crowd you will not have a crowd following you.

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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).

Church Builders—by Bernard R. DeRemer

Called and Committed: William Evans

Originally published in Pulpit Helps, February 2004.

The great evangelist D.L. Moody was preaching at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City. One of his hearers was William Evans, a young typesetter for

the *New York World*. Forcefully, Moody spoke from Luke 5 on the subject, “Surrender All to Jesus Christ.” Then he appealed, in his powerful, unique way, for young men to give their lives for His service. Looking down at Evans, he announced abruptly, “Young man, I mean you!” After the meeting, Moody declared, “Somehow or other God told me He meant you. Have you never been called to give your life to the service of Jesus Christ?”

Evans, a young convert, was “getting a comfortable salary,” but had given weeks of anxious thought to the ministry, and had been helping in mission work. He wrestled with the thought of giving up his salary and position, living a life of self-denial, “and I was not willing.” After he got his breath, he replied, “I don’t know; I have been thinking about it.” Moody charged him to “go and prepare yourself for Christian work,” and urged him to attend the Bible Institute in Chicago without delay.

To the objection that he had no money for such a venture, Moody countered, “Did I say anything about money? Young man, you pack up your trunk and go to my school in Chicago.”

Moody was a man of action who sought and got results. A few days later, Evans found himself on a train to Chicago with Moody’s promise ringing in his ears: “If God has called you He will take care of you.” When he arrived he found an allowance of \$25 a month had been provided for him. He was able to supplement this sum (which went much farther then than it would now!) from other sources by part-time work.

So, in 1892, he became the first graduate of what is today Moody Bible Institute, also known as the West Point of Christian Service. He went on to become an outstanding author, pastor, and lecturer. Moody’s vision was wonderfully fulfilled.

Born at Liverpool in 1870, Evans came to the U.S. seeking newspaper employment. After graduation from the

Bible Institute, he attended the University of Chicago as well as other schools. Eventually he earned a number of college and seminary degrees, including Ph.D.

He joined the Moody Institute faculty and became director of the Bible course for 11 years. Students recalled that his voice “sometimes rose to a roar.” Though he was stern, they found him kind and sympathetic; many would linger after class to ask questions.

Especially as a result of the teaching of Dr. R. A. Torrey, he became “somewhat of a walking Bible.” As years went by, he added to the Torrey system some memory gymnastics of his own. Thus in later years Evans would stand before vast audiences and quote “whole chapters of the Bible without difficulty.”

Next he became associate dean of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (now Biola University). After 1918 he traveled widely, ministering at Bible conferences in many parts of Africa and Asia. He was offered a number of famous pulpits, but preferred to have the world as his parish.

Most of his 40 books are out of print, but may be found in second hand stores and libraries. Outstanding titles still available include *Great Doctrines of the Bible*, *How to Prepare Sermons*, and *What Every Christian Should Believe*.

Evans went to be with the Lord in 1950, at age 80. His funeral was held at the First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood, where his son, Dr. Louis Evans, was pastor. “*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord . . . and their works do follow them*” (Rev. 14:13).

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.

Advancing the Ministries of the Gospel

National Workers Model Christ-Likeness

By AMG International Staff

What would it cost for you to proclaim the love of Christ in a foreign country where the Good News desperately needs to be heard? Likely thousands of dollars each month. Yet, there is a much more effective way, through AMG’s **national workers** around the world.

We have always believed there is no better way to make disciples of all nations than by equipping men and women to proclaim the Gospel and teach God’s truth in their own language and culture. This is exactly what AMG’s nearly **2,500 national workers** in dozens of countries around the world are doing every day—whether

they are directing our ministry in a given country, planting and pastoring churches, or cooking meals for the kids at one of our childcare centers.

Our commitment to national workers goes beyond ministry effectiveness, though. Think for a minute about the spiritual and theological resources at your disposal here in the U. S. You and I are (in spite of opposition) blessed with freedom to openly practice and share our faith. We are able to build churches, Christian schools, and other ministry facilities, and these institutions enjoy tax-exempt status. We have countless copies of Scripture and volumes of practical

and theological books to help us grow in our faith. Radio, television, and the Internet offer us access to a world of Bible teaching from all corners of our country.

In much of the world, however, this is not the case. When we think of the work our national partners do in the name of Christ, we want to see the church flourish in every culture where we work, sharing the riches of Christ fully. Nationals are leading the way in making disciples, and this goes so much deeper than making Christians. National workers model Christ-likeness to their people in a way that shows that the Gospel is not merely a Western idea but the good news for all people.

