

Disciple Magazine

Equipping believers for deeper life

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by Charles Haddon Spurgeon

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Liberty in the Spirit: Freedom for Holiness

By Charles Haddon Spurgeon

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.... But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.... If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:1, 18, 25).

I. Free Gifts in Christ

This “*liberty*” makes us free to heaven’s charter—the Bible. Here is a choice passage, believer, “*When thou passest through the rivers, I will be with thee*” (Isa. 43:2). You are free to that. Here is another: “*The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall*

not depart from thee" (Isa. 54:10); you are free to that.

You are a welcome guest at the table of the promises. Scripture is a never-failing treasury filled with boundless stores of grace. It is the bank of heaven; you may draw from it as much as you please, without fee or hindrance. Come in faith and you are welcome to all covenant blessings. There is not a promise in the Word which shall be withheld. In the depths of tribulations let this freedom comfort you; amidst waves of distress let it cheer you; when sorrows surround you let it be your solace. This is your Father's love-token; you are free to it at all times.

You are also free to the throne of grace. It is the believer's privilege to have access at all times to His heavenly Father. Whatever our desires, our difficulties, our wants, we are at liberty to spread all before Him. It matters not how much we may have

sinned, we may ask and expect pardon. It signifies nothing how poor we are, we may plead His promise that He will provide all things needful. We have permission to approach His throne at all times—in midnight's darkest hour, or in noontide's most burning heat. Exercise your right, O believer, and live up to your privilege.

You are free to all that is treasured up in Christ—wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It matters not what your need is, for there is fullness of supply in Christ, and it is there for you. O what a “freedom” is yours! Freedom from condemnation, freedom to the promises, freedom to the throne of grace, and at last freedom to enter heaven!

II. What of the Law?

He who looks at his own character and position from a legal point of view, will not only despair when he comes to the end

of his reckoning, but if he be a wise man he will despair at the beginning; for if we are to be judged on the footing of God's Law, there shall no flesh living be justified. How blessed to know that we dwell in the domains of grace and not of law!

When thinking of my state before God the question is not, "Am I perfect in myself before the law?" but, "Am I perfect in Christ Jesus?" That is a very different matter. We need not enquire, "Am I without sin naturally?" but, "Have I been washed in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness?" It is not "Am I in myself well pleasing to God?" but it is "Am I accepted in the Beloved?"

The Christian views this evidences from the top of Sinai, and grows alarmed concerning his salvation; it were better far if he read his title by the light of Calvary. "Why," says he, "my faith has unbelief in it, it is not able to save me." Suppose he had

considered the object of his faith instead of his faith, then he would have said, "There is no failure in Him, and therefore I am safe." He sighs over his hope: "Ah! My hope is marred and dimmed by an anxious carefulness about present things; how can I be accepted?" Had he regarded the ground of his hope, he would have seen that the promise of God stands sure, and that whatever our doubts may be, the oath and promise never fail.

Ah! Believer, it is safer always for you to be led of the Spirit into Gospel liberty than to wear legal fetters. Judge yourself at what Christ is rather than at what you are. Satan will try to mar your peace by reminding you of your sinfulness and imperfections: you can only meet his accusations by faithfully adhering to the Gospel and refusing to wear the yoke of bondage.

III. How we Live in Liberty

The two most important things in our holy religion are the life of faith and the walk of faith. He who shall rightly understand these is not far from being a master in experimental theology, for they are vital points to a Christian. You will never find true faith unattended by true godliness; on the other hand, you will never discover a truly holy life which has not for its root a living faith upon the righteousness of Christ. Woe unto those who seek after the one without the other!

There are some who cultivate faith and forget holiness; these may be very high in orthodoxy, but they shall be very deep in condemnation, for they hold the truth in unrighteousness; and there are others who have strained after holiness of life, but have denied the faith, like the Pharisees of old, of whom the Master said, they were "*whitewashed sepulchres.*"

We must have faith, for this is the foundation; we must have holiness of life, for this is the superstructure. Of what service is the mere foundation of a building to a man in the day of tempest? Can he hide himself therein? He wants a house to cover him, as well as a foundation for that house. Even so we need the superstructure of spiritual life if we would have comfort in the day of doubt. But seek not a holy life without faith, for that would be to erect a house which can afford no permanent shelter, because it has no foundation on a rock.

Let faith and life be put together, and, like the two abutments of an arch, they will make our piety enduring. Like light and heat streaming from the same sun, they are alike full of blessing. Like the two pillars of the temple, they are for glory and for beauty. They are two streams from the fountain of grace; two lamps lit with holy fire; two olive trees watered by heavenly care. O Lord,

give us this day life within, and it will reveal itself without to Your glory.

Selections 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.

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Pastor Appreciation Is a Team Sport

By Joe McKeever

Editor’s Note: Next month (October) is pastor appreciation month, so Joe’s reminder of the congregation’s role in a pastor’s work is timely.

Fall is in the air, and for many Americans, that means football season. We who are fans only of the game have no idea what it must be like to walk out onto the field for players at the college or professional level.

Growing up, many of us played the game for fun or in school. We're used to the green expanse stretching before us and the guys on the other team facing us. But there's one thing we never saw that is a powerful element in the game played by the big boys—There are a jillion fans surrounding them.

As they exit the locker room, in their field of vision is the sliver of green that is the playing field. But filling 90 percent of their eyeballs is a stadium packed with raving, cheering, expectant fans. When the ball is thrown into the air, the backdrop is the fans. When it's kicked, the player has to pick the ball out of a mural of fans.

That's the part of the game I cannot imagine. I have little trouble imagining the running, throwing, hitting, blocking, and catching parts of the game. But what a difference it must make for a player to be the object of 75,000 fans, all screaming for him to make it or break it, to catch it or miss it. He's cheered; he's booed; he's a goat; he's a hero. I recall the time Rex Ryan, coach of the NFL's New York Jets, gave the game ball (signifying the leading role in a victory) to the fans who helped his team to a rare win over the New England Patriots. The previous week, Ryan had sent a voice mail to every season-ticket holder calling on them to "be there and be loud" at the game.

Just like Ryan knew the importance of his team's fans, pastors know the difference the congregation makes. But I suspect few ministers know better than the visiting preacher—that's what I am these days—the leading and critical role the

people in the pews make in determining what happens in a church service.

Did they pray before the service—for themselves, for the minister, for the Lord's presence, for His will to be done? Are they expectant today—toward themselves, the outcome of the service, the Lord Himself? Are they totally involved in the praise, in the prayers, in the sermon, or are they passively sitting back expecting to observe, to be “ministered unto,” but not to actively participate? Are they happy or upset? Glad to be here or just enduring the hour so they can get on to more important things?

Church members can make or break a pastor. The members can nitpick him to death. The leadership can ride him and harass him, reward him one moment and attack him another, and turn him into a candidate for the psych ward. Or, they can love him for Christ's sake. They can pray for him and encourage him. They can help him

grow to the full extent of the Lord's design for him. So much depends on their involvement.

Here are five suggestions for turning your pastor into a "winner".

1) First and above all, pray for him.

And I don't mean just a "bless the pastor" prayer, although we'll take that if that's all you can give. Pray God will protect him from critics, will give him discernment about the use of his time, and strengthen his family relationships. Ask the Father to give him quietness of soul, peace in his heart, and joy in his life. Pray for the Holy Spirit to speak to him in the study and to give him solid rest when he lies down at night. Pray for his family, his wife and children. Pray for his recreation time and whatever he does to take care of his body. Pray for his mental health and his positive attitude. Pray for those times he's in his study and someone drops by with a problem, needing his

counsel. Pray for his leadership with the staff.

2) Speak well of him to others. In fact, you bring the subject up. “Didn’t our pastor bring a wonderful message Sunday?” “I loved his series on the parables of Matthew.” “I’m so happy God sent Pastor Mike to our church.” Set the standard. And challenge anyone who is determined to tear down the preacher. Even the best of ministers gets subjected to that from time to time. But you do not have to sit back and idly observe it. Speak up.

Do not retreat into a cowardly “Well, who am I to question him? After all, the critic is a church leader and I’m a nobody.” Wrong. Bad wrong. If you are a born again believer and a member of that church, you have a right to insist that church leaders be supportive of the pastor unless he is seriously misguided in doctrine, wrong in ethics, or offensive in manner. Speak up.

3) Work your half-acre well. The shepherd has responsibility before God for the entire field, but as a church member, you have certain areas as your assignment. You lead a choir; you teach a class; you serve as a greeter; you work in the nursery. Do it well. Devote yourself to being the best member of the pastor's team. Be fully prepared when you arrive for your job. Pray long and hard, train your team, encourage their faithfulness, follow up on problems and deal with them promptly.

When you do your work well, it strengthens the church and that blesses your pastor. It will actually make him feel better about himself and the job he's doing in your church. Anything that blesses and encourages a pastor is a good thing. Nothing does that more than team members serving well.

4) Do something nice for his family. The tendency here is to suggest you

give a little present to the pastor—a gift card to a book store or men's clothing shop. Those are nice things to do, but they are the first thing people think of. Consider the pastor's family.

What if you sent the pastor's wife a gift card to her favorite coffee shop or dress store? Or simply sent her a note of appreciation and included a 20 dollar bill? (Or a hundred!) A gift card to a toy store or a play station for the children would be nice, but send it to the wife, not to the children. For the really ambitious, maybe take it upon yourself to get up the money to send your pastor and wife to the Holy Land, or the entire family to a resort in the Ozarks or a condo on the beach.

5) On Sundays, be one of the faces that inspire the pastor. Teachers learn that just because a pupil looks bored or seems to be daydreaming does not automatically mean they're not listening. However, a

person's doodling or slumped posture or the glazed-over look in their eyes can be discouraging to one trying to speak to them about important matters.

