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Equipping believers for deeper life

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Growing in the Lord

By Alan Stewart

According to a 2003 *Oxford Journal* study, medical doctors in West Africa began to notice an unusually large number of cases of stunted growth in sixteen villages from the countries of Benin and Togo. A team of doctors and research scientists were brought in to evaluate and determine the causes of the dwarfism.

Initially, they tried to associate the lack of growth with malnutrition because the remote areas of the countries in which they lived were poor, but the food found there was both adequate and abundant. Scientists then began questioning the reliability of the food they ate. In those rural villages, maize and groundnuts are major dietary staples; however, it would be the storage practices of these crops that would reveal the problem.

Both commodities were being stored in hot, humid conditions that promoted the growth of fungus which was not visible to the human eye. Unknown to the villagers was the fact that, as the contaminated food was being consumed, they were literally poisoning themselves. Through a simple, routine practice the villagers were actually impairing their own ability to grow.

At a time in history when we possess unprecedented resources and have set unparalleled records, there is an absence of something that has gone almost unnoticed. Where have so many of the spiritual giants gone in our land? I am talking about those who stand head-and-shoulders above the crowd in respect, and those who cast long shadows of influence. While the ladders of power, position, and prestige are still being climbed, the rungs appear further apart because we have accepted spiritual smallness as the new standard of the day.

E.M. Bounds once said, “Everywhere, everything in apostolic times was on the stretch.... No premium was given to dwarves, no encouragement to an old babyhood.” There is a phrase in scripture that is said of Isaac, Moses, Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist, and Jesus; “*And the child grew....*” It is a phrase describing an increase of spiritual stature as much as it is their physical stature.

Growth is a natural and normal process of life, but the moment we cease to grow spiritually, something within that life is now in jeopardy. We are told it was during a season of rest, “*And David...lay with her.*” It was on a night when he fell asleep at prayer that “*Peter sat down among them*” and denied knowing Jesus. Withered leaves will rarely signal the arrival of forthcoming fruit. Just how do you maintain a consistent level of growth that is never satisfied with being petite?

I. Healthy Growth Will Require a Cultivation of Life

In 2 Peter 3:18, Peter writes, “*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*” The idea behind the word “*grow*” is “to perpetuate the growth.” Whether in plants, animals, or people, steady growth is dependent upon being placed in an environment which promotes growth.

One of the most popular aquarium fish is the shark. Experts tell us that if you catch a small shark and confine it, it will stay a size proportionate to the aquarium. Sharks can be six inches long yet be completely mature. However, if you turn them loose in the ocean, they grow to their normal length of eight feet. A life that remains confined spiritually is destined to become stagnant and stunted.

Growing faith is always an active, moving faith. Elisha had to abandon his plow

if he wanted to be God's prophet. Gideon had to leave the mediocrity of the village in order to become a mighty man of valor. Peter had to stop fishing from the ship if he wanted to be filled with the Spirit. I agree with Alan Redpath who said, "The conversion of a soul is the miracle of a moment, but the manufacture of a saint is the task of a lifetime." The day we lose a willingness to change, we forfeit those victories that develop our future potential.

II. Healthy Growth Will Require a Consistency of Learning

In Hebrews 6:1, the author writes, "*Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection....*" The idea is we are to grow beyond the elementary lessons and into the deeper teaching of Christ. The writer noted there were those who spiritually should be eating meat, but they were still drinking milk.

In other words, they simply were not growing.

Any good farmer knows that the success of his crops is dependent upon water and light. In similar fashion, the growth of every Christian life is dependent upon two vital elements: teachability and truth.

Teachability is the manner in which men go deep, but truth is the means by which men scale unimaginable heights.

Although he had already experienced God in a burning bush and through His miracles, Moses still kept pressing to see God's glory. Although he was greatly educated, Paul kept reaching for more of the knowledge of Christ. Charles Ryrie said, "In this life we never ascend to a plateau above and beyond which there is no further ground to gain." The moment we no longer feel the need to learn from God is the moment we cease to live and merely exist.

III. Healthy Growth Will Require a Contentment of Love

In Ephesians 4:15, Paul is encouraging spiritual maturity as he hopes his readers “...*may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.*”

Many years ago, Japanese horticulturists developed bonsai, a method which enables them to keep certain trees stunted and small. Early in the life of the tree, they tie off the tap roots through which life must flow to the farthest branch. This keeps the tree undernourished so that it never attains the growth that others of its variety reach. Jesus clearly understood such a danger to our lives as well when He noted several times in John 15, “*Abide in Me...*” Our attachment to Jesus is the difference between average living and abundant living.

Corrie Ten Boom explained this best when she said, “Like some railway tickets in America, I am ‘Not good if detached.’”

Nothing can grow without life, and apart from the touch of God, our lives are uprooted and unproductive. Uzziah felt he no longer needed God's strength, and he died "*cut off from the house of the Lord.*" Demas fell in love with the pleasure, provision and possibilities of the world, and he is never heard from again. When the tree of our life falls to the ground, what a testimony it is if the rings around our stump reveal we were still growing when we fell!

High in the Swiss Alps there is a wooden cross that marks the grave of an Alpine guide who perished while attempting the ascent of a peak. Inscribed on the monument are these stirring words, "He Died Climbing!" May God give us the courage to keep climbing higher in our lives. Many may start the climb, but few will continue the climb. To stop before you reach the pinnacle is just selling yourself way too short!

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A Christian Doctor's Advice on the Use of Medical Technology

By John T. Dunlop

Editor's Note: This is the second of two pieces covering a Christian perspective on end-of-life issues from John Dunlop. This article discusses the use of medical technology in prolonging life; the first (published in the 6/27/2011 issue) focused on the spiritual discipline of "dying well".

My friend Lee is a prime example of how one can benefit from modern medical technology. At age seventy he is actively using his skills to serve many churches, able to do so because, thirty years ago, he had a

bypass that kept his heart going. Since then he has had emergency surgery to repair an aortic aneurysm, and later another bypass. His life of service today is testimony to the gift God has given us of life-saving technology.

On the other hand, technology is not always a blessing. At age ninety-two Tom lived independently without any family nearby, his major social connections being within his church. One Sunday he casually mentioned to his pastor that when the time came to die, he wanted to do it in the church. Several weeks later, while in the sanctuary listening to the choir practice, he had a cardiac arrest and collapsed into the aisle. A 911 call brought paramedics who quickly shocked and restarted his heart.

He was transported to a nearby hospital where the emergency room physician greeted me with: "John, we have a save." But, a "save" it was not; when I

evaluated Tom, there was little brain activity even though he was clearly not brain dead. After a week in the intensive care unit on maximal life support, he died. This was not the death Tom would have chosen for himself. Many would say that Tom final week was evidence of technology gone awry.

Very few of us will die without having to make some difficult decisions as to how much medical care we should seek to prolong our lives. If we are viewing death as an enemy to be defeated, we will want all possible treatments and should thank God for them. They are the result of the God-given mandate God gave to humanity after creating us (Genesis 1:26). But if death is near and treatment options less attractive, we will view death as a defeated enemy and choose not to use technology that will make our dying a fight to the bitter end.

Needing a strategy to make appropriate use of technology, I suggest the following guidelines.

I. Be Aggressive Early in the Treatment of the Disease when It Is Most Helpful

Delayed treatment may add a few weeks or months to one's life, but it is often at the expense of much pain and suffering.

II. Define the Purpose Clearly

We should determine whether the treatment is to cure, or to prepare for a comfortable and dignified death. Sometimes making this choice requires withdrawing or withholding treatment. For instance, one patient might make the decision not to treat his life-threatening cancer; another patient might decide to stop treatment that has been keeping him alive. Most Christian ethicists will approve of either of these choices.

Unfortunately there is not always a clear distinction between treatments designed to cure and those used for giving comfort. A common struggle in intensive care units involves the care of a patient with near end-stage emphysema. If the lungs fail, a breathing machine is necessary to sustain life. But it is never certain that a patient will be able to get off the ventilator and return to breathing on his own. There is always a chance that a person will become permanently dependent on the ventilator. Many would not choose to be kept alive that way. In this case, one option is to use the machine with a limit in mind; to, for example, use the ventilator for up to five days, but if the patient is unable to breathe on her own after that, the treatment would be stopped. This keeps the survivors from saying, "We never even tried."

With severe emphysema at age eighty-six, Leona is an example of this

procedure. She uses oxygen around-the-clock and had been in the hospital five times in the last two years, each time because of the worsening of her long disease. On two occasions she required a ventilator to keep her alive, the first time for one day, but the last for three days. She hated those experiences and made it clear that she did not want to have a machine keep her alive. Her doctor suggested she be put on a time limit for the treatment. It is now understood that if Leona is ever in a situation when she cannot get off the ventilator in seven days the doctor will sedate her with appropriate doses of morphine and remove her from the machine.

III. Weigh the Burden against the Potential Benefit

The burdens we need to consider include such things as the financial, emotional, and physical (in terms of pain

and suffering) costs as well as the risks involved. In my experience as a geriatrician, this cost counting is crucial when treating an elderly person who is acutely ill.

Is the treatment considered ordinary or extraordinary care? Ordinary care is the minimal level of care that we all deserve as humans created in the image of God, including such things as being given food to eat and fluids to drink, being kept warm, and receiving loving compassion. Jesus refers to all of these in verses 34 to 40 in chapter 25 of Mathew's Gospel.

I consider extraordinary care to be anything that involves potentially life-prolonging treatment; we are not required to pursue such treatment. Such care may be wrong in the following contexts: 1) It violates the expressed wish of the patient; 2) it is generally felt to be futile; 3) it is presented as being more effective and less risky than it

truly is; 4) it is an effort to defy God's will that the patient die.

Personally, I want to come to the end of life when God calls me home, not when technology fails. To do that will likely require that, at some time, I will say no to some available life-prolonging treatment.

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The Holy Calling of Believers

By Charles Haddon Spurgeon

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9).

The apostle uses the perfect tense and says, *“Who hath saved us.”* Believers in Christ Jesus are saved. They are not looked upon as persons who are in a hopeful state, and may ultimately be saved, **but they are already saved.**

Salvation is not a blessing to be enjoyed upon the dying bed, and to be sung of in a future state above, but a matter to be obtained, received, promised, and enjoyed now. The Christian is perfectly saved in

God's purpose; God has ordained him unto salvation, and that purpose is complete.

