

The Heartbeat of 

The Remnant

Volume 28, Issue 3
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A ministry of
The Berean Voice



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“The Berean Voice” is an outreach ministry of Faith Christian Fellowship, a church located in Holmes County, Ohio. It is operated by a board of directors, which ultimately answers to the elders of the church.

As a non-profit ministry, we desire to work with the Lord, for without Him we can do nothing. We are trusting God to provide for the ongoing work of this magazine and our other outreach projects through the free-will offerings of His people. Would you join us in prayer for this work and ongoing need?

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~ *The Berean Voice Board*

It is our goal that the content of this magazine bring honor and glory to God. All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise notated. In the event of discovering any errors in content or detail, please count it to our oversight and kindly bring it to our attention.

Magazine Contact Info

The Heartbeat of the Remnant

c/o: The Berean Voice

P.O. Box 279

Shreve, Ohio 44676

Ph. (330) 439-9547

website: bereanvoice.com

Email Contacts

Questions or Comments

editor@bereanvoice.org

Address Changes & Subscriptions

(Free Subscriptions—Donation Funded)

subscribe@bereanvoice.org

Submitting Articles, Poems, & Photos

(please contact us for requirements)

submit@bereanvoice.org

Board of Directors

Edward Martin *Chairman*

Joel Hostetler *Vice-Chairman*

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Greetings to each one in the worthy name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, and our Redeemer.

This magazine issue may seem to be arriving more quickly on the heels of the last one. True. We are continuing to tighten up our schedule as we work towards getting each quarterly issue out in a more timely manner. Our ultimate goal is to have them arrive in your mailboxes in the months of March, June, September, and December of each year. Pray for us as we continue moving towards that schedule.

From time to time, we receive feedback—suggestions, concerns, and encouragement. We value this feedback. It is filed away and used by the board as we continually evaluate ways to make our magazine better. One final thought on this matter... when we receive feedback of encouragement regarding a specific article, it is helpful for us, and it is encouraging for our authors as we pass that along to them. We welcome your ongoing feedback.

As previously mentioned, we are including several new categories in this issue. One on Church History that is being written by two young brothers from our church. And one on Hymn Histories being written by one of our board members, a middle-aged married man, who is also from our church.

In “Moses in Midian”, we take a walk in Moses’ footsteps during the mid-section of his life. He was uprooted from his comfortable lifestyle in Egypt as an adopted son of royalty and was then sent by God into the desert to learn some much-needed lessons in further preparation towards becoming God’s servant. As we take a look at the life of Jonah, we glean glimpses of “The God Who Will Not Let Go”. Often a struggling believer loses sight of the Truth of God because they believe the lie that no one cares, yet the truth of the matter is this—the God of the Bible doesn’t just drop us, or turn His back on us, the instant that we take a wrong turn or a misstep. Let’s allow this article to help us to become rooted and grounded in the biblical Truth of Abba Father—a Father who cares for His children. We also have the second article in a continuing series on discipleship, as well as an article written by a middle-aged, spiritually-mature sister who shares her encouragement for sisters to evaluate what God thinks of their attire.

Church History and Should A Christian Vote

Finally, let’s consider the two short articles on church history. One of our goals for this issue is burdened with the awareness that the country in which we live (the U.S.) is

approaching mid-term elections in November of this year and that there will be a strong push for many conservative Anabaptists to become involved in the voting process to ensure a proper outcome for the good of their perceived cause or goals.

In the natural world our “old man” has the tendency to think that we must “do something” if we expect things to go in a “right” direction. The spiritual Truth is this: *The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will –Proverbs 21:1.* If we think that, as believers, we will have a part in electing the “right” person in an election if we personally vote, let’s stop to consider what God Himself told Nebuchadnezzar. ... *That the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will –Daniel 4:31-32.*

Throughout the history of the Anabaptist people there have been varied opinions on this matter, however, it is our wish to lift up the perspective that Jesus said ... *My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight ... but now is my kingdom not from hence –John 18:36.* When we understand and develop a personal world view that is founded on the two-kingdom principle, we realize that we must function as ... *strangers and pilgrims on the earth. [While we] ... declare plainly that [we] seek a country ... a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called [our] God: for he hath prepared for [us] a city –Hebrews 11:13-16.* In all things involving political involvement, it is our encouragement that New Testament believers should obey the command to ... *come out from among them, and be ye separate... –2 Corinthians 6:17.*

Let’s always cultivate a right attitude in our hearts so that our talk and actions reflect God’s view on the matter when He through the Apostle Paul tells us to: *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God ... For he is the minister of God to thee... –Romans 13:1-4.*

It is in consideration of these thoughts that we wrote the two articles detailing very different times in the history of the church and what it was like for Christians to relate to the government of their day. Let us seriously ponder whether we can do more good by getting involved in politics, especially in the voting process. Or whether God wants us to pray for our elected officials, to view them as His servants, and to speak about them with respect. Ultimately, we must trust God to bring about His will for the winding down of the “clock of time” as time speeds onward towards the end of time. God will do this through

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Nero: Life of an Emperor

by Jonathan Yoder
Big Prairie, OH

Being a ruler over a group of people is marked with stress, hard decisions, and sleepless nights—certainly not a position for the mentally weak or immature. The position is difficult, be it sheriff, mayor, governor, or president. The average person does not fully mature until the age of 25, according to neuroscientific studies.¹ And yet, in AD 54, a ruler was appointed who was only seventeen years old. This was no petty judge or political secretary. He was crowned ruler over one of the largest empires of the world at that time. The boy's name was Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus—commonly called Nero. He was the fifth emperor of Rome.

Nero was not brought into power by any election or choice of his citizens. His mother, Agrippina, had married Caesar Claudius (her uncle), emperor of Rome. Claudius adopted Nero as his son. Nero would go on to marry Claudius' daughter Octavia, his own cousin and stepsister.

On October 13, A.D. 54, Agrippina poisoned her powerful husband, and her son Nero became emperor. It was rumored that Nero and his mother had an incestuous relationship, but the new ruler was well received by his subjects and seemed eager to please them, ordering grand public buildings to be built, as well as lowering taxes and the price of food. However, it was not to last.

Nero soon killed his brother-in-law, who was fourteen, which angered his wife. At this point, the emperor was in a relationship with a freedwoman (a formerly enslaved person), so he had his wife exiled. When this sparked public outrage, he had Octavia beheaded on false charges of being unfaithful.

He then became infatuated with a woman named Poppaea Sabina, who was scheming to marry him. Sabina roused Nero to such fear and jealousy that he decided to kill his mother for fear of losing the throne. The plan was simple—while Agrippina was on a cruise ship, it would be discreetly sunk, and Nero's mother would drown. However, this was not to be. Agrippina was a strong swimmer and escaped with her life. Undeterred, Nero dispatched his executioners

to stab her to death in broad daylight. Unfortunately, things had just gotten started for the most powerful man in the empire and these bizarre and inhuman acts were only a sampling of what was to come.

Nero was given to fits of rage and became violent towards his wife in one such outburst. He kicked Sabina repeatedly until both she and her unborn child died. Nero is said to have regretted this, and he soon started a hunt for anyone who looked like Sabina, his dead wife. He finally found a slave that is said to have resembled her strongly, and they were married. The catch? The slave was a man. Nero took to dressing him in the clothing of a woman and referring to him as a lady. At this point, Nero's slippery slope was only getting more slippery. He believed himself to be an artist—a genius, even—and gave massive public performances. If you were in attendance, you could not leave. Why? The doors were locked. Nero also dreamed of singing to his enemies and bringing them to tears for their perceived wrongdoings.

But the emperor was not content with only putting on musical performances. In A.D. 67, he entered into the Olympic Games, which was against the rules (no emperor was allowed to compete in the Games). Nevertheless, Nero entered. He introduced new competitions, such as trumpeting and acting. He entered into several and won each one. His actions caused much outrage since the Olympics were considered a sacred event and Nero had changed them.

However, Nero had an even bigger goal in mind. The chariot races were the biggest spectacle the Olympics had to offer. In them, chariot riders were allowed a team of four horses. Teams would race around a massive arena for a total of seven laps. Sometimes wheels fell off, or chariots crashed into each other. It was not uncommon for drivers to be thrown from their ride and to be trampled to death or to be dragged by their own team of horses. However, the winner would be celebrated and highly paid.