My wife will come into my study to hear something I've found on the internet or to be a sounding board for a piece I've written. Sitting at the table, often she will start straightening the pencils or arranging the lamp or tidying my papers. "Honey," I will say, "I need you to listen to this." She was listening, but she also knows I want her undivided attention. She turns toward me and I have it. It's a pastor thing. Most preachers would love to stop at several points in the sermon and say to the congregation, "Honey, stop that. I need you to listen to this." (Well, okay, he wouldn't say "honey": Beloved, maybe.)

Ask any preacher. On Sunday, during the sermon, his eyes roam the congregation in search of other eyes that are fully present

and totally involved and “with him.” You be one of those.

When Colt McCoy was quarterback for the University of Texas’ Longhorns, he gave us a lesson about football and life. One week, he’d been battling the flu bug and was feeling below par. His team was playing Texas Tech, an important rivalry for both schools. When the teams went into the locker rooms at halftime, McCoy wolfed down several peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and drank a can of Pedialyte, a children’s hydration drink. A few minutes later, he ran onto the field with new energy. We all need nourishment.

That’s what the worship service and the sermon are all about—nourishment for the Lord’s team members who have paused in the middle of the game and want to finish strong. Think of the pastor as the chef. He has labored all week over this menu. You come into the locker room, aka the worship

center, hungry and weak and tired. He and the worship team have a smorgasbord, a spiritual buffet, laid out before you.

This is no time to be distracted or uninvolved. Dig in. It was prepared with you in mind. Nothing will encourage him more than to see you feasting on what he serves and returning to your assignment with new energy. On Monday morning, he will re-enter his study with a new zest.

One of these days, when your preacher stands before the Lord and hears His “well done,” I can tell you what’s going to happen. He’ll turn to you, his church members, and he’ll hand you the “game ball.” He could not have done it without you.

Joe McKeever is a retired Southern Baptist pastor from New Orleans, Louisiana. He blogs regularly at www.joemckeeper.com.

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Why I Preach the Gospel

By John Kitchen

*Originally published in Pulpit Helps,
September 2000.*

“Why are you a preacher?” We have all faced the question. The question arose several years after I graduated from high school. I crossed paths with one of my former teachers. He inquired as to the direction my life was taking. I’ll not soon forget the look on his face when I told him God had called me to the ministry. The question arose again not long ago when I was asked to address a civic organization about how I came to believe God had called me into the ministry. The question has surfaced often between those two opportunities. It is asked by different people, in different ways, at different times. Yet their

query is the same: “Why would you spend your life preaching the Bible?”

I’ve tried different ways of answering that question, but I’ve come to realize that the best answer grows out of Paul’s final words to Timothy: “*I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word*” (2 Tim. 4:1-2a). So, why do I preach?

I. I Preach Because God Is Listening

Paul’s solemn charge to preach came “*in the presence of God.*” When we gather for worship, the average attendance is higher than the number of humans present, the angels are assembled with us as well (1 Cor. 11:10). As if it’s not enough that we are in the presence of angels as we gather for worship, Paul focuses us on the most amazing Person present—God Himself!

One Sunday morning I began to beg God to not make me preach. I was moments away from standing in the pulpit. I was exhausted. I was tired in a way that even a week's vacation could not help. The weight of standing to speak for God seemed more than I could bear. As I sat silently pleading with God during the last hymn, He sent tracing through my mind this revolutionary thought: "Then just preach to Me." The idea was so radical that it startled me. I breathed the simple prayer, "What do You mean?" The thought shot back, "I know you're tired. I know you'd rather not preach today. I'm asking you to make it a sacrifice on the altar to Me." As I stood to preach that day, preaching became an act of worship for me. I preach because God is my primary audience.

II. I Preach Because Christ Is Judging

The solemn charge came “*in the presence...of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead.*”

I once stepped into the pulpit and saw a man I recognized by face. At the time his voice was heard five days a week over ninety percent of the Christian radio stations in America. Suddenly I felt a pressure about my sermon that I had not felt earlier. I have come to understand, however, that no man's evaluation is the final one. The true question is, “Can I face God's penetrating, omniscient, holy gaze as He reviews this sermon?”

I've preached thousands of sermons, and many of you have preached more times than that. Some misguided person might view such a record as a truck-load of merit with which to stand before God. I see it more as an awful burden because I know that the Scriptures say “*Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such*

we shall incur a stricter judgment” (James 3:1).

III. I Preach Because Christ Is Coming

Paul said, *“I solemnly charge you...by His appearing...preach the word.”* Christ’s charge to His disciples was to *“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation”* (Mark 16:15). We are to be people who are *“...looking for and hastening the coming day of God”* (2 Pet. 3:12). We preach because Christ is coming and to hasten His coming.

One summer afternoon in 1789 when others thought an ominous thunderstorm was a portent of the end, Colonel Davenport, speaker of the Connecticut House of Representatives, was steady. He declared, “The Day of Judgment is either approaching or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. If it is, I choose to

be found doing my duty. Therefore, I wish that candles be brought.”

IV. I Preach Because Christ Is Ruling

“I solemnly charge you...by His kingdom: preach the word.” I preach to announce the rule of our King. Jesus “*is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords*” (1 Tim. 6:15). I preach to extend the Kingdom.

A group of seminary students once observed a custodian reading the book of Revelation during a down time in his work. One smart young man posed the question, “Do you understand what you are reading?” The janitor shocked them with his concise insight, “Yes, it’s clear. Jesus is going to win!”

Why do I preach? I preach because God is listening and because Jesus is judging, coming and ruling. Though these reasons may not satisfy the curiosity of the

unbelieving or uninformed, I have found them to echo the cry of my heart. With the Apostle, I need no other argument, I need no other plea to explain why I am a preacher.

Submitted for publication.

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Exegetically Speaking

by Spiros Zodhiates

Is It Forbidden for Christians to Be Angry?

James 1:19b-20

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

“Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of

man worketh not the righteousness of God"
(James 1:19b-20).

Now we come to a very practical and most difficult problem. We are all human beings with many weaknesses. All around us there are so many people and things which sometimes vex us that it seems almost impossible not to lose our tempers and be angry. Who can honestly say he never gets angry?

Here are some questions for us to consider: Is it right or wrong to be angry? Does God ever become angry? If He does, why should we not? If we should not, is it possible for the Christian to live through life and never be angry?

The Apostle James gives some very fine practical prescriptions in his epistle; and, once we understand what the Word of God actually expects of us, we shall be much happier. In verse 19 James gives us a piece of advice with three parts to it. He

says: “*Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.*”

There are two Greek words which are indicative of the turbulent spirit. They are *thumós* and *orgē*. The first one is indicative of more of the turbulent commotion, the agitation of the feelings, while the second one is more of an abiding and settled habit of mind with the purpose of revenge. It is this latter word which is used in the original Greek text under study. Now to make matters a little clearer let me paraphrase this verse for you: “Let every man be swift in hearing, slow in speaking, for only thus will you be able to avert as much as possible that state of mind which seeks to find revenge.”

Please observe that James does not say that we are to show no anger or wrath at all. He does not say, “Do not be wrathful, do not be angry,” but rather, “Be slow in getting

angry.” His statement leads us to the following conclusions.

1) That anger or wrath, *orgē* as the original Greek has it, is unavoidable and possibly necessary; otherwise it would be totally prohibited. James says “*slow in anger*” and also “*slow in speaking*.” As we are supposed to speak, so we are supposed to get angry.

2) That anger is of different kinds. The anger referred to in verse 19 apparently is permissible, while the one mentioned in the next breath, at the beginning of verse 20, is not recommended. Here is what it says: “*For the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God.*” This leads us to believe that there is a wrath which does work the righteousness of God. This may be termed the wrath of God, or the righteous indignation of God, which, however, man also may possess.

This is the logical deduction which we make as we look at these two verses. Now let us proceed with the examination of anger. This word which has to do with the world of the spirit has its beginning in the natural world. In one of its verbal forms, *orgdō*, when it refers to the soil, it means “to be well watered and ready to bear a crop, to swell, to teem with moisture.” In its metaphorical and general sense it is “to swell with lust.” James has already spoken of the lust of the flesh and how detrimental it is to the poise of the spirit. It is this lustful anger and wrath which is forbidden. It is this wrath which is designated in verse 20 as man’s wrath. It is a wicked wrath in which the believer should have no share. Let me give you a few illustrations of this kind of wrath.

An unbeliever listening to the Word of truth usually is very uncomfortable, especially if he resists the call of the Gospel

to salvation. That discomfort may very easily turn to real anger. There is an easy way of making an unbeliever, a persistent unbeliever, angry, and that is to continue to speak to him the Word of truth. That is an example of man's wrath.

But why limit our illustration to the unbeliever? There are many born-again Christians who have often left the house of God really angry. They may even turn to their fellow Christians and say, "That preacher made me terribly mad today. I am not going to come to hear him again." But all that the faithful preacher did was preach the Word of truth. If it made him angry, that anger is a wicked anger, declares the Word of God.

Such wrath, man's wrath, James says, does not work the righteousness of God. What does that really mean? Here the word "*worketh*" has the meaning of

“produces.” The result of the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

What is the righteousness of God?

The word in Greek is *dikaíosúnē*, which means “justice.” The word presents God as a great Judge whose work is to render justice—punishment where punishment is due and reward where reward is due. Now the expression as a whole, “the righteousness of God,” may be taken in two ways. The first meaning would be to take righteousness as an attribute of the character of God. In other words, it is part of the makeup of God to condemn sin and reward obedience. Many times, motivated by our natural impulses, we become angry; we speak and act angrily. James warns us to know that in our anger we can never render justice in any situation as God would have rendered it.

Man’s anger is contrary to the character of God. James spoke about the

re-creation of man through the Word of truth, through Jesus Christ. When this occurs, then the nature and character of God are formed in man. Among the many attributes of God is this righteousness of God. In order for that divine character to be fully formed in us, however, we must not have any of our own anger.

Now just a few words about this righteous indignation or the anger which is permissible. This anger does not spring from the Adamic nature in man, but from the divine nature which has begun its existence in man at the moment he has received the Lord Jesus Christ into his heart. The *Apostle* Paul goes so far as to command us to be thus righteously indignant and angry when he says, "*Be ye angry, and sin not*" (Eph. 4:26).

Such anger also is a characteristic of God. Both the Old and New Testaments are full of expressions which speak of the anger

or wrath of God, which wrath may be defined generally as an energy of the divine nature called forth by the presence of daring or presumptuous transgression, and expressing the reaction of the divine holiness against it in the punishment or destruction of the transgressor. Hear John the Baptist as he speaks to the Pharisees and Sadducees: "*O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*" (Matt. 3:7). And Jesus said: "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*" (John

3:36). Many more verses could be enumerated to show that God does become angry. His anger invariably is prompted by the sin which His holiness cannot tolerate. Surely as we watch the sin all around us we cannot possibly stand and ignore it. It is our

duty to condemn it, and to do it with righteous indignation.

There is, however, a fundamental difference between the wrath of God and ours. Perfection and holiness at their highest have a greater right to condemn sin than we who possess little of these divine qualities. God can be angry and not sin, but for us redeemed sinners, who are still capable of sin, sometimes the thread of separation between righteous indignation and sin is very thin indeed.

A church was in need of a pastor. A candidate came who preached on hell. The next Sunday another candidate came whose sermon was also on hell, and his fundamental teaching was the same as that of the first one. When the members of the church were called upon to vote, they voted for the second candidate. When they were asked why, the answer was, "The first one spoke as if he were glad that people were

going to hell, while the second seemed sorry for it.” Though you and I ought to reflect the wrath of God in our daily lives, our righteous wrath and indignation ought to be clothed in love, for it is only by the grace of God that we ourselves do not incur His wrath.

Who is to make the distinction as to when our anger is righteous and works the righteousness of God and when it does not? Herein lies the difficulty. The answer lies with the conscience of the individual. What happens when both a husband and wife think they have a righteous anger? An aged man went to his physician for an examination. The physician expressed astonishment at his robust vigor in spite of his advanced years. The man explained that he had been compelled to live an “out-of-doors life.” He then went on to say that, when he and his wife were married, they made a compact that, when he lost his temper, she was to keep silent; and when

she lost her temper, he was to go outdoors! I think this is still better advice: “*Enter your closet and seek the Lord in prayer. Look at His face and His countenance will change yours.*”

Be careful, lest the feeling of anger, although legitimate, should last too long. Remember that, in spite of your redemption, you are just a human being capable of sin. “*Anger resteth,*” says the author of Ecclesiastes, “*in the bosom of fools.*” It arises in the bosom of all men, but it remains unduly long only in the bosom of fools.

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

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Words to Stand You on Your Feet

by Joe McKeever

How Bible Prophecy Works

“No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:21).

Do you suppose some prophet (well, any true prophet, that is) in ancient times ever said, “I think I’ll issue a prophecy. Now, what could I predict?” Not hardly. *“No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will.”*

Prophecy is God revealing to humans something that is going to happen, something He will do, so that they can be prepared and when it comes to pass they will not be surprised but know God was on duty. Sometimes, a prophecy speaks of

something just around the corner and sometimes centuries later.

When the prophet Isaiah spoke prophetically of the coming Messiah—His birth, life, death, etc.—He was talking about things nearly 8 centuries in the future. Think of that! It's as though something was revealed in the 13th century to apply to us today. That was the Dark Ages!

One thing we must always keep in mind when coming to prophecy is that the determinative question is **never** "What did the speaker have in mind?" In many cases they had no clue what the prophecy meant or what God was up to.

Listen to the Apostle Peter: "*The prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.*" Now, get

this: “*It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you...*” (1 Peter 1:10-12). He adds that these are “*things into which angels long to look.*” Wonderful! Even the angels did not know what God was up to in Jesus; much less the prophets.

I awakened one morning thinking of what Elizabeth said to Mary in Luke 1. As Mary enters her house, the baby within Elizabeth, now some 6 months along, jumped. Elizabeth says, “*How does it happen that the mother of my Lord has come to me?*” (1:43). The question is not, “What did Elizabeth know?” or “What did she mean?” She may have found herself thinking, “Where did that come from” and “How did I know this?” (Pastors know the feeling. Many a time, we leave the pulpit reflecting on something in particular that came out of our mouths and wondering where it came from, that it was not

something we had read or thought of. It was a God thing.)

Anyone coming to biblical prophecy should bring with them a hefty supply of humility and a willingness to acknowledge the sovereignty of God. This means we will “allow” (as if He needed our permission) Him to mean whatever He chooses a prophecy to mean and to fulfill it in His own time and manner.

Beware of anyone who is advertised as an expert in prophecy. The only expert I know sits on the throne of glory. The rest of us are just His children.

Joe McKeever is a retired Southern Baptist pastor from New Orleans, Louisiana. He blogs regularly at www.joemckeeper.com.

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Living out the Living Word

by Justin Lonas

Children of the Curse

2 Peter 2:10b-14

Throughout his second epistle, Peter warns against the pervasive threat of false teachers who would “*secretly introduce destructive heresies*” (2:1) into the Church. At the same time, he urges those who follow Christ to “*be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing*” them (1:10), grounding their faith in Christ’s work (1:1-4), calling them to live it out fruitfully (1:5-9), and confirming it again by the certainty of Scripture (1:19-21) which reveals it. Unsettlingly, Peter predicts that many who call themselves believers would be seduced by these false teachers and that the reputation of Christ and the Church

would be shamed because of them (2:2). Even so, we are not to live fearfully—Peter appeals to God’s holy and consistent judgment through the ages (before creation, in the flood, and at Sodom and Gomorrah) as the source of our comfort in the face of this reality: “*the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment*” (2:9).

After offering this word of peace, Peter’s again picks up his invective against those who would subvert the Gospel: “*Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord*” (2:10b-11). These teachers are bold in their sin, not holding back even as they openly mock the Lord and His servants. What the NASB translates as “*angelic majesties*” is the Greek *dóxas*,

which comes from the same root word used for “*glory*” or “*majesty*”. Though it is not precisely clear from this who Peter refers to—other renderings here include “*glorious ones*” (ESV), “*dignitaries*” (KJV), and “*celestial beings*” (NIV)—the thrust of the argument is that false teachers, just like Satan, have no respect for the things of God.

The second piece of this sentence is also a bit puzzling—why would the Lord’s angels not hold false teacher’s blasphemy against them? Jude (whose letter very closely parallels this section of Peter’s letter) helps shed some light. As we mentioned, Peter’s allusion to fallen angels (2:4) appears to draw from the apocryphal *Book of Enoch*, and Jude relates this account in more detail: “*Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. But Michael the archangel, when he*

disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" (Jude 8-9). Jude refers specifically to Satan, Peter refers to those false teachers who follow his path, but in both passages, angels (who are in the presence of God and exist but to do His will) defer to God for judgment against those who mock them. They know that they are mocked because they do the Lord's bidding, and so they don't presume to defend themselves, stepping back instead to allow the Lord to judge those who rebel against Him.

Why does Peter include a passage that seems so confusing to us? First, the source he and Jude draw from here must have been familiar to those of Jewish heritage in his day, otherwise the allusion would lack instructive power. Moreover, what appears enigmatic in isolation is much

clearer in Peter's larger context—these false teachers are ruthless in their aim to destroy Christ's Church and those beings (human and angelic) who protect and support it, and are utterly blinded to their own coming judgment. The Lord will indeed rebuke those who reject Him.

As his denunciation continues, Peter again pronounces the Lord's coming judgment while likening false teachers to the one their efforts serve (whether they know it or not): Satan. In 1 Peter 5:8, he writes that *"your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."* Here, he says that *"these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong"* (2:12-13a). They are so proud in their lies ("not trembling") that they do not

even recognize what they rail against. They have left even the bounds of human reason and argument, preying on God's flock like ravenous animals. Just as a good shepherd will defend his sheep by capturing or killing the wild animals that threaten them, so the Lord will defend His Church by bringing judgment on her attackers.

The Lord, Peter says, causes false teachers to suffer "*wrong as the wages of doing wrong.*" We typically think of God's judgment as a sort of "shock and awe" response to sin, but the text here seems to indicate that a life of sin itself is part of His judgment. Without redemption and repentance, sin begets sin, resulting in further alienation from the Lord and, ultimately, death. In this statement, Peter, echoes Paul's evaluation of the sinful world: "*And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those*

things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them” (Rom. 1:28-32).

Whereas they begin their attack on truth “*secretly*” (2:1), once false teachers and their followers have infiltrated the Church, “*they count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime.*” Their whispered half-truths and distortions bear fruit in open wickedness, even when they pretend to be children of God: “*They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as*

they carouse with you” (2:13). “*Carouse with you*” seems to imply that believers were engaging in sinful activities along with the offenders, but the Greek is more nuanced. This phrase translates *syneuōchoumenoi*, literally meaning “feast together with you.” Again, Jude helps us understand—the same word shows up in Jude 12: “*These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves.*” Perhaps Peter devotes so much time to alerting his readers because such people are already in their midst, attempting to join in fellowship with the church, staining worship and threatening to wreck fellowship.

These “daytime revelers” receive a full blast from Peter. He says they have “*eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls*” (2:14). This damning indictment draws on Jesus’ words: “*The eye is the lamp of your body; when*

your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness” (Luke 11:34). This is both a poetic truth (in which the eye is a synecdoche for the whole soul of a man) and a literal description (in that our eyes express our thoughts and emotions). Peter says, in effect, that they are consumed with desire for adultery—another double meaning, in that they pursue all manner of sexual sin, but also that they join themselves spiritually to false gods (a metaphor used in Hosea 1:2 and throughout the Old Testament).