He is saved also as to the price which has been paid for him: "*It is finished*" was the cry of the Savior before He died. The believer is also perfectly saved in His covenant head, for as he fell in Adam, so he lives in Christ. This complete salvation is accompanied by a holy calling.

Those whom the Savior saved upon the cross are, in due time, effectually called by the power of God the Holy Spirit unto holiness: they leave their sins; they endeavor to be like Christ; they choose holiness, not out of any compulsion, but from the stress of a new nature, which leads them to rejoice in holiness just as naturally as aforesaid they delighted in sin. God neither chose them nor called them because they were holy, but He called them that they might be holy, and holiness is the beauty produced by His workmanship in them.

The excellencies which we see in a believer are as much the work of God as the atonement itself. Thus is brought out very sweetly the fullness of the grace of God. Salvation must be of grace, because the Lord is the author of it: and what motive but grace could move Him to save the guilty? Salvation must be of grace, because the Lord works in such a manner that our righteousness is forever excluded. Such is the believer's privilege—a present salvation; such is the evidence that he is called to it—a holy life.

This calling from before the world began, extends into eternity also. Behold the superlative liberality of the Lord Jesus, for He hath given us His all. "*And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one*" (John 17:22). Although a tithe of His possessions would have made a universe of angels rich beyond all thought, yet was He

not content until He had given us all that He had.

It would have been surprising grace if He had allowed us to eat the crumbs of His bounty beneath the table of His mercy; but He will do nothing by halves, He makes us sit with Him and share the feast. Had He given us some small pension from His royal coffers, we should have had cause to love Him eternally; but no, He will have His bride as rich as Himself, and He will not have a glory or a grace in which she shall not share.

He has not been content with less than making us joint-heirs with Himself, so that we might have equal possessions. He has emptied all His estate into the coffers of the Church, and hath all things common with His redeemed. There is not one room in His house the key of which He will withhold from His people. He gives them full liberty to take all that He hath to be their own; He loves them to make free with His treasure, and

appropriate as much as they can possibly carry.

The boundless fullness of His all-sufficiency is as free to the believer as the air he breathes. Christ hath put the pitcher of His love and grace to the believer's lip, and bidden him drink on forever; if he could drain it, he is welcome to do so, and as he cannot exhaust it, he is bidden to drink abundantly, for it is all his own. What truer proof of fellowship can heaven or earth afford?

“When I stand before the throne
Dressed in beauty not my own;
When I see Thee as Thou art,
Love Thee with unsinning heart;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe.”

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

The Pride of Pharisaism

Matthew 23:1-12

From Exegetical Commentary on Matthew, 2006, AMG Publishers

To prepare for this section, it is wise to review other narratives where Jesus called the Pharisees into account for substituting their traditions for God's commands (see Matt. 15:1–9; Mark 7:1–16).

As we saw in our discussion of Matthew 15:9, two words are translated “*commandment*” from the Greek New Testament. The first, *entolē* (1785), is the

only one that defines God's authoritative, absolute rules including the Ten Commandments that He gave Moses. The second word is *éntalma* (1778) and always refers to man-made commandments, the religious precepts that the Pharisees mercilessly placed on the backs of people (see Matt. 15:9; Mark 7:7; Col. 2:22).

[1-2] The Jews considered the decree or *éntalma* to be a prerogative that came with the “seat” (from *kathédra* [2515], seat of authority; from *kathézomai* [2516], to sit; we obtain the English word “cathedral”) of Moses, as found in verse 2.

On this seat the scribes and Pharisees “sat” (*ekáthisan*, the aorist tense of *kathízō* [2523], to sit), the aorist summing up an extended history that began at some point in the intertestamental period. Even Jesus, in His use of the term, acknowledged that such a position—which was illegitimate—was considered to carry the

same authority as that held by Moses. In other words, the precepts (from *éntalma*) were considered to be on a par with the imperatives (from *entolē*) in the Decalogue and with other laws listed in the Torah. This, of course, was false. The concept of ex cathedra—“out of [or from] the chair”—is false because the *kathédra* (chair) was never established by Moses or any subsequent prophets.

[3] Interestingly, what follows is not so much a denunciation of the authority of the chair as a castigation of the hypocrisy of the chairpersons: “*All therefore (oún [3767], in conclusion) whatsoever they bid (eípōsin, the aorist active subjunctive of légō [3004], to intelligibly speak) you to keep (tēreín, the present infinitive of tēréō [5083], to guard), keep (tēreíte, the present imperative of tēréō) and do (poieíte, the present imperative of poiéō [4160], to make, to do)*” (a.t.).

The aorist verb *eípōsin* places the emphasis on instances of “saying,” whereas the present infinitival verb *tēreín* means “regularly [habitually] guard.” Similarly, “keep” and “do” are both present (habitual) imperatives. By telling the multitudes and his disciples (v. 1) to both guard and do all the laws the scribes and Pharisees taught, Jesus acknowledged the authority of Moses’ chair, but He rejected the hypocrisy of the chairpersons: “*But do (poieíte, the present imperative of poiéō) not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.*”

[4] The Pharisees did more than speak but not perform God’s commands (Matt. 22:36–40); they also did forbidden things. In fact, Jesus vividly described several evil things the Pharisees did (vv. 3, 5). The first was their imposition of the full load of the Law and its guilt on people, binding them without grace while not abiding by it themselves: “*For they bind*

(*desmeúousi*, the present tense of *desmeúō* [1195], to tie up) *heavy* (from *barús* [926], heavy) *burdens* (from *phortíon* [5413], load, freight) *and difficult to carry, and lay* (*epitithéasin*, the present tense of *epitithēmi* [2007], to put on top; from *epí* [1909], upon; and *títhēmi* [5087], to place) *them on men's shoulders; but they themselves do not choose* (*thélousin*, the present tense of *thélō* [2309], to determinately will) *to move them with one of their fingers"* (a.t.).

Remember, Jesus had just said, "*Whatever they tell you to observe, both observe and do*" (a.t.). Since He would not command such universal compliance to human precepts, the subject here must be the Mosaic Law. The problem, therefore, was not the Law per se but the scribes' and Pharisees' use of it. They did not use the Law to save souls because the Law could not do this anyway. As Paul says, "*If there had been a law given which could have*

given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Gal. 3:21). No such law had been given.

The scribes and Pharisees used the Law to imprison people in their sins—viewed metaphorically as placing heavy loads on their shoulders. They refused to extend grace, here analogous to physically lifting the loads off shoulders. The aorist tense of *kinéō* means they would not make a single effort to remove an oppressive load. But why would they do something counterintentional? They placed the loads there in the first place. And they did it continuously; the verbs "*bind*," "*lay*," and "*choose [not]*" are all present tenses.

Paul explains the proper use of the Law: "*The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith*" (Gal. 3:24). Had the Pharisees recognized and accepted Christ's perfect obedience to the Law, they would

rather have relieved the oppressive burdens by commanding people to place their faith in that perfection.

The problem here was that the scribes and Pharisees were not binding on themselves the heavy burdens they placed on other people's shoulders. They were inconsistent. What they demanded of others, they did not demand of themselves. This is why Jesus said in verse 3, "*Whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.*"

[5] The second evil work of the scribes and Pharisees was ostentation: "*But all their works they do for (prós [4314], toward the end purpose of) to be seen (from theáomai [2300], to be displayed, theatricalized) of men.*" Although Jesus earlier indicted the Pharisees' trumpeting their alms to be seen by others (the same

verb, *theáomai*, is used in Matt. 6:1), here He extended hypocrisy to “*all their works.*”

The inner motives of self-righteous persons are devious. They seem to have no consciousness that God is watching and that He can see motives as well as actions. Nor are self-righteous persons motivated to be seen by both God and others. Self-justification and pride overpower any good motives. They direct their ostentation toward people alone. Paul describes such persons as “*boasters, inventors of evil things*” (Rom. 1:30). James tells us, “*But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil*” (James 4:16, cf. 2 Tim. 3:2).

The scribes and Pharisees paraded their arrogance in the culture of their day: “*They make broad their phylacteries* (from *phulaktērion* [5440] from *phulássō* [5442], to keep, preserve), *and enlarge the borders of their garments,*” which made them more visible. Phylacteries were pouches or boxes

in which the Jews stored scrolls of parchment on which they had written portions of the Law. Later, they would bind these to their foreheads and wrists (Matt. 23:5; see Deut. 6:4–9; 11:13–21) as a display of their righteousness. Even certain groups of Jews today wear these small containers. In Jesus' day, the Jews superstitiously regarded them as amulets or charms that would preserve them from evil.

They also broadened the “*borders of their garments*” (Matt. 9:20; 14:36; see Num. 15:38; Deut. 22:12). Again, the purpose was to call attention to extraordinary piety and obedience to the Mosaic Law (Matt. 23:5).

[6] The third evil work of the scribes and Pharisees was their love of prominence: “[They] *love* (from *philéō* [5368], to love conditionally) *the uppermost rooms* (from *prōtoklisía* [4411] from *prōtos* [4413], first; and *klisía* [2828], a chair or seat) *at feasts* (from *deípnōn* [1173]), *and the chief seats*

(from *prōtokathedría* [4410] from *prōtos*, first; and *kathédra*) in the synagogues.”

Philéō is a fitting verb to describe the Pharisees, since the emphasis on conditionality shows that the scribes and Pharisees loved the topmost (*prōtos*) status for what they got out of it. Since *prōtos* has a qualitative element in it, the prefix “chief” is the preferable rendering to “numerically first” in both compound nouns above. What is numerically first is not necessarily first in rank. A person can be chronologically invited first to a wedding yet placed in the last row of the balcony. Chief (first in rank) seats at feasts and in synagogues were reserved for the rich and famous.

[7] Fourth, the conditional love continued, now for “greetings (from *aspasmós* [783] from *aspázomai* [782], to salute; a salutation, an oral or written greeting) in the markets.” Traditionally, the scribes and Pharisees expected formal

greetings at three places: the evening meal (*deípton* [1173]; see previous verse), the synagogue, and the markets. They also loved being called “*Rabbi, Rabbi*”. The noun “*rabbi*” is not found in the Old Testament, but the title emerged in the intertestamental period and continues to this day.