Knowing all the difficulty, danger, and stress involved, you can only imagine how the charioteers felt to see Emperor

Nero roll up to the racetrack in an expensive chariot and a team consisting of not four, but ten horses. As it turns out, Nero was inexperienced and out of shape. Almost immediately, he lost control of his team and was thrown from the chariot, being seriously injured in the process. Despite never finishing the race, Nero won first place.

This incident does a good job of demonstrating Nero's attitude toward his authority at this point in his reign. In fact, in A.D. 66, he won more than 1,800 first-place prizes for his supposed exhibits of artistry. Here was a man that could not be told "no".

On the night of July 18, A.D. 64, a fire started in Rome's Circus Maximus. The fire grew and spread, becoming out of control. The fire would rage for the next six days, leaving almost no part of the city untouched. It was devastating for the citizens of Rome and would go on to be the incident Nero would be most widely known for. Many ancient writers blamed Nero for starting the fire, although he was not in the city when it began. Whether or not he started the fire, Nero needed someone to blame. He chose a group of people who were despised and feared by the Romans and tortured them relentlessly. That group was known as the Christians. Tacitus, a secular Roman writer, described it as such, "Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as nightly illumination when daylight had expired."

Meanwhile, Nero grew even more wicked. He ruthlessly slaughtered Christian men, women, and children, and plunged ever deeper into immorality. Finally, On June 9, AD 68, Nero, the last emperor of Rome killed himself after having been declared a public enemy by the Roman Senate. He was only 31 years old.

So, here is a man corrupt in every way. His lifestyle was deeply offensive to Christianity, and his persecution was one of the most horrible in history. How would we respond to such a ruler? How *did* Christians respond to him?

Paul lived under Nero's reign. He saw all the horrible things detailed above. Yet, he gave the church the following admonition: *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise*

of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake –Romans 13: 1-5.

These words seem impossible when we consider the situation. Yet the Word of God tells us that our governmental authorities are put in place by God Himself. What a testimony! How much more, then, are we called to respect our authorities—to not slander them; to obey them in all possible aspects; to stay away from their elections and campaigns; and yet, to yield ourselves to God and His authority as our final say?! Or, as Paul put it, *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God...* –Romans 13:1.

The believers of the early church saw Nero—the murderous, bloodthirsty, corrupt emperor—as a man ordained of God. They sought to honor and respect him in his authority, while ultimately yielding to the higher authority of God. Herein, we see a potential paradox, that the earthly authorities are "ministers of God" to be honored and obeyed, yet IF the time would come wherein the believer is required by the civil authorities to disobey God, we then have a higher responsibility—... *We ought to obey God rather than men* –Acts 5:29.

This all puts a great responsibility on our shoulders today as Christians living in an increasingly corrupt and evil society. Can we find that biblical balance between honoring our governmental leaders while still obeying God in all things? Or do we fail just like the unregenerate around us in picking apart the faults of our earthly authorities when we feel our "easy living" being trodden upon?

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is –Ephesians 5:15-17. And Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful –1 Corinthians 4:2.

Let each one of us as committed, born-again, Bible-believing Christians walk circumspectly, redeeming the time. For we all want to be found faithful in that soon-coming day when we all will stand before the judgment seat to receive our just reward.

Endnote:

ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3621648

The Integrity of the Church

NAZI GERMANY AND THE MENNONITES

by Joshua Yoder
Big Prairie, OH

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?... –Matthew 5:13.

One might wonder as to why the Anabaptists, the early church fathers, church history writers, and especially the progenitor (originator or author) of our beliefs, Christ Himself, effected such a vehement and absolute approach to a separated church and state. Why did they unanimously preach, write, and otherwise caution against political involvement of any kind by Christians? Perhaps this is best answered by looking at the results of Christians ignoring these sincere warnings, casting off their Godly allegiance, and pledging themselves to a flawed and ultimately futile earthly kingdom.

The Mennonites of Germany are a particularly intriguing and cautionary episode of Christian and Anabaptist histories—not only because of their relative proximity to our time—but also because of their almost wholesale devotion to a worldly leader and agenda. What led them to such an un-Christ-like position? A true understanding of their story must begin, naturally, with their beginnings.

The Mennonites of 20th century Germany were descended from the first Anabaptist groups, but unlike our ancestors, they stayed in the Old World instead of emigrating to the New World. There, a number of factors led them to a unique position within world events, a position that would test their mettle on a global stage.

The beginnings of the 20th century brought about the first World War, which ended with the defeat of Germany and its allies. The resulting peace treaties were structured to humiliate and crush Germany, saddling it with an almost unpayable war debt, and restricting its rights to build a military. The German people, unsurprisingly, resented this insult being added to the injury of having lost the War. Their resentment festered, and soon manifested itself in nationalistic movements, the most notable of which was the National Socialist German Workers Party (or the Nazi Party). The party was founded in 1919, and Hitler was amongst its first members. He quickly assumed party

leadership, attracting followers with his “us vs. them” rhetoric and strong leadership.

Party growth was small in the decade following its founding. During this time, Hitler continued to shape the Nazis according to his wishes. Hatred for most non-German (Aryan) groups became a central party theme, along with a violent distaste for communism. However, the party was not large enough to be anything but a fringe voice, representing only a small portion of German voters.

Insignificance did not last, however. The Great Depression brought the catalyst for the Nazi’s rise to power. When the global market crashed, over 2 million Germans lost their jobs. Unemployed, they rallied around the charismatic leadership that promised to give them jobs, give them power, to “Make Germany great again”. Moving quickly, Hitler added legions to his followers.

The thousands of new Nazi Party members enabled the Nazi Party to seriously contest many local elections, and in Germany’s Parliament, they were able to control enough votes to sway policy making. In the long run, their political might handed Hitler the office of prime minister. Having secured that position, he went on to overthrow the German government, establishing himself and his party as the undisputed rulers of Germany.

Why did such a man, and such a movement, attract the attention and adoration of a church that professed much of what we do? Loving our enemies, separation from the world, and nonresistance did not seem to combine with the message of the Nazis. The answer, like most backsliding churches, is best portrayed as happening in small steps and over time.

In 1929, the Mennonites came under the eye of Germany and its rapidly expanding Nazi Party. 13,000 Russian Mennonite refugees descended on Moscow, seeking an exit from the Communist-run country. The Nazis seized the situation, using the Mennonites as supposed evidence that Aryans (peoples of German lineage, such as the Mennonites) were being unjustly used by the rest

of the world. This image was pushed by state propaganda departments, who circulated writings, pamphlets, and even two immensely popular movies, depicting the Mennonites as strong, red-blooded Germans valiantly striving against the unjust oppression of the Russian Communists. These efforts afforded the refugees national attention, which subsequently led to them being admitted into Germany.

While many Mennonites entered Germany, as refugees and otherwise, there were also thriving, established communities that were given the same patriotic make-over by the Nazi propagandists. Unfortunately, these churches welcomed the Nazi attention, going so far as to send Hitler a letter thanking him for being the “savior of the German peoples” and pledging their support to his government. It is of note that Hitler, a man quite busy running an emerging world power, personally responded to this letter with a memo thanking the churches for their support and expressing a desire for further cooperation to the benefit of both the Nazis and the Mennonites. The church further weakened under these seemingly beneficial relations.

A particularly shocking case of Mennonite political involvement came from the churches in or around Danzig. Danzig and the surrounding countryside had long been a part of the German Empire, until the end of World War I, when the region was separated from Germany, essentially becoming a buffer zone between Germany and Poland. In 1939, Hitler would make one of his first moves on Europe by annexing Danzig, where the Nazis had been building party influence for most of the 1930's. The Mennonites of the area, having been German only a generation before, welcomed their new part in the Germany of the future, becoming involved in almost every level of the Nazi Party. Otto Andres became the second-highest ranked Nazi of the Danzig area, and scores of the 6,000 believers in the surrounding congregations joined various Nazi organizations. The men often took part in the paramilitary SA and SS, while their wives and daughters took part in corresponding women's groups. Churches became saturated with active Nazis, even going so far as to accept them into church leadership. At one point, five of the seven local churches were led by active party members.

World War II was the final step in the Mennonites' integration with the Nazis. The German concentration camp of Stutthof supplied slave labor to numerous Mennonite businesses. Mennonite churches organized war efforts, including recruiting their young men to serve in the German army. In a particularly twisted case, a Mennonite doctor, Johan Klassen, was personally responsible for the deaths of more than one hundred disabled children.