Through nationals, AMG provides churches with extended opportunities for ministry (through medical care, child care, disaster relief, etc.) as well as **pastor training** (ranging from special classes for pastors already serving to formal higher education for those pursuing ministry). We want to see God's Church "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Pet. 3:18), teaching and equipping believers to withstand trials and faithfully witness for Christ to their neighbors.

Among the most rewarding experiences we have the privilege to share as a ministry is watching a young person come through one of our childcare centers, and through the love and care of our faithful national workers there, grow to accept Christ and then serve Him in ministry also—whether with organizations like AMG or as a local church pastor.

We could tell you the story of **Virgilio**, who came to AMG's Home of Hope orphanage in Bacolod City in the Philippines as a malnourished child, with no hope and no direction for his life. Through AMG's faithful workers there, he was fed, clothed, taught, and even provided a

scholarship to be able to attend college and seminary. Today, he serves as a pastor in his home country.

It never ceases to amaze us how often we see this "full-circle" of life transformation in what God is doing through AMG. There are young men and women like **Ender** and **Cintía** in Guatemala who, through sponsorship with AMG, finished school and became teachers themselves (Ender even teaches at the same center where he was a student!), or **Sylvia** in Uganda who earned a degree in child development with the goal of helping kids like herself escape poverty and abuse. There are stories like those of **Daniel** and **Hardi**, both of whom were sponsored as children in Indonesia and both of whom today serve as pastors of local churches even as they teach God's word to others at AMG's **Berita Hidup Seminary** in Solo City.

Please pray with us for AMG's national workers and consider helping provide for their ministry expenses and family needs through sponsorship. With your support, hundreds of faithful AMG national workers will continue to be salt and light to their communities.

To learn more about AMG's national worker ministries around the world, and discover how you can sponsor a national worker, please visit www.amginternational.org or call 1-800-251-7206.

Advancing the Ministries of the Gospel (AMG) International is a non-denominational, international missions agency based in Chattanooga, Tenn. AMG's distinctive has always been its reliance on national workers to carry the Gospel in their own cultures. Today, they operate ministries in more than 30 countries around the world through partnership with national believers.

Marks of the Master—by the Old Scot

Consider the Lowly Ant

Many years ago, a wise observer bent his gaze upon the lowly ant, and took notice of its incessant purposeful activity. He then wrote for posterity this sage advice: "*Go to the ant, thou sluggard: Consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, ruler, or overseer, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest*" (Prov. 6:6-8).

Solomon, of course, wrote of the ants he was familiar with in the Middle East. Later observations have shown that there are some 8,000 varieties of ants around the world. Some are large (up to an inch long), others are small; some carry potent stingers in their tails, others do not; many live in nests, but some do not.

The army ants of Africa, for example, spend their entire existence on the march, moving in large columns

that feed chiefly on insects which they have overrun. The ant army rests periodically, while its queen lays her eggs, and these are then carried along when the march is resumed.

A number of types of ants are dubbed "honey ants," from their habit of eating "honeydew," a sweet secretion of aphids. The ants actually "milk" the aphids, by gently stroking their abdomens with their antennae.

So close is the association of the corn root aphid and corn field ant that this species of aphid is almost totally dependent upon its ant "masters." The ants take care of the aphids just as a farmer cares for his cows. Each fall the ants collect aphid eggs, which they maintain overwinter in their underground nests. In the spring the young aphids are moved to the roots of early weeds and grasses,

which are the first “feeding grounds” available. Then, after the corn fields are planted and sprouted, the farmer-ants move their charges to their favored food source, the roots of the corn plant. It has been determined that the corn root aphid is nearly helpless at finding its preferred food source without help from the ants.

One ant species, the acropyga, makes sure of the honeydew supply by a sort of marriage dowry: the virgin queen-to-be carries along on her nuptial flight a fertilized female mealy bug. When the queen nests, the mealy bug’s progeny provide food for the ant queen’s offspring.

But perhaps the most interesting ant livelihood is that of certain species called “leaf-cutter ants.” The ants do not eat the bits of leaves which they drag down into their nests, but instead chew it into pulp and use it as garden material on which fungus grows. It is the fungus that the ants eat.

At least one species of leaf-cutter ants also “fertilizes” the leaf pulp with ant manure, and transplants fungus “starts” from an old garden—and then “weeds” the garden by making sure no other fungus creeps in. The entire ant colony lives on the fungus thus grown.