Unable to see the forest because of his fixation on two or three trees, a fool either ignorantly loses a concept in a sound or deliberately destroys a concept with a sound. The sound here is “*rabbi*,” but the concept is teaching authority. Today, the same love is attached to the title, “Doctor, Doctor”—a different sound but conceptually equivalent to *rabbi*. As with every title of teaching authority people bestow on themselves, this one especially applies to the Great Physician (v. 8).

[8] Accordingly, Jesus said bluntly: “*But don’t you be called Rabbi: for one is your Master (Kathēgētēs [2519] from katá*

[2596], according to; and *hēgéomai* [2233], to lead), *even the Christ; and all of you are brothers* (from *adelphós* [80])” (a.t.). Note how Jesus substituted “*Master*” (a “leading authority”) for “*Rabbi*,” identifying the two nouns in meaning.

The reasons assigned? First, Christ alone is your Master, and second, you are all equal. Plainly, there is no room for hierarchy below “*the anointed One (Christós* [5547] from the verb *chríō* [5548], to anoint; note the definite article),” the Lord Jesus Christ. All believers are anointed with the Spirit of Christ according to 1 John 2:20: “*But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know*” (NASB).

[9, 10] Jesus continued with His injunction: “*And call no one your father upon the earth: for One is your Father, who is in heaven. Neither (mēdé* [3366] from *mē* [3361], “not”; and the adversative *dé* [1161], even) *be called masters: (from* *kathēgētēs*

[2519]) for *One is your Master (Kathēgētēs), even the Christ*” (a.t.).

“*Father*” is used in an absolute sense. This does not contradict Paul’s relative use as, for example, when he says: “*For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel*” (1 Cor. 4:15). Even here, Paul’s statement is carefully articulated: he is a “father in Christ”—having begotten “*in Christ*”—not a “father in himself” (“*in*” meaning “under the sovereignty of” [Christ]). Paul’s sharp theological mind conveys the accurately sequenced thought that Christ fathered the Corinthians through Paul by the gospel (His Word). Moreover, Paul was not encouraging the incorrigible Corinthians to call him “father.” He merely informed them of his right above other instructors to disciple them with the Word of Christ.

[11] An all-encompassing attitude characterizes greatness that is contrary to saying and not doing (v. 3), imposing law without extending grace (v. 4), performing to be seen by others (v. 5), and seeking status in public places (v. 6), including greetings and titles (vv. 7, 8): “*But he that is greatest (from mégas [3173], great, strong) among you shall be your servant (diákonos [1249], a minister, one who waits on tables).*” The true servant of Christ does not do the things the scribes and Pharisees did because he has a servant’s heart.

This is the third time the word *diákonos* occurs in Matthew. In the first occurrence (Matt. 20:26), we find words similar to the ones in this verse addressed to Salome and her two sons, James and John: “*Whosoever if he chooses (from thélō [2309], to determine) to be great (mégas) among you, let him be your minister (diákonos)*” (a.t.).

At the time, deacons were officers of banquets and synagogues or city officials. At banquets, they served or “*ministered*” (*diakonéō* [1247]) at tables (Acts 6:1–7). Deacons were not, however, designated as officers of the local church. Government was placed, rather, in the hands of elders (*presbúteroi* [4245]) who presided over a council (*presbutérion* [4244]; 1 Tim. 4:14). Elders were appointed to rule (Acts 14:23; 2 Cor. 8:19) while deacons served in the manner of the Lord Jesus who came “*not to be served* (from *diakonéō*) *but to serve* (also from *diakonéō*)” (Matt. 20:28; a.t.). From Jesus’ words above and from His own example, we conclude that every ruling elder in the church is a deacon (in the sense of being a servant [*diákonos*]) and the greatest elder (ruler) is the “*servant [deacon] of all*” (Mark 9:35).

[12] Now follows the general rule:
“*Whosoever shall exalt* (from *hupsóō* [5312],

to elevate) *himself shall be abased* (*tapeinōthēsetai*, the future passive of *tapeinóō* [5013], to humble, humiliate, be brought low); *and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted* (*hupsōthēsetai*, the future passive of *hupsóō*).”

From the time of the fall of Adam, people seek status, glory, and positions of superior rank. But, for most, the highest rank they ever attain in this life is simply an appearance of superiority. According to James, God opposes (from *antitássomai* [498] from *antí* [473], against; and *tássomai*, the middle of *tássō* [5021], to set, place, arrange; “sets Himself against”) such puffed-up persons (James 4:6; a.t.; cf. 1 Pet. 5:5).

In His opposition to the proud, God humiliates them. The passive voice of the verb *tapeinōthēsetai* implies God’s forced subjugation that Paul speaks of in 1 Corinthians 15:24, 25. Whenever the proud are humiliated from without, they

resist, but not successfully; God's overpowering force prevails.

There is another side to this. Jesus added, "*He that shall humble himself shall be exalted (hupsōthēsetai).*" This refers to the saved who believe by God's grace. Empowered by God's Spirit, we believers should voluntarily humble ourselves.

Hypocrisy, then, desires rank without change of character. The scribes and Pharisees needed to learn that God's eternal life is not superficial. Sin permeates the soul, and the soul itself needs saving from its natural tendency to exalt itself over others. The first remedy for hypocrisy is the legal cancellation (*athētēsis* [115], annulling; Heb. 9:26) and removal (*áphesis* [859], remission; Heb. 9:22) of sin.

In verse 12, both verbs, "*abased*" (*tapeinōthēsetai*) and "*exalted*" (*hupsōthēsetai*), are passive in voice with God the subject of the action. No matter how

low or great we make ourselves, God has ways of exalting or humbling us.

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Following God

by Wayne Barber

The Brokenness of Faith

Walking by faith involves brokenness. This is probably one of the hardest lessons one ever has to learn in the Christian life. Faith doesn't begin until human ability ends. In this world when something is broken we put it on the shelf because it is unusable. But, in God's Kingdom, it has to be broken before God can use it.

We see this in the life of Moses, probably more so than any other place we could turn to in God's Word. As the text begins in Hebrews 11:23, the author of Hebrews introduces us to the parents of Moses who were faced with a very difficult decision: "*By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict*" (Heb. 11:23). The history of why they hid Moses for three months is found in Exodus. It takes us into the time when the nation of Israel was captive in an Egyptian slave camp. The Israelites were treated cruelly by an evil pharaoh who came on the scene after Joseph.

"Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, 'Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them, or else they will

multiply and in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land.’ So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel” (Ex. 1:8-12).

To solve the problem of Israel’s exponential growth one Pharaoh ordered that all male children were to be put to death. As soon as they were born the parents were to throw them into the Nile River to drown. *“Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, ‘Every son who is born you are to cast into the Nile, and every daughter you are to keep alive”* (Ex. 1:22). Stephen addresses the evil of this despicable Pharaoh in Acts: *“It was he who took shrewd advantage of our race and*

mistreated our fathers so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive. It was at this time that Moses was born..." (Acts 7:19-20).

This evil mandate by the Pharaoh forced Moses' parents to make a huge decision. Should they obey Pharaoh (who was the law) and have their child put to death by drowning him in the Nile River, or obey God (whose law is higher than man's law) and protect their child? We know from Scripture what they decided.

There are times when man's law violates God's law and one must obey God and take whatever consequence that comes. Little did they know that God was working through them to raise up the Deliverer of all Israel. We know the story of how they put the baby in a basket and floated it down the Nile River. The daughter of the Pharaoh found it, and little Moses even had the luxury of being raised and

cared for by his own mother. The fact is that Moses grew up in Egypt with every advantage that any child could ever want or wish for. How was God ever going to use him to deliver the children of Israel?

First of all, we see that God had to teach Moses that his identity was in him, not in the world. Paul says in Romans 12:3, "*For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think.*" Moses spent 40 years of his life learning to be a somebody. What would growing up in Egypt as the son of the Pharaoh's daughter have involved? We learn from Acts 7:22 that "*Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.*" Most likely Moses was educated in the Great "Temple of the Sun," known by the Greeks as Heliopolis, which was the most advanced university in the world at that time.

He would probably have known medicine, philosophy, law, military leadership, sculpture, and music. But he was also a man of power, so he would have had the respect of the Egyptians and would have been very influential. He had all the advantages to have whatever he wanted; and to do whatever he wanted whenever he wanted. But he was a Hebrew!

The book of Acts records this for us, too: “*But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel*” (Acts 7:23). His brethren! His mother had obviously told him that he was a Hebrew and of how he was miraculously saved. He went to visit his brethren, which means that he went to inspect the condition of his people in an Egyptian slave camp. He was shocked at what he found about his people and how they were treated.

In fact, he saw one of his brethren being mistreated by an Egyptian, and Exodus 2:11-12 tells us that he looked both ways to make sure that no one saw him and killed the Egyptian. It was a stupid act, but I guess he figured that the son of Pharaoh's daughter could get away with murder! But in so doing, he shows that he had made his decision as to which identity he would embrace. His identity would be with his people, God's people. *"By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter"* (Heb. 11:24).

But God was not ready to use him yet. As you study the life of Moses you realize that nothing in all of Moses' training and education in the very best of schools in Egypt could help him deliver God's people. Being a somebody was in conflict with what God wanted to do with him. You see, the world cannot teach us how to do the works

of God. The ways of God are only learned by living and trusting God. Moses had spent 40 years becoming somebody in his world at that time, and now he would spend another 40 years learning to be a nobody, finally weak enough for God to use him. The world's way of being a leader is never God's way. What about you today? Where do you find your identity? There are a lot of "hotshots" in the Christian world today. It's a pity isn't it?

Moses could either ignore the condition of his people, or turn his back on all that he had as Egyptian royalty, with every convenience known to the world at that time. Hebrews tells us that it was by faith that he chose "*rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering (hegeomai, making this his priority) the reproach of Christ* (that is, the same reproach that Christ suffered Moses

suffered—because of his trusting God he suffered) *greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward*” (Heb. 11:25-26).

Moses chose to leave it all behind him and he left Egypt, but God was leading him all the time. Now, the lesson really began. “*By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen*” (Heb. 11:27). The word “*endure*” comes from the Greek *kartereo*, which means to hold out; to bear the burden. Here it means that Moses bore the long burden of exile.

The story of Moses is an incredible picture of how God has to break us of being a somebody and teach us to be a nobody filled with Jesus. When Moses left Egypt he went to Midian where he settled. It was there that God broke his self will. In fact, he became so despondent that he named his

first son Gershom, which means “banishment”.

Moses thought God was finished with him, but He had only just begun. In Acts 7:30 we read, “*After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning thorn bush.*” It was on the west side of Midian at Mt. Horeb where he had lived in exile for 40 years that God finally appeared to Moses and spoke to him about his calling to be the deliverer of Israel. He was finally broken enough for God to use him to deliver His people.

In Exodus 3, God calls to Moses from the burning bush, introducing Himself as the One True God and giving this charge: “*Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them. Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may*

bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt” (Ex. 3:9-10).

Read carefully how Moses responds: *“But Moses said to God, ‘Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?’” (Ex. 3:11).* God answers, *“Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain” (Ex. 3:12).*

That wasn't good enough for Moses, and he tried to weasel out of it again: *“Then Moses said to God, ‘Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, “the God of your fathers has sent me to you.” Now they may say to me, “What is His name?” What shall I say to them?’” (Ex. 3:13).* Again, God answers his objection: *“God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’; and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Ex. 3:14).*

Where is that cocky boy that we saw 40 years ago in Egypt who was going to deliver Israel all by himself in his own strength, even if it meant killing one Egyptian at a time? The picture gets clearer and clearer: *“Then Moses said, ‘What if they will not believe me or listen to what I say? For they may say, ‘The Lord has not appeared to you’”* (Ex. 4:1). This time, God answered by turning Moses staff into a serpent and telling him to use that as a sign of his true encounter.

But Moses was so broken that he says in Exodus 4:10, *“Then Moses said to the Lord, ‘Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue’.*” God’s answer: *“The Lord said to him, ‘Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now then go, and I, even I, will be*

with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say” (Ex. 4:11-12).

Moses then tries one more time to avoid his call, this time pretty directly: “*But he said, ‘Please, Lord, now send the message by whomever You will’*” (Ex. 4:13). After this point, we read that “*the anger of the Lord burned against Moses*” (Ex. 4:14), and He gave Aaron to speak for Moses and sent him on his way. Apparently Moses was finally out of excuses!

God finally had a man here who was weak enough that God could use him to deliver His people. I heard Ian Thomas say years ago, “I can’t but God never said I could; God can and always said He would!” Moses spent 40 years learning to be a somebody, 40 more years learning to be a nobody, and the rest of his life realizing that God only uses nobodies.

Where are you today? A somebody in the world: or a nobody who wants God to

use him? Brokenness comes when we realize that only in our weakness can God's strength be made perfect. Oh, that we would be weak enough that God would use us in this difficult time in which we live!

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Words to Stand You on Your Feet

by Joe McKeever

What the Embattled Pastor Prays

“At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, ‘O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word’” (1 Kings 18:36).

Elijah was confronting the prophets of Baal when he prayed that brief but potent prayer. But he was not trying to win these renegades over. His target audience was the multitudes of Israel who in their shallow affection were going with the God (or “god”) who could produce the most dramatic fireworks that day.

I have prayed that prayer.

Many a time as I entered the sanctuary for the Sunday morning service, I sent up this plea. “Lord, there are a few people in this church who are roadblocks to us doing anything. They fight me on every proposal. And they claim to do it in Your Name. Father, please let them know that You are God and that I am your servant.”

Now, you would think it was the second part of that prayer that occupied my attention, that what I wanted most of all was for this bunch of nay-sayers to get clear on the fact that God in Heaven had sent me as

His ambassador. But you'd be wrong. Before anything else, I wanted the same thing Elijah wanted for God's people that day: for them to settle once and for all that the Living God is Lord and in charge and in this place. That He is "God in Israel."

I am personally convinced that the trouble-makers in most churches do not really believe in God. Oh, they do, theoretically. If you press them, they can tell you when they professed faith in Jesus and were baptized. Call on them to pray in the service and they will render up an invocation or offertory prayer with the best of them. It's just that they don't really believe God is on the premises.

The proof of that is how they play fast and loose with the Bride of Christ and the Body of Christ. The way they mistreat the family of God shows beyond a doubt that the "God" they serve is some kind of absentee landlord, who is not around to defend

Himself, and they can do as they please. These people need to know two things: The Lord is present and He is on the job; and that man standing behind the pulpit is on assignment for Him. One is just as critical, essential, and vital as the other.

God Is Alive and on the Job

One day while reading through Ezekiel, I was struck by how many times the Lord told the prophet that as a result of His dealings with Israel in that day, one of His purposes would be that they might know *“That I am God in Israel.”*

I've debated listing the places in Ezekiel where this statement (or a variation of it) is made, and decided to go for it, even though it will appear as only a pile of numbers. But for anyone in doubt as to the importance of this, wonder no longer. God wants His people to know Who is first! This phrase or equivalent is found (at least) in

Ezekiel 6:7,10,14; 7:4,27; 11:12; 12:15;
13:9,21,23; 14:8; 15:7; 16:62; 17:21,24;
20:20,26,38,44; 22:16,22; 23:49; 24:24,27;
25:5,7,11,17; 28:24,26; 29:16,21; 30:19,26;
32:15; 33:29; 34:30; 35:4,9,15; 36:11,23,38;
37:6,14; 38:23; and finally 39:28.

Whew! I went through the entire Book of Ezekiel for this, highlighting each verse where the Lord makes this statement. If repetition means anything, then clearly it's important to the Living God that His people know He is alive and on the job and involved in their situation.

That is the missing element in the worship of many in our pews. They go through the motions, sing the hymns, offer up the prayers, bring their tithes, and teach their lessons. But God is far off. He is a concept more than a Living Presence. This, we might add, is not always their fault. We in the pulpit have frequently conducted ourselves and delivered our messages as

though we were off on a picnic far from home without oversight or accountability. If the pulpit acts that way, the pew will not be long following.

Praying, therefore, that your people might experience God today in worship is right up there among the greatest desires of the Heavenly Father. God wants us to know He is Lord.

This Man Standing Before You is Heaven-called and God-sent

Once the people come face to face with the reality of God's presence among them, they will humble themselves in awe. The next prayer—that they might know “*I am your prophet*”—is a short step.

Twice in Ezekiel, among all those declarations that “*they will know that I am the Lord,*” we see God wants Israel to know that prophet whom they've been despising is God's man.

“As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse—for they are a rebellious house—yet they will know that a prophet has been among them” (Ezek. 2:5).

“And when this comes to pass—surely it will come—then they will know that a prophet has been among them” (Ezek. 33:33).

Is this a legitimate prayer for a preacher to voice to the Father? You bet it is. Pray it, pastor. “Lord, let these people know that You are God and that I am your servant.” Pray it often. It is the will of God; it is the need of your people; it is the validation of your ministry. It is the remedy for what ails the Church.

It weighs heavily on the heart of every God-sent messenger that there are in every church men and women who treat his ministry with scorn. It’s important that the preacher not take it personally or react as though personally offended. It’s the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom they are rejecting (See Exo. 16:8 and 1 Sam. 8:7).

When God sends revival to your church, two big things will occur. **1)** The people will be in constant awe of the Father's presence. They will need no convincing or reminders that He is alive and on the job and involved in what we are doing in this place. His presence will be so real that many times the people will feel they can almost reach out and touch Him. **2)** They will adore their pastor and support him.

But not all will. Not all? I thought you said the church was in revival. Why not everyone?

Every congregation has its share of hangers-on. Israel in the wilderness had them, a carnal group that did not understand or value spiritual things. Every church since has been infiltrated by their sons and daughters.

What we must not do is elect them as leaders of the congregation or sit still and wait for all of them to be on board before moving forward. If you are indeed “the called of the Lord,” pastor, then you must keep your eyes on Him and take orders from no one else. You will take counsel from many, but orders from only One.

You’re probably wondering if the Lord ever answered my prayer in that church, that they would know I was God’s man. He did. Not as dramatically as He did for Elijah, but He answered affirmatively. No fire fell from heaven. No prophets of Baal were executed. Nothing like that.

What happened is that a few of the nay-sayers apologized and got their hearts right with God and the pastor. Several moved out of town. Some went to Heaven. And the others just gave up.

Remember how Joseph in the Old Testament had 7 good years in Egypt

followed by 7 years of famine? Well, this Joseph put in 14 years in that church—7 really difficult ones in which I was continually having to prove myself, followed by 7 wonderful years, the kind every pastor dreams of.

That prayer is well worth praying. I recommend it heartily.

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Jewels from Past Giants

Christ as a Man of Prayer

By James Stalker

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I. The Mystery of Jesus' Prayers

There is surely a mystery in the prayers of Jesus. If, as we believe, He was no less than God, how could God pray to God, or what need could there be in His nature for the satisfaction of which He required to pray?

It may be a partial answer to this question to say that all prayer does not consist of petitions arising from the sense of need. Prayer, indeed, is often spoken of, especially by those who wish to bring it into ridicule, as if it consisted of nothing but a series of demands addressed to God—to give fine weather, or to take away disease, or in some other way to alter our circumstances in accordance with our wishes.

But it is not by those who pray that prayer is thus spoken of. In the prayers of those who pray most and best, petitions proper, I venture to say, occupy only an

inconsiderable place. Much of prayer expresses the fullness of the soul rather than its emptiness. It is the overflow of the cup.

Prayer at its best is, if one may be allowed the expression, conversation with God, the confidential talk of a child who tells everything to his father. There is a remarkable example of this in the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. This great book is in the form of a prayer from beginning to end; yet it narrates its author's history and expounds the most important of his opinions. Evidently the good man had got into the habit of doing all his deepest thinking in the form of conversation with God.

If this be what prayer is, it is not difficult to understand how the Eternal Son should have prayed to the Eternal Father. Indeed, it is easy to see that, in this sense, He must have prayed without ceasing.

But this does not altogether clear up the mystery of the prayers of Jesus; for many of them were undoubtedly expressions of the sense of want. *“In the days of His flesh, He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared”* (Heb. 5:7). How can we explain a statement like this? There is but one explanation of it; and it is His true humanity. It is only by accepting this truth in the fullest sense that we can understand this aspect of His life. Christ was not half a God and half a man, but perfectly God and perfectly man.

There are things about Him, and there are statements of His own, to which justice cannot be done without categorically calling Him God. We may hesitate to utter this confession, but the facts, unless we flinch from them, will compel us to make it. On the other hand, there are other things

about Him which compel us in the fullest acceptance of the term to call Him a man; and we are not honoring but dishonoring Him if we do not accept this truth also in all its fullness and in all its consequences.

He prayed, then, because He was a man. Humanity even at its best is a feeble and dependent thing; it can never be self-sufficient. Even in Him it was not sufficient for itself, but dependent on God from day to day; and He expressed His sense of dependence by praying. Does this not bring Him very near us? Verily He is our brother, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

But there is another lesson in it, and a graver one. Although a man, Jesus was a sinless man. At every stage of development His manhood was perfect. He had no sinful past to weaken the force of present effort. Yet He needed prayer and resorted to it continually. What a commentary on our need of it if He needed it, being what He

was, how must we need it, being what we are.

II. The Life of Prayer

The life of prayer is a secret life, and everyone who really loves prayer has habits of it known only to himself. Much of the prayerfulness of Jesus must have lain beyond the observation of even His disciples, and therefore is altogether unrecorded in the Gospels. But some of His habits have been preserved, and they are extremely interesting and instructive.

He liked, when about to pray, to escape from the house and from the town and go away out into the natural solitudes. We read, "*He went out and departed unto a solitary place, and there prayed*" (Luke 4:42). Elsewhere it is said, "*He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed*" (Luke 5:16). He seems to have especially loved mountains as places of prayer. When

the statement is anywhere made that He went up to a mountain to pray, commentators try to find out, by examining the vicinity in which He was sojourning at the time, which mountain it was He ascended for this purpose. But in this, I think, they are on the wrong track. In Palestine, as in many parts of Scotland, there is a mountain everywhere. A mile or two from any town you are out on it. You have only to quit the houses, cross a few acres of cultivated ground, and your feet are on the turfy pastures, where you can be absolutely alone.

Jesus had, if we may so speak, made the discovery that He could obtain this solitude anywhere and, when He arrived in a town, His first thought was, which was the shortest road to the mountain—just as ordinary travelers inquire where are the most noted sights and which is the best hotel.

There is a solitude of time as well as a solitude of space. What mountains and wildernesses are to towns and cities, the night-time and the early morning are to the day-time and the early night. Jesus frequented this solitude too for prayer. We hear of Him continuing the whole night in prayer to God, or it is said that He “*rose up a great while before day, and departed into a solitary place to pray*” (Mark 1:35). It may partly have been because, on account of His poverty, He could not easily find solitude in the houses in which He lodged that Jesus cultivated this habit, and this may give His example a special interest for any whose circumstances expose them to the same difficulty.

But it is a discovery which might immensely enrich us all if we were to realize how easy it is to get into the natural solitudes. There is scarcely a town out of which you cannot escape in a very few

minutes and find yourself quite alone—on a bit of shore, or on a mountain, or in a pasture or a wood. The town or city may be thundering away quite near, with its imprisoned multitudes bound on the treadmill of its toils or its amusements; but you are out of it and alone with God.

There is more than mere solitude in such a situation to assist prayer. There is a ministry of nature which soothes the mind and disposes it to devotion. Never did I feel more strongly that in this habit Jesus had laid bare one of the great secrets of life than one day when I climbed all alone a hill above Inveraray and lay on the summit, musing through a summer forenoon. On every hand there stretched a solitary world of mountain and moorland; the loch below was gleaming in the sun like a shield of silver; the town was visible at the foot of the hill, and the passengers could be seen moving in the streets, but no sound of its

bustle reached so high. The great sky was over all, and God seemed just at hand, waiting to hear every word.

It was in spots like this that Jesus prayed. He prayed, however, in company as well as in solitude. We hear of Him again and again taking two or three of His disciples away to pray with them, and sometimes of Him praying with them all. The Twelve were a kind of family to Him, and He assiduously cultivated family worship. He spoke too of the value of united prayer. *“I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven”* (Matt. 18:19).

United prayer acts on the spirit very much in the same way as conversation acts on the mind. Many a man's intellect, when he is alone, is slow in its movements and far from fertile in the production of ideas. But, when it meets with another mind and

clashes with it in conversation, it is transformed: it becomes agile and audacious; it burns and coruscates, and brings forth ideas out of its resources which are a surprise even to itself. So, where two or three are met together, the prayer of one strikes fire from the soul of another; and the latter in his turn leads the way to nobler heights of devotion.

And lo! as their joy increases, there is One in their midst whom they all recognize and cling to. He was there before, but it is only when their hearts begin to burn that they recognize Him; and in a true sense they may be said to bring Him there—“*Where two or three are met together in My name, there am I in the midst of them*” (Matt. 18:20).

III. The Occasions of Prayer

The occasions which call for prayer are innumerable, and it would be vain to attempt to count them. Jesus undoubtedly

had, as we have ourselves, reasons for praying every day; but some of the occasions on which He prayed are especially instructive.

1) We find Him engaged in special prayer just before taking very important steps in life. One of the most important steps He ever took was the selection from among His disciples of the Twelve who were to be His apostles. It was an act on which the whole future of Christianity depended; and what was He doing before it took place? *“It came to pass in those days that He went into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God; and, when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples, and of them He chose twelve, whom He also named apostles”* (Luke 6:12-13).

It was after this night-long vigil that He proceeded to the choice which was to be so momentous for Him and for them and for all the world. There was another day for

which, we are told, He made similar preparation. It was that on which He first informed His disciples that He was to suffer and die. Thus it is evident that, when Jesus had a day of crisis or of difficult duty before Him, He gave Himself especially to prayer.

Would it not simplify our difficulties if we attacked them in the same way? It would infinitely increase the intellectual insight with which we try to penetrate a problem and the power of the hand we lay upon duty. The wheels of existence would move far more smoothly and our purposes travel more surely to their aims, if every morning we reviewed beforehand the duties of the day with God.

2) Jesus appears to have devoted Himself especially to prayer at times when His life was unusually full of work and excitement. His was a very busy life; there were nearly always many coming and going about Him. Sometimes, however, there was

such a congestion of thronging objects that He had scarcely time to eat. But even then He found time to pray. Indeed, these appear to have been with Him seasons of more prolonged prayer than usual. Thus we read: *“So much the more went there a fame abroad of Him, and great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by Him of their infirmities; but He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed”* (Luke 5:15-16).

Many in our day know what this congestion of occupations is: they are swept off their feet with their engagements and can scarcely find time to eat. We make this a reason for not praying; Jesus made it a reason for praying. Is there any doubt which is the better course? Many of the wisest have in this respect done as Jesus did. When Luther had a specially busy and exciting day, he allowed himself longer time than usual for prayer beforehand.

A wise man once said that he was too busy to be in a hurry; he meant that, if he allowed himself to become hurried, he could not do all that he had to do. There is nothing like prayer for producing this calm self-possession. When the dust of business so fills your room that it threatens to choke you, sprinkle it with the water of prayer, and then you can cleanse it out with comfort and expedition.

3) We find Jesus engaging in special prayer when about to enter into temptation. The greatest scene of prayer in His life is undoubtedly Gethsemane. As we enter that garden after Him, we fear almost to look on the scene—it is so sacred and so passes our understanding, and we tremble as we listen to the prayers rising from the ground where He lies. Never were prayers heard like these. We cannot fathom them, yet much may be learned from them.

Let one lesson, however, suffice in the meantime: He prayed on this occasion before entering into temptation; for at the gate of the garden, after the agony was over, He said, "*This is your hour and the power of darkness*" (Luke 22:53). It was the commencement of His final conflict with the powers of wickedness in earth and hell. But He had equipped Himself for the conflict by the prayer in the garden beforehand, and so He was able to go through all that followed with unruffled dignity and with perfect success. His strength was the strength of prayer.

What an illustration of contrast was presented on that occasion by the weakness of the disciples! For them also the hour and the power of darkness began at the gate of Gethsemane, but it was an hour of disaster and ignominious defeat. Why? Because they were sleeping when they ought to have been praying. "*Watch and pray,*" He had

said, bending over their prostrate forms, “*lest ye enter into temptation*” (Mark 14:38). But they heeded not, and so, when the hour of temptation came, they fell.

Alas, their experience has often been ours also. The only armor in which temptation can be successfully met is prayer, and when the enemy is allowed to come upon us before we have buckled it on, we have not a chance of standing.

4) If any scene of prayer in our Lord's life may compete in interest with this one, it is the last of all. Jesus died praying. His last words were words of prayer. The habit of life was strong in death. It may seem far off, but this event will come to us also. What will our last words be? Who can tell? But would it not be beautiful if our spirit were so steeped in the habit of prayer that the language of prayer came naturally to us at the last? Many have died with Christ's own last words on their lips. Who would not covet them for

his own? *“Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.”*

IV. The Answers to Prayer

If anyone were to go through the life of Christ seeking for answers to His prayers, many of them, I am persuaded, could be found. But I shall at present refer only to two on which the Word itself lays emphasis, and which are especially instructive.

The Transfiguration was an answer to prayer. This is how it is introduced in one of the Gospels: *“And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias”* (Luke 9:28-30). I do not say that He was praying for this alteration in His countenance and raiment,

or even for the privilege of talking with these wise and sympathetic spirits about the work which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. But yet, I say, all this was in answer to the prayer He was offering when it came.

There are some who, disbelieving in the direct virtue of prayer to obtain from God what it asks, yet believe in what they call the reflex influence of prayer: they allow it does you good to pray, even if you get nothing directly by it, and even if there is no God to hear you. This, taken as the whole theory of prayer, is a mockery, as the simplest mind must perceive. But it is none the less true that there is a most blessed reflex influence of prayer.

Prayers for goodness and purity in a sense answer themselves; for you cannot pray for these things without in some measure receiving them in the very act. To lift up the soul to God calms and ennobles it.

It was this, I imagine, that was the beginning of Christ's transfiguration. The absorption and delight of communion with His Father overspread His very face with beauty and glory, and through this outlet the inner glory leapt forth.

In some degree this happens to all who pray, and it may happen in a high degree to those who pray much. Moses, after being forty days in the mount with God, shone with the same kind of light as the disciples saw in their Master on the Holy Mount; and there is a spiritual beauty bestowed in some degree on all God's saints who pray much which is of the same nature and is the most precious of all answers to prayer. Character flows from the well-spring of prayer.

The other answer to prayer given to Jesus to which I desire to call attention took place at His baptism. Here is St. Luke's account of it: "*Now when all the people were*

baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended like a dove upon Him” (Luke 3:21-22). It was when He was praying that the Spirit was sent down upon Him, and in all probability it was this which at the moment He was praying for.

He had just left His home in Nazareth to begin His public work; and He was in immediate need of the Holy Spirit to equip Him for His task. It is a forgotten truth that Jesus was filled with the Holy Ghost, but it is one most clearly revealed in the Gospels. The human nature of Jesus was from first to last dependent on the Holy Ghost, being thereby made a fit organ for the divine; and it was in the strength of this inspiration that all His work, as preacher, miracle-worker, and atoner, was done. And if in any measure our life is to be an imitation of His—if we are to help in carrying on His

work in the world or in filling up what is lacking in His sufferings—we must be dependent on the same influence.

But how are we to get it? He has told us Himself: *“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him”* (Matt. 7:11). Power, like character, comes from the fountain of prayer.

James Stalker (1848-1927), one of Scotland's most renowned preachers, was born in Crieff, Perthshire, and educated at the University of Edinburgh, as well as in Germany. Stalker served as a pastor in various churches for over 30 years and in 1902 was appointed professor of Church history in Aberdeen at the United Free Church College, where he served until just before his death. Stalker was a widely known visiting lecturer and scholar, teaching

through the years at colleges and seminaries throughout the United States and Britain. He declined several leadership positions offered to him, focusing his efforts instead on making the Word known through preaching and writing. Some of his best-known books include *Studies on the Person of Christ*, *The Life of Paul*, and *The Seven Deadly Sins*.

Marks of the Master

by The Old Scot

Hibernation: Deep Sleeps

Sleeping, someone has said, “is trying death on for size.” While not many would accept that extreme view, it does emphasize the difference between sleep and wakefulness. When we sleep, all our bodily functions slow down. We breathe less

often, our hearts beat less frequently, and our muscles do less work. It is a time to recover from the exertions of the day and to make ready for tomorrow.

But not all sleep is for this purpose. For some creatures a special kind of sleep called “hibernation” may go on for many weeks and even months at a time. It is a primary means of survival for many of Earth’s creatures.

But for some of them, including especially some species of ground squirrels, bats, and hedgehogs, their winter sleep is so deep that it closely mimics death. The Arctic Ground Squirrel, for example, takes only about three shallow breaths per minute; its heartbeat is virtually imperceptible; and it is unresponsive, even when handled. It not only looks dead, it may also be as cold as ice, for its internal temperature may drop to the freezing point.

The somber truth is that the Arctic Ground Squirrel in hibernation is balanced on a knife-edge between life and death. Some of the animals never wake up from their long winter sleep. Those that do awaken have lost about 40 per cent of their body weight. They are also in poor condition, for there has been no repair, nor even maintenance, of body organs and tissues for many months. Even their bones and teeth have deteriorated. The survivors have a lot of catching-up to do when spring returns to the Arctic!

Yet through some wonderful agency of which science as yet has no understanding, the awakened animal is capable of returning to its normal condition within a mere 24 hours!

Interestingly, naturalists have discovered that one organ does not share in the general winter deterioration. The brain is protected by an extra supply of blood, while

all else is deprived. The brain, of course, contains the trigger mechanism which tells the rest of the body when it is time to wake up. Since this trigger must function perfectly at the right time, precious heat is supplied to it through the blood.

Many other animals practice less intensive forms of hibernation. Bears, for instance, snooze away the dreary cold months, but their sleep should properly be called “winter rest,” rather than true hibernation. Their body temperature falls only about 7 degrees Fahrenheit (from 100° to 93°), and they are capable of activity if disturbed. (In fact, they can be downright nasty if awakened early—just like some humans!)

Female bears awaken sufficiently to give birth to their cubs during this winter rest and rouse slightly to suckle their hungry offspring thereafter— in the manner of sleepy mothers the world-around.

The reason bears sleep far less soundly than much smaller hibernators may be simply a matter of economics: a 200 kilogram bear would need more than 5,000 calories to warm from 50° to 99°. That is a full day's ration, and taking those calories from a body already seriously depleted could threaten the bear's life. So by opting for a shallower, warmer sleep, bears use up more calories each day but they avoid the heavy expenditure of energy to warm up as they wake up.

How did hibernation become a vital survival resource for many animals? Some may shrug the question off by remarking that "it just happened." But nothing ever "just happens." There is always a cause and a reason.

Others attempt to explain hibernation as a mechanism which the species evolved in order to survive. But a moment's reflection will show the absurdity of this explanation:

When an animal sleeps, all its defenses are lowered. Not only is it helpless against the attack of an intruder, it is also less resistant to the icy breath of the silent killer, cold.

When warm-blooded animals become chilled, their bodies instinctively generate more heat, just as our bodies do when we are cold. And it has been found that hibernators react just as do other warm-blooded animals, if they are caught by an unseasonal cold wave—they generate extra heat. It is only at the right time of year that falling temperatures plus unavailability of food trigger the onset of hibernation.

To overcome the powerful instinct to stay warm, an even more powerful instinct to just let go must somehow be developed. Along with this must come development of an instinct to pile on excess body fat in the summer and fall. Something also tells each animal that it needs to prepare a snug retreat ahead of time.

Nor is this all: trigger mechanisms must be built in—one to start the sleep cycle and another to end it. Furthermore, special adaptations are required throughout the body to shut down each function to the bare minimum required for life. And when all this is arranged, there must finally be special adaptations provided to bring each body function back to peak performance in a very short time after awakening.

In fact, the more we learn about hibernation, the more obvious it becomes that God has been at work here. The deep cold of winter has never waited for multiplied generations to inch their way to survival techniques that work. Quite simply, these species could never survive unless every needed adaptation was already fully in place.

The Bible declares that God in His wisdom made the Earth and all things in it. If that is so, then all the Earth gives back

testimony to its Creator; and we believe that all of Nature does just that, when we seek to discovered her secrets.

But the Bible also says that “*the fool hath said in his heart, ‘There is no God’*” (Ps. 14:1). Many would rather follow some foolish speculation than admit that God is indeed the Author of creation. Nevertheless, at the end every knee shall bow before God and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord of all (Rom. 14:11).

So whether we now, with joy, acknowledge God as our Maker, or whether we now deny Him, there will come a time when we will have no choice but to give Him His due. But woe to those who wait until that time! For then they will be condemned prisoners, standing before the Judge of all, confessing tearfully that in their lifetimes they were willful rebels against God. Their eyes will be open at last, but too late.

For now, God's door of grace and forgiveness is still open, through His Son, Jesus Christ. That is why the Bible says "**now** is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). Do not throw away your opportunity!

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

Source: *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 15th edition, Vol. 14, pp. 670-676.

Advancing the Ministries of the Gospel

Greek Debt Crisis Presents Threats and Opportunities to Ministry

By Karen Farney

This column highlights the ministries of Disciple's parent organization, Advancing the Ministries of the Gospel (AMG)

International, a non-denominational missions agency.

In 1942 AMG International started as “The American Committee for the Evangelization of the Greeks” and since then we have always had a presence among the Greek People. Most Greeks are nominally Christian, but have no experience of the Gospel of Christ from the state-funded Greek Orthodox Church. Our Greek co-workers are bravely sharing Christ through St. Luke’s Hospital, media evangelism, the Cosomovision Center, outreach to refugees, and church planting.

The current financial and political situation in Greece has greatly affected our ministry, especially St. Luke’s Hospital. In light of the present crisis, I want give you a quick update on what is going on and how it is affecting our co-workers in Greece. We

must remember to pray for Greece as they struggle through this difficult time.

On June 29, the Parliament passed another austerity plan in order to receive more bailout money from the European Union and the IMF. Immediately, Greece will receive 12 billion Euros with which to pay their most urgent loans. If Greece doesn't receive the 12 billion right away, they will default on loans in July and August, which would greatly affect the world economy.

The austerity plan will cut €20 billion in public spending, raise taxes, and privatize many government owned operations like the postal service and key shipping ports. The parliament hopes that this plan will stop or slow the ever-climbing Greek national debt. Currently Greece needs over €100 billion to cover their debt obligations.

The Greek people are hurting. The unemployment rate is at 16%, but unofficially, it is much higher, because 8 %

of the population consists of illegal immigrants (largely from the Muslim world) who are also unemployed or under-employed. The current austerity package will significantly increase income tax and sales tax, and cut public sector jobs and salaries. In protest to these measures, public employees have repeatedly gone on strike, grinding public transportation, education, sanitation, etc. to a halt. Often, anarchists join in the protests, turning the demonstrations into violent mobs that destroy life and property and have to be turned back by massive police intervention.

All of this directly affects our ministry efforts in Greece. Yet, it also gives us the opportunity to share the love and grace of Jesus Christ to people in their most desperate time of need. Fotis Romeos, a lifelong resident of Athens and AMG's Eastern European director said, "As Christians we have to lift up our heads to the

Lord of the harvest, but at the same time to lift up our voices and share the victorious message of His resurrection.”

In addition to the economic crisis in Greece, there is also a moral crisis with prostitution, human trafficking, and high divorce and abortion rates. Romeos said, “I do believe that this atmosphere is ideal for Christians to raise their voice and speak about the hope of our faith in Jesus Christ. The Greek people are in desperate need of some hope for something better in their lives.”

Please pray for Greece. Pray especially for St. Luke’s Hospital in Thessaloniki, which is in danger of bankruptcy because the government has not yet paid tens of millions of Euros in state health insurance claims. Pray for all our co-workers in Greece as they continue in ministry and shine brightly for Christ, and

pray for their financial support during this tough economic time.

If you would like to be part of what God is doing in Greece by supporting our Greek missionaries, and national workers, and various ministries, please visit www.amginternational.org, write to AMG International, 6815 Shallowford Rd., Chattanooga, TN 37421, or call (800) 251-7206 and ask for Patrick Ragan. Thank you for your prayers and support.

Karen Farney is ministry assistant to child sponsorships for AMG International.

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 Reviews—7/11/2011

Editor's Note: As we sometimes do, in this issue, due to a recent influx of books we are offering brief overviews of six noteworthy recent releases in lieu of our usual full reviews.

Am I Really a Christian?, Mike McKinley, 2011, Crossway Books, Wheaton, Ill., ISBN 9781433525766, 160 pages, \$12.99, softcover.

What happens when someone thinks he or she is a Christian, but isn't? Mike McKinley takes readers on a journey of what it means to be a Christian. He asserts that "manipulative evangelism techniques and a

poor understanding of the gospel have resulted in an abundance of professing Christians who have no idea what it means to follow Christ.”

Each chapter title begins with “You’re not a Christian (if/when/just because you). . . .” As he surveys what it means to be Christian, McKinley offers criteria for evaluating one’s standing before God. Readers are guided through a series of challenges to reflect, repent, remember, and report to another person. This unique book is written for nominal or new Christians and can be used in personal or small-group study.

Give Them Grace: Dazzling Your Kids with the Love of Jesus, Elyse M.

Fitzpatrick and Jessica Thompson, 2011, Crossway Books, Wheaton, Ill., ISBN 9781433520099, 216 pages, \$14.99, softcover.

How are parents to raise children so they don't become Pharisees (legalists) or prodigals (rebels)? Fitzpatrick and Thompson say that it's all about grace-filled, gospel-driven parenting. Christian parents, in their desire to raise godly children, can drift toward rule-centered discipline. There is, however, a far more effective method—a grace-motivated approach that begins with the glorious truth of God's love for sinners.

Give Them Grace shows parents how to connect the benefits of the cross—especially regeneration, adoption, and justification—to their children's daily lives. Fitzpatrick and Thompson also discuss discipline, dealing with popular culture, and evangelism as a way of life. Parents will find this book a great resource for raising grace-filled, Jesus-loving kids.

The Living Church: Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor, John Stott, 2011,

InterVarstiy Press, Downers Grove, Ill.,
ISBN 9780830838059, 174 pages, \$15.00,
softcover.

A paperback re-issue of this wonderful 2007 book, *The Living Church* is a meditation on the characteristics and the future of the Church from the nonagenarian British pastor. Stott looks at seven areas which represent crucial aspects of the responsibility of the Body: worship, evangelism, ministry, fellowship, preaching, giving, and impact. In each of these areas, he points out that the biblical approach is one of balancing extremes where the truth is not found in compromise but in fully encompassing both.

A fitting capstone to Stott's writing career and a piercing examination of the state of Christendom. As the subtitle implies, the book is at its core an earnest plea from a man near the end of his life exhorting those

whom he loves to fully embrace the calling to pursue Christ's model of a church that is both emphatically holy and emphatically relevant.

The Mighty Weakness of John Knox,
Douglas Bond, 2011, Reformation Trust
Publishing, Lake Mary, Fla., ISBN
9781567692556, 138 pages, \$16.00,
hardcover.

An engaging concise biography of the great Scottish reformer, John Knox. Bond's purpose is not simply to shed light on a past hero of the faith, but to study his habits and his faith to illuminate for readers the ways in which God uses our human weaknesses to show His mighty strength. Bond relates how God took this short, sickly, shy Scotsman and grew him through the Spirit into a firebrand of the Gospel whose legacy is still felt in Scotland and throughout the world.

Old Testament Wisdom Literature: A Theological Introduction, Craig G.

Bartholomew and Ryan P. O'Dowd, 2011, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill., ISBN 9780830838967, 327 pages, \$30.00, hardcover.

Bartholomew and O'Dowd look at the three wisdom books of the Old Testament (Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes) and the interpretive challenges and rewards that they present. They bring a wealth of cultural contextual studies to bear on their overview, and they delve into the style and traditions of wisdom literature to formulate a biblical theology of wisdom that applies still today.

Reaching the Next Level, Pete

Charpentier, 2010, Crosslink Publishing, Rapid City, S.D., ISBN 9780982621530, 203 pages, softcover.

Discipleship is the crucial activity of the Christian life—we are called to follow Christ and to multiply by drawing others to Him. *Reaching the Next Level* is a helpful resource for Christians to deepen their own individual relationships with Christ or to mentor others.

The book is available in both leader and student versions, with a study-guide format and discussion/application questions for each chapter. Charpentier identifies four key disciplines of our relationship to Christ (the Scriptures, prayer, discernment, and confession) and two key disciplines of our relationship to others (community and witnessing) and focuses the study around them. Ideal for personal devotions, one-on-one discipleship, or group study.

News Update—7/11/2011

China Arrests 19 More Christians at Outdoor Service

Despite restrictions due to the Chinese Communist Party's 90th anniversary, members of Shouwang Church in Beijing continued to meet outdoors July 3. *Baptist Press* reports their actions led to at least 19 arrests. Church members defied the Chinese government for the 13th consecutive week with the outdoor service.

The illegal church, which was evicted from its leased meeting space in April, reported in a translated statement on ChinaAid.org that police were waiting outside the church's designated worship site, an open-air plaza in northwest Beijing, and "only a few dozen people" were able to meet because, "many believers were under stricter detainment at home. Some individuals were taken to be detained in hotels nearby."

All but two of the 19 people arrested were released by midnight, and one was released the next day. Some church members have lost their homes or jobs and others have been subjected to verbal abuse because of their faith.

Religion Today Summaries

Egypt Supreme Court Rules in Favor of Christian Re-Converts

Middle East Concern reports that Christians in Egypt won a small victory in court on July 3. Egypt's Supreme Administrative Court ruled in favor of those seeking to have the religious registration officially changed back to "Christian."

This ruling affects people who were registered as "Christian," but whose registration changed to "Muslim." Adults who convert to Islam can change their registration, and a parent's change affects their child's. The ruling stated that

presentation of a birth certificate stating religious registration as “Christian” with a current confirmation of faith from the church would be sufficient for the change to be made.

However, the ruling seems to leave out Muslims who have converted to Christianity, who have protested the registration laws for years.

Religion Today Summaries

BGEA Teams Finish Work in Tornado-Stricken States

Billy Graham Rapid Response teams have wrapped up their ministry to Tuscaloosa, Ala., and Joplin, Mo., following deadly tornadoes earlier this year. The cities were two of the hardest hit locations in what has been a particularly active and devastating tornado season.

The Rapid Response Team, a nationwide network of chaplains across 40

states that are specifically trained to deal with crisis situations, spent approximately nine weeks in Tuscaloosa, ministering to and praying with more than 2,600 survivors. They were in Joplin for more than six weeks and comforted more than 4,200 in and around the city of 50,000.

“We are just thankful for the opportunity to come alongside those who are grieving and broken-hearted, and share with them the hope God offers through the cross of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ,” said Preston Parrish, executive vice president of ministry at the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA).

Religion Today Summaries

Iran ‘Annuls’ Death Sentence for Pastor

Following a huge prayer campaign on behalf of an Iranian pastor, ASSIST News Service has learned that Iran’s supreme court has overturned the death sentence

handed down to a pastor. Youcef Nadarkhani, a Christian pastor, is accused of apostasy for having converted from Islam.

The pastor's lawyer, Mohammad Ali Dadkhah, said Sunday, "The Supreme Court has annulled the death sentence and sent the case back to the court in Rasht (his hometown), asking the accused to repent."

Nadarkhani, a pastor in the Church of Iran denomination, was arrested in October 2009 while attempting to register his church. However, neither the pastor nor his lawyer has seen the written verdict yet, and Dadkhah himself faces nine years in jail for defending the pastor.

Religion Today Summaries

Pakistan: Support for Blasphemy Laws Still Strong

Efforts to modify Pakistan's draconian blasphemy laws have slackened inside the country since March. Governor of Pakistan's

province Punjab Salmaan Taseer and Federal Minister for Minorities Shahbaz Bhatti were both assassinated shortly before then after voicing public support for Asia Bibi, the first woman sentenced to death for blasphemy charges.

Another man, 29-year-old Abdul Sattar, was sentenced to death for blasphemy charges on June 21. According to the British group Index on Censorship, no one has ever been executed by the state for blasphemy charges. However, the number of those gunned down while facing charges continues to rise.

In July 2010, two Christian brothers accused of committing blasphemy were killed just outside of a Pakistani court. Many Pakistanis have demonstrated publicly against any changes to the laws.

Religion Today Summaries

Uzbek Christians Suffer as Regime Tightens Noose

ASSIST News Service reports that Christians in the former Soviet country of Uzbekistan faced multiple instances of persecution in the last week.

According to a report by Fernando Perez for the Religious Liberty Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance, one Christian woman was beaten and suffered a concussion. Another woman was fined \$1,465 by a court for giving the New Testament to a child. One Christian man was threatened with axe attack by a police official and another man was assaulted by police.

Perez says the spurt can be linked to renewed attempts to maintain hold on power and the communist legacy by its president, Islam Karimov. The president has remained in office through controversial referendums since 1991.

Sermon Helps

From SermonHall.com

Sermon Outlines

How to Walk Through a Mess

1 Samuel 30:3-24

Intro.: Ever had the overwhelming feeling that the future looked so bleak that you might as well throw in the towel, turn in your Bible, and move to the woods? But God says we can face our future with confidence. In 1 Samuel, Saul was on the throne for 32 years, until age 72. David was immensely popular, much to Saul's chagrin. King David walked into a mess and had to learn that:

I. God's Plan May Include a Divine Interruption (29:10)

A. David had run from the wrath of Saul into Philistine territory. He was trying to outrun his problems, but God wanted to deepen his faith.

B. Achish loved David, but succumbed to pressure and ordered him to leave. David thought it was circumstantial; with God, it was providential.

II. God's People May Never Escape Problems (30:3-5)

A. While living in Ziklag, David had raided Israel's enemies while pretending to raid Israel

B. Upon returning to Ziklag, they found the city burned and their families not to be found.

C. Some problems are self-induced; others are not.

III. God's Road May Never Be the Easy Road (vv. 6-10)

A. His followers spoke of stoning him.

B. David turned to God and
“*strengthened himself in the Lord his
God.*”

IV. God’s Man Must Never Be for Sale (vv.
212-24)

A. David organized a raid to recover
their families and goods from the
Amalekites.

B. Upon returning the spoils which
were recovered, refused to share with
those who had stayed behind.

C. David’s character was not for sale.

Closing: In the toughest of times, God’s man
maintains his character.

David Alan Sylvester, Today’s Pulpit,
www.todayspulpit.com

The Unchanging God

I. His concern changes not.

II. His commands change not.

III. His compassion changes not.

IV. His commission changes not.

Croft M. Pentz

Illustrations

The Music Played On

Natural man does not have a clue about solving the mystery of Christ. His attempts to figure out God's mind by using his own reason are futile.

Use your imagination for a moment, if you will: Imagine a family of mice who lived all their lives in a large piano. To them in their piano-world came the music of the instrument, filling all the dark spaces with sound and harmony. At first the mice were impressed by it. They drew comfort and wonder from the thought that there was someone who made the music—though invisible to them—above, yet close to them.

They loved to think of the Great Player whom they could not see. Then one day a daring mouse climbed up part of the piano and returned very thoughtful. He had found out how music was made. Wires were the secret: tightly stretched wires of graduated lengths, which trembled and vibrated. They must revise all their old beliefs: none but the most conservative could any longer believe in the Unseen Player.

Later, another explorer carried the explanation further. Hammers were now the secret—numbers of hammers, dancing and leaping on the wires. This was a more complicated theory, but it all went to show that they lived in a purely mechanical and mathematical world. The Unseen Player came to be thought of as a myth. But the music continued to play.

*Practical Illustrations: Galatians-
Colossians*, by Leadership Ministries
Worldwide.

Steadiness under Temptation

If one looks out upon New York harbor, after an eastern storm, he will see it covered with craft, that brood upon its surface in flocks like wild fowl; nor can the eye, at a distance, tell why they hold their places, swinging but a little way with the changing tide, facing the wind obstinately and refusing to be blown away.

Every one is rooted by its anchor. If men are found in life much tempted and yet firm in principle, there is an anchor somewhere. It may be a sweetheart, or a sister, or a mother, a wife, a father, or an old teacher. People anchor each other.

Anonymous

Bulletin Inserts

On Time and Habits

Too much time is wasted by some people in telling how busy they are.

You do not get much done by starting tomorrow.

Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there.

Time is too slow for those who wait, too swift for those who fear, too long for those who grieve, too short for those who rejoice, but for those who love the Lord, time is eternity.

These four via *The Messenger*

If you have half a mind to turn on the TV, that's all you need for most of the programs.

The worst boss anyone can have is a bad habit.

These two via the *Old Union Reminder*

Good habits are the soul's muscles. The more you use them, the stronger they become.

Don't focus on your limitations—focus on your abilities.

These two from Croft M. Pentz

Bad habits are like a comfortable bed—easy to get into but hard to get out of.

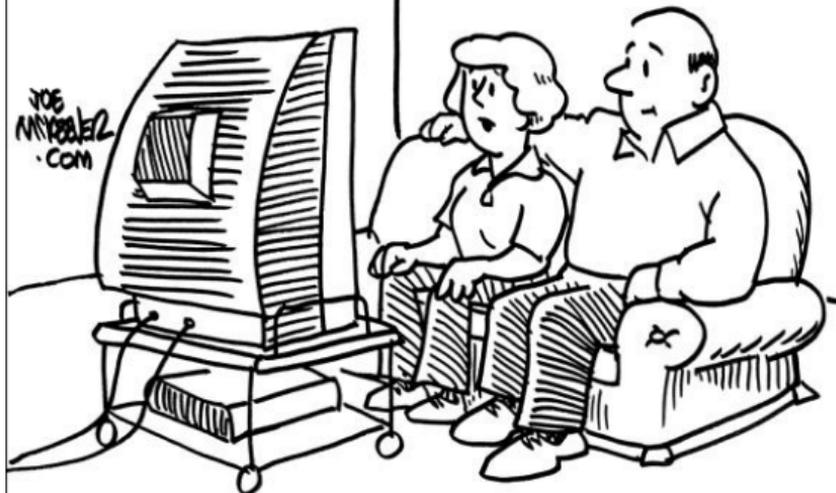
The secret of patience is doing something in the meantime.

These two Anonymous

Puzzles and 'Toons

Church 'Toons by Joe McKeever

"I'M GLAD SO MANY CHURCHES ARE BROADCASTING THEIR SERVICES. NOW THAT I SEE WHAT THEY DO, IT MAKES ME APPRECIATE MY OWN CHURCH SO MUCH MORE."



"THANK YOUR FATHER FOR TURNING ON
THE PORCH LIGHT - BUT IT SEEMS A
LITTLE MUCH, SEEING WE'VE BEEN
MARRIED GOING ON FIVE YEARS."



Answers to last issue's puzzles:

ANSWERS

1. "... to put confidence in man" (Ps. 118:8) or "... to put confidence in princes" (Ps. 118:9).
2. "... great treasure and trouble therewith" (Prov. 15:16).
3. "... great revenues without right" (Prov. 16:8).
4. "... he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich" (Prov. 28:6).
5. "... an house full of sacrifices with strife" (Prov. 17:1).
6. "... secret love" (Prov. 27:5).
7. "... the song of fools" (Eccl. 7:5).
8. "... an old and foolish king who will no more be admonished" (Eccl. 4:13).
9. "... a brother far off" (Prov. 27:10).
10. "... a thousand" (Ps. 84:10).

ACROSTIC #29: ANSWERS

ACTS (2:36) — "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

- A. LOVESTTHOUME
- B. ATHALIAH
- C. CHALDEA
- D. THUCYDIDES
- E. SHAMU
- F. ALFRED
- G. SOJOURN
- H. FLANDERS
- I. SWEET
- J. WESTBROOK
- K. MEATY
- L. DELIGHT
- M. THOR
- N. ACHISH

Father Abraham and Hidden Wisdom By Mark Oshman

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**FATHER
ABRAHAM'S
QUESTION BOX**

See answers on page 27.

“DIDJA EVER SEE...?”

In which books of the Bible can you find these odd phenomena?

1. Men as trees walking?
2. A man digging through a wall with a pack on his shoulder?
3. A prophet asking another man to wound him?
4. A man caught up to the third heaven?
5. An archangel arguing with the devil?
6. A righteous man who broke the jaws of the wicked?
7. A future king acting like a madman?
8. A man who preached until midnight?
9. A Pharisee who prayed with himself?
10. A woman whose teeth were like a shorn sheep?

Hidden Wisdom on next page

HIDDEN WISDOM: BIBLE ACROSTIC # 30

BY MARK A. OSHMAN

Solve the acrostic by using the clues listed below to guess the words and by transferring the letter above each number to its appropriate place in the diagram. The result will be a Scripture verse of admonition, comfort, or instruction. Further, the initial letters of the answers will contain the name of the book from which the verse was taken. Happy hunting! Dedicated to Dr. David Boulter, the pastoral staff, and congregation of Highland Park Baptist Church, Chattanooga, TN.

HAPPY SOLVING!!

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|-----|-----|------|------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|
| 1D | 2K | 3C | | 4Q | 5A | 6H | 7D | | 8J | 9E | 10A | 11I | | 12C | 13N | | |
| 14F | 15H | 16N | 17A | | | 18M | 19D | 20K | 21I | 22H | | 23G | 24Q | 25B | 26M | 27L | |
| 28N | 29J | | 30A | 31B | 32C | | | 33F | 34M | 35G | 36H | 37D | 38A | 39L | 40B | 41E | 42K |
| | 43D | 44N | | 45L | 46G | 47I | | 48C | 49A | 50F | 51L | 52H | 53B | 54M | 55Q | 56E | |
| 57A | 58F | 59D | | 60K | 61L | 62A | 63E | | 64D | 65B | 66G | 67H | | 68D | 69J | 70C | 71B |
| | 72E | 73J | 74H | 75F | | 76A | 77D | | 78Q | 79K | 80I | 81A | 82J | 83L | 84F | 85G | 86N |
| 87B | 88H | 89M | 90D | | 91E | 92A | | 93N | 94I | 95L | | 96J | 97E | 98B | 99C | 100H | |
| 101D | 102Q | 103K | | 104F | 105L | 106M | 107N | | | 108B | 109I | 110C | | 111E | 112H | 113F | 114A |

- A. Patronymic of Uzzia (1 Chr. 11:44) 10 92 81 30 62 114 57 38 5 49 76 17
- B. Hiawatha's Sweetheart 53 25 71 87 40 31 108 65 98
- C. A city in central England 12 32 110 48 84 99 3
- D. "They shall bear thee up, lest...
thou ____ against a stone" (3 Wds.) 59 1 90 37 68 19 7 101 43 77 64
- E. A purple quartz stone 91 72 111 56 9 63 41 97
- F. A city in central Carolina 58 104 14 33 113 70 50 75
- G. A son of Asher (1 Chr. 7:30) 35 23 85 66 46
- H. D. L. Moody, among others 88 112 52 74 36 6 22 15 100 67
- I. In the New Jerusalem,
it measures 12,000 furlongs 21 47 109 80 11 94
- J. An individual's position
in relation to others 96 8 73 82 69 29
- K. "Ye blind guides, which ____
at a gnat" 42 60 103 20 79 2
- L. Describes an east wind
God prepared for Jonah 105 27 61 83 51 95 39 45
- M. Contemptuous 89 26 54 106 34 18
- N. Attacks with machine-gun fire. 16 93 107 28 44 13 86
- O. A wind which drives away rain
(Prov. 25:23) 55 102 78 4 24