Perhaps the most concerning episode in this dismal tale of backsliding comes after the war. Mennonite leadership, recognizing to some extent the terrible depths to which they had fallen, and noting the justice that was to come through the Nuremberg trials, effectively shrugged the blame from off their shoulders. Appealing to their Mennonite brothers across the ocean, they convinced them of their innocence, twisting their involvement in the Nazi regime to make themselves appear the victims. American Mennonites helped these now-refugees in many ways, providing all manner of assistance, and ultimately keeping most of them from facing possible prison time or death sentences. The surviving German churches eventually disintegrated or emigrated to the Americas.

If a group who originally held beliefs identical to our own could stray to the point of child murder and slave labor, then the question must be asked: “Are we seeing their folly for what it was?” Why did the churches of Danzig accept the advances of what, in retrospect, was a clearly un-biblical, un-Christlike movement?

The origin for their downfall was surprisingly simple. The Mennonites of Germany forgot who their true Ruler was. No earthly kingdom at war tolerates an allegiance to the enemy, and neither does the Kingdom of Heaven. The pride in their earthly kingdom, the pursuit of prestige and power, all led to a foreseeable end. Their salt had lost its savor, and they were cast out and trodden underfoot. This is a cautionary tale of the dangers of an unequal yoking of the church with the world.

Source:

[anabaptisthistorians.](#)

[org/2018/02/07mennonites-and-the-holocaust-an-introduction](#)



Moses in Midian

by Lee Rufener
Athens, WI

Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb –Exodus 3:1.

The back side of the desert has long been understood as God's school wherewith He has instructed many of His servants, of whom Moses stands chief. At the prime age of 40, he found himself *...learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel –Acts 7:22-23.*

I have no doubt that God can, and does, use men of great ability, capacity, and training, but spiritual leadership requires an ingredient that is not derived from doing, attaining, and accomplishing. The bane of the zealot is often too little confidence in God and too much confidence in the flesh. This pride and restlessness is not dealt with in a seminary nor is it normally exterminated during vigilant duty. For many of God's servants, it is extracted from the soul on the soil of deserted sands. This arid and abandoned acreage that appears void of life and fruitfulness is where many servants learn to put their face in the dust and yield to what may seem to be inactivity, unfruitfulness, and rejection.

Moses' life could be divided into three sections. He spent his first forty years learning the wisdom of Egypt, the next forty as a shepherd in Midian, and a final forty as the shepherd of Israel. We can imagine that the first third of his pilgrimage was filled with tremendous activity, advancement, and accomplishment. It had undoubtedly been rehearsed to him that at his birth he *...was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months –Acts 7:20.*

The miraculous river rescue by Pharaoh's daughter would serve to confirm that he was destined to be an instrument of God's divine orchestration. As a centerpiece of national attention, it is certainly understandable how this man who *...was mighty in words and in deeds –Acts 7:22,* was

brimming with self-confidence in his ability to accomplish God's bidding.

In today's economy, Moses would be esteemed as the ideal candidate for church leadership. He was in every way qualified. He stood above his countrymen in education, and he possessed above-normal natural, financial, and spiritual endowments. He had emerged from the "University" of Egypt as a man mighty in word and deed and he had an obvious call from God upon his life. He was a conservative man who chose *...rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season –Hebrews 11:25.*

Still, amidst all his fine credentials he was yet deficient for the work that God had called him to. And so, God conveniently conducted him into the land of Midian to enroll him in another school to feed upon the bitter herbs of disappointment and rejection, obscurity and loneliness, and unfulfilled dreams and longings. While it was his earlier ambition to voluntarily align himself with the people of God, this chapter of his life was enacted by compulsion.

We learn from the account in Exodus that the latter third of his life was loaded with intricate involvement and major ministry. While the exit from Egypt is an exciting read and provides great insight, most of us cannot honestly relate to the mighty Moses and his dynamic coalition with God. Rather, it is the uneventful 40-year mid-section of his life that many of us find ourselves in. Though there are but a few dozen verses that represent these four decades of his life, we assume that it was a thorough schooling that inscribed immense patience, soul searching, and perhaps a bit of frustration.

For us, it represents a period when the parched sands of time about us seem to be producing nothing more fruitful than a revelation of our dry, crusty heart—shriveled and wasted by the consequences of our failures and past sins. It is at these times that we can have a lapse in faith, not that we blame God for our circumstances, but that we may begin to see our lives as futile, and that each day is the same as the previous one. Perhaps we begin to walk around in a

visionless stupor—through a fog of spiritual depression—as we grope for encouragement and a reminder that God has not forgotten us. At times, it even seems that our prayers hit the ceiling and bounce back, laughing and lying to us in grim mockery that our usefulness in the Kingdom of God is over. During extended times of trials and testing, we can feel abandoned. We can even imagine that God has turned against us. We look up to Heaven and ask, “Why Lord?” We will never experience rejection and being forsaken to the extent that the Lord Jesus did, but when we experience them in our petty little realm, it seems to sap all our spiritual strength and vigor. We think... *If the Lord should require forty years of this from us there would be no time left in our lives to capitalize on what we have learned.* But God’s timing is perfect. Thus, it behooves us to not concern ourselves so much with the longevity of our schooling, but to be thoroughly acquainted with the message from Midian. While some receive the bitter strokes of Midian and retreat to stand cynically on the sidelines, we must shake off the dust of the desert and arise with an understanding of...

God’s Purpose

God has a purpose for every detail of our lives. He may plant us in a difficult position, to forge in us a new vocation. It was alone in Midian where Moses learned of his own pride, self-confidence, lack of faith, and the utter folly that his own hands had participated in. Here in his Midian, he was alone and yet not alone; numerous other saints have joined him there. The sons of Jacob and the wife of Potiphar sent another vibrant servant there—Joseph. The wild rage of a jealous king sent a gifted young harpist there. Even an old and foolish king who refused to be taught found himself in a wilderness eating grass like an ox until he recanted of his pride.

Throughout the pages of history, countless saints have realized that ‘the darker the valley, the more I learned to pray’. While they arrive at the threshold of the new day loaded down with bountiful exuberance, they are soon stripped naked in a metamorphic change and finally emerge with nothing but the rod of God in their hands. Gone are the days when they were swift to speak, swift to act, and slow to hear. In Midian, the student learns to shift his focus from, “I will do great things for God” to “What wilt thou have me to do?”

And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do –Acts 9:6. The new arrivals in Midian have many answers, but most of them involve a one-act-play with self as the main character. The graduates walk out silent and sober, for they’ve come through the arduous process of separating the flesh from the spirit which was accomplished by...

God’s Purging

The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the LORD trieth the hearts –Proverbs 17:3. As Moses passed through the gates of Midian, the first scene that God set before his eyes was an injustice at a well. *Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters... –Exodus 2:16,* who were being driven away by a band of uncouth shepherds. But Moses had been well trained in every dimension of Egyptian plutocracy, which would have included all aspects of military expertise and worldly leadership skills. Thus, when he stepped in to assist the helpless shepherdesses, he would have been quite capable to do so. These daughters of the priest of Midian appreciated the help which they recounted to their father that *...An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock –Exodus 2:19.* Upon hearing this tale, their father, Reuel, was so impressed that he gave Moses a reception, a job, and a wife... all in one verse. –*see Exodus 2:21.*

...Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them –Mark 10:42. While Moses’ quest for justice may have been noble, his orientation was merely Gentile. This may work for establishing pecking order in a hen house, but it is destined for failure in leading forth the people of God. *But ... whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all –Mark 10:43-44.*

This doctrine was foreign to Egypt and to Moses as well. Many good and talented men can successfully operate a business using Gentile authority, but it rarely works in their home, and it is even more futile in a church. Thus, God moved His chosen vessel from royalty to proletariat (the working class), almost overnight. He is then given a job which was loathed by the people who had trained him—... *for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians –Genesis 46:34.* This fining pot is not just to teach us a much-needed lesson, but to guide us into...

God’s Provision

The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way –Psalm 25:9. God will never abandon us on the back side of the desert; instead, He tailors our life circumstances to bring us into His fullness. If we resist the temptation to espouse an attitude of anger, then God will be able to teach us His ways. But to Moses, the situation presented itself such that God’s divine direction was the last thing he would suspect was happening.

Happening...? It seemed that nothing was happening. The weeks melted into months, the months into years, and the years into decades, all the while the gifted Moses remained an underachieving shepherd. One of the hardest things that

we struggle with is “waiting.” Almost every Christian will face a long time of tribulation and we are told to: ...*think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you* –1 Peter 4:12. But we should not judge God’s means by our feeble sense, for in the meantime, the wonderful working of waiting prepares us for...