Moreover, they have hearts “*trained in greed*”—literally “having been exercised in covetousness”; with the verb *gegymnasmenēn* coming from the same root where we get “gymnasium”—they are not just absent-minded sinners, but they have practiced to be skilled at working evil. In each sense, they are seeking out

“*unstable souls*”, “*enticing*” those who are young in their faith, still learning to discern the truth. Mature believers may recognize false teaching and not be swayed by it, but we also have a responsibility to protect weaker brothers from falling prey to error and temptation.

Peter’s malediction comes to a head here, in his statement that these false teachers are “*accursed children*” (2:14). This translates the Greek phrase *kataras tekna*, perhaps better rendered as “children of the curse” (along the lines of Paul’s statement in Ephesians 2:3 that we were “*children of wrath*” before our salvation). They are fully sons of the world, and should not be welcomed as a part of the Church unless they repent and place themselves under the authority of God’s Word alone. Otherwise, they only bring destruction.

Over and over through this chapter, Peter proclaims judgment after judgment on

those who would distort the truth, malign the name of Christ, and lead astray those who have believed. We will conclude our look at his warnings next month, but this emphasis in his letter is amply clear already. What are we to learn? If Peter (and Paul, Jude, and John) devote so much of their teaching to guarding the Church from false teachers, should we not also be on alert? The dangers they saw are just as pervasive today, and will be until the Lord returns. May we be grounded in Scripture and never forget that we have an adversary who will use every means at his disposal to shake our faith and distract us from Christ's Gospel "*which also you received, in which also you stand*" (1 Cor. 15:1). If we abandon our foundation, everything about our hope falls also.

Justin Lonas is editor of *Disciple Magazine* for AMG International in Chattanooga, Tennessee. [Table of Contents](#)

Following God

by Erik Christensen

Salvation Purchased, Given, and Lived out

The Theme of Ephesians

Editor's note: Erik was unable to finish the next article in his Ephesians series this month due to a full ministry schedule, so we are republishing his introduction to the book. Originally published in Disciple, August 2013.

Ephesians is certainly one of the greatest New Testament letters written to the Church. The Apostle Paul writes to the believers in Ephesus, giving a beautiful picture of our salvation in Christ and walk of faith as the Body of Christ. Grand themes such as our election, grace, faith, the bringing together of both Jew and Gentile

believers into one body, unity, the vastness of Christ's love, and the greatness of His strength in the believer, are all elements woven together within this letter.

Paul writes this letter in two parts. The first three chapters deal with the reality of believers' identity in Christ; the last three chapters are an exhortation of those "*in Christ*" to walk in a manner worthy of the calling being empowered by Christ. Paul gives us an overview of his letter immediately in his introduction, "*to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus*" (1:1).

In the first three chapters, Paul expounds on who the saint is "*in Christ.*" Paul details what the Father has done on our behalf calling us into relationship with Him through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul clearly explains our salvation as being of the Father, who is blessed (1:3) and "*who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing*

in the heavenly places in Christ.” We have been called, chosen “*before the foundation of the world*” in order that we would walk with Him in holiness and in love (1:4). Paul establishes that the believer’s salvation is not by any effort or work but rather is a receiving of the gift of Christ’s salvation through belief (vs. 13).

Paul makes very clear Christ’s headship over the church. God the Father has placed Christ in authority over all things including the church (1:22). In writing to believers, Paul reminds them how at one time we had been without Christ. In chapter 2, he continues to expound on the theme of Salvation by grace through faith encouraging believers to remember what we used to be apart from the Lord and now what He has declared us to be “*in Christ.*”

Paul, in writing to mainly Gentile believers, reminds the Ephesian believers how they were separate even from the

covenants of promise, having no hope. He makes clear that both Jews and Gentiles are now one in Christ through faith revealing a profound mystery. Jew and Gentile believers are being built into a holy temple in the Lord. Paul emphasizes this truth through chapter 3 and concludes this portion of his letter with one of the great Scriptural doxologies.

Christ, whom we are saved by as a result of His doing, whom we are blessed with, whom we are loved by and who is building us into a holy temple, is able to do far more than we could ask or think, deserving all glory.

In the final three chapters, Paul directs his attention to imploring the saints “*to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called*” (4:1). As a result of who we are, saints—called out ones—who are now “*in Christ,*” Paul exhorts and commands believers to walk empowered by Christ and in His love. Due to the salvation that we have received as

believers by grace through faith, we are now indwelt by Christ Himself and have the opportunity of experiencing Christ in action in and through our lives as we submit to Him.

Paul immediately addresses relationship themes within the Church such as unity and love for one another. He also gives practical commands concerning work, speech, and attitudes. As a result of our new nature, Paul consistently reminds us of the difference from what we used to be outside of Christ to what we have been called to be in Christ. This certainly carries over into his directives concerning wives, husbands, children, slaves, and masters. Families and those either in authority or under authority have specific God-ordained roles, which, once embraced, should be recognized as ultimately service rendered to Christ. Paul also acknowledges the spiritual battle we are in as believers reminding us of the

presence of Christ, who is our armor, and encourages saints to be engaged in the battle through prayer.

The Church, the Body of Christ, reflects the very life of Christ. Through our sonship, having “*been brought near by the blood of Christ*” (2:13), and into a relationship with the Lord and one another, the Church now has the privilege of not only experiencing the Lord individually and corporately, but also reflecting the glory of Christ in the midst of the world’s spiritual darkness.

Paul’s final words to the Ephesian believers are, “*Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love*” (6:24). It is interesting to note that only about 40 years after Paul penned these words to this church, the Lord tells John to write to the Ephesians that they had left their first love (Rev. 2:4). As we take a look at this amazing letter to the Church, let us

remember that it is the Lord Himself who has called us out of darkness, now empowering us to walk in such a way as to glorify Him in all that we do and say.

Erik Christensen is senior pastor of Hoffmantown Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico. [Table of Contents](#)

Points to Ponder

by David L. Olford

At the Feet of Jesus—Part 3

Text: *“Then, one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks”* (Luke 17:15).

Thought: As we walk through this miracle account, we are fixing our eyes on Jesus to see why we ought to be at His feet

as well—offering Him praise and thanksgiving. We ought to be at Jesus' feet not only because **1) Jesus Extends Divine Mercy** (17:11-14a), and because **2) Jesus Provides Total Cleansing** (17:14b-15a), but also because **3) Jesus Receives Sincere Gratitude** (17:15b-18).

The one formerly leprous man who returned was so moved by what Jesus did for him that he glorified God “*with a loud voice.*” He was filled with praise and thanksgiving. It is interesting that in Luke's account of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem it is said of the people that they “*began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen*” (Luke 19:37). Here in Luke 17, only one person returns to praise God, but he does it with a loud voice! And the text says, “*he fell on his face at Jesus feet, giving him thanks.*” This man was so overwhelmed with what God

had done for him that this was his genuine response.

Remember, as a leper, he was lost in terms of this life. He was desperate. He had no hope. He was alienated from others and from the corporate worship of God. Now, his whole life had been changed. It was like he was a “new creation.” And he knew that Jesus had done it. He knew that Jesus has had mercy on him and granted him cleansing and healing. He was grateful, he was thankful, he sincerely praised God and he did it at Jesus’ feet. He fell on his face at Jesus’ feet. He was filled with sincere gratitude and thanksgiving. It was real.

What about us today? Can we offer sincere thanks to Jesus? We express emotion and gratitude in different ways, don’t we! The challenge of this text is not to copy this man specifically, but it is to ask ourselves, have we lost our appreciation for what the Savior has done for us? Have we

lost a deep sense of gratitude to our Savior for His merciful work in our lives, not just initially, but His continued work of saving, cleansing, healing, helping, comforting, enabling and so much more?

If we understand the Gospel, leprosy is a less serious problem than the sin that separates us from a Holy God. Our condition, outside of Christ coming to our town, is helpless and hopeless. But Jesus had mercy upon us, and through His perfect life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection, He cleansed those of us who have sought His mercy and placed our faith in Him.

What is striking in these verses is Jesus' response to this man's return and his praise and gratitude. This is really the crux of the matter. Jesus, first of all, accepts his praise. Jesus did not tell him immediately to get up and not bow at his feet. Jesus allowed him to offer his thanksgiving there at

His feet. Remember, this is King Jesus on His way to Jerusalem, but as Jesus often did, He asked questions that take us further into the truth and challenge of this event.

This man was a Samaritan, and Luke states that specifically and clearly at the end of verse 16. And that leads into the three questions that Jesus' asks that get at the heart of this account.

Jesus' question about the ten being cleansed indicates that all ten of the men must have been cleansed from leprosy. Evidently the nine others were cleansed, but they did not return to praise God, they didn't return to see Jesus. "*But where are the nine?*" Wow! What a question! This clearly demonstrates that all ten should have been at the feet of Jesus, but only one was there—in the right place. The only one to return was this Samaritan. Jesus calls him a "*foreigner.*" This implies that at least some of the others were Jewish, but more

importantly, it reveals that a person considered a foreigner by the Jews, was touched by Jesus. As often is the emphasis in Luke's gospel, Jesus' power and saving work was recognized first of all by the poorest, the alienated, the hardest to reach, the despised of this world. In a sense it is as if Jesus is saying, the others should have come, and joined this one who was the least likely to return.

Let me remind you of something that happened right after Jesus set His face to go to Jerusalem. Jesus was rejected by a Samaritan village because He was on his way to Jerusalem (Read Luke 9:51-56). This underlines the idea that the one who you might not expect to be at Jesus' feet is exactly the one there. Those who should have been there at the feet of Jesus were not there.

Thrust: Where are we today? Are we with the nine in our neglect of praise and

thanksgiving? Or are we truly overwhelmed with the mercy and saving power of Christ? I imagine that some of us, to be honest, may be somewhere in between. Yes, we're thankful, but not desperately thankful. We're praising God, but not wholeheartedly. Let me just encourage you to praise the Lord, and ask Him to help you understand more fully the greatness of His mercy and the fullness of His salvation.

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Jewels from Past Giants

The Wonderful Fact that the Lord Jesus Christ Was Rich

By Arno C. Gaebelein

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).

This statement leads us back into eternity. The riches of which we read here are His eternal riches. He ever subsisted in the form of God as the only Begotten of the Father, absolutely one with Him. With the Father before the world ever came into existence, *“He was rich.”* But who is able to penetrate the mysteries of eternity?

The wisdom of man, his reasoning, and imaginations are all folly in the presence of such a stupendous statement. We have to turn to revelation to receive glimpses of that which *“eye has not seen, nor ear heard”* (1 Cor. 2:9) to listen to what God in His Word has to say of the riches of the Son of His love. *“No man knoweth who the Son is but*

the Father” (Luke 10:22). Thus He spoke Himself. But it is blessedly true that “God has revealed to us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God” (1 Cor. 2:10).

I. The Riches of the Lord Jesus

What, then, do the Scriptures say about the eternal riches of Him, who is our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ? The Word of God tells us that the Son of God was rich in all eternity in three things. He was rich in possessions, rich in love, and rich in glory. As far as we can learn from revelation, His eternal riches consisted in these three things. But how little we know what they all include! When at last Grace has brought us to the Father’s house, where we shall behold His glory, when we shall know as we are known, then we shall understand His riches fully! And yet that which is made

known about His riches is sufficient to fill our hearts with wonder and our lips with praises.

II. Rich in Possessions

Our conception of riches in possessions is limited. If we fill the hands of a child full of glittering pennies, that little one looks upon them as great riches. The great ones of the earth only count themselves rich when they can add millions to millions, houses to houses, and land to land. If the whole world were to belong at some time to one person and that one had possession of all the gold and silver, the precious pearls and costly stones, all the treasures of art, yea, all the treasures yet hidden in the mountains and hills of the earth, how rich that person would be! It would be impossible to make known the riches of such a man. Still in comparison with Him who was rich, this person would be only a poverty-stricken beggar.

What does it mean, “*He was rich?*” Let the Scripture give the answer: “*For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him*” (Col. 1:16). In this blessed Word we find the description of the riches of the Son of God. All things belong to Him, for He created them; all things were created by Him and for Him. He is the Creator of all things, and because He is, they belong to Him, they are His and consist by Him.

“*The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein*” (Ps. 24:1). Jesus is one with the Father, who speaks in another Psalm: “*Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I*

would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof" (Ps. 50:10-12). Again, He says through one of His prophets, "*The silver is mine and the gold is mine*" (Hag. 2:8). And then of the great sea with its fearful and mysterious depths, of the sea with its mighty waves, it is written, "*The sea is His, and He made it*" (Ps. 95:5). How great His possessions! This earth He created, with all its wonders and beauties belongs to Him.

But His riches are greater still. He created the things that are in heaven. What a wonderful world it is which is above! Well did the holy singer cry out, "*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork*" (Ps. 19:1). But what are the things in heaven? What are these stars and suns? The human eye can get a few glimpses of that wonderful creation. There are stars and planets hundreds and thousands of times larger than our earth.

The sun is over a million times larger than our planet. It is a marvelous, incomprehensible ocean of fire. And yet the star Sirius has, it has been calculated, a force of light equal to over 140 suns like ours. Stars there are in such wonderful distance from our planet that light, though traveling over 180,000 miles each second, 10,800,000 miles each minute, 648,000,000 miles each hour, takes several thousand years to reach our earth. And oh! The mysteries hid in the impenetrable depths of the universe, which no telescope can reach!

And in the heavens are the innumerable angels; their number is “*ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands*” (Rev. 5:11). And all He—who is the image of God—created, and by right of creation all is His; all belongs to Him. How rich He was in all eternity!

III. Rich in Love

God did not become love, but God is love and has always been love. Love needs an object. The object of the love of God in all eternity was He, who is called, "*the Son of His love*" (Col. 1:13). In that remarkable passage in the book of Proverbs, which can only refer to that One, we read how He declares, "*I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him*" (Prov. 8:30). In the Gospel of John, in which the Holy Spirit portrays the Lord as the Son of God, we learn of this eternal love relation between the Father and the Son. Here in the first chapter we read that "*The Word was with God,*" and that He was "*the only begotten Son, in the bosom of the Father*" (John 1:1, 18).

But we have to listen to His own precious words as they came from His lips in His high priestly prayer to hear of that eternal love He enjoyed, a love without beginning.

“Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24). What words these are! Who dares to add to them or attempt to describe that love? One hears almost the solemn caution of old given by the Lord, *“Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place where thou standest is holy”* (Josh. 5:15). All attempts to describe that love or to illustrate it must fail. What that love was in all eternity, what riches of love He enjoyed in the bosom of the Father, what delight was His, no Saint has ever comprehended. It is enough to know that before the world was, He was *“the Son of His Love”* in the bosom of the Father, enjoying the riches of His love.

IV. Rich in Glory

Love puts glory upon the beloved object. The Father’s love and the Father’s glory was His in all eternity. Again we have to turn to His own words to learn of His

eternal glory. When He uttered that marvelous prayer in the presence of the Father, He made the following request, “and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory, which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5). How simple and definite this statement is! He had a glory with the Father before the world was; yea, He was the effulgence of the Father’s glory.

But who can tell what that glory really was? What human eye could fully gaze upon that glory? Seers of old had visions of the glory of the Lord. They saw the heavens opened and got faint glimpses of the glory of the Lord. Whose glory was it they beheld? A passage in the Gospel of John gives us the answer. “*These things said Esaias when he saw his glory and spoke of him*” (John 12:41). The prophet Isaiah saw the Lord and he beheld His glory, and the New Testament tells us that it was the glory of the only

begotten, the Son of God. What a glory place it must have been where He was in all eternity, which, while on earth, He called the Father's house! What scenes of joy and praise, when the morning stars sang together and the sons of God, the holy angels, clapped their hands for joy! And He was the center of that glory. To understand it all we must wait till we enter that place above, when we with all His redeemed people are with Him and when He will show us His glory.

We dare not add another word to that which we have written. Scripture gives us no other description of His eternal riches, than these three: riches in possessions, all is His; riches in love; riches in glory. But what a theme to meditate upon! What joy in believing in Him "*who was rich!*" Now He has "*blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*" and in Him "*we have redemption through his blood, the*

forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:3,7). Full enjoyment of the blessed Gospel is an impossibility unless we have His eternal riches before the soul!

Arno Clemens Gaebelein (1861-1945), born in Germany, came to the United States at the age of 18. Converted at the age of 12, he never received any formal theological training but gained knowledge of the Scriptures through diligent, personal Bible Study. Gaebelein was ordained as a German Methodist preacher in 1885. As pastor of a German congregation in Baltimore, he became interested in Jewish evangelism. He became superintendant of Hope of Israel Mission and editor of the magazine *Our Hope*. In later years Gaebelein carried on an interdenominational ministry and authored numerous books on Bible Study, prophecy, and the Jews. His *Annotated Bible, The Prophet Isaiah,*

Conflict of the Ages, and many other books are serving students of the Scriptures today.

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Counselor's Corner

by James Rudy Gray

Resources and References for Christians

About 35 years ago, I was browsing in a Christian bookstore when the owner of the store asked me if I could recommend a book to a young Jewish man who had recently become a Christian. He wanted something to help him grow in his faith. I recommended he start by reading the gospel of John since it was written “*that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ...*” (John 20:31).

The Bible is our textbook, but we can benefit from other books, written by gifted teachers, that can help us in our

understanding of the Scriptures. I have given away a few hundred books over the years and have downsized my library considerably. I still have more than 2,000 volumes.

Today, resources and references are in abundant supply, especially for the English-speaking world. In addition to all kinds of books, software and internet sites offer a huge array of information. Logos Bible Software, for example offers the Logos 5 package. You can buy whatever level you need: Starter, Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum, Diamond, Platinum, and Portfolio. Each level includes the previous offering. The Portfolio includes everything they offer—2,585 resources. It sells for \$4,232.96 but Logos says it is worth \$78,000 in print value.

For those who like to read books, printed or digital, a basic library should include: a Bible dictionary (Unger's, Moody,

Zondervan, etc.); A Bible encyclopedia (like the two volume Wycliffe set); an exhaustive concordance like Strong's or the New American Standard; a general commentary on the Old and New Testament such as the *NIV Bible Study Commentary* (one volume), Matthew Henry's abridged commentary (one volume), Jamieson, Fausett, and Brown's *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical* (three volumes), or *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (two volumes); Biblical language books for English readers like *The Theological Wordbook of the OT*, Nelson's *Expository Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vine's *Complete Expository Dictionary, Practical Word Studies In The New Testament* (which includes five translations), *Word Studies in The Greek New Testament* by Kenneth Wuest (four volumes), or *Word Pictures in the New Testament* by A.T. Robertson (six volumes); and books on biblical customs,

backgrounds, and lands (like the *IVP Bible Background* two vol. set).

In addition, it can be very helpful to own specific commentaries related to what you are studying or teaching. My formula was to have at least 10 commentaries on a particular book of the Bible from which I was preaching or teaching. While I own several complete sets of commentaries, these books can usually be purchased individually. *The New American Commentary* by Broadman & Holman is very good, as are John MacArthur's commentaries on the New Testament, *The New International Commentaries*, Keil and Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*, and William Barclay's *Daily Bible Study Series* (NT). Barclay was more liberal in his theology, but his word studies and background information is helpful.

There are so many other books a person could accumulate. I could mention so

many others but the ones I have stated above I believe are basic in building a good library. Over the years, I collected the 63-volume set of C.H. Spurgeon's sermons from The New Park Street Church and the Metropolitan Tabernacle in addition to 50 other books by him or about him. He became my pastor-teacher of history.

Most of us will have our favorites, but in building a library we need to be sure to include books and reference references by solid and sound Bible-believing teachers and scholars. God gave to the church, according to Ephesians 4:11-12, "*apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.*" Through the teaching and preaching of great leaders from the past, we can access their insights through their writings and apply what we learn to our time and culture.

With all of our reading of good books, it is still good to remember the warning of Ecclesiastes 12:12, “*the writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body.*” There are many good resources available today. They are tools to aid us in understanding Scripture. The Holy Spirit is our highest teacher and our foundational resource and authority is the Bible itself. As Spurgeon himself said, “Visit many good books, but **live** in the Bible.”

James Rudy Gray is certified as a professional counselor by the National Board for Certified Counselors, and is a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors. He serves as the editor of *The Baptist Courier*, the official newspaper of the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

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The Story behind the Song

by Lindsay Terry

“So Overwhelmed I Began to Weep”

Song: “There Is None Like You”

“O Lord, there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears” (1 Chron. 17:20).

Lenny LeBlanc became involved in music quite by accident. He related to me, “One day I was visiting in a friend’s home and several of the young people there were playing instruments. They asked me if I would sing with them. I agreed to do so, and after a few songs, they said, ‘You sound pretty good.’ I responded, ‘I do?’

“They then asked me to get a bass guitar. I asked, ‘What’s a bass guitar?’ They said, ‘It’s the one with the four big strings on

it.' I said, 'Okay.' So I went to work at Eckerd to earn enough money to buy a bass guitar. I taught myself to play it. By the time I was seventeen years of age, I was supporting myself with my music."

Lenny went on to a very successful career in pop music, at first as a studio musician on recordings for singers such as Crystal Gayle, Joan Baez, Roy Orbison, Hank Williams Jr., and The Supremes, just to name a few.

Lenny confessed, "My career was my god, and I began to worship the gift God had given me. I was not at a low point in life, nor was I looking or searching for God, but a good friend, a drug smuggler, called me late one night and said, 'Lenny, I got saved, and I'm going to heaven.' He then said, 'Lenny, I want you to be there with me. Are you saved?' Without thinking, I said yes, not even knowing what being saved meant. I

had, however, had some contact with Christian musicians.

“My friend sent me a Bible, and for the next few weeks God began to reveal His love to me. I began to realize how shallow and selfish my life was, and there in my home I cried out to Jesus for mercy and forgiveness. I could have continued in the field of pop music, but I sensed that God had something different for me.”

In 1991, Lenny was asked by Integrity Music to be the worship leader on a CD project, Pure Heart, so he tried to carve out time from his schedule to write some songs for the endeavor. He related this story: “One morning, while at home alone, I was playing the keyboard, and suddenly a tune and some lyrics began coming to me. Before I had finished, I had written the major part of a song, which I titled ‘There Is None Like You.’ I was so overwhelmed by the Spirit of God that I began to weep. I found it hard to

believe that God would give me such a wonderful song. Because it was so meaningful to me, I soon had it committed to memory.”

A few months later, Lenny’s song was launched and would find its way around the world by way of the Integrity project Pure Heart. The album was recorded live at Faith Tabernacle in Florence, Alabama, where Lenny coordinates the total worship ministry.

Several years ago Lenny accompanied Don Moen on a trip to Korea, where they were engaged in some extraordinary meetings in an outdoor square with sixty thousand young people present. During one of the sessions they sang “There Is None Like You” in English. Don then had them sing it in their own language. Much to Lenny’s surprise, they already knew it; it had been translated into Korean some time before. People would come up to him and say, “Didn’t you know that your song is one

of the most popular Christian songs, if not the most popular, throughout all of Asia?”

He was completely overwhelmed. He said to me, “It blew me away.” The song has been translated into at least a half-dozen languages in the Far East.

As we read through the Scriptures and consider all of our Lord’s wonderful deeds, His loving-kindness, and the works of His hands, we remember that the psalmist said, “*O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth! Who has set Your glory above the heavens*” (Ps. 8:1). O Lord, there is none like You!

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Lindsay Terry has been a song historian for more than 40 years, and has written widely on the background of great hymns and worship songs including the books *I Could*

Sing of Your Love Forever (2008), from which this piece is excerpted, and *The Sacrifice of Praise* (2002).

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Church Builders

by Bernard R. DeRemer

Charles Alexander: Gospel Singer

Charles M. Alexander (1867-1920) was born near Meadow, Tenn. and educated at Maryville Academy and College. He also had some training at Washington College and served for a time as musical director for Maryville College.

He attended Moody Bible Institute and became associated with D.L. Moody during the great 1893 World's Fair Campaign in Chicago. He became a dedicated soul winner and gospel singer. He also worked with R.A. Torrey in his great world tours over

Australia, India, England, Canada, and the U.S.

In 1904, He married Helen Cadbury, daughter of the president of Cadbury Chocolate Company. They made a world tour together in 1906-7, where she reached out to women.

From 1908 on he joined forces with evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman in campaigns over Europe, Asia, and the U.S. During World War I travels took them into many camps “where they did much effective evangelistic work.” They assembled an impressive team of evangelists and song leaders and took to the streets to preach Christ. The first joint campaign was held in Philadelphia from March 12 to April 19, 1908. They partitioned the city into 42 sections covered by 21 evangelist-musicians teams. They spent three weeks on each half of the city, resulting in approximately 8,000 conversions.

He supported the Pocket Testament League which Helen Cadbury founded. It became a worldwide Bible reading and Scripture distribution movement.

After conducting the last Chapman-Alexander crusade in 1918, Alexander retired to England where he died and was buried near Birmingham. “...*Well done, thou good and faithful servant...*” (Matt. 25:21).

Bernard R. DeRemer chronicled the lives of dozens of heroes of the faith in more than a decade of writing for *Pulpit Helps Magazine*.

He continues to serve in this capacity as a volunteer contributor to *Disciple*. He lives in West Liberty, Ohio.

References: *Who Was Who in Church History*, by Elgin S. Moyer; excerpts used by permission of Moody Publishers; Wikipedia, “Charles McCallon Alexander”,

Advancing the Ministries of the Gospel

How Will They Hear? Pastor Training and National Workers

By AMG International Staff

Near the end of his time on earth, the apostle Peter wrote one last time letter to impart the truth of the Gospel again to those he had preached to: *“Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is in you. I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder...that at any time after my*

departure you will be able to call these things to mind" (2 Pet. 1:12-13, 15).

"*These things*" Peter shares with them are part of the bedrock of faith: the story of salvation, the path to living in righteousness (sanctification), the authority of Scripture, the danger of false teachers, and the coming Day of the Lord. He says that they already believed and already knew these truths, but he was eager to teach them again, making certain that they would remember, teach, and practice them long after his death.

We could learn much from Peter's passion today. Sometimes, in our zeal for evangelism, we forget the last part of Christ's Great Commission—"teaching them to obey all that I commanded you" (Matt. 28:20)—rejoicing in the salvation of new believers, but leaving them ill-equipped to grow in their faith. Often Christians have no one in their city or village who can disciple

them and educate them in the Word. The person who has been in the faith the longest or who happens to own part of a Bible becomes the pastor to their community, struggling to teach when he knows so little himself. This opens doors to false teachers and confusion with other religions or traditional beliefs.

At AMG, we've long recognized the need for new Christians around the world to be well taught in God's Word in their own language, with the example of His truth lived out by more mature believers from their own culture. It's only in this way that the Gospel fully takes root in new places once the missionaries have gone. That's why AMG invests in supporting and training **national workers** who serve and share Christ among their own people. These men and women are very literally our hands and feet, filling vital ministry roles as leaders, church planters, teachers, childcare workers, and

more in nearly every country where we work.

We have a particular burden to equip pastors for ministry in the Word. As many of you probably remember, our longtime president Dr. Spiros Zodhiates was always teaching—whether through his *New Testament Light* program on radio and television, *Pulpit Helps Magazine* for pastors (which continues through AMG's online publication *Disciple*, and is still printed in local editions in India, Indonesia, and elsewhere), or his frequent visits to churches and missions conferences. Today, the vision he gave to AMG to reach multitudes by teaching those who teach the Word is alive and well through our **pastor training** ministries around the world.

This takes many forms in different places. AMG Indonesia operates **Berita Hidup Seminary** on the Island of Java to provide sound theological education for

pastors and church planters who boldly teach and evangelize in the world's most populous Muslim nation. Our **Pastors 4 Pastors** initiative takes experienced pastors and Bible teachers from the U. S. to host conferences and training seminars for local pastors in underserved regions.

In some countries, our missionaries and national directors have made this ministry a special focus. AMG Uganda director Reuben Musiime and missionaries Jim and Drew Everett have been doing intensive training for several years with the same group of rural pastors there, and are now also reaching out to pastors in Kenya. Rueben has even put together a pastor training curriculum to be published so that those already taught can teach others. In Greece, AMG partners with the **Greek Bible College** to educate leaders for the evangelical minority in that country. In Italy, AMG missionaries Larry and Mary Lowery

have for years served alongside Italian pastors to strengthen their fledgling churches and encourage their growth in God's Word.

These are just a few examples, and we are excited to see the ways God is leading and blessing AMG's work to build up local churches around the world. As with each of the ministries to which he has called us, we can only fulfill this work because of the faithful support of partners like you. Significant funding is required to provide for each of these outreaches, and your gifts make an incredible impact for the churches served by the pastors we train. For **\$110**, you can send an African pastor to a week-long training conference. For **\$50**, you can provide a valuable packet of resources (a study Bible, concordance, and original language dictionary) to one national pastor. For **\$50 per month**, you can sponsor a

national worker as he serves his own people in Jesus' name.

Will you join AMG in supporting this critical work? With your help, we will continue fulfilling all of the Great Commission! Thank you!

To learn more about AMG's national workers, pastor training ministry, and how you and your church can partner with us, please visit www.amginternational.org.

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

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Marks of the Master

by the Old Scot

The “Lemming Years”

Originally published in Disciple, April 12, 2010.

Most of the time, the Norway lemming is one of the most ordinary creatures you could imagine. It is only when his generation sets its mind on moving that the lemming ceases to be ordinary.

Norway lemmings are shy little rodents which inhabit the waste places of northern Scandinavia. They like to feed upon roots, shoots, ends of twigs, or grass—whatever vegetation is at hand. They raise their families in the summer time, and try their best to avoid predators, like all small animals.

As long as things go on like this, the normal routines of life and occasional violent death occupy their colonies in the arctic meadows. But about every fourth year, unusual things begin to happen and build to a climax that ends in the mass destruction of many thousands of lemmings. The onset of what are called “lemming years” is first signaled by a major change in breeding patterns. Instead of two annual litters of about 5 each, female lemmings produce four litters of 6 to 8 each.

This nearly triples the population in a very short time, without any corresponding increase in available food. By fall the lemmings are no longer shy, as they are driven by hunger to gather food where and whenever they can find it. Eventually, something tells the lemmings that it is time to migrate. In Scandinavia the mass movements always start from one of five regions, and follow old paths to the same

goals. In the far north of Norway, for example, the goal appears always to be either the Lofoten Island to the northwest, or the Gulf of Bothnia to the southeast.

Once begun, a strange “migration fixation” comes over the scurrying horde. Though scarcity of food triggered the migration, after the flood of lemmings has reached ample food supplies in the lower valleys they will not turn aside nor slow the march in order to fill their stomachs.

Nor do they allow obstacles to turn them from their appointed course. Even though they are not good swimmers, the leading animals plunge recklessly into swift rivers, urged on by ceaseless pressure from the following ranks. Thousands perish in such crossings, but the rest push on heedlessly.

Indeed, nothing stops the lemmings’ advance, as long as there are lemmings left, until they reach the sea. And when that

happens, the remnant of the horde keeps right on marching into the fatal waters. Rarely are there more than a few survivors.

Back on their home grounds, the lemming population is gradually built up again by the few who did not migrate. Lemmings will be scarce for a year or two, but after another four years there is usually once again a population explosion, and the cycle is repeated.

There are puzzling aspects to this periodic pattern of self-destruction. We noted, for example, that the condition is largely brought about by a sudden increase in the number of young produced. Thus, the migrations are not simply a unique method of handling a problem of surplus numbers. If lemmings had “evolved” this solution, they would have been better served had they omitted the spurt in breeding during “lemming years.” It makes no evolutionary sense.

The fact is that no one knows what causes the periodic massive jump in numbers, nor why they behave so strangely while on the march. They respond to orders that we can neither detect nor comprehend, and which seem in some ways to be harmful rather than helpful to the species.

Nevertheless, the system works: the overall population of lemmings (and the consequent numbers of predators) remains in harmony with their environment.

It should be sufficient for us that someone understands and has the situation well in hand. We can rest assured that the One who created lemmings and established the pattern for their generations is well able to see to their needs—and to ours also. God Himself tells us in the Bible that “*My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, saith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are*

my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Is. 55:8-9).

The Bible also assures us that this God, whose thoughts and deeds are incalculably beyond us, is also the Preserver and the Rock of Refuge for His children in time of trouble. How comforting this is! How wonderful to know that when we reach the limits of our understanding, of our strength, or of our resources, God’s power to help is yet unlimited. Let us draw near with our hearts to this God of all!

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

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Book Review—September 2014

Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption, Laura Hillenbrand, 2010, Random House, New York, ISBN 9781400064168, 473 pages, \$28.00, hardcover.

All our content in *Disciple* is here to encourage you to grow in Christ-likeness through growing understanding of His Word, and the books we choose to review reflect that. Most are theological or devotional in nature, hailing from reputable Christian publishing houses. We almost never review mainstream books from secular publishers, but this incredible story demands that we stand up and take notice. It is, in fact, even an explicitly Christian story that put Christ's transforming power on display at the top of the *New York Times* Bestseller list.

Unbroken relates the life of Louis Zamperini (1917-2014), following him from his troubled childhood as the son of Italian immigrants and juvenile delinquency, to athletic achievement and recognition at the Olympic Games, to service in World War II and nearly three years as a Prisoner of War, to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and alcoholism, to his encounter with Christ that gave him peace and made sense of all the rest. Many of his generation knew Zamperini's incredible tale from news reports and his later career as an inspirational speaker, but Hillenbrand's masterful book brings it to life for a new generation.

It would do you a disservice to explain the full details of this story rather than letting you discover it through your own reading, but here's a taste. Zamperini survived multiple experiences that could have (you get the sense from the flow of

narrative in *Unbroken* that they perhaps **should** have) killed him—a firefight during a bombing run that resulted in nearly 600 holes in his B-24; an air raid on a small island with almost no shelter; an uncontrolled high-speed plane crash in the Pacific; a journey across thousands of miles of shark-infested ocean with almost no supplies; and brutal beatings, starvation, and forced labor at the hands of his Japanese captors.

In spite of these often unfathomable hardships, Louis made it home safely at war's end, reunited with his loving family. Many writers would have left it at that, a harrowing yet somehow hollow survival account. Hillenbrand, however, doesn't stop there, telling the sour details of rest of his story—how Louis could not make peace with life back in the U.S., how his spirit was consumed by hatred and a desire for revenge, and how his anger and alcoholism

threatened to destroy his young family. Moreover, she doesn't shy away from showing the only thing that made him whole: the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which pierced his heart through the preaching of a young Billy Graham. This comes through, not as a footnote, but as the key to Louis' understanding of how and why he had been preserved. The Lord took his heart of bitter resentment, replacing it with a heart of forgiveness and launching him on a new life of touching others with the love of Christ.

A dust jacket festooned with glowing accolades and a good deal of media hype surrounding its publication made me skeptical of the book. After enough recommendations from trusted friends I came around to it, finding every drop of that praise to be wholly accurate. Zamperini passed away in late July of this year, and a film adaptation of *Unbroken* is due out this December; both events are giving his story a

new boost of publicity. Do yourself a favor and be challenged and encouraged by this excellent work.

*One word of caution--descriptions of violence, injury, sickness, etc. in the book are graphic (though very pertinent to the story), and many aspects of Louis' pre-salvation life are rendered faithfully as well (though not gratuitously). Hillenbrand is not endorsing ungodly practices, but the work of Christ in Louis' life is magnified by the earlier depiction of sin and suffering,

Justin Lonas

Target: All

Type: Biography

Take: Highly Recommended (with cautions)

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News Update—September 2014

Andrew Klavan Hired to Write Script for *Gosnell*

The producers of the movie about convicted killer and abortionist Kermit Gosnell have hired bestselling and award-winning novelist and screenwriter Andrew Klavan to write its screenplay.

Husband-and-wife filmmakers Phelim McAleer and Ann McElhinney, along with Magda Segieda, decided to make a film about Gosnell because they believed nobody else in liberal-leaning Hollywood would. They call Gosnell “America’s biggest serial killer”—but he’s also one of the least known. The Gosnell case caused much ire and disgust within pro-life and conservative circles, but barely sparked interest from mainstream media.

During the crowd-funding phase (in which over \$2 million was raised from more than 27,000 donors), the filmmakers sent out press releases to Klavan and several other writers. He shot a response back “within seconds,” calling the project “the best story I’ve ever heard for a movie” and a “stroke of genius.” But over the next few weeks, Klavan started thinking he would actually be a good candidate to write the script—after all, he is a crime and thriller writer, whose novel *True Crime* was made into a movie starring and directed by Clint Eastwood. He’s also a brassy conservative who doesn’t mince words about Hollywood’s liberal takeover of popular culture, penning several controversial columns and opinion pieces on the subject.

Klavan said that as the Gosnell trial was unfolding, he was most “appalled” by the barren media section at the courtroom: “I thought, ‘How is that possible? What were

they thinking?’ I really followed the press’ responsibility at the time.... That seems to be the core of the story: it’s really this almost conspiracy of silence—not just the press, but the state and local officials as well.”

That “wall of silence” is the angle Klavan will be pursuing while writing the script. “There’s always going to be evil people like Gosnell,” he said. “But they only thrive when regular, decent, normal people work to protect them.”

Religion News Service

27 Saudis Arrested for Practicing Christianity at Home Church

A home in Saudi Arabia was raided by authorities September 5; authorities arrested 27 people in the house, accusing them of practicing Christianity. Saudi law prevents the practice of any religion other than Islam.

The Saudi Gazette reported, “The Haia members who stormed the house found the men, women and children engaged in religious rituals in one of the rooms.” Bibles and musical instruments were also seized. A tip from a Saudi citizen accusing the house of “suspicious activities” prompted the raid.

“The raid is another part of an ongoing harassment campaign directed at Christians at the exact same time that the Saudi kingdom is making a major ‘interfaith outreach’ push internationally,” Patrick Poole of P.J. Media said.

U. S. Representative Frank Wolf said that he hopes the U.S. “will speak up” about the house raid and subsequent arrests.

Christian Headlines

Bhutan Pastor Sentenced for Accepting Ministry Funds

A Bhutanese pastor has been

sentenced to 11 months in prison for receiving donations for his ministry. Serving in the landlocked country in South Asia located at the eastern end of the Himalayas, Pastor Tandin Yangwal allegedly received \$11,864 in contributions from a foreign Christian organization.

“Wangyal was convicted under Article 71 of the Civil Society Organization Act of Bhutan, which outlaws raising funds for activities ‘in contravention of the laws of the country’ and without prior permission. The pastors were arrested in Khapdani village, Dorokha area in Samtse District, on March 5,” according to the Morning Star News.

Sources claim the Dorokha, Samtse District court ruled Yangwal used the funds for training and to share the Gospel, which is against the law in the Buddhist nation. The Voice of the Martyrs reports that Christians once enjoyed a “measure of freedom

beginning in 1965,” but established tighter restriction in 1990.

While Yangwal has ten days to refute the ruling, he reported to Morning Star News he has already filed an appeal to the Samtse District Court.

Christian Headlines

Ibrahim: “I Knew God Would Stand by My Side”

Sudanese Christian Meriam

Ibrahim has spoken out about the persecution and suffering she endured while imprisoned for her faith. Ibrahim was granted asylum in the United States in August, but spent months in prison for apostasy charges prior to her release into safety.

Though Ibrahim suffered in prison, and was even forced to give birth to her daughter in chains, she says that she knew God was with her. “The situation was difficult

but I was sure that God would stand by my side. I relied only on my faith and I knew that God would stand by me at any time, in any situation,” Ibrahim said.

Ibrahim was imprisoned for her Christian faith because the nation believed she should practice the same faith as her estranged father, a Muslim. Ibrahim argued that her mother was a Christian and she had practiced Christianity her entire life. ”I knew that God would help me, that God knew that I was a victim of injustice. It is my right to be able to practice the religion I choose,” Ibrahim said.

Ibrahim is now safe in New Hampshire with her husband, a U.S. citizen, and two young children. She says that she still needs prayer as she adjusts to the new life. Ibrahim also thanked Christians around the world for the support and prayers on her behalf.

Christian Headlines

Kurdish Forces Taking Back Christian Villages as More Christians Join Fight

Fighting continues across Iraq and Syria, as Kurdish forces attempt to force Islamic State (ISIS) terrorists out of the region and regain control. *Christian Today* reports that Kurdish forces are beginning to see some success, as seven Christian villages were taken back from ISIS authority.

United States airstrikes reportedly aided the Kurdish forces as the troops regained control.

A Catholic cleric confirmed the report saying, "The peshmerga [Kurdish militia] managed to liberate several villages...[ISIS] militants have now fled from there."

At the same time, more Christians are joining Kurdish troops in an effort to defeat the Muslim extremists. Christian men ages 18-30 are being recruited for the cause after

Christians leaders requested permission for members of their community to fight.

Christian Headlines
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Sermon Helps

from www.sermonhall.com

Sermon Outlines

Turning the Cheek

- I. Involves Pain (John 15:18-19)
 - A. Persecution.
 - B. Suffering
- II. Involves Patience (Eph. 4:32)
 - A. Humility
 - B. Forsaking desire for revenge.
- III. Involves Perception (2 Tim. 3:12)
 - A. Perceiving it is God's will.
 - B. Sharing the sufferings of Christ (Phil 3:10).

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

Ephesians 1:4-14

Intro.: In the Lord Jesus Christ, God has signed over to the believer His whole estate of spiritual wealth. Without Christ, and apart from Him, we have nothing, we are nothing and we can do nothing (John 15:5); but, as believers, how rich we are! All the blessings which are in Him become ours.

I. We have been chosen in Christ (v. 4)

A. Before the creation of the world.

B. Election looks backward and tells us we were chosen.

II. We Have Been Predestined unto the Adoption of Children (vv. 4-5)

A. Predestination looks forward and tells us why we were chosen.

B. God's purpose in choosing us is that we should be brought into His family

III. We Have Been Accepted in the Beloved (v. 6, Isa. 64:6)

A. God could never accept us in our sinful, unregenerate condition.

B. Once we trust Christ as our Savior He does accept us in Him.

IV. We Have Been Redeemed and All Our Sins Have Been Forgiven (v. 7)

A. We have been bought back, ransomed

B. 1 Peter 21:18-19; Romans 7:14; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Isaiah 44:22-2; and Luke 7:47.

V. We Have Been Initiated into the Divine Mystery (vv. 8-10)

A. Everything is moving towards the glorious consummation of all things.

B. Philippians 2:10-11 will be reality.

VI. We Have Obtained an Inheritance (v. 11)

- A. In Christ we have everything we need for time and for eternity (cf. 1 Pet. 1:4).
- B. Compare Romans 8:17,32; 1 Corinthians 3:21-23; 2 Timothy 2:12; and Revelation 5:10.

VII. We Have Been Sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise (vv. 13-14).

- A. This divine sealing denotes ownership and security.
- B. Spiritual blessings belong to us.
 - 1. If we are “in Christ” (v. 3).
 - 2. If, having heard the gospel we have believed (v. 13).

Anonymous

Illustrations

A Little Girl Overcoming Evil

A very little girl, who often read her Bible, gave proof that she understood her obligations to obey its precepts. One day

she came to her mother much pleased to show her some fruit which had been given to her. The mother said the friend was very kind, and had given her a great many. "Yes," said the child, "very, indeed; and she gave me more than these, but I have given some away."

The mother inquired to whom she had given them, when she answered, "I gave them to a girl who pushes me off the sidewalk, and makes faces at me." On being asked why she gave them to her, she replied, "Because I thought it would make her know that I wanted to be kind to her, and maybe she will not be so rude and unkind to me again." How admirably did she thus obey the command in Romans 12:21 to "*overcome evil with good!*"

Anonymous

Putting on Christ

The story is told of a Roman youth who, notwithstanding a mother's unwearied prayers, had lived a life of self-seeking and sinful indulgence. Then one day, as he sat in the garden, in the cloudless beauty of an autumn day, a great struggle took place in his mind. Throwing himself on his knees he prayed earnestly to God, "O Lord, how long, how long, how long wilt thou be angry with me? Must it be forever, tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrows? Why should it not be today?"

Suddenly in his agony he seemed to hear the voice as of a little child repeating, "Take up and read"; "Take up and read." And taking up the Epistles of St. Paul which he had happened to be reading, and opening the book at random, his eye caught these words: "*Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make*

not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:13, 14).

The words came to him as a direct message from God, and in one instant strong resolve, he determined forever to break with his old life and in the might of Christ to enter on the new. Young Augustine put on Christ.

Anonymous

Bulletin Inserts On Evangelism

Witnessing is not just something a Christian says, but what a Christian is!

Richard Halverson

Reach out to a world in need with the Word it needs.

God has more trouble getting Christians to go than sinners to come.

Hoarded religion pays no interest—and the principal is in danger.

Be fishers of men. You catch them—He will clean them.

Can you reconcile these two statements? “I am a Christian, but I am not interested in missions.”

These five anonymous

Keep your fears to yourself; share your courage with others.

If it had not been for a missionary somewhere, sometime ago, where would you be today?

These two via the *Old Union Reminder*

I can't find a verse of Scripture that commands a lost person to go to church

(but) I know a lot of Scripture that
commands believers to go into a lost world.

Howard Hendricks

No matter who you are or where you are,
God has a purpose for you...and that
purpose is to be a witness for Him.

Andy Chap

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Puzzles and 'Toons

Church 'Toons by Joe McKeever

On following pages

"SHE APPEARS TO BE IN A
SERMONICALLY-INDUCED COMA."



"HE'S NOT A FIRE
AND BRIMSTONE PREACHER,
BUT HE MAKES UP FOR
IT WITH HIS ONLINE
COMMENTS."



Answers to last issue's puzzle:

HIDDEN WISDOM

ACROSTIC #79: ANSWERS

Daniel (2:22)—“*He revealeth the deep and secret things; he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.*”

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| A. Whirlwind | H. Athens |
| B. Heed | L. Neglect |
| C. Gath | J. Ink |
| D. ThankbeLord | K. Enshemesh |
| E. Shephi | L. Levite |
| F. Henth | M. Seed |
| G. Dewitt | N. Thwart |

Question Box Answers

1. Joppa (Jon. 1:3)
2. “*For forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown*” (Jon. 3:4).
3. One hundred and twenty thousand (Jon. 4:11).
4. The houses of Achazib (Mic. 1:14).
5. The remnant of Israel (Mic. 2:12).
6. Jerusalem (Mic. 4:2).
7. “*He... that is to be ruler in Israel*” (Mic. 5:2), i.e. Jesus Christ (cf. Mt. 2:5, 6).
8. “*To do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God*” (Mic. 6:8).
9. Nineveh (Nah. 2:8).
10. Their merchants (Nah. 3:16).

Hidden Wisdom & Father Abraham

By Mark Oshman

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On following pages

Father Abraham's Question Box

By Mark Oshman

Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai

Fill in the missing word(s):

1. What nation did God describe as "bitter and thirsty"? (Hab. 1)
2. With what shall the earth be filled? (Hab. 2)
3. From where did God come? (Hab. 3)
4. During whose reign did Zephaniah prophesy? (Zeph. 1)
5. Which Philistine cities did God promise to destroy? (Zeph. 2)
6. What nations did God say would be like Sodom and Gomorrah? (Zeph. 2)
7. Whom did God describe as "tight and treacherous persons"? (Zeph. 3)
8. Who was the governor of Judah when Haggai prophesied? (Hag. 1)
9. Who was the high priest when Haggai prophesied? (Hag. 1)
10. What did God promise to do regarding Zerubbabel? (Hag. 2)

See answers on page 23

Hidden Wisdom: Bible Acrostic #80

by Mark A. Oshman

Solve the acrostic by using the clues to guess the words and by transferring the letter above each number to its appropriate place in the diagram. The result will be a Scripture verse of admonition, comfort, or instruction. Further, the initial letters of the answers will contain the title of the book from which the verse was taken. All quotations are from the King James Version. HAPPY SOLVING!



CLUES

A. Burning

B. Slender shoot on a tree

C. King Ahab's father-in-law

D. Descriptive of God (1 Tim. 6)

E. Celestial

F. Part of the offering brought by a Nazarite after the period of his vow expired (2 wds.)

G. Where Ibero reigned as king

H. A very small quantity

I. Meet the expense of something

J. Neither masculine nor feminine in gender

K. Location of the tabernacle when Eli was high priest

L. A simple dwelling

6I 54 17 24 48 29

3 57 50 22

8 43 55 34 47 27 12

T T1 64 35 51 28 14 40 60

65 13 49 69 39 5 59 33

56 9 66 71 44 31 37

42 23 67 4 16

70 62 6 36

32 63 21 41 15 46

45 68 2 25 30 10

52 10 58 38 20 26

7 18 53

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