But how, we ask, do the ants know to do these things? How is it possible that ants “learned” to make gardens out of chewed leaves? And how do they understand that fertilizing their garden produces larger crops? Who taught them the art of transplanting? And how did the corn field ant become a livestock raiser?

A moment’s thought will show that the fungus-eating ants, for example, could never have survived while they laboriously learned how to cultivate their food, one incremental detail individually mastered, over huge periods of time. By the same token, no one teaches the acropyga queen-to-be to take her dowry with her on her mating flight.

Farmer ants, aphid-raising ants, army ants, nest-building, and non-nest-building ants of every description all do what they do by instinct. They do as their kind has always done, through instinctive wisdom implanted in them by someone much greater than themselves.

We are pointed to a Master Intelligence, capable of creating each life form with its own intricate life processes—often intermeshed with those of other life forms. Obviously, this is someone far greater than man.

In the Bible, God asked Job: “*Who hath sent out the wild ass free? Or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass...? Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? Or wings and feathers unto the ostrich which leaveth her eggs in the earth and warmeth them in the dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. ...Her labor is in vain without fear, because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding*” (Job 39:5,13-17).

Truly, the more closely we delve into Nature’s secrets, the more surely we can see God’s handiwork! The stamp of His creation is unmistakable, if we will but open our eyes.

The Old Scot (Ted Kyle) served as managing editor for *Pulpit Helps* magazine (*Disciple*’s predecessor publication) from 1993-2008. He was always fascinated by the natural world, and readily saw God’s hand in every detail. Ted went to be with His Creator and Savior in April 2013.

Source: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th Ed.: Micropaedia Vol. 1; Macropaedia Vols. 8 & 12.

Book Review—April 2015

Luther on the Christian Life: Cross and Freedom, Carl R. Trueman, 2015, Crossway, Wheaton, Ill., ISBN 9781433525025, 214 pages, \$17.99, softcover.

In the realm of Christian biography, we often look to those who have done great deeds in obedience to Christ—missionaries, martyrs, and evangelists—for inspiration and encouragement as we follow Him. Less often, perhaps, do we consider theologians as role models for our Christian walk. We read their work and their ideas impact us, but the Theologians on the Christian Life series from Crossway takes this to another level. Each book in this series explores the great thinkers of the faith in their

personal life and the development of their theology, mining it for wisdom for today’s Christians.

The latest installment in the series is Carl Trueman’s work on The Great Reformer, Martin Luther. Trueman, a professor of church history at Westminster Seminary, has studied Luther for the better part of his career and writes about him with affection and admiration (without sugar-coating his sins and shortcomings). As a scholar, he draws on thorough reading of Luther’s works, and as a Presbyterian standing apart from Luther’s tradition, he provides an instructive introduction to his life and thought from an outsider’s perspective.

This short volume is richly packed with scriptural and practical insight. Trueman begins by briefly

summarizing Luther's biography, illuminating the personal and cultural contexts that influenced his study, teaching, and actions. In this, he reminds us that theology never happens in a vacuum, and that there are very real consequences to our belief and our choices. Notably, Trueman urges readers to consider all of Luther's life and work, not just his exuberant, bold pre-1525 writings (before which he had not had to wrestle extensively with the need for liturgical and ecclesiological precision in order to protect church order, among other things).

Over seven other chapters, Trueman unpacks several key concepts in Luther's thought. The first is his distinction between theologians of glory (who see God's character as a reflection of the way the world works) and theologians of the cross (who see God working in ways the world deems foolish, subverting the sinful order). Importantly, Trueman points out that these are not "theologies" but "theologians", that is, attitudes of approaching God and His Word rather than organized systems of thought.

Trueman also spends a great deal of time exploring Luther's views of baptism and the Lord's Supper, pointing out that he would have viewed most modern evangelicals as outside the bounds of orthodoxy for seeing these sacraments as symbols only (rather than understanding baptism as a seal of grace and communion as containing the real, physical presence of Christ). Instead of explaining away these differences as unreformed holdovers from Luther's medieval Catholic theology, Trueman endeavors to show how Luther came to these positions through careful

study of the Word and a fervent commitment to justification by faith. In this way Luther reckoned the sacraments as tangible gifts from God to remind His people that their salvation came wholly from outside themselves.

On justification, Trueman delves into Luther's statement that "The Love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it." In this idea and the reasoning behind it, we see a radical departure from the worldly view that we love that which pleases us, and, by implication, that we must somehow make ourselves acceptable to God before He will love us. In this, as in every area of his theology, Luther is adamant that man is helpless to save himself, thus magnifying God's glory in the work of salvation.

In all, this book was a tremendous blessing to me. Trueman's winsome writing style brings depth of content to bear on the reader with application as the goal. The result is a historically enlightening, theologically challenging, and profoundly pastoral work. Martin Luther has clearly been used by God to advance the spread of His truth, and Trueman engages him "as one of us," a man whose "strengths were his weaknesses" but who was faithful to strive after humble obedience to his Heavenly Father.

Justin Lonas

Target: All

Type: Church history/biography/theology

Take: Must Read

News Update—April 2015

Texas Mother Refuses Abortion, Gives Birth to Nation's First All-Female Quintuplets

A mother who refused doctors' advice to undergo selective abortion gave birth to the nation's first all-female quintuplets last week.

Doctors told Adam and Danielle Busby that three of the couple's babies should be aborted to ensure the health of the remaining two. The Christian couple refused, believing that God intended for all five girls to survive.

The baby girls were born at 28 weeks weighing between two pounds and two pounds, six ounces. All of the babies are healthy, only requiring "modest support" to breathe, *USA Today* reports.

On the family's GoFundMe page, they wrote, "Never would we have imagined the plan that God had for us in our journey to grow our little family."

Following the delivery, Danielle Busby expressed her gratitude to God in a press release. "We are so thankful and blessed. I honestly give all the credit to my God. I am

so thankful for this wonderful hospital and team of people here. They truly all are amazing," she said.

Christian Headlines

Thousands Attend Funeral of Pakistani Christian Boy Set on Fire for Christian Faith

Approximately 2,000 people attended the funeral of Nauman Masih, a Pakistani Christian boy who was attacked and set on fire for his Christian faith.

Masih, 15, was outside the tailor's shop where he worked when he attacked by two Muslim men. The attackers beat him and poured lighter fluid on him before setting him on fire, *Christian Today* reports.

Doctors said that Masih suffered burns on 55 percent of his body. He died April 15 after saying he forgave the men who attacked him. Pakistani authorities have not pursued the case to determine the identities of the attackers.

British Pakistani Christian Association chairman Wilson Chowdhry said, “Nauman was brave throughout his pain and spoke of forgiveness for his attackers. He dies a martyr and will no doubt be with the Lord today. Please pray for his family who have had to endure days of extreme heartache and can expect little justice.”

Christian Headlines

Indiana Pizzeria Will Reopen after Receiving \$800,000 from Donors

An Indiana pizzeria will reopen its doors after receiving \$800,000 in donations. Memories Pizza in Walkerton recently closed after owner Crystal O’Connor stated that the restaurant would not cater same-sex weddings.

Charisma News reports O’Connor and the company received threats after making the statement and police were forced to heighten security in the area.

Supporters backing the O’Connor family raised \$800,000 so that Memories Pizza would reopen its doors.

O’Connor told the *Daily Mail*, “I wasn’t trying to score points. It is something I believe in from my heart and my faith about gay weddings. But I don’t regret what I said. I have been scared, but God is giving me strength. I think it is nothing compared to what Christ had to suffer.”

Christian Headlines

Garissa Student Leader Urges Prayer for Survivors of Al-Shabab Attack

The chairman of Garissa University College’s Christian Union, who survived the April 2 Al Shabab attack in which 148 students were killed, has pleaded for prayer for the physical and psychological healing of survivors.

“Please pray for us.... Many saw sights too horrible to describe,” said 21-year-old Frederick Gitonga. “Pray for me too. I need peace of mind, strength and wisdom. I am struggling with dreams that cause me to snap awake, then [I] cannot get back to sleep. I find myself remembering the horror of that day. The sounds and smells come back clearly.”

Gitonga explained how he had been up late the night before the attack, praying for one of the students under his care, that they would be able to truly forgive someone a wrong. The next morning, that student was dead, along with the other 21 Christian Union (CU) members who had attended early morning prayers.

Gitonga said the only reason he is still alive is because he had felt too tired after his late night to join in with prayers that morning. Instead, he decided to go back to sleep, only to wake to the sound of gunshots.

“I praise God that some survived, many in truly miraculous ways. However, we are deeply traumatized, broken and in need of much prayer. At the same time we are trying to help fellow students who seek comfort and support from us.

“It’s so painful to see people you know butchered like cows. They died for confessing Christ, but I put it to you.... Who will stand up and say enough is enough?”

Christian Headlines

Two Catholic Colleges Are Being Forced to Cover Abortions in California

Two Catholic academic institutions in California have been told by the state government that their healthcare programs must cover abortions.

Loyola Marymount University and Santa Clara University were initially given reprieve from being forced to pay for abortions as part of their insurance policies, however, the earlier decision was reversed.

In a letter sent out last month, California’s Department of Managed Health Care concluded that “it erroneously approved or did not object to such discriminatory language in some evidence of coverage filings.” “The purpose of this letter is to remind plans that the Knox-Keene Health Care Service Plan Act of 1975 (Knox Keene Act) requires the provision of basic healthcare services,” continued the DMHC letter. “...the California Constitution prohibits health plans from discriminating against women who choose to terminate a pregnancy. Thus, all health plans must treat maternity services and legal abortion neutrally.”

Before the Aug. 22 letter, California allowed for insurance companies to provide plans to the two Catholic universities that limited the types of abortions that could be covered.

“Insurance coverage for abortion is not mandated by the federal healthcare law. But California guarantees abortion, both by statute and by privacy protections, in the state Constitution,” reported Bob Egelko of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

“Until the current controversy arose, insurers in California had treated all abortions sought by women in their health plans as medically necessary,” Egelko added.

The DMHC position considers all abortions, regardless of reason, to be “medically necessary” and thus a procedure that should be covered by insurance companies.

In response to the DMHC letter, the Life Legal Defense Foundation and the Alliance Defending Freedom sent a letter of protest to the change.

The Christian Post

Sermon Helps—from www.sermonhall.com

Sermon Outlines

The Blessing of Motherhood

Selected Scriptures

Intro.: In God's perfect plan, he created women to be able to bring life into the world, picturing His own creative, nurturing love. In Scripture we see models and metaphors of motherhood that instruct and encourage us.

I. A Mother's Longing (Hannah—1 Sam. 1-2)

- A. Desiring children.
- B. Dedicating children to the Lord.

II. A Mother's Discipline (Prov. 1:8-9)

- A. Listen.
- B. Remember.
- C. Obey.

III. A Mother's Steadfast Love (Isa. 49:15-16)

- A. No stronger love on earth.
- B. God's love is even greater.

IV. A Mother's Respect (Ex. 20:12)

- A. Commanded.
- B. Blessed.

IV. A Mother's Care (Prov. 31:28)

- A. Children care for the one who bore them.
- B. Jesus modeled this (John 19:25-27).

Conc.: Children, respect, love, and learn from your mothers. Mothers, rejoice in the blessing and the challenge that God has given you. In this, you are showing His character and honoring Him before a watching world.

Justin Lonas

The Promise, Patience and Purpose of God

2 Peter 3

I. God's Promise

- A. The promise of His coming (vv. 1-4; Hab. 2:3,4; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thess. 4:17).
- B. The promise that the world will end (vv. 5-12).
- C. The promise of New Heavens and Earth (v.13; Is. 65:17; Rev. 21:1-5).

II. God's Patience

- A. Time is meaningless to Him (v.8; Ps. 90:4).
- B. He knows the end result of longsuffering (v.15).
- C. He wants people to be saved! (1 Pet. 3:20; 1 Tim. 1:16; Rom. 2:4).

III. God's Purpose

- A. That none should perish (Ezek. 33:11; Acts 2:22, 23, 37-39).
- B. That all should come to repentance! (Luke 13:3; John 3:16, 17; 1 Tim. 2:4).

Conc.: Do you understand the promise? Do you appreciate His patience? Have you fulfilled His purpose in your own life? In the lives of others?

Victor Knowles

Sermon Illustrations

Play It Safe

Many years ago, a farmer, ragged and barefooted, was standing on the steps of his tumbledown shack. A stranger stopped for a drink of water. "How is your cotton coming along?" he asked.

"Ain't got none," replied the farmer.

"Did you plant any?" asked the stranger.

"Nope," was the reply, "afraid of bollweevils."

"Well," continued the stranger, "how is your corn?"

"Didn't plant none," came the answer, "'fraid there weren't gonna to be no rain."

The visitor persevered: "Well, how are your potatoes?"

"Ain't got none. Scairt of potato bugs."

"Really, what did you plant?" pressed the stranger.

"Nothin'," was the calm reply, "I jest played it safe."

Anonymous

The Force of Habit

How easy it is to tear a piece of paper along the line in which it has originally been folded! How easy it is for a second temptation to overcome when the first has been yielded to! A sin that has once gained the victory over our moral nature has put a fold, as it were, in that nature, and destroyed its straightness and smoothness, so that when the same temptation comes a second time, it seeks the weak point which it had formerly made, and along that line of least resistance we are turned from our righteous principles and strong resolution.

Anonymous

Bulletin Inserts

On Character

Character is the joint product of nature and nurture.

The Churchmouse

Goodness is love in action.

James Hamilton

One backslider can do more harm in the world than twenty Christians can do good.

D. L. Moody

A man's wife can tell him more about himself than he really cares to know.

R. Whitson Seaman

Those who "cook up" stories usually find themselves in "hot water."

The Old Union Reminder

God creates out of nothing. Therefore, until a man is nothing, God can make nothing out of him.

Martin Luther

Admission of error is the sign of maturity.

He who kneels before God can stand before anyone!

It is easier to preach ten sermons than it is to live one.

These three anonymous

Making mistakes isn't stupid—disregarding them is.

Croft M. Pentz

Character is like a fence: it cannot be strengthened by whitewash.

Bernie Koerselman

Puzzles and 'Toons

Church 'Toons by Joe McKeever



Answers to last issue's puzzles:

Hidden Wisdom Bible Acrostic Answers
 Mirah 7:8—*Rejoice not against me, o mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise: when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.*
 A. Wintergreen • B. Still • C. Ants • D. Melita • E. IthankmyGod •
 F. Charleston • G. Abolibus • H. Herodians • I. Elisha • J. Felnes • K. Jewel
 L. Minniemoose

Father Abraham's Answers

1. A centurion (Matt. 8:8).
2. He was "sitting at the receipt of customs," i.e., collecting taxes (Matt. 9:9).
3. "Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).
4. Capernaum (Matt. 11:23).
5. "The sign of the prophet Jonah," i.e., the Savior's resurrection three days after His death by crucifixion.
6. The world (Matt. 13:38).
7. Peter (Matt. 14:28).
8. She wanted Him to heal her daughter (Matt. 15:23).
9. Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:13-16), north of the Sea of Galilee (not to be confused with Caesarea on the coast).
10. A piece of money (Matt. 17:27).

Hidden Wisdom and Father Abraham
 By Mark Oshman
 Originally published in *Pulpit Helps*, July 1999

⚡ Father Abraham's Question Box ?

By Mark Oshman

"the weightier matters of the law?" (Matt. 23)?

The Gospel of Matthew, Part 3
 Fill in the missing word(s):

1. What did Jesus Christ reply when his disciples asked, "Who then can be saved?" (Matt. 19)?
2. How many times did the householder go out to hire laborers for his vineyard (Matt. 20)?
3. When asked about John's baptism, what did the chief priests and elders reply (Matt. 21)?
4. According to Jesus Christ, what is the greatest commandment in the Law (Matt. 22)?
5. What did Jesus Christ refer to as
6. To what tree did Jesus Christ allude in directing His disciples to learn a parable (Matt. 24)?
7. What happened to the man who hid his lord's talent in the earth (Matt. 25)?
8. In what locale did a woman anoint Jesus Christ (Matt. 26)?
9. Who warned Pilate, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man" (Matt. 27)?
10. Where did the eleven remaining disciples meet the resurrected Jesus Christ (Matt. 28)?

See answers on page 31

Hidden Wisdom on next page

Hidden Wisdom: Bible Acrostic

by Mark A. Oshman

Solve the acrostic by using the clues 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. All quotations are from the King James Version. HAPPY SOLVING!

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

CLUES

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| A. August, for one | 19 50 86 71 7 |
| B. Connected in a subordinate capacity | 73 17 80 28 49 62 35 |
| C. Its tail should never do this (3 wds.) | 46 37 18 87 11 65 58 2 74 |
| D. Zipporah's father | 15 45 38 4 53 27 |
| E. A Macedonian of Thessalonica (Acts 27) | 12 61 76 6 22 56 64 33 39 81 43 |
| F. Possessing an unusual ability to attract others | 30 40 83 21 14 79 68 54 |
| G. Medad's fellow prophet | 70 9 48 75 82 |
| H. Where King Rehoboam went for his coronation | 78 26 5 69 42 85 59 |
| I. Mankind | 72 16 51 8 57 24 41 34 |
| J. Foam | 1 32 67 25 44 |
| K. "_____ slayeth the silly one" | 52 77 13 63 |
| L. Ornaments | 66 31 23 60 10 3 55 |
| M. Topic of discourse | 29 36 47 84 20 |