God’s Promotion

38, 39, ... 40 years. *Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt* –Exodus 3:10.

Perhaps God is enamored with the number 40, but more than likely, it was the time that it took for Moses to land at the seat of resignation. His self-esteem has been fully extinguished, and he humbly asks: ... *Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?* –Exodus 3:11.

Moses was not less qualified than he was forty years prior to this time, but his presumption had evaporated in the heat of the desert sun. The experience gleaned in the rugged pastures with the stubborn sheep has brought him to the

understanding that this will be nearly an impossible feat. But there is no ordained calling issued independently from...

God’s Promise

...*Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain* –Exodus 3:12.

Not that Moses had attained perfection, for we find Moses provoking God to anger in the very next chapter—*And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses...* –Exodus 4:14. Then soon again he is the direct object in the path of God’s sword—*And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the LORD met him, and sought to kill him* –Exodus 4:24. Even so, while his vessel is still made of clay, it has met with a firing that has prepared him for the Lord’s service, and for us God will not revoke His promises in the wind of our whims. Thus, the great I AM THAT I AM –see Exodus 3:14, has laid upon human shoulders the immense and eternal task of leading His people. But this charge is not to be executed without...



God's Power

What was the real refinement from Moses' time spent in the desert? We notice his rash willingness to wield the sword before his arrival, but upon his exit, he only bore a rod in his hand. With the sword he had overcome an Egyptian offender, but with the rod he overcame the entire forces of Egypt. The rod of God brought forth the water in the wilderness. It was the rod of God, that, when lifted high by feeble hands secured the victory over Amalek. What is the rod of God? Before his days in Midian, he hardly knew it existed. Forty years later there hardly exists a scene without it.

The rod is the power of God unto salvation. It is the wisdom of God, the truth of God, the testimony of God, but more than all of these it is the chastening of God. Without it, man does not receive nor perceive the love of God for without it man is not connected to God. *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons* –Hebrews 12:6-8.

This same Moses, who at one time was willing to exercise lordship (Gentile authority) over God's people now finds himself entreating God and staying His wrath from destroying them. The people who accused Moses of leading them out to kill them and even at one point were ready to stone him are now at the center of his heart and affection, even though they are at the cause of his failure to enter the promised land. This is the love of Christ. But where is this learned except under the rod of God, on the back side of the desert, in the Egyptian dungeons, in the caves of Adullam, in the straits of Arabia, and in the silent solitude of the back burner where God has ordained that many of His people go until they learn to ...*learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls* –Matthew 11:29. Surely that is where Moses secured the character known to the biblical scholar as the meekest man to walk the face of the earth. Surely there is no more opposite place on earth to learn it but in the school of suffering.

And so here we shall abide as well, so that we ...*may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death* –Philippians 3:10.



All Hail the Power of Jesus Name

by Joel A Hostetler
Coshocton, OH

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created –Revelation 4:11.

This hymn, often called the “National Anthem of Christendom,” is perhaps one of the greatest of hymns of all time. It was written by Edward Perronet, first appearing in the November 1779 issue of Gospel Magazine. It was edited by Augustus Toplady, who is also the author of another well-known hymn, “Rock of Ages”. The text of this hymn, All Hail the Power of Jesus Name, has been translated into almost every language where Christianity is known. Wherever it is sung, it communicates to the spiritual needs of human hearts. One writer has said, “So long as there are Christians on earth, it will continue to be sung; and after that, in heaven.”

Edward Perronet was born at Sundridge, Kent, England, in 1726. He was a descendant of a distinguished French Huguenot family who had fled to Switzerland and later to England because of the religious persecution in France. Edward’s father, a pastor in the State Church of England, was strongly sympathetic with the evangelical movement spearheaded by the Wesleys and George Whitefield. Edward, too, like his father, became a minister in the Anglican Church but was always critical of its ways. Once he wrote, “I was born and I am likely to die in the tottering communion of the Church of England, but I despise her nonsense.” Soon, however, he broke from the Church and threw himself strenuously into the evangelistic endeavors of the Wesleys during the 1740s and 1750s.

Charles Wesley writes of Edward Perronet’s boldness in preaching. At one time he and Perronet were beset in a house by a mob of rough revilers, whom Perronet opposed courageously, while they abused him and threw dirt on him. It was during this time that the Wesleys and their followers suffered much persecution and even violence from those who disagreed with their ministry. Concerning these experiences, Wesley made the following notation in his diary: “From Rockdale we went to Bolton, and soon found that the Rockdale lions were lambs in comparison

with those of Bolton.” Edward Perronet was thrown down and rolled in mud and mire. Stones were hurled and windows broken.

Another interesting account is given regarding the relationship between the Wesleys and Perronet. John Wesley wanted to hear Perronet preach, and he, being 18 years younger than John had always refused to preach in the older churchman’s presence. So, one day Wesley seeing Edward in the congregation announced that he would preach at the next service. Desiring to avoid a public conflict with Wesley, Perronet mounted the pulpit the next morning, but quickly explained that he had never consented to preach. “However,” he added, “I shall deliver the greatest sermon that has ever been preached on earth.” He then read the Sermon on the Mount and sat down without comment.

After eight years of co-operation with the Wesleys, Perronet’s strong-mindedness and free spirit caused a division between them, as he disagreed with some of their regulations. They continued, however, to esteem and love each other.

The last years of Perronet were spent at Canterbury, where he was pastor of an independent church, and where he died in 1792, at the age of sixty-six. His last words have also become a classic: “Glory to God in the height of His divinity! Glory to God in the depth of His humanity! Glory to God in His all-sufficiency! Into His hands I commend my spirit.”

Though Perronet wrote many other hymns and forms of poetry, none of them, have attained fame except the immortal “All Hail the Power of Jesus Name.” The success of this text has, no doubt, been furthered by three fine tunes. “Coronation,” composed by Oliver Holden, a Massachusetts carpenter, self-taught musician, and respected singing-school teacher, is most widely used in America. “Miles Lane” composed by William Shrubsole, Perronet’s personal friend, is the most popular in Great Britain. While the festive “Diadem” tune, composed in 1838 for this text by James Ellor, an English layman, is

frequently used as a choir number. This hymn was originally written having the title, “On the Resurrection,” and there were eight stanzas, as follows:

All hail the power of Jesus’ name,
Let angels prostrate fall
Bring forth the royal diadem,
To crown Him Lord of all!
Let high born seraphs tune the lyre,
And, as they tune it, fall
Before His face who tunes their choir,
And crown Him Lord of all!
Crown Him, ye morning stars of light,
Who fixed this floating ball,
Now hail the Strength of Israel’s might,
And crown Him Lord of all!
Crown Him, ye martyrs of your God,
Who from His altar call;
Extol the stem of Jesse’s rod,
And crown Him Lord of all!
Ye seed of Israel’s chosen race,
Ye ransomed of the fall,
Hail Him who saves you by His grace
And crown Him Lord of all!
Hail Him, ye heirs of David’s line,
Whom David Lord did call.
The God incarnate, Man divine,
And crown Him Lord of all!
Sinners, whose love can ne’er forget
The wormwood and the gall,
Go spread your trophies at His feet,
And crown Him Lord of all!
Let every tribe and every tongue
That bound creation’s call
Now shout in universal song,
The crowned Lord of all!

As it now stands in our hymnbooks, the hymn is shortened and changed, and one stanza has been added by the famous hymn collector, Rev. John Rippon, in 1787.

Oh, that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall;
We’ll join the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all.

As we wrap up this amazing story of the life of Edward Perronet and the others who have had their part in bringing this immortal hymn to us, let’s take a look in closing at the effect this hymn has had on heathens who knew nothing about Jesus. The most famous story connected with Perronet’s great hymn is told of the missionary to India, Rev. E.P. Scott. One day he saw on the street a man of so strange an appearance that he inquired about him and learned that he belonged to a wild mountain tribe among whom Christ had never been preached. Mr. Scott prayed over the matter and decided to visit that tribe. As soon as he reached their mountain home, he fell in among a savage band of murderous tribesmen who were on a war expedition, and who were closing in on him with their spears. They seized him and pointed their spears at his heart. At once the missionary drew out the violin that he always carried with him and began to play and sing in the native language, “All hail the power of Jesus’ name!” He closed his eyes, expecting death at any minute. When he reached the fourth stanza, and nothing had happened, he opened his eyes, and was amazed to see that the spears had fallen from the hands of the savages, and big tears were in their eyes! They invited Mr. Scott to their homes, and he spent the remaining years of his life preaching and ministering God’s love and redemption to these people. God in His providence used a simple hymn as a means of introducing the gospel to a group of needy pagans.

References:

A Treasury of Hymn Stories

101 Hymn stories

“Coronation” Tune -Oliver Holden 1765-1844

“Miles Lane” Tune -William Shrubsole, 1760-1806

“Diadem” Tune -James Elliot, 1838

“Let Us Crown Him” Tune -James McGranahan 1840-1907

JESUS CHRIST: PRAISE AND WORSHIP

Salvation, glory, honour, and power unto the Lord our God. - Rev. 19:1

180 ALL HAIL THE POWER OF JESUS' NAME

DIADEM C. M. with Refrain

Edward Perronet, 1780

Sts. 3 and 4 by John Rippon, 1787

James Ellor, 1838

1. All hail the pow'r of Je - sus' name! Let an - gels pros - trate fall,
 2. Ye cho - sen seed of Is - rael's race, Ye ran - somed from the fall,
 3. Let ev - 'ry kin - dred, ev - 'ry, tribe, On this ter - res - trial ball,
 4. O that with yon - der sa - cred throng We at His feet may fall,

Let an - gels pros - trate fall; Bring forth the roy - al di - a - dem,
 Ye ran - somed from the fall, Hail Him who saves you by His grace,
 On this ter - res - trial ball, To Him all maj - es - ty as - scribe,
 We at His feet may fall! We'll join the ev - er - last - ing song,

And crown ----- Him, Crown Him,

And crown Him crown Him, crown Him, crown Him, And crown Him Lord of
 And crown ----- Him, Crown Him,

And crown Him crown Him, crown Him, Crown -----

crown Him, crown Him;

all! crown Him And crown Him Lord of all! A - men
 crown Him;

----- Him; And crown Him Lord of all!

The God Who Will Not Let Go

A Study from the Book of Jonah Chapter 1

by Luke B. Bucher

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This article is based on the first chapter of Jonah. Nothing is said here about Jonah's birth or his previous ministry. But at some point in his life, God came with a message for Jonah to deliver. We are not told in what manner the Word of the Lord came to him; he may have had a dream, or have seen a vision, or have heard a voice. The Book of Jonah is very practical, very interesting, and it can be applied to today's life experiences.

The Book of Jonah brings to our attention three great characteristics of God: God's mercy, God's sovereignty, and God's love. Mercy is not getting what we really deserve. We deserve to go to hell because of our sins. But God does not allow that to happen if we open our hearts to Jesus Christ, God's Son. As we open our hearts to God's plan of salvation, the punishment for our sins will be removed. The sovereignty of God means that God is over all. He is all knowing and all powerful. Man can plan, and choose, and go his own way, but God always writes the final chapter. And then too, a careful study of the Book of Jonah reveals how great a love God has for us, and how marvelously God works in each of our lives, even as He did in Jonah's life. We see how great a love God has for the whole world. We notice how God wills to not let people go their own self-willed ways but seeks diligently to bring all of us to a realization of our need to follow Jesus.

1. The Call Which Came to the Prophet

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me –Jonah 1:1-2.

The words "arise," "go," and "cry" are imperatives. They signify the urgency and the authority of God's command. Jonah was told in no uncertain terms what he must do. Jonah was to get up, go to Nineveh, and cry out the message that God would reveal to him.

The story continues: *But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD... –Jonah 1:3.* Why did Jonah not obey God's command? What was the reason he headed for Tarshish? In his own words, the prophet reveals why: *And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled*

before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil –Jonah 4:2.

Jonah knew that God was gracious, and that God was not sending him to Nineveh only to announce impending judgment, but the real purpose was to urge the people of Nineveh to repent. Those who lived there were enemies of Jonah's people, the Jews. Jonah was afraid that if he did go and preach the message of judgment, they would believe it and repent of their sins and turn to God, and God would bless them. But Jonah did not want them blessed!

Jonah's problem was that he wanted to limit his love and sympathy to just certain people, while excluding others. He was not willing to go to the place where God had sent him. The people from Nineveh were not the people to whom Jonah wished to minister. But God's mercy is extended to all people.

Far too many times, Christians unconsciously display an attitude very similar to Jonah's. The call comes to every Christian today just as it came to Jonah, "Arise, go, and cry!" The lost need to hear about Jesus! They need to repent and be saved. These people need to be shown an example of true Christianity. They need to hear about the love of God and they need to be introduced to a Savior who can save us from our sins (Matthew 1:21). When the message comes to us—to "Arise, go and tell the lost"—what are we going to do? Will we be too busy? Will our own problems keep us from obeying the Word of the Lord? Will our fear of not knowing what to say, prevent us from telling someone about the good news of salvation? Or will we obey when God says ... *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature –Mark 16:15.*

2. The Prophet Who Ran Away

We see how Jonah attempted to get away from God, and the consequences of his attempt. Jonah got up, but he didn't go toward Nineveh. Instead, he fled toward Tarshish ... *from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD –Jonah 1:3.*

Since Jonah lived after the Psalms were written, he knew the great truths contained therein: *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me –Psalm 139:7-10.* But in spite of that knowledge, Jonah went in a direction opposite from Nineveh.

In Jonah's attempt to get away from God, we notice two results that will follow anyone who tries to disobey God. First, we see that Jonah's course was downhill. Jonah would have said that he was improving his life. But it was downhill. Jonah 1:3 clearly reveals this. First, he went **down** to Joppa. Then he went **down** into the ship. Later, he went **down** into the sides of the ship. And later, Jonah confessed that he went **down** to the bottom of the mountains. The path of one who acts in self-will is always a downward path.

The second result of running from God was that Jonah paid the fare, yet he did not get to where he wanted to go, since he was thrown overboard. And he did not get a refund on his ticket for that part of the journey which he did not experience. Jonah paid the full fare and did not get to the end of his journey. Jonah was acting rebelliously. He knew better than what he was doing. It seems that whenever we decide to go wrong, the devil is right there to give us all the assistance we need. However, many times we put the blame on some other person or think up some excuse. But the fact is, as with Jonah, we are sinning because of a deliberate act and choice. Each of us must ask, "Will I go God's way, or will I go my own way?"

3. The God Who Will Not Let Go

Jonah had sinned. God had told Jonah to go to Nineveh. Jonah decided that he was not going to go, so he headed off in the other direction. But remember that God is sovereign. God has the final word. *But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken –Jonah 1:4.*

Note the contrast. The Lord who can calm the troubled waters of our lives is the same Lord who can stir them up into great difficulties and problems. What He does depends on whether or not we are with Him in the boat. If Jesus is in our boat and we are going His way and trusting Him, then when the storms do come, we can cry out, "Master, help me!" He will calm the tempest. But if we are disobeying Him, then He may need to stir up the troubled waters to have us realize our need to follow Him. The fact is clear that we are allowed to resist God and that we may choose to disobey Him.

If we choose to stop reading the Bible, God does not send a special prophet to get us to read it again. If we choose to stop praying, He does not send a disaster into our lives to make us

turn to Him. He will not necessarily send the "cock to crow" at the very beginning. He simply will allow us to go downhill and eventually pay for our own foolish choices. However, if we persist in our disobedience, God will not let us go. He will begin gently at first, and then more and more firmly to remind us of the way we ought to be going. If we persist in our rebellion, He may need to send a tempest in order that His purpose may be accomplished in our lives.

We see also that the disobedience of one of God's children involved others, not just himself. Not only was Jonah experiencing a problem, but the sailors were in trouble as well. Jonah had sinned, and innocent sailors were on the verge of drowning. They knew how to sail a ship, but the intensity of this storm was something which they had never experienced before. *Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them... –Jonah 1:5.*

We must remember that the trouble that came upon these sailors had come because of Jonah. This means that, in some cases, problems come to the world because of God's judgment on His own children. While the storms were raging, Jonah (who represents the church) was asleep down within the hold of the ship. How many of God's people are asleep today, totally indifferent while the world rushes on, and the storm is still raging?

4. The Sleeping Man Is Interrupted

Jonah went down into the sides of the ship, and he was fast asleep. *So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not –Jonah 1:6.* The captain was a pagan man (as were the sailors). He did not know the true God. His ideas of religion were undoubtedly filled with superstitions. Nevertheless, he wanted Jonah to wake out of his sleep and pray. Maybe after all, Jonah's God might hear and lend some help to the sailors, seeing the dire situation which they were experiencing.

Meanwhile, up on the deck of the ship, the sailors had been discussing the storm and had concluded that this storm was not like other storms they had witnessed. They had been able to handle other storms, but this one was more violent and cruel. The sailors concluded that it must have been because of some individual. *And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah –Jonah 1:7.*

As soon as Jonah was singled out, a flurry of questions came from the troubled sailors. *Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou? –Jonah 1:8.* Here is Jonah—running away from God. He is running away from giving the message to a heathen people who needed to repent. Now he is being

quizzed by people who didn't know God, and in a sense is being reprimanded by them.

Jonah gave a straightforward answer. *And he said unto them [the sailors], I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land –Jonah 1:9.* For Jonah to answer the sailors in this way shows some measure of self-righteousness. As far as Jonah was concerned, he still seemed to feel that he was doing the right thing in running away. But those unsaved sailors reasoned differently. *Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him [Jonah], Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them –Jonah 1:10.*

Though these men didn't know Jonah's God personally, they knew much about Jonah's God. They had traveled from port to port around the Mediterranean Sea. They had heard that this was the God who had brought down the plagues on Egypt so that He might lead His people out. They knew that the Children of Israel had walked on dry ground across the Red Sea as it parted, and that the Egyptian forces were drowned. The sailors knew that this was the God who had leveled the walls of Jericho and had made the sun to stand still. They knew that He was the God of the Hebrews, and that He was pursuing them for the sake of Jonah. No wonder they were exceedingly afraid!

But Jonah was like many of God's people when they sin. Instead of thinking clearly, he hardened his heart, kept his back turned toward God, and plunged on into even greater separation from God. Notice what happened. *Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous –Jonah 1:11.*

The condition of Jonah's heart is revealed in his answer. *And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you –Jonah 1:12.* Actually, his answer was a sad one. So determined was he to resist the Lord's will that he actually said, "Throw me overboard." It seems obvious that Jonah meant, "I would rather die than to do God's will." He had no knowledge that God was going to have a fish ready for him. He would have rather been dead than to do God's bidding.

The sailors were unwilling to see Jonah die if it could be prevented. *Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them –Jonah 1:13.* There was only one thing left to do. But before they did it, they prayed. *Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee –Jonah 1:14.*

Having prayed to Jonah's God, the men lifted Jonah up and hurled him into the sea. Since Jonah had made up his mind

to die, he offered no resistance. He was more concerned about maintaining his spirit of rebellion than the saving of his own life. *So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging –Jonah 1:15.* Would that not have been an awesome experience? *Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows –Jonah 1:16.*

Jonah was running away from God because he did not want God to save the heathen of Nineveh. But as a result of this experience, the sailors, unfamiliar as they were, responded to the mercy of God with sincere hearts. As for Jonah, God also showed him mercy. *Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights –Jonah 1:17.*

What are the lessons that we can learn from this chapter? God is merciful; God is sovereign; and God is love.

Because God is sovereign, He wants us to follow Him and to obey His bidding. We can choose to be disobedient but if we are, He will gently at first, and then more forcefully, bring to our mind and realization that He wants our first love, our lives, and our service.

Whether it was a man going away from God, a city steeped in sin, or a group of sailors who were worshipers of pagan gods—God loved them all and wanted them to be saved. It is the same today. Peter tells us that God *...is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance –2 Peter 3:9.*

That is why He sent Jesus. That is why Christ was willing to hang on Calvary's Cross. But you are not forced to accept it. However, if you don't, you make the decision to not inhabit Heaven. God's love is great enough, and Heaven is large enough for all who will say "yes" to Jesus. Are you willing to do that today if you have never done it before?

As Christians, let us take a lesson from the life of Jonah. We might be disobedient, but God is a God who won't quickly let us go. Through many and varied experiences, I am sure each of us could reflect upon how God, gently at first, and then in stronger ways, nudged us, drew us, and had us come back to a closer walk with Him.

Let us come daily to Christ, and along with the words of the Psalmist say, *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting –Psalm 139:23-24.*

God is a God who will not let go. Each of us makes the final decision.

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Robert Lehigh, Editor

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SAVED FROM THE "LION'S" MOUTH

Louella H. Burkholder
Myerstown, PA

The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them -Psalm 34:7.

"Tell us a story, Grandma," begged two eager children as they crowded around her rocking chair.

"My, my, you children like to hear stories, don't you?" replied Grandma, with a twinkle in her eye. "All right, I'll tell you about a time when I was about eight years old, and my sister Lori was nine.

We lived on an old farm, back a short lane along a dirt road. One morning, Mother called us in from our play and said she was out of sugar. She asked us to walk to Mrs. Brightbill to see if she had any sugar to spare. You see, we didn't have telephones when I was a little girl, so she couldn't call the neighbor and ask her. Neighbors often shared back and forth because we didn't go shopping at the store very often either. So, mother gave us a container, and we started out on our long walk

as Mother called after us and reminded us not to loiter along the way."

"How far was it to the Brightbills?" asked Sharon.

"Oh, it was about half a mile to our closest neighbor, the Rhine's place, and then about another quarter of a mile to the Brightbills," replied Grandma.

"Oh, that's far. Mother won't let us walk on the road at all," added Micah.

"I'm sure you are right," agreed Grandma. "And I hope you never walk on the road without your parents' permission. But things were much different when I was a little girl. We also walked every day to school, which was quite a bit further



than the Brightbill farm. So, the little errand we were doing on this morning for Mother seemed like fun. There was only one problem though. The Rhine family had an old man living in their summer house. His name was Pierce, and he had a very fierce dog; at least he acted very fierce! He was kept behind a high wire fence connected to an old shed.

Every day when we walked to school, that dog frightened us terribly with his fierce barking and growling. But Mother always reminded us to pray and remember the Bible verse which says: *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee –Psalm 56:3.* Still, we hurried by as fast as our legs could take us.

Lori and I started out happily on our errand for Mother. We skipped along, watching the dust swirl beneath our feet on that warm summer morning. Everything seemed unusually quiet and still as we passed through the gully, over the rippling creek, and up the steep hill right before Neighbor Rhine's place. There before us was the old shed, and on the other side was the high fence which kept in Pierce's mean dog. My heart began to thump rapidly. 'Maybe that bad dog hadn't seen us yet,' I thought gratefully as I whispered once more to myself, 'I will trust and not be afraid.'

Suddenly, the air was shattered by the ferocious barking of that mean dog as he sprang around the corner of the old shed! Lori and I froze in our tracks! As that angry dog raced toward us, Lori screamed. The next moment, I realized she had fallen down and was sitting in the middle of the dirt road, with her hands behind her on the hard

packed gravel, feet and legs in the air, kicking and kicking, spinning around and around as that angry dog circled her, jumping in at her and nipping at her feet and legs! I was so scared. I just stood frozen to the spot. I don't remember if I screamed, or if I prayed. But suddenly there was a shout! It was Pierce, with a whip in his hand. He came running around the shed and out on the road. He whipped and whipped that dog and finally got him away from Lori and back inside the fence where he belonged, as Lori and I stood there, trembling, and crying with relief."

"Wow!" exclaimed Sharon. "That was really scary, wasn't it?"

"Did Pierce need to get rid of his dog?" asked Micah.

"Yes, Sharon, it was very scary," answered Grandma. "And no, Micah, Pierce did not get rid of his dog. We children needed to keep trusting the good Lord to keep us safe every day."

"I don't remember what happened after Pierce got the dog away that day, or if we ever got Mother's sugar, but I will never forget what happened that day.

It was a miracle that Lori and I were not injured. There is a verse in Psalms which says: *Save me from the lion's mouth... –Psalm 22:21.* How thankful we were to be delivered from the dog's mouth! I like to think that the Lord's angel had his sword drawn in front of that dog's mouth every time he leaped at my dear sister."



With What Should We Be Adorned?

by Leora Schmucker
Harlan, IN

Greetings of love in Jesus' name! We have a great God who is worthy of all our praise, all our love, and our whole life!

We live in a time where there are many distractions. The prince of this world is truly out to destroy people's lives at whatever cost. We have amusement parks, video arcades, theaters, internet, Facebook, fashion malls, and whatever else you can think of—it's out there. But God would have our hearts stirred to not be entangled with these distractions, but rather to work for Him and His Kingdom. If we are entangled with the affairs of this life, we will have no time left for our Lord. We cannot serve two masters. There seem to be some things trying to steal the time of our dear sisters (young and old alike). Let us be aware of these things so that we can be free from them and then be free to serve the Lord with our whole hearts.

The one thing we should be aware of is called adornment and the other is foolishness or looseness. To me it is so amazing how God works. He tells us in His Word **what not to** adorn ourselves with, but He also tells us **what to** adorn ourselves with. He tells us what fruit should be coming from our lives, and what fruit should not be coming from our lives. For every evil way that there is, God also shows us the right way. I know many of us would not go to fashion malls to buy our clothes, but I fear that many of us are still looking for clothes that accent the body rather than glorify our Lord. Jesus said: *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God –Matthew 5:8.*

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement –1 Peter 3:3-6.

Adorn: to deck or beautify; set off; to embellish by anything external or adventitious; to display the beauty or excellence of.

Remember, God wants us to adorn ourselves with things that will bring glory to Him. Depending on the type of clothing that I choose to wear, the focus of others is drawn to my clothing first, instead of my countenance. When this happens then I am getting all the glory because the focus is on my apparel. But if somebody sees me and they can see the clear countenance on my face and they can tell that I've been with Jesus, then they will give God all the glory that He deserves, and **we will be displaying the beauty or excellence of God's spirit** in our lives.

Now let's take a look at some more of the words found in our Scripture text and consider their meaning:

Plaiting: folding, doubling, braiding.

Apparel: clothing; external habiliments or decorations.

Ornament: That which embellishes; or something which, added to another thing, renders it most beautiful to the eye.

How beautiful it is to our Lord when we become born again, have a broken spirit, and become meek and quiet. Can people see the fruits of God's spirit in our lives—as ornaments? Truly that is an ornament of great price. Remember we can add external ornaments to our lives that bring sadness to our Father. Let us not make Him ashamed to call us His sons and daughters.

Meek: mild of temper; soft; gentle; not easily provoked or irritated; yielding, given to forbearance under injuries.

Are we irritated if somebody has something to share with us that will help us in our walk with the Lord? Remember our Lord wants the fruit of meekness adorning our converted lives.

Quiet: still; being in a state of rest; not moving; peaceable; not turbulent; not giving offence; not exciting controversy, disorder, or trouble; mild; meek; contented.

With every new style that comes in among us are we quick

to change for no reason other than adding something to our bodies that only brings glory to us? Are we content with the biblical standard of God for our lives? Are we firm and grounded in what we believe? Do we know why we believe in what we believe?

Subjection: the act of subduing; the act of vanquishing and bringing under the dominion of another.

Are we under the dominion of our Lord in **every** aspect of our lives?

Afraid: impressed with fear or apprehension.

Amazement: astonishment; confusion or perplexity from a sudden impression of fear, surprise, or wonder.

We are daughters of Sarah as long as we do well, and are not impressed with fear or any confusion or perplexity. God is not the author of confusion—*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul... –Psalm 19:7. Remember: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom [not confusion]... –Proverbs 9:10.*

Entangleth: to twist or interweave in such a manner as not to be easily separated; to perplex or distract, as with cares.

Are we allowing our lives to be interwoven with the fashions and foolishness of this world?

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart –2 Timothy 2:4-22.

Shun: to avoid; to keep clear of; not to fall on or come in contact with; not to mix or associate with.

Are we shunning the practices of this world? More specifically, are we shunning loose and empty talk?

Profane: irreverent to anything sacred; polluted; not pure.

Vain: empty; worthless; having no substance, value, or importance.

What we fill ourselves with will come out. If we are filling ourselves with God's holy Word, then that will be flowing out of our lives. However, if we are filling ourselves with vain things then that shall come out as well.

Babblings: foolish talk.

Is our talk centered on the Bible, or is it centered on the new things that we have bought such as a new garment or a vehicle, or maybe it's on all the people we have met on Facebook?

Flee: to run with rapidity, as from danger; to hasten from danger; or expected evil.

If we are with a group of people whose talk is foolish, do we stay for fear of losing friends or do we walk (or run) away from the expected or dangerous evil? The more we interweave our lives with the ways of the world, the harder it is to untangle ourselves.

Lusts: longing desire; eagerness to possess or enjoy; carnal appetite; unlawful desire of carnal pleasure.

God will give us the true desires of our heart. We may say that we desire pure things, but if our heart is yearning for unlawful things, we shall yield to those things. Our lives consist not only in what we say, but more importantly what we live. Also, take courage, the inward desires of our heart can be forever changed through the spiritual operation or "new birth".

Righteousness: the active and passive obedience of Christ, by which the law of God is fulfilled.

If we are to follow righteousness, then that means we should follow the active and passive obedience that Christ shows us by his example.

Faith: the object of belief; a doctrine or system of doctrines believed.

What is the reality of our faith? Do we really believe God and what He tells us through His written Word? It was because Abraham believed God that he was able to "offer up" his only son Isaac through whom Abraham's descendants would be counted. –see *Hebrews 11:17 and Genesis 22:13*. If God tells us in His Word to shun ungodliness because it will lead to more ungodliness, then we need to believe God and flee those things, and we must not allow ourselves to think that just a little bit of fun will not matter.

Charity: love; benevolence; goodwill; that disposition of the heart which inclines men to think favorably of their fellow men, and to do them good; it includes supreme love to God our Maker and universal good will to men.

Do we have the Love of God dwelling within and flowing out of our lives like a spring of running water?

We are daughters of Sarah as long as we do well, and are not impressed with fear or any confusion or perplexity.
GOD IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION

Peace: heavenly rest; harmony; freedom from disturbance or agitation.

We are to follow the example of our dear Savior Jesus Christ whose whole life was in perfect harmony with God the Father. Christ was not disturbed or disrupted by the ways of this world, but He was at rest doing His Father's will. Are we?

Pure: clear; free from moral defilement; without spot; holy; incorrupt.

We are to follow or have these fruits adorned in our lives and also practicing these with those who are practicing the same things in their own lives. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works –1 Timothy 2:9-10.

Shamefacedness: bashfulness; excess of modesty.

We should be adorned with shamefacedness and not giddiness or sensuality.

Sobriety: habitual soberness; seriousness; gravity without sadness or melancholy.

Even if we are sober we don't need to be sad but we can have the joy of the Lord adorning our lives. There should be a light in our eyes because Jesus is the light of our lives. Truly if God's spirit is dwelling within us we have so much to be thankful for. It should be evident in every aspect of our lives.

* * * * *

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world –Titus 2:11-12.

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels –Isaiah 61:10.

The ornaments of modesty, shamefacedness, sobriety, faith, charity, peace, righteousness, meekness, and quietness are truly jewels of great price. These jewels are so valuable that it is worth surrendering our whole lives to the God of Heaven, our Maker, and our Redeemer, so that we may have them adorning our lives. But likewise, if we are surrendered to the god of this world we will have the ornaments of

pride, envy, hate, jealousy, and so forth. Which ones are the more beautiful?

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. –Revelation 21:2-3.

Are we preparing to meet Jesus? Is God dwelling in us? Is He our God and are we His people?

Remember time is swiftly passing by. We can be here today and gone tomorrow. Do we want to be with Jesus throughout all eternity, or do we want to be with the devil and his angels? The choices we make for our lives today will affect where we spend eternity.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap –Galatians 6:7. Don't be misled. That verse is also for the believer, not just for the unconverted. Each one of us can ask ourselves what we are sowing. Concerning adornment, are we sowing the thought that outward beauty is very important or are we sowing the thought that inward beauty is the most precious thing to have and obtain? For clarification, I am not talking about being dirty and unkempt. God is a God of order and cleanliness, but He is not a God of ribbons, bows, frills, lace, and expensive, attractive clothing. Remember that most people who create new clothing fashions focus on designing garments so that they will be appealing and attractive to the eye. That is what makes people buy them.

Again, when people look at us do they glorify our fleshly body or are they praising God for the work that He is doing in our lives? Also, concerning foolishness and looseness, if we are grounded in the word of God, we will not have time for vain babblings and pleasure-seeking idleness. Let us be busy doing the work of our Lord, such as helping our neighbor who could use an extra hand, or sharing our testimony with people that we meet.

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell –Matthew 10:28. As we live in these last times, the message that is all around us is that as long as you believe in a God, you will be okay. That is a false message. Jesus tells us there is only one way. *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him –John 14:6-7.* Praise the Lord that God has given us an example to follow.

Admonitions From a Mother in Prison

by Edward Martin
Glenmont, OH

On November 27, 1560, Sotegen Van Den Houde of Ghent, Holland was martyred for her faith in the Lord, Jesus Christ. Prior to her passing, her husband had also been martyred for his faith. During the time of her imprisonment, she wrote several lengthy letters to her three youth-aged children. The following are abridged excerpts of these letters which can be found in full text on pages 646-651 in the Martyr's Mirror.

Grace, peace, and mercy from God, the Father, and the Lord, Jesus Christ, to my dear children, David, Betgen, and Tanneken. This affectionate greeting, written by your mother in bonds, is a memorial of the truth to you. I hope to testify to this Truth by my words, my life, and my death, with the help of the Most High. May the wisdom of the Holy Ghost instruct and strengthen you, that you may be brought up in the ways of the Lord. Since it pleases the Lord to take me out of this world, I will leave you this memorial of my faith in the only true God, not of silver or gold for such jewels are perishable.

Receive admonition. First, I admonish you, my most beloved children, always allow yourselves to be instructed by those who fear the Lord. As long as you obey good admonition and instruction, God will be your Father and not leave you as orphans. For David says: *What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose* –Psalm 25:12. Children, grieve not when you are corrected and do not speak in anger to those who correct you. *A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke* –Proverbs 13:1.

Guard your tongue. My dear children, guard your tongue, that it speak no evil. Do not practice deceit or backbiting with your lips. Paul teaches us to live peaceably with all men if it be possible. –see *1 Peter 3:10 and Romans 12:18*. If you are crossly spoken to, learn to answer kindly, and you will be loved by all men. Humility and meekness are acceptable to both God and man.

Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight –Proverbs 12:22. I admonish you

to beware of lying, since liars have no part in the kingdom of God. –see *Revelation 21:8*.

Be diligent in work and give alms. Always be diligent to do your work, wherever you be; for Paul says ...*that if any would not work, neither should he eat* –*2 Thessalonians 3:10*. It is also written, be diligent to labor, that you ...*may have to give to him that needeth* –*Ephesians 4:28*.

Do not turn your face away from the poor. *Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard* –*Proverbs 21:13*. Therefore, be diligent in prayer, and love the poor; for Christ also was poor for our sakes—*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 Corinthians 8:9*. Be therefore also merciful, even as your heavenly Father is merciful; for such shall be blessed, and shall obtain mercy. –see *Matthew 5:7*.

Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith –*Proverbs 15:16*. And, *Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife* –*Proverbs 17:1*. Choose to earn your bread by the labor of your hands, and to eat your bread with peace. Seek not to be a merchant, nor be anxious for great gain.

Be meek, merciful, and pure in heart. Learn to be meek and lowly in heart for such are blessed and shall inherit the earth. *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful*. *Luke 6:36*. And, *Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth* –*Matthew 5:5*. Finally, *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God* –*Matthew 5:8*. Hence, my dear children, let no impure thoughts remain in your hearts. Engage yourselves with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs and evil thoughts will have no room. –see *Ephesians 5:19*.

Neither let filthiness proceed out of your mouth. You will have to give an account of all filthiness. –see *Matthew 12:36-37*. Always esteem yourselves as the least and be not wise in your own conceit. Allow yourselves to be instructed by your elders and always be silent when others speak.

Humble yourselves, for ... *whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted* – *Matthew 23:12*. For Christ who is the greatest made Himself the least for an example unto us. –see *John 13:13-15*.

Avoid a luxurious life. My children, do not desire the luxuries of fine food or wine. He that desires costly feasts will not become rich. Be content with the labor of your hands. Do not be a burden to anyone as long as you can obtain the things needful—...*It is more blessed to give than to receive* –*Acts 20:35*. Paul says: *And having food and raiment let us be therewith content* –*1 Timothy 6:8*.

Be sober and thankful as you have heard me read of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were selected by the king of Babylon to be nourished with the same wine and meat which the king drank and ate at his table. But they chose to have pulse [vegetables] and water. They wanted to observe the law and commandments of their fathers with sobriety and thankfulness in the fear of God. In the end, they were fairer and fatter than those who ate of the king's dainties, see Daniel chapter 1. Thus, faithfully they walked in the ways of the Lord. They made themselves acceptable to God in prayer and supplication, therefore, he did great things through them. He delivered them from the den of lions and out of the fiery furnace.

When Joseph was sold into Egypt, he desired no worldly dainties. When the Egyptian woman sought to seduce him, he feared God, and God preserved him. He pleased God in sobriety and prayer and God appointed him ruler over Egypt. –see *Genesis chapters 37, 39, and 41*. Take an example from this in your youth and you will please God. He will

keep you from all seduction.

Oh, my lambs, you are still in your youth, yet you have a part in your Father's kingdom. See that you keep it well and not as Esau who gave his inheritance or birthright for a mess of pottage, disregarding his father's blessing. –see *Genesis 25:30-34*. But Jacob chose the better part, walking in the ways of the Lord with all righteousness.

Shun worldly living. Do not delight in the evils of the world such as lying, cheating, gambling, banqueting, playing, swearing, cursing, backbiting, hatred, and dancing, nor envy, drunkenness, excess, idolatry, covetousness, lasciviousness, vanity, filthy conversation. Though the world does not consider these things to be sin but rather calls them amusements, nevertheless, they are abominations in the eyes of the Lord. –see *1 Peter 4:3-4*. If you take pleasure in these things, you sell your birthright (or the spiritual inheritance) from your Father, for a mess of pottage—namely, for a few temporal pleasures, which lead you to damnation.

Choose to suffer affliction with the children of God. From the time of Abel until now many have been afflicted and have suffered. They were rejected, despised, persecuted, and killed because they would not follow the wicked world and her false prophets.

My children, choose ... *rather to suffer affliction with the people of God* [that you may be rewarded with them], *than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season* –*Hebrews 11:25*. Unto such belong all the beautiful promises of God. It is written: *...ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy*

I HOPE AND PRAY

CONSTANTLY that He, in His
mercy, will preserve you, just as
He preserved Joseph, Moses,
and Daniel in the midst of
wicked men. And He will do this

IF YOU GIVE DILIGENCE TO
FOLLOW THE TRUTH.

–John 16:20. And, *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life* –Revelation 2:10. Finally, *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world* –John 16:33.

Instructions to my son, David. David, my dear son, I commend you to the Lord. You are the oldest; learn wisdom, so that you may be a good example to your sisters. Beware of bad company and of playing in the street with bad boys. Diligently learn to read and write so that you may get understanding.

Love one another without contention or quarreling. Be kind to your sisters. Bear them up as the stronger and out of love help all you can. Assist them out of brotherly love.

Learn to obey your elders in that which is good. Be industrious so that people may love you. Exhort one another to good works, modesty, honorableness, and quietness. Always care for one another for the time has come that *...iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold* –Matthew 24:12.

Beware of deception. Remember, Jesus said *...that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect* –Matthew 24:24. Learn to diligently search the Scriptures so that you may not be deceived. Do not believe gossip but examine the matter.

Make no commotion when you are slandered but bear it for Christ's sake. Love your enemies and pray for those who speak evil of you and afflict you. Suffer affliction rather than afflicting others. Suffer reproach rather than reproaching others. Be slandered rather than slandering others.

You must constantly see that you do not seek solely your own profit, but always care for those with whom you have dealings, whether they be young or old.

Instructions to my daughters Betgen and Tanneken, my beloved lambs, I admonish you in all these same things, that you obey the commandments of the Lord. Also, obey your elders and all who instruct you in virtue.

Be diligent to do your work, and you will be loved wherever you live. Don't be quarrelsome, talkative, light-minded, proud, or surly of speech. Be kind, honorable, and quiet, as behooves young girls.

Pray the Lord for wisdom, and it shall be given you. Diligently learn to read and write, and take delight therein, and you will become wise. Take pleasure and sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Learn to please the Lord from your youth, as did the holy women and virgins of old. Esther also was a virgin who feared God; she was adorned

with humility, was gracious, honorable, kind, and humble of heart; hence she pleased King Ahasuerus above all the other virgins. –see *Esther 2:17*. But even in her high estate she was not proud. Though she shone in royal apparel, she humbled her heart with fasting and prayer to the Lord, for her brethren, that they might be delivered out of the hands of their enemies. She did not esteem herself better than one of the least of her brethren.

When you have attained the years of understanding, see that you adorn yourselves with the works of the Spirit such as goodness, gentleness, meekