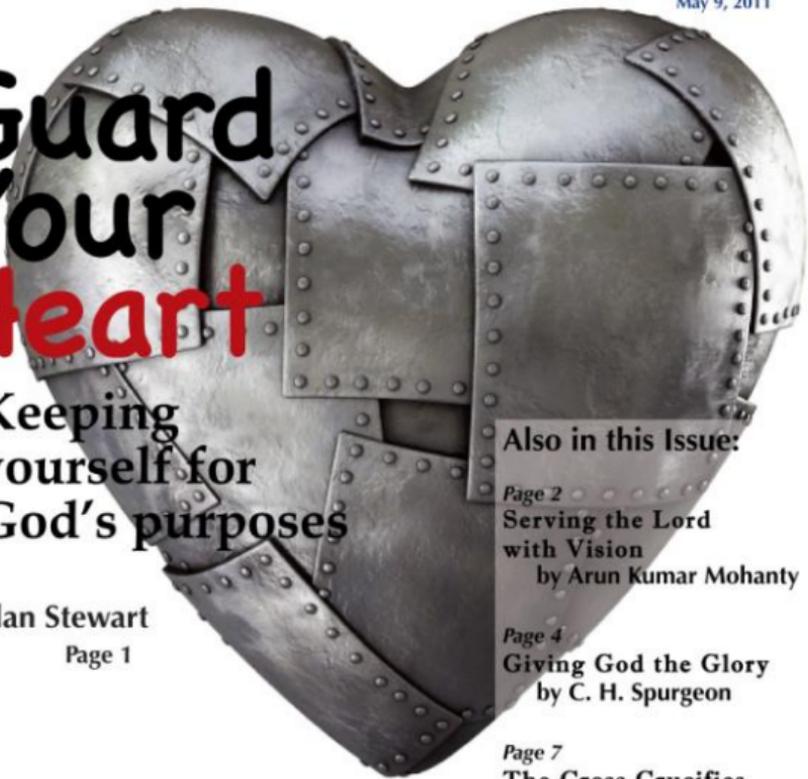


Disciple Magazine



Equipping believers for deeper life

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Keeping
yourself for
God's purposes

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Guard Your Heart

By Alan Stewart

One of my good friends growing up was a guy named Richie. Although he only stood 5'6" and weighed less than 130 pounds, pound-for-pound, he was perhaps the toughest football player I have ever seen. In fact, he once put a lick on my rib cage that I can still feel today if I turn the right way!

During our senior year, Richie was promoted to starting tailback. Knowing that defenders would be double his size and would attack the ball in his arms, the coach knew he could be prone to fumble. The coach devised an interesting practice drill to strengthen Richie's ball handling abilities. A long strap was tied around

a football, and as Richie ran with the ball clutched against his chest, teammates ran behind him yanking on the other end of the strap. At the same time, other teammates on the line of scrimmage were smacking at the ball hoping to dislodge it from his grip.

As Richie ran, he had to maintain a focus of guarding the football with all his might in order to keep from losing it. Richie had an incredible senior season, and I can still see ole' number 37 breaking through the line like Walter Payton and knocking down defenders twice his size. To the best of my recollection, I never saw Richie lose a fumble all season long.

Throughout the course of any given day, the experiences of life are repeatedly tugging on our

heartstrings. Our heart measures both the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. Our heart feels the pains, the pleasures, and the pressures. Perhaps that would explain Solomon's word of wisdom and caution in Proverbs 4:23, *"Keep [guard] thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."*

The only things we take time to guard and protect are those things which hold true value and importance to us. We are quick to guard our family, our treasures, and our reputations, but how often do we consider guarding our heart? The Bible often refers to the heart, and it symbolizes our emotions, our intellect, and our will. So, why is this something so important that we guard it? God

knows that what is on the inside is what matters most!

Seventeenth century Scottish minister Robert Leighton wrote, "Solitude, silence, and the strait keeping of the heart, are the foundations and grounds of a spiritual life." We are told, "*Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself*" (Dan. 1:8), and his purity bred promotion. Nehemiah guarded the vision, "*God put in my heart to do at Jerusalem*" (Neh. 2:12), and his composed trust led to a completed task. The lesson should be clear to us; a guarded heart is the only kind of heart God can teach, tame, and trust. Consider why a guarded heart is such a necessity to our spiritual life.

I. An Unguarded Heart Has the Potential to Be Wounded Deeply

Although Jesus had often declared the plan and purpose of His life to die on a cross, the disciples were still clinging to their selfish dreams and shallow desires. Having seen the power of His miracles and His message, they were not ready to let Him go. Once the hour of fulfillment was at hand, Jesus sensed their hurt and said to them in John 14:1, "*Let not your heart be troubled....*" Jesus knew that loving so freely comes with the risk of being hurt so deeply.

Some of life's most difficult challenges come when we are unsuspectingly blindsided, betrayed, and broken by those in whom we trusted. Imagine the depth insecurity Esau carried the rest of his life when

Jacob swindled him out of his birthright. Imagine the depth of Samson's cries from the dungeon once Delilah betrayed the secret of his strength. Imagine the depth of vulnerability David felt when his son Absalom stole his throne. I once heard Warren Wiersbe say, "Anything that has the ability to bless me also possesses the ability to hurt me." It is not that God expects us to live with walls of suspicion, but rather that we live in the wisdom of the Spirit. An unguarded heart will always be an unbalanced heart that will carry a surprising amount of unnecessary scars.

II. An Unguarded Heart Has the Propensity to Wander Disgracefully

Again, Proverbs 4:23 states, *"Keep [guard] thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."* The word *"issues"* can also be translated as *"boundaries."* The very word conjures up images of legalism and limitations, but the exact opposite is true. When our children were toddlers, we blocked off rooms and stairways with baby gates and chairs. The purpose was not to restrain them with limitations, but rather to release them with freedom to enjoy an area protected by love. However, the depth of their understanding and obedience was tested anytime we left a gate open.

The Lord is conscious of our dreams and desires, but He is also keenly aware of our depravity. A.W. Tozer said, "The neglected heart will

soon be a heart overrun with worldly thoughts; the neglected life will soon become a moral chaos." It was an unguarded heart that led Adam and Eve into sin, Noah into drunkenness, Lot into worldliness, David into adultery, and Solomon into idolatry. A heart without boundaries is like a ship without anchor, and headed toward disaster. Until a man knows exactly where he stands, he will never know exactly where he is going.

II. An Unguarded Heart Has the Presumption to Worship Defectively

In Jeremiah 29:13, God spoke through His prophet, "*And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart.*" What God expects and demands of our

hearts is nothing less than whole-hearted allegiance. It is all or nothing with God, and He is never impressed with partial devotion.

The moment a heart is left unguarded, idols will contend for the throne. Idols are not always made of stone and wood. In fact, if there is anything you love more, fear more, serve more, or value more than God, then your heart has created an idol to worship. God will never accept the remains of sacrifices that have already been offered elsewhere.

Seventeenth century French mathematician Blaise Pascal wrote, "There are two kinds of people one can call reasonable: those who serve God with all their heart because they know him, and those who seek Him with all their heart because they do not know

Him." Jesus used explicit terms when it came to His defining how we are to follow Him. Again, it is all or nothing. An unguarded heart may want the best of both worlds, but it also runs the risk of losing the best of both worlds.

Jesus asked a question that reveals the danger of an unguarded heart, "...*have ye your heart yet hardened?*" (Mark 8:17). An unguarded heart will ultimately become a hardened heart. Rather than aging gracefully, many lives have soured and spoiled over time. Through all the years of despair, deception, and disappointment, an unguarded heart merely learns to kill time and waste time. In the final analysis, it is simply a heart that fumbles away the golden opportunities of life.

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Serving the Lord with Vision

By Arun Kumar Mohanty

"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.' And the posts of the door moved at the

voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, 'Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.' Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, 'Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.' Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then said I, 'Here am I; send me'" (Isa. 6:1-8).

I. Depending on God

We notice in these verses that when Isaiah looked up, he had seen

the glory of God. We see that there is connection between the death of King Uzziah and Isaiah's vision. Uzziah was a great king. He was obedient to God through much of his life, but he was beset by pride, offering incense on the altar of the Temple against God's will (2 Chron. 26). We know that Isaiah was probably a scribe or person of influence in the government of Israel (from 2 Chron. 26:22, Isa. 7:3-4, etc.) and tradition tells us he was a cousin of the king.

The king was likely respecting everything done by Isaiah and taking care of him. He may have been looking to the king and not to God. His physical needs were taken care of by the King. When King Uzziah died, it became necessary for Isaiah to look upon God. The time had come for

Isaiah to depend on God. So God opened on him the glory of Heaven. It was a vision from God. Then Isaiah could see the full glory of God. God showed Isaiah the same holy place that Uzziah had violated because of His pride, and Isaiah was "*undone*".

Many a time, we also have a desire to see the glory of God but we fail. We are not able to hear His voice.

As long as Isaiah was depending on the king for his needs he was not able to see the glory of God.

When a desire was born in Isaiah's heart to see the Lord, heaven was opened to him. Thus he was able to see God.

Similarly Israel depended on Joseph when they were in Egypt. The King looked after Israelites because he knew Joseph. "*Now there arose up a*

new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph" (Ex. 1:8); then the Israelites started facing problems. It was then that Israel started looking for God. As a result, God raised up Moses and sent him back to Egypt to bring them out of bondage. So the point is clear that **as long as we depend on men, we cannot see or experience the glory of God**. When you seek Him with all your heart and soul, God will show Himself to you and take care of you when you earnestly seek Him (Heb. 11:6).

The central verse of the Bible is *"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man"* (Ps. 118:8). It is literally in the center of the Bible. Psalms 118 is the central chapter of the Bible. There are 594 chapters on one side of this chapter

and another 594 after this. It is by the guidance of the Holy Spirit that the most important words occupy the central place in the Bible. We can also see that Psalm 117 is the smallest chapter in the Bible, and the next Psalm, 119, is the longest chapter in the entire Bible. That could be the reason why God kept this sentence right in the center of the Bible. We must depend on God for our needs and not men or kings. That is the way God enters our life and miracles begin to happen.

II. God's Presence Can Be Found Everywhere

We can learn three things if we make a careful study of this portions in the Bible. Firstly, "*His robes filled the temple.*" Secondly, the seraphim were

singing that the whole earth is full of God's glory. The third point is that *"the posts of the door moved at the voice of Him that cried, and house was filled with smoke"*. We can feel the presence of God all over.

We can say that the glory of God pervades the entire creation.

Psalm 34:7 says *"The Angel of the Lord encampeth round about those who fear Him and delivereth them."* God's angels live with us wherever we are; His presence follows us wherever we go. God keeps protecting us. Even King David says the same in his Psalm 139:7-10.

"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the mornings, and dwell in

the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

This reveals that God is omnipresent. Today God's presence is with us right here. But it is our responsibility to feel His presence, and to experience it we must be able to see the presence of God and must be able to talk to Him. Then we can hear God speaking to us. *"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do"* (Heb 4:13). So we must be careful in whatever we do. God is right there. His Angels keep protecting us. **We must remember that He is seeing whatever we are doing.** Even if we want to do something in darkness, let us not

forget that God is watching us, even though the people around you may not see.

III. Every Man Is a Sinner in God's View

We have learned two things from chapter six of Isaiah. First, that we must depend on God for everything. Second, that God's presence is everywhere. The third lesson we can learn that the Bible tells us that we are sinners although we may think that we are pure and holy. *"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:23). *"And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth: neither will I again smite*

any more everything as I have done" (Gen. 8:21). We sin in our hearts right from our birth. We will not be able to get rid of our sin by doing good things. **We may put on make-up and our best clothes, but God will not take us for holy people because God examines our hearts.** We may give a lot of money to the Church and involve ourselves in many good deeds, but in His view, we are still sinners.

We know that Isaiah was God's prophet. He delivered God's messages to people. He heard the voice of God. He was working as God's ambassador, but when he had seen God's glory he cried out, *"I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts."* He knew that he was a

sinner, but the view of the people was different. They took him for granted as a pure and holy man. When he was delivering God's messages he might have thought that he was pure, but when he had actually seen the glory of God, he cried out that his lips were unclean.

When such a great prophet as Isaiah says that his lips are unclean, what is to be said about ordinary people like us? We may be thinking that we are pure, that we are listening to God's voice, and that we are God's messengers, but when the glory of God covers us fully and wholly, we realize that we are unclean. The Word is talking to you now and today. Examine yourself and your life. There may be secret sins hidden in your heart. **We may think that we are**

better compared to other men around us, but the comparison must be between you and Christ.

Then it will be revealed to us that there is sin in our life. Our own estimate of ourselves is shown to be wrong when we see ourselves in the Light of Lord.

IV. God Reveals the Sin

We can never know the sins hidden in our heart unless God shows them to us. When we are in the presence of the Lord, when our eyes are opened to see Him, when our ears are opened to His voice, when we surrender our lives to Him, He reveals to us where our sins are hidden in our heart. What is the sin we are doing? Are we sinning only in thought? Are we sinning in our deeds? Are we sinning

by way of disobedience to His commandments?

God's vision revealed to Isaiah that his lips were unclean. Only God's vision can make us realize the exact sin, whether it is in word, deed, thought, with a part or the entire body. *"If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell"* (Matt. 5:30). Even if your hands and legs are cast off there may be elsewhere sin in your body. Here, it is not God's command that you should literally cut off your hand or leg, but it is His wish that you should stop doing that sin. Then our life becomes holy and useful to God. We can summarize that **our sins will be seen by us**

clearly when God's glory surrounds us in His vision.

V. Repentance in God's Presence

When we realize our sin, we repent. God has given an opportunity to Isaiah to know that he is a sinner. But when Isaiah totally depended on God, God's glory was revealed to him. **God is teaching a lesson to him by saying "Isaiah! Your life is not for depending on kings who are human beings. It is meant for Me."** Similarly, you must understand that God has chosen you and that He has a purpose for you.

When we come nearer to God, God will show our sin to us. Not only that, but He also helps us to come out of that sin. Proverbs 28:13 teaches, *"He that covereth his sins shall not*

prosper: but who so confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

Isaiah agreed that his lips were unclean, so he received Lord's mercy. When we repent in the presence of the Lord, God will show us His grace and mercy. Our Lord is faithful and holy, so He cleanses us of all our sins and makes us holy so that we can be in His presence. *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). Here, we see that God had pardoned the sins of Isaiah. Likewise, God will pardon also your sins. Today our prayer is that we should be called to Him and that God should entrust His work to us. This is possible only when we sanctify ourselves to Him. May the

Lord grant you the same grace that He granted to Isaiah.

VI. God Paves the Way

God has paved a way and has given an opportunity to reach the way. In verses 6-7, we see the seraphim reach out to Isaiah and touch his lips with the burning coal. **When we come to God and repent from our sins, He will help us to get rid of our sins.** The way God has paved is Jesus Christ. He has come into the world to pay for our sins on the cross. He has placed Himself on the altar like a lamb that bears others' sins. Our sins are washed away by His blood. You are now hearing the voice of the Lord summoning you to Him. *"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with*

another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

When we live a holy life, He calls us to His ministry. He strengthens us with His Holy Spirit. He gives this presence to us and helps us to walk in His light. He uses us for His glory. We notice here that, after seeing the vision of God, Isaiah surrendered himself to His service. He repented of his unholiness. When Isaiah was made holy by the Lord Himself, he was given a responsibility. Today our prayer is that we should be called to Him and that God should entrust His work to us. This is possible only when we sanctify ourselves to Him. May the Lord grant you the same grace that He granted to Isaiah.

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Giving God the Glory

By Charles Haddon Spurgeon

"Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 29:2).

God's glory is the result of His nature and acts. He is glorious in His

character, for there is such a store of everything that is holy, and good, and lovely in God, that He must be glorious.

The actions which flow from His character are also glorious; but while He intends that they should manifest to His creatures His goodness, and mercy, and justice, He is equally concerned that the glory associated with them should be given only to Himself.

Nor is there aught in ourselves in which we may glory; for who makes us to differ from another? And what have we that we did not receive from the God of all grace? Then how careful ought we to be to walk humbly before the Lord! The moment we glorify ourselves, since there is room for one glory only in the universe, we set

ourselves up as rivals to the Most High.

Shall the insect of an hour glorify itself against the sun which warmed it into life? Shall the potsherd exalt itself above the man who fashioned it upon the wheel? Shall the dust of the desert strive with the whirlwind? Or the drops of the ocean struggle with the tempest? Give unto the Lord, all ye righteous, give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto Him the honor that is due unto His name.

Yet it is, perhaps, one of the hardest struggles of the Christian life to learn this sentence: "*Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name be glory*" (Ps. 115:1). It is a lesson which God is ever teaching us, and teaching us sometimes by most painful discipline. Let a Christian begin to

boast, "I can do all things," without adding "*through Christ which strengtheneth me*" (Phil. 4:13), and before long he will have to groan, "I can do nothing," and bemoan himself in the dust.

When we do anything for the Lord, and He is pleased to accept of our doings, let us lay our crown at His feet, and exclaim, "*Not I, but the grace of God which was with me*" (1 Cor. 15:10)!

From Morning and Evening

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

Exegetically Speaking

by Spiros Zodhiates

Rendering to Caesar and to God

Matthew 22:15-22

From Exegetical Commentary on Matthew, 2006, AMG Publishers.

The parable of the wedding feast infuriated the Pharisees. They knew that Jesus accused them of rejecting the kingdom of God, of not possessing God's righteousness, and of having a futile righteousness of their own (Rom. 10:3). Beside all this, He had virtually predicted their personal deaths and the destruction of their city.

[15] Consequently, we read, *"Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel (sumboúlion [4824], a body of*

advisers; from *sún* [4862], together; and *boulē* [1012], advice) *how they might entangle* (from *pagideúō* [3802], to set a *pagís* [3803], a trap) *him in his talk* (from *lógos* [3056], logic, rational propositions). They hoped to cause Jesus to say something they could interpret as an attack on Rome, a message the Herodians would carry swiftly to higher authorities. This would expedite His death. Imagine trying to trap the *Lógos* of God, God's personified logic, with logic.

[16] *“And they sent out* (from *apostéllō* [649], to send on a mission) *unto him their disciples with the Herodians* (from *hērōdianoí* [2265]).” The Herodians were a Jewish political party loyal to the Romans, some of whom even considered Herod to be the Messiah. Because of the Pharisees’

heavily compromised allegiance to Moses, they considered the Herodians their enemies. But the Pharisees willingly enlisted them as allies to entrap Jesus (cf. Mark 3:6). The expression "*the leaven of Herod*" in Mark 8:15 may be an allusion to the Herodians.

On approaching Jesus, the disciples of the Pharisees addressed Him with a long-winded, flattering barrage of lies: "*Master* (from *didáskalos* [1320]), *we know* (from *oída*, the perfect of *horáō* [3708], to see and perceive) *that thou art true* (*alēthēs* [227], genuine), *and teachest the way* (from *hodós* [3598]) *of God* (meaning the Father as in John 1:1-2) *in truth* (from *alētheia* [225], truth), *neither carest* (from *mélō* [3199], to care) *thou for any man* (from *oudeís*

[3762], not anyone or anything): *for thou regardedst* (from *blépō* [991], to see) *not the person* (*prósōpon* [4383], face, appearance) *of men* (from *ánthrōpos* [444], man). What a preface! They believed none of these truths. Surely, they hoped the flattery would ensnare Jesus, please the crowd, or both. We know these were scheming and not honest appraisals.

[17] The attempt at entrapment began: "*Tell us therefore, 'What do You think* (*dokeí*, the third person singular of *dokéō* [1380], to think; lit., "How does it seem [to you]")? *Is it lawful'* (*éxestin* [1832], the third person singular impersonal of the verb *éxeimi* [n.f.], to be lawful) *to give* (from *dídōmi* [1325]) *tribute* (from *kēnsos* [2778]) *to Caesar or not?'"* (a.t.). "*Tribute*" was a poll tax paid by

each person recorded in the census, a polling of people and a property valuation. "*Tribute*" was the Latin word from which the Greek *kēnsos* was transliterated (Matt. 17:25; Mark 12:14, 15 where it is called a "penny" or *dēnárion* [1220], the pay for one twelve-hour day of work [Matt. 20:2]) during the Roman occupation. Poll taxes collected from subjugated nations were called *phóros* ([5411]; Luke 20:22; 23:2; Rom. 13:6, 7).

Most Jews bitterly resented paying this tax imposed by Rome. So the question was filled with dangerous enticements. Any answer would necessarily enrage either the Jews (the Pharisees and their followers) or the Romans. If Christ's antagonists could get Him to say that it was unlawful, they could accuse Him to the Roman

authorities and have Him apprehended. On the other hand, if they could get Jesus to say that it was lawful, the whole Jewish nation would be incited against Him and Rome. In either case, the Romans would retaliate against the instigator long before revolution or the threat of revolution broke out. The Pharisees knew either answer would cause Him a great deal of trouble.

[18] Jesus was cognizant of their evil intent: "*But Jesus, having perceived* (from *ginōskō* [1097], to know by experience) *their wickedness* (from *ponēria* [4189], malice, evil intent), *said, Why do you tempt* (from *peirázō* [3985], to tempt or test, here with the evil intention of causing trouble) *Me, you hypocrites* (from *hupokritēs* [5273], a stage-player, one

who does not show his true self; cf. Mark 12:15)?” (a.t.).

While Jesus had implied hypocrisy in the past (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16; 7:5; 15:7), this is the second time He explicitly called the Pharisees “*hypocrites*.” He would do so many times later (Matt. 23:13–15). Mark 12:15 substitutes *eidōs* (the perfect participle of *oída*) for *ginōskō*, but since *ginōskō* means experiential knowledge and *eidōs* derives from *horáō* ([3708], to see and perceive—both of which are experiences) the two terms converge in meaning.

[19] Jesus was not intimidated by the request: “*Shew* (from *epideíknumi* [1925], to exhibit) *me the tribute money* (*nómisma* [3546], the coin in use to pay the poll tax). *And they brought unto him a penny*

(*dēnárion* [1220], a coin of very low value). The “*penny*” or *dinar* is the most commonly mentioned coin in the Gospels (Matt. 18:28; Mark 6:37; etc.). The impression on it included the name, title, and image (effigy) of the reigning emperor or some member of the imperial family (Norman Fraser, *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, edited by James Hastings, pp. 199–200).

[20, 21] “*And He said unto them, ‘Whose is this image (eikōn [1504], likeness, profile) and inscription (epigraphē [1923])?’ They said unto Him, ‘Caesar’s’*” (a.t., cf. Rom. 13:1, 5; 1 Pet. 2:13–17). This was probably the image of the Roman emperor, Tiberius Caesar, who reigned in A.D. 14–37 (Luke 3:1). “*Then saith he unto them, ‘Render (from*

apodídōmi [591]; from *apó* [575], from; and *dídōmi* [1325], to give; to give voluntarily something in fulfillment of an obligation or expectation) therefore *unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's'.*"

We cannot give to God as we would give to human rulers. God is almighty (*pantokrátōr* [3841] from *pás* [3956], all, the totality; and *krátōr* [n.f.], the one who holds, from the verb *kratéō* [2902], to hold; see 2 Cor. 6:18), the absolute and universal Sovereign who needs nothing. He holds all things, maintains dominion, and therefore owns everything (John 17:10; Col. 1:15-16). We can only give back to God what He has given us, and we give indirectly to Him through His people (Matt. 25:35-45).

Paul commits seven verses of Romans 13 to the just payment of tribute (*phóros* [5411]; vv. 6-7) to human governments as our civic duty. In most countries, taxes are allocated to defense, both externally (military) and internally (police and National Guard), to employment (governmental), and to social programs that benefit the retired and the poor. The “*for*” that connects Romans 13:5 to 13:6 implies that taxes finance the king’s sword (from *máchaira* [3162]; v. 4), the “*revenger* (*ékdikos* [1558], punisher) *to execute wrath* (from *orgē* [3709]) *upon him that doeth evil*” (Rom. 13:4). Paul implies that an invisible theocracy is in place since “*there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God*” (Rom. 13:1). Therefore, a

ruler is "*the minister of God*" (13:4), both of good to the good and of vengeance to the evildoer (v. 4).

[22] The leaders were impressed with Jesus' ability to avoid the trap: "*And having heard, they marvelled* (from *thaumázō* [2296], to marvel, wonder, admire) *and having left* (from *aphíēmi* [863], to leave alone) *Him, they went their way*" (a.t.). Matthew records many times that people marveled at Jesus' words and actions: the disciples who witnessed the calming of the storm marveled (8:27); the crowd marveled when Jesus cast out a demon so that a dumb man could speak (9:33); the multitudes marveled when Jesus healed the dumb, the maimed, the lame, and the blind (15:31); His disciples marveled when He caused the fig tree to wither

and die (21:20); and now the Pharisees and Herodians themselves marvel at Jesus' reconciling of civic and divine obligations.

Jesus was not trying to avoid death—that is why He came to Jerusalem in the first place—but He could never be tricked or arrested out of season. He planned to allow Himself to be betrayed (*paradídōmi* [3860]) when the time was right. As admirable as Jesus' response was, the Pharisees left. Repeatedly, the unrepentant hearts of people give lip service and toss a few peace offerings to God but inevitably returns to their vomit and mire (2 Pet. 2:22). As Jesus said, "*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead*" (Luke 16:31).

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.

Following God

by Wayne Barber

The Cross Crucifies Us Too

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What a message we have to share with the world! The message of Grace is the only message. Religion is not what Christianity is. Christianity is a relationship with the living God through His Son Jesus Christ. It all

goes back to the cross. In fact, the whole message of the book of Galatians could possibly be summed up in the message of the cross.

In the closing statements of this great epistle Paul says in Galatians 6:14: *"But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."*

The cross is the message of not only Christ dying for us on the cross, but is also of our dying with Christ and being raised to walk in the newness of life. The hinge of the whole epistle to the Galatians is 2:20: *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,*

who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."

Paul's answer to refute the error of the Judaizers that were plaguing the Galatian believers was simply to preach the cross. The cross is where the flesh—with all its efforts to justify itself or to earn a right standing with God—was put to death! The Judaizers did not have a leg to stand on when the message of the cross was preached.

In the last part of 6:14, the message of the cross is clearly defined. Paul says, *"through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."* It is at the cross that we are separated through death to the world and all its influences. Paul stands dead to the influence of the world that he was once such a part of.

The phrase "*has been crucified*" is perfect passive: "I am in the condition that I'm in because of what happened to me back there at salvation." The word for "*world*" has no definite article before it. It qualifies something, which the context defines as the world of Judaism—Paul's former world. Now it has been crucified to him. The Judaizers could not in the least tempt Paul to return to their world. It had no claim on him, and he had no attachment to that world anymore.

What was your world before you were saved? What was it that you received your praise and identity from? What claim do you think it still has on you? You and the world you used to know parted company when you put your faith into Christ.

The next sentence shows clearly Paul's point: "*For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation*" (v. 15). Circumcision means absolutely nothing towards salvation or sanctification for the Jew, while the Gentile has missed out on no blessings of God because he has not been circumcised. Trusting Christ is enough for both.

Believers are "*new creations*" in Christ. "*New creation*" is a wonderful term. "*New*" is the word *kainós*, meaning qualitatively new—something never seen before and which will never cease to be new. New forever! Now, put this "*new*" with the word *ktísis*, "*creation.*" *Ktísis* refers to that which is created, but the emphasis is on the

process of creation, not on the finished product.

Now, look at the context again: *"But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation"* (Gal. 6:14-15). The process of making a new creation in Christ will never change or be replaced. The only way we are new creations is through what Christ has done in our hearts. We are products of the cross. No effort of the flesh can produce new creations. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, when it comes to producing new creations.

Paul is just summing up what he has been teaching all through Galatians. He has taught us that it is only through our dying to the Law that we can become new creatures and live unto God. Remember back in 2:19 when he spoke of his own conversion? *"For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God."* This is in the aorist indicative active. Paul turned his back on the Law, knowing it could not save him, no matter how many laws he obeyed. It was at that time, when he only trusted Christ, that he was crucified to that world, which trusted only obedience to the Law as the way to earn righteousness.

Galatians also teaches us that it is only through faith in Jesus Christ that we are made new creatures in Christ. *"For you are all sons of God*

through faith in Christ Jesus” (3:26).
There is no other way. This will never change.

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Words to Stand You on Your Feet

By Joe McKeever

How to Frighten a Preacher

“Pastor, some of our members are concerned.” That gets his attention, believe me.

You can say all you want about how the minister is God-called and God-protected and that sort of thing,

but he would not be human if he did not want the people he's serving to be supportive and responsive. After all, since he's sent to help them, he will want some kind of evidence he's accomplishing his purpose. Otherwise, he feels that he has either failed them or God—or both. He is vulnerable as a result.

What makes him more vulnerable to negative influences from the congregation is that he has a family to feed and look after the same way you do if you work at the post office, drive a delivery truck, teach school, or extract teeth. The fact that he needs this job means he opens himself up to pressure from his constituents. As a result, he reacts—at least emotionally—when he hears some of these lines that have been

used on preachers since the beginning of the Church.

“I know we ought to be reaching all these people and it’s good they’re being saved, but I miss our church the way it used to be.” Yesterday, the church I visited had 140 in two services. When the pastor came, three or four years ago, they had 40. In the last three Sundays, he has baptized 11 people. Before the benediction, the pastor called on me for a few words.

I said, “My friends, I am thrilled at the growth your church is having. These are wonderful days in this church. But I need to caution you about something. The devil will not take this lying down. He will raise up people to criticize and oppose, and he’ll do it from within the

congregation.” I said, “Sooner or later, you will hear someone say, ‘I wish our church was the way it used to be.’ When that happens, do not wait for the pastor to address it. That’s your job. You turn to them and say, ‘Are you out of your mind?’” They laughed, but I hope they got the point.

“I’m not being spiritually fed by your sermons.” This is a common ruse that accomplishes two things: it puts the preacher down while leaving the impression the critic is super spiritual with a taste for the red meat of the Word. And may I say, such criticism is almost always off base. I once had a chairman of deacons at my church tell me, “Preacher, they say you’re not preaching the Word.” I said, “Mike, I just got finished preaching through the Gospel of Matthew. What

did they mean by that?" He said, "I don't know." I said, "Please go back and ask them." That was the last I heard of it.

"Pastor, some of us have been talking and we feel there is a malaise in the church." The answer to this one—those are the exact words I once heard from a group of naysayers in my congregation—is a simple one: "Yes there is, and you're it." Why do people think they can spend their days criticizing the pastor and undercutting him, and then fire him because "there is a malaise within the congregation?" There ought to be one; they made it! Webster defines "malaise" as "an unfocused feeling of general unease or discomfort." That's exactly what a constant barrage of

criticism and non-support builds within a church body.

“Preacher, we were here a long time before you and we’ll be here after you leave. Don’t tell us what to do with our church.” This ungodly approach is usually directed toward the pastor of a small church, particularly a first-timer who doesn’t know any better. But its cousin lurks in the hallways and classrooms of the larger churches where members-with-seniority-and-clout (MWSAC) resent the changes the pastor is bringing in.

“Pastor, some of us think it’s time for new leadership.” This one is also a camouflage for the real reason they are attacking you, pastor. They have no answer for what you preach and the way you are leading. They want you out and the best they

can come up with is this nebulous, foggy, smoky reasoning. One answer to it might be, "You're right. I think you've been chairman of deacons long enough, don't you?"

"Pastor, there's a delegation of deacons here to see you. Now." Nothing strikes terror into the pastor's soul like this one. He knows the boom is about to be lowered. Even if he stands up to them and carries the day and keeps his job, the fact of the confrontation itself will leave him shattered and unnerved for the rest of the day. No one enjoys this.

My hunch is that fully half those in the pastoring business despise confrontation. They feel called as teachers, comforters, and blessers. They will put up with a lazy staffer, a critical member, or a rebellious leader

far longer than they should simply because they hate to call someone on the carpet and have to deal with the consequences. Maybe they'll move to another church, they think to themselves.

But the worst confrontation of all to a pastor is when they themselves are the subject of the meeting. What makes it worse is if the preacher has served any length of time, he knows he has failed some people, he has preached some lousy sermons along the way, and he has left undone work he should have pulled off. In other words, he knows he is not guiltless.

My philosophy is that anyone who has been married for three years or more has legally defined grounds for divorce. What it means is not that divorce is ever justified, but that if one

were keeping account of every slight, every put-down, every harsh word, he or she could convince some judge somewhere of grounds for divorce for incompatibility. In a sense, a pastorate is like a marriage. The only way to make it work past the honeymoon stage is for both sides to agree to stick together “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health.” The spouse or the church leader who is only committed to the mate or the preacher so long as everything goes well will soon be headed to the divorce courts.

There is no way to say this loud enough or sufficiently forcibly: Every pastorate that endures—that is, every church that keeps a pastor for any length of time—has to make up its mind to weather the storms that blow

through from time to time. What are the storms? Criticism; disaffection; mass exodus (with members taking their offerings with them); sinful rebellion against godly leadership; worldly philosophies; carnal failures.

Here are questions that ought to be discussed in every church committee meeting: "What would it take for me to leave this church?" "How committed am I to seeing this church's mission through to completion?" "Do I really believe God calls pastors to churches and that He alone decides when one should leave?" "Am I part of my pastor's support team or one of those who make it difficult for him to do the work God sent him here to accomplish?"

I've left unaddressed something the premise of this article assumes:

that preachers are frightened at the idea of losing their churches. The answer to that is manifold.

1) Let the preacher look to the Lord as His employer and not to man (2 Cor. 4:5). **2)** Let the preacher understand, too, that the leadership of his church are mortal, have clay feet, and can make serious errors. In other words, he can be fired and his ministry severely wounded by church members. **3)** When that happens, his responsibility is to shake the dust off his feet and go on to the next assignment. If he grows embittered, it's a sign he had his eyes on men and not on the Lord. **4)** A pastor will spend his entire ministry walking that line between taking great joy in his congregation but looking only to the Lord for his affirmation and guidance.

Sometimes he will veer from one side to the other, but both are essential. Paul called the Philippians “*my joy and my crown*” (Phil. 4:1), and yet he knew the only crown that mattered would be one from the Lord (2 Tim. 4:8).

Frightening words to preachers? Nothing will give him a heart attack more than walking up to him five minutes before the morning service and saying, “Uh, pastor, I thought you’d want to know. The pastor-search committee from First Church of Bigtown is here today. All twelve of them.” Oh my. Watch him sweat now.

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Jewels from Past Giants

The Message of First Timothy

By G. Campbell Morgan

Originally published in 1912 as part of The Living Messages of the Books of the Bible. Edited slightly for length and modern spellings. In next month's "Jewels from Past Giants" column, we will publish Morgan's companion chapter on 2 Timothy.

This letter is the first of three which, while separated from each other in that they were written at different times and to two persons, are yet correlated in that they deal with one subject: that of the relation between the minister and the Church. They were all written to men

occupying positions of responsibility in regard to churches of Jesus Christ: Timothy in Ephesus, and Titus in Crete.

The doctrine of the Church and the fundamental doctrine concerning the ministry we find in other of Paul's writings, and the things therein taught must be borne in mind as we come to these letters which, while so largely personal, are yet full of relative values. We find in our study of the New Testament that sometimes the Church is spoken of, sometimes the churches, and sometimes a church. That is to say, the word is used in reference to the whole Church, the complete Church. It is also used of local churches.

Whereas it is perfectly true that there is one Church of God, it is

equally true that there was the church at Ephesus, the church at Corinth, and so on. In that sense therefore we use the word "churches", not that these churches are divided each from the other, but that the whole Church is divided by locality, by circumstances, by geographical distances, into churches. In the New Testament it is evident that every local church was a microcosm of the catholic [worldwide] Church, and all the great fundamental doctrines concerning the catholic Church are equally applicable to the local church.

Timothy was in oversight of the church at Ephesus; Titus was fulfilling a special work in connection with the church in Crete. These letters were written to these men, holding positions of spiritual responsibility for very

definite and specific purposes, and their theme is that of the interrelation of the minister of the Word and the Church. The first part of 1 Timothy deals with the charge of the minister, that over which he has care, the church. The second part is the apostolic charge to the minister concerning his consequent responsibility.

In these three letters then the great theme is that of the church and the minister. The first letter to Timothy is general and fundamental; the letter to Titus deals particularly with the method by which the minister is to set the church in order; and in the second letter of Timothy the particular subject is that of the minister's personal responsibility. Having thus recognized the interrelationships of these letters

we may now turn our attention to the first.

The central teaching of this first letter to Timothy is that of its revelation of the true function of the church and the true function of the minister. The true function of the church is the proclamation of Truth in the world. The true function of the minister is that of the exposition of Truth in the Church. That is the exact thought underlying Paul's teaching in the Ephesian letter concerning the catholic Church. In that letter, when we turn from the discussion of the Church's predestination, edification, and vocation, to the application of the truth in detail, we find Paul writing, "*I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called*"

(Eph. 4:1). In close connection, he declares that when Jesus ascended and received gifts, *"He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering"* (Eph. 4:11-12); that is to say that the saints are to fulfill the ministry, and men qualified by gifts are to perfect the saints for the fulfillment of that ministry.

The ministry of the Church is that of the proclamation of the truth of God in the world. The ministry created by gifts bestowed is that of perfecting the saints. The saints are to be perfected by the truth. The one function of the ministry then is the exposition in the Church of the truth which the Church is to proclaim to the

world. That is the central teaching of this letter in application to the local church.

The true function of the Church then is that of the declaration of the Truth to the world. *“That thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; He Who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory”* (1 Tim. 3:15-16).

There we reach the central light of the epistle concerning the true function of the Church. The Church is an instrument; it is *“the pillar and ground of the truth”*; it is that upon

which the truth is to be displayed; it is that upon which the truth is to be so raised up that men may see it.

This is in perfect agreement with the teaching of our Lord. *"Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 5:14-16)

The value of the Church in the world is that of the Truth which the Church reveals and proclaims, that Truth is light, which flashes upon the darkness, rebuking it, dissipating it, making it easy for men who are stumbling to find their way. The

apostle immediately, comprehensively, and most marvelously described the Truth in the words "*without controversy great is the mystery of godliness.*"

The word which most simply conveys the meaning of the Greek work here translated "*godliness*" is the old word "piety". It has largely dropped out of use in recent years, and for some reasons we are not sorry, for it was very much abused. Yet that is the real thought of godliness, and if we use it, as did our fathers, to describe relationship to God in the actualities of everyday life, we have the true thought of godliness.

Where is this piety? Where is this life of relationship to God to be seen? The answer to such inquiries is to be found in the fact that the apostle

immediately passed from the abstract ideal of godliness to a concrete and positive Person in whom the idea was perfectly revealed: "*He [who] was manifested in the flesh.*" For poetic beauty of expression Humphrey's translation of this passage in the Cambridge Bible is very fine: "Who in flesh was manifested, pure in spirit was attested; by angel's vision witnessed, among the nations heralded; by faith accepted here, received in glory there!"

According to that setting of the passage, the three couplets suggest the central facts in the life and work of Jesus: the first the life story, the second the angels desiring to look into the mystery and the nations hearing the ministry, the third the victory among men by faith and the

ascension. Though it is poetic and beautiful, I do not think that it reveals the deepest values of the passage.

Rotherham thus translates:

“Who was made manifest in flesh, was declared righteous in spirit, was made visible unto messengers, was proclaimed among nations, was believed on in [the] world, was taken up in glory.” So far as I have any right to express an opinion, I do not hesitate to say that I consider that to be a most accurate, and beautiful translation. It covers far more than the life story of Jesus when He was in the world, including the whole mystery of godliness manifested, beginning with the life story, and ending with the second advent.

The first line deals with the whole fact of the human life: “Who in

flesh was manifested." The second line, "Was declared righteous in spirit," refers to the resurrection from the dead, for it was by the resurrection from the dead that He was "*declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness*" (Rom. 1:4). The third line, "Was made visible unto messengers," needs to be carefully noticed. The Greek word is sometimes translated "angels" and sometimes "messengers", and here I believe Rotherham is quite right in translating it messengers. The messengers were not angels in our general sense, but those who saw Him after resurrection, and who became the first apostles of the new movement.

The immediate result of that manifestation to the messengers is

declared in the fourth line "Was proclaimed among nations," and the spiritual result in the fifth "Was believed on in [the] world." These two facts of proclamation and belief are going forward now. The last line, "Was taken up in glory," refers to the ascension of our Lord, and ultimately to that hour when, completed in His saints, His whole body perfected at the second advent, Christ and His Church as an eternal unit pass into the heavens.

The great mystery of godliness then, according to this earliest hymn of the Church, is that of the manifestation of godliness in the flesh of the Son of Man, the declaration of His righteousness by resurrection, that risen One made visible to messengers who proclaim the resurrection which is

the foundation truth of Christianity, the proclamation issuing in the belief which brings men into living union with the manifested One, and, ultimately, the complete manifestation in the Church in her union with Christ. Thus the true function of the Church of God in the world is that of the proclamation of godliness, the Christ and all those associated with Him, manifesting to the world the true life of piety, of religion, of godliness.

The true function of the minister then is that of the exposition of Truth in the Church. This is to be done by teaching, by exhortation, and by example. The word is full of solemnity, one that always searches the heart of those who are called to the ministry of the Word. It is not by orthodoxy of intellectual comprehension merely that

this work can be done. It is only as Truth is incarnate in the life of the teacher that the teacher has the power to prepare others to reveal the Truth. The responsibility of the Church in regard to the ministry is that it shall incarnate the Truth taught, in order that it may fulfill its function in the world as the pillar and ground of the Truth, that from which the glory and light of the Truth flashes upon the darkness of the world.

The abiding appeal to the Church is that the instrument must be fitted for the fulfillment of the function. The supreme matter of importance in the life of the Church is that she shall be an instrument able to proclaim the Truth. First her Gospel must be an unchanged Gospel. There must be no turning aside to false knowledge and

heresies, such as Gnosticism and others that were then creeping in, no turning aside from the one doctrine of godliness manifested in flesh, the great faith once delivered to the saints in the Person of Christ, and multiplied in exposition through all these who share His life. The Church must be true to her Gospel. Secondly her worship must be unceasing, hence that whole section which deals so wonderfully with the subject of prayer. Finally she must be responsive to the authority of a faithful ministry.

In order to be an instrument fulfilling her true function the Church needs a Gospel unchanged, worship unceasing, and an unfailing ministry. The responsibility of the minister may be described in the same way. The instrument must be fitted for the

fulfillment of function. That fitness on the part of the minister consists of unswerving loyalty to truth, consistent behavior, that is behavior towards others in harmony with the truth proclaimed, and realization of godliness in personal life—that is, personal life harmonious with the truth, mastered by the truth, and responsive to the truth.

There is an immediate application of this message to the Church of God, and I choose to make it, having thus seen the positive teaching, by a negative statement. Let the Church beware of the things that hinder. They are false doctrines, failure in prayer, and false government.

False doctrine is any doctrine that denies the essential truths

focused in the apostolic statement. When the Church relaxes her hold upon any vital part of the essential truth of the New Testament, she is weakening her testimony. Failure of prayer is so patent a secret of failure that it only needs to be stated. False government is government by men who lack the godly character.

Both bishops and deacons must be men of true Christian character. We have been too eager to seek men for other reasons than for the highest and to put them in charge of the affairs of the Christian Church. Those in oversight should be men full of faith and the Holy Ghost, men whose lives are transformed by the great doctrines for which the Church stands. Oversight must be in fulfillment of the truth and by incarnation of the truth, or what

hope is there that the Church will rise to the fulfillment of her function in the world?

The application to the minister is that he is warned against failure in doctrine, failure in duty, and failure in diligence. No man can be in the ministry of Jesus Christ and fulfill the ideals of this letter to Timothy without putting into the business of his ministry, the business of his study, the business of his exposition, and the business of his life all the forces of his being.

Our sources of strength are sufficient. Truth itself, if known and responded to, will make us free from all the things that hinder us in the fulfillment of our service. Let those who teach the Word of God, whether in the larger assembly or in the

smaller circle, remember that teaching is only valuable and dynamic in the measure in which it is given, not by intellectual processes merely, but by volitional obedience and the changed life that results. How often we need to remind ourselves of the word of Emerson, "I cannot hear what you say for listening to what you are." Let us solemnly remember it in the presence of God. However orthodox the thing we say, however godly the method of our presentation of the truth, unless the life harmonizes, it is not only true that the things said will have no effect, it is true that the things said become a blasphemy and an impertinence.

The Church of God in the world today has as her function the proclamation of the truth of godliness. Those who teach the Word of God

have as their responsibility that they give such exposition of the truth in teaching and life that the Church shall be equipped for her great work. May He Who has honored us with the sacred responsibility fit us for the fulfillment of the duty.

George Campbell Morgan (1863-1945) was a prominent pastor, theologian, and evangelist. Born in Gloucestershire, England, he was taught at home by his parents and tutors because of his frailty. He had a quick mind and an insatiable desire for knowledge. At the age of thirteen he preached his first sermon, in a Methodist church. He became a powerful Bible commentator and the greatest expositor of the Word in the early part of the twentieth century. At

age 35 he was called to preach at the Fifth Presbyterian Church in New York City. But it was at the Westminster Chapel in London that he preached his famous sermons later published in the eleven volumes of *The Westminster Pulpit*.

Marks of the Master

By The Old Scot

Strange Doings in the South Pacific

For most of the year, the Pacific Palolo (sometimes spelled Paolo) work leads a quiet, uneventful existence, dwelling in coral reefs around the Fiji and Samoan Islands. But as spring comes to the south Pacific, strange

changes begin to take place in the body of this marine worm.

Many of the muscles and internal structures in the tail of the worm begin to degenerate, while at the same time the reproductive organs rapidly increase in size. The appendages on each ring-segment of this tail section also enlarge and become more like little paddles.

What's all this about? It's all about the Palolo worm's unique response to the age-old mating call: Part of the worm stays safely in the reef, and part swims to the common mating area at the surface. The worm actually forms itself into two separate creatures, one of which will die within hours, after fulfilling its destiny.

In most years there are two "risings," as islanders of the region

term the occurrences. The first, or "little rising," occurs near the end of October, while the main rising takes place two or three weeks later. Some years there is no preliminary rising.

The main rising always occurs at dawn, and always at the time of high water. This is an event of great interest to the islanders, for the worm is esteemed as a great delicacy. Some experienced islanders are able to predict the day of the rising with great accuracy.

As the precise moment nears, each individual worm somehow senses that its time has come, and the posterior end—about 10 inches in length—breaks free from the head end. It then swims up to join with countless other worms at the surface. One observer noted that the ocean

locale "simmers like vermicelli soup" at this time, as the reddish-brown male and blue-green female body-portions thrash convulsively in their millions (see source 1).

As the convulsions continue, the tails break up into shorter and shorter segments, thus freeing the sperm and egg cells, which unite in the water. Within three hours after sunrise, the rising is finished and nothing more than patches of scum is visible on the surface. But the next generation has been launched.

Meanwhile, the head end of the Palolo remains alive in the reef. It will grow a new tail and be ready to repeat the process the following year.

Altogether, it is an amazing phenomenon. How on earth did the Palolo worm come by this method of

reproducing? Not by its own achievement! Once again we must note—as with so many examples of nature we have examined—that the entire process has to be in place and functioning for it to work at all. If the tail segments could not swim, or could not find their way to the common meeting place, there would be no next generation. And if they did not meet at the same time, the result would be the same. This could not have been the result of small genetic changes over thousands or millions of years or the worms would have long since died out.

The case of the Palolo worm is simply another example of creation in which God signed His handiwork in especially clear letters. All that we need do to see God at work is to look closely at the world around us.

Certainly “*the heavens declare the glory of God*” as the Bible says (Ps. 19:1), but the whole of Nature likewise reflects His wisdom and His creativity and His majesty—if we will but open our eyes.

Let us give glory to so great a God, who fashioned the earth and all things therein—including you and me.

The Old Scot (Ted Kyle) lives in Newberg, Oregon, with his wife, Marga.

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Advancing the Ministries of the Gospel

Fertile Ground: National Workers Plant the Seed of the Gospel in India

By AMG International Staff

With a population that is approaching 1.2 billion, India is gaining on China to become the world's most populous nation in the coming years. It is also a spiritually dark place, where the official estimate is that only 2.3% of the population is Christian. The vast majority is Hindu and most of the remainder is Muslim.

It is in this field that AMG's national workers have been working tirelessly to spread the Good News. One of these workers is Daniel, who

was born into and brought up in a Hindu family. His parents lived according to the Hindu customs and traditions, worshipping nature and idols.

As a young man, Daniel followed the religion of his parents. He lived a life filled with bad friends and bad behavior. His lifestyle was one of wild living. Evangelists would come to his village and he would mock them.

But in 1976, another servant of God conducted Gospel meetings in Daniel's village. He preached from Romans 8:1, "*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*" God spoke to Daniel through this passage. Daniel's heart was convicted and he repented,

accepting Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Daniel began to share his faith with others in the local community. Then, during another meeting several years later, he sensed the calling of Christ to take the Good News to remote areas, and Daniel entered the ministry. God has blessed Daniel. In the village in which he ministers, he is now pastoring a church that consists of 65 members, and it is growing.

Samuel is another AMG India national worker. He too comes from a Hindu background. He was born into a cobble community that helped to build Hindu temples. Samuel's story is similar to Daniel's. Because of an evangelist that visited his village, he came to know Jesus as Savior. There was no church in Samuel's village, so

he decided to minister to his local villagers. The beginning was small, with 10 people attending. Now the church has grown to 75 members. In addition to ministering there, Samuel travels to neighboring villages to proclaim the Gospel.

The Lord is using AMG's national workers in wonderful ways. These men and women of God faithfully serve Him at a minimal financial cost. They don't face any of the barriers of language and culture that Western missionaries would face. They are supported through sponsorships of \$50 a month.

Please pray for AMG's national workers in India and around the world, and for more supporters to engage nationals in the harvest. While the harvest is plentiful, the workers are few and many more are needed.

For more information, or to learn how your church can sponsor a national worker like Daniel or Samuel, please visit our website or write to AMG at 6815 Shallowford Rd., Chattanooga, TN, 37421.

Originally published in the May 2011 edition of AMG International's *News from the Field*.

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 over 40 countries around the world through partnership with national believers.

Book Review—5/09/2011

Clouds of Witnesses: Christian Voices from Africa and Asia, Mark A. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom, 2011, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill., ISBN 9780830838349, 286 pages, \$25.00, hardcover.

Today, more than ever, the center of gravity of global Christianity is shifting from the core of “Christendom” (Europe and North America) toward Asia, Africa, and Latin America as the Gospel goes forth with power around the world. In *Clouds of Witnesses* Mark Noll and Carolyn Nystrom show that this is not a new phenomenon, but one that has been building for generations through the

faithful work of believers in their own cultures.

The book profiles heroes of the faith that many Westerners may have never heard of and recounts their impact on the spread of the Gospel. It is organized partly by region and partly by chronology with three biographies of significant leaders from the southern part of Africa coming first, followed by representatives from India, Korea, and China.

Through the section on Southern Africa, readers learn about the following: **Bernard Mizeki**, a cross-cultural missionary, a lay catechist and the first Anglican African martyr killed during a tribal revolt. **John Chilembwe**, a pastor, development worker and political rebel (a fact which led to his early death and the apparent

collapse of his far-sighted enterprises). His various activities have made him a hero in contemporary Africa. **Albert Luthuli**, a tribal chief and faithful Christian who later assumed leadership in the African National Congress. His life story sheds light on the vitality of indigenous Christian faith in the complex, conflicted modern history of South Africa

There are two chapters from West Africa which feature lives from the first and last part of the 20th century. **William Wade Harris**, one of the most visible "prophets," whose brief but spectacular preaching career helped much of his region move from a missionary Christianity to a deeply rooted African Christianity. **Byang Kato** left a continuing legacy of serious theological achievement in his

native Nigeria but also many other African regions.

In the two chapters about the other side of the continent, the authors tell about **Simeon Nsibambi**, a major player in the beginnings of the East African Revivals. That, along with recent revivals in China, was one of the 20th century's most important Christian renewal movements of any kind.

The biographies move next to India where three studies explore how Indian believers adjusted to their own cultural inheritances in accepting Christian faith and adapting Western Christian traditions to Indian conditions. **Pandita Ramabai** was an Indian teacher whose independent way made her a key person in the rooting of Christianity in modern India.

Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah

served as the first native-born Anglican Bishop in India. However, it is his sacrificial service to the poor in his diocese that is so impressive.

The next portrait is **Sun Chu Kil**, a Korean responsible for a significant revival of the 20th century. The book concludes with six studies from China that show the fire of the Gospel spreading through the 20th Century, even in the face of violent repression.

The authors' stated reason for undertaking this complicated story is to inform and reflect on some of the general challenges presented to Western Christians by learning about such saints around the world. It is their goal to stimulate readers intellectually, instruct them historically, and challenge them

spiritually through the stories to hold fast to the faith and to embrace the global family of Christ as we work together to ensure that all men might hear the Gospel.

Karen Cannon

Target: Western Christians

Type: Church History/Biography

Take: Recommended

News Update—5/09/2011

**Christians in Tornado-Hit South
Pray for Help**

Editor's Note: These storms have affected many across the South, but also at our home office. Several of our AMG International staff lost electricity

for several days, some suffered extensive damage to their homes and cars, and one of our staff lost four family members to a tornado in our area. Please be in prayer for these and others who've suffered as they regroup and rebuild.

Churchgoers in tornado-ravaged towns across the American South prayed for help Sunday, May 1—many in the open air outside churches leveled by the deadly storms. However, church leaders were determined to gather.

“This service is our response to tragedy. It shows that we are not victims. We are victors. We are visible victors,” said Pastor T.L. Lewis, who led a congregation of 5,000 outside the remains of Bethel Baptist Church in Pratt City, Ala. *The New York Daily*

News reported that the church's stained glass window of Jesus was one of the only parts of the church to survive the storm.

At least 342 people were killed across seven states in the April 26-28 outbreak of storms. Relief groups such as Samaritan's Purse and World Vision are on the ground, distributing emergency supplies and hygiene kits. World Vision will also bring in a mobile distribution unit that will drive directly to affected communities. The group will shift to rebuilding efforts over the next 90 days.

Religion Today Summaries

Christians Attacked by Anti-Government Protesters in Syria

Anti-government protests in Syria have increasingly targeted

Christians in the country, according to sources for International Christian Concern. One Christian leader said, "People want to go out and peacefully ask for certain changes, but Muslim Salafi groups are sneaking in with their goal, which is not to make changes for the betterment of Syria, but to take over the country with their agenda."

He said Christians have been told join protests or else leave the country, at least one Christian home was attacked, and several churches received written threats over Easter. Another Syrian Christian leader told ICC, "If Muslim Salafis gain political influence, they will make sure that there will be no trace of Christianity in Syria."

ICC says if the situation further deteriorates, the country may see an

exodus similar to that of Iraq's Christians, in which more than half the Christian population has left over the last eight years.

Religion Today Summaries

Cuban Protestant Pastors Detained, Interrogated

Three protestant pastors were detained and questioned by Cuban security agents in Camaguey over the weekend of May 1. The pastors are all affiliated with the Apostolic Movement, a network of churches that has come under heavy pressure from the Cuban government over the past few years, according to Christian Solidarity Worldwide.

Pastors Benito Rodríguez and Bárbara Guzmán were picked up by a group of high ranking state security

agents and communist party officials on April 30 and held for two hours. They say they were under heavy pressure to cease holding church services in their home.

The next day, officials interrupted the church service and demanded they show proof of their home ownership, despite the fact that Rodríguez has lived in the house his entire life. That same day, another pastor, Bernardo de Quesada Salomón, was detained and subjected to similar pressure in an effort to make him leave his pastoral work.

Religion Today Summaries

Asia Bibi Still Imprisoned despite Internet Rumors

Asia Bibi, the 45-year-old Christian mother of five who was

sentenced to death last year for alleged blasphemy, has not been pardoned and freed despite Internet rumors reporting the story.

ASSIST News Service reports that Bibi has been imprisoned since June 2009 on accusation of blasphemy, and was sentenced to death on Nov. 8, 2010, by Judge Naveed Iqbal. Previously retracted stories recounting her supposed pardon by Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari were recently rerun due to dating errors, but the Centre for Legal Aid, Assistance and Settlement Pakistan (CLAAS) says Bibi's case has not changed.

Bibi was accused of insulting the Prophet Muhammad by Muslim field workers following a dispute over their different faiths. When she was asked

to bring a cup of water to one of them, the women refused to drink from it, saying that it had been touched by a Christian and was therefore “unclean.” Her conviction and sentence caused an international outcry and shone a spotlight on Pakistan’s blasphemy laws.

Religion Today Summaries

Evangelist David Wilkerson Laid to Rest

Times Square Church and Teen Challenge founder Rev. David Wilkerson was laid to rest at a private funeral on Monday. The pastor, who also wrote the popular book *The Cross and the Switchblade*, died in a traffic accident April 27, according to Religion News Service.

Wilkerson was known most for his outreach to street gangs, which he started after viewing a photo in *Life* Magazine of New York City teens charged with murder. He founded Teen Challenge, a ministry to young gang members and drug addicts, in New York in 1959. In 1963, he co-authored his best-selling story, which *Christianity Today* listed in 2006 in the No. 32 spot on its "Top 50 Books That Have Shaped Evangelicals."

Amazingly, Wilkerson's last blog entry—posted the day of his death—addressed the inevitability of death. "To those going through the valley and shadow of death, hear this word: Weeping will last through some dark, awful nights," he wrote, "and in that darkness you will soon hear the Father whisper, 'I am with you. I cannot tell

you why right now, but one day it will all make sense. You will see it was all part of my plan. It was no accident.”

Religion Today Summaries

Sermon Helps

From SermonHall.com

Sermon Outlines

The Hand of God in Your Life

I. There Are Wounds in His Hands
(Zech. 13:6)

A. They remind us of His great love for us (John 3:16; etc.).

B. They remind us of the great price He paid for our redemption (Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:26).

II. There Is a Sword in His Hand (Josh. 5:13)

A. The sword is the Word of God (Heb. 4:12; Eph.6:17).

B. Jesus will judge the world by the Word of God. (John 12:48).

III. There Is a Plumb Line in His Hand (Amos 7:7)

A. It will measure every person.

B. It will measure by God's Standard, not man's.

IV. There Are sheep in His hands (John 10:28)

V. There Is a Cup in His Hand (Ps. 116:13)

A. A cup of salvation.

B. Filling of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37,38).

VI. There Is a Scourge in His Hand (Heb.12:6-8).

A. God has a whipping post for every disobedient child.

B. God's scourging for disobedience is one of the ways to know a person is saved.

VII. There Is Judgment in His Hand (Ps. 11:5,6).

Bobby K. Carden

The 5 Meanings of M-e-r-c-y

Lamentations 3:19-33

Prop.: God's mercy has a five-fold meaning:

I. **M**—The Meaning in Affliction (vv. 19-21)

A. Affliction teaches us lessons we never forget (v. 20).

B. Endurance gives us hope to face tomorrow (v. 21).

II. **E**—the Eternality of Compassion (vv. 22-24)

A. God's compassion is one of His main attributes (v. 24).

B. His compassion remains ever new (v. 23).

III. **R**—the Resignation of Anticipation (vv. 25-27)

A. Silence nourishes the soul that trusts in the Lord (v. 26).

B. Suffering disciplines the soul that trusts in the Lord (v. 27).

IV. **C**—the Courage to Face Persecution (vv. 28-30)

A. It takes courage to be silent (v. 29).

B. It takes courage to be non-violent (v. 30).

V. **Y**—the Yearning of Restoration (vv. 31-33).

A. God always tempers grief with mercy (v. 32).

B. God always avoids
unnecessary pain (v. 33).

Steve D. Eutsler

Illustrations

Old Mothers

I love old mothers—mothers with white hair, and kindly eyes, and lips grown softly sweet, with murmured blessings over sleeping babes. There is something in their quiet grace that speaks the calm of Sabbath afternoons; a knowledge in their deep, unfaltering eyes that far outreaches philosophy.

Time, with caressing touch, about them weaves the silver-threaded fairy-shawl of age; while all the echoes of forgotten songs seem joined to lend a sweetness to their speech. Old mothers! As they pass,

with slow-timed step, their trembling hand clings gently to youth's strength. Sweet mothers! As they pass, one sees again old garden walks, old roses, and old loves.

Anonymous

My Mother Never Tells Lies

Some women and their children met at the house of a friend in the city of St. Louis, for an evening visit, when the following scene and conversation occurred: The child of one of the women, about five years old, was guilty of rude, noisy conduct, very improper on all occasions, and particularly so at a stranger's house.

The mother kindly reproved her. "Sarah, you must not do that." The child soon forgot the reproof, and

became as noisy as ever. The mother firmly said "Sarah, if you do that again I will punish you." But not long after, Sarah "did that again." When the company were about to separate, the mother stepped into a neighbor's house, intending to return for the child.

During her absence, the thought of going home recalled to Sarah's mind the punishment which her mother told her she might expect. The recollection turned her rudeness and thoughtlessness into sorrow. A young lady who had observed Sarah's countenance and had learned the cause for this sorrow, in order to pacify her, said, "Never mind, I will ask your mother not to whip you."

"Oh," said Sarah, "that will do no good. My mother never tells lies." The

writer who communicated the above for the *St. Louis Observer*, adds, "I learned a lesson from the reply of that child, which I shall never forget. It is worth everything in the training of a child, to make it feel that its mother never tells lies."

Anonymous

Bulletin Inserts

How to Celebrate Your Mother

Don't pity yourself. Maybe you had a mother who did not know how to love or care for you. Stop concentrating on your own broken dreams. Find ways to help other mothers who, like yours, need some parenting skills.

Don't dread Mother's Day. Instead of focusing on your situation (maybe you've lost a child, or cannot conceive), think of Mother's Day as a time to reflect on, serve, and honor your own mother.

Patch relationships. If you and your mother are separated by disagreements, look for ways to bridge the gap. If misunderstandings are to be resolved, you can be the first to extend a hand. Forgive or ask for forgiveness. Resolve to find ways to be compatible, loving, and caring.

See her as more than "Mom." Get to know her beyond just her nurturing qualities toward you. What are her thoughts, dreams, and feelings?

Learn from your mother. What are the qualities you admire in the moms in your life? Which qualities have you inherited? Which qualities are you determined not to acquire, or want to develop?

Treasure the thoughts. If your mother is no longer with you, don't despair. She's as close as your memory. Think about the good times, not the loss.

Little things mean the most. Caring doesn't have to have monetary value. Hugs, kisses, taking a bowl of strawberries are ways to say I love you. Wash her windows, help her in the garden, or bake her favorite cookies.

Adopt a mom. Find a woman who needs to be cherished and show her how much you care.

Look to Jesus. In His last moments on the cross Jesus showed His love toward His mother. Jesus saw His mother and the disciple He loved standing near her. He said to His mother, "*Woman, here is your son.*" Then to the disciple, "*Here is your mother.*" From that moment the disciple accepted her as his own mother (John 19:25-27).

From <http://liveit.crosswalk.com>

Puzzles and 'Toons

Church 'Toons by Joe McKeever



JENNIFER WASN'T THE FIRST AND UNFORTUNATELY WON'T BE THE LAST TO CONFUSE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SING IN CHURCH WITH AN AUDITION ON 'AMERICAN IDOL.'



Answers to last issue's puzzles

ANSWERS

1. King Saul (1 Sam. 15:23).
2. Their tradition (Matt. 15:6; Mark 7:13).
3. The sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17)
4. "...lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prov. 30:6)
5. In heaven (Ps. 119:89)
6. "...that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4).
7. *Doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness* (2 Tim. 3:16).
8. *Converting the soul, making wise the simple* (Ps. 19:7).
9. "...the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jer. 15:16).
10. "...and keep it" (Luke 11:28).

ACROSTIC #25: ANSWERS

REVELATIONS(17 B & 18) —
"*...Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and of death.*"

- A. METHOD
- B. WAY OF
- C. ODD LOT
- D. MOVE
- E. RATTLESNAKE
- F. EFFEMINATE
- G. VANDERBILT
- H. ENTERTAINED
- I. LAVALAVA
- J. AHISHAHAR
- K. THARSHISH
- L. ITHMAH
- M. OFFHANDED
- N. NEEDLE
- O. MEDEA

Father Abraham and Hidden Wisdom

By Mark Oshman

Originally published in *Pulpit Helps*,
September 1993

Father Abraham's Question Box

Odds and Ends

1. In which book is a blessing pronounced on those who read it and hear its words?
2. Who had a daughter named Noah?
3. Which King of Judah was hidden in the Temple as a boy?
4. In which epistle did Paul quote a Cretan?
5. What happened to Malchus in the Garden of Gethsemane?
6. Who was ordered to bake his bread using human dung as fuel?
7. What was Jeremiah told to hide by the river Euphrates?
8. Who paid tribute money with a coin taken from the mouth of a fish?
9. In what city did Paul find an altar with the inscription, "To The Unknown God?"
10. Which tribe was characterized by Moses as "a lion's whelp?"

See Answers on page 26.

Hidden Wisdom on next page

HIDDEN WISDOM ACROSTIC #26

BY MARK A. OSHMAN

Solve the acrostic by using the clues listed below to guess the words and by transferring the letter above each number to its appropriate place in the diagram. The result will be a Scripture verse of admonition, comfort, instruction, or promise. When read vertically, the initial letters of the answers will contain the name of the book from which the verse was taken. All quotations are from the KJV.

HAPPY SOLVING!!

1 M	2 H		3 J	4 Q		5 L	6 C		7 G	8 J	9 M		10 I	11 C	12 D	13 L	14 F
	15 B	16 E	17 G	18 A	19 C	20 K	21 L			22 E	23 M	24 B	25 C		26 N	27 J	
28 G	29 H	30 B		31 J	32 Q	33 I		34 L	35 A	36 F	37 K	38 M	39 H	40 D	41 B		
42 I	43 E	44 C	45 D	46 L	47 G	48 B		49 A	50 H	51 C		52 J	53 F	54 I	55 Q	56 I	57 A
58 D	59 C	60 H	61 B	62 G			63 E	64 N	65 J	66 C			67 G	68 K	69 M		
70 J	71 A	72 N	73 D		74 J	75 G	76 B		77 L	78 E	79 K		80 G	81 N	82 H	83 B	84 I
		85 D	86 A	87 Q	88 J	89 F	90 C	91 B		92 G	93 J	94 L	95 C	96 Q		97 B	98 H
	99 I	100 M	101 F			102 C	103 H	104 L	105 D	106 A	107 E	108 Q	109 B	110 K	111 J	112 M	113 G

CLUES

A. The Philistine army encamped near here

57 106 86 18 71 35 49

B. Hocus-pocus

109 48 91 30 83 41 76 15 24 97 61

C. "Many are the _____ of the righteous"

95 7 6 102 66 19 44 25 59 11 90 51

D. Temperance is needed by everyone who strives for this (1 Cor. 9)

85 45 58 105 40 12 73

E. Baren

43 63 107 78 22 16

F. Clamorous

36 53 89 14 101

G. Go beyond a boundary

7 17 28 67 113 92 75 80 47 62

H. Sihon and Og, among others

103 39 60 29 50 2 82 98

I. Shakespeare's 'king of cats'

33 84 42 56 10 99

J. This is reserved in heaven for the saint (1 Pet. 1)

65 31 8 27 93 3 70
74 88 52 111

K. Noted Olympic athlete (1913-1980)

68 79 20 110 37

L. Jesus called him "a master of Israel"

77 104 34 5 13 94 54 46 2

M. Epithet applied to Bildad

112 23 38 100 1 69 9

N. An O.T. offering

26 64 81 72

O. A young plant growth

4 55 87 32 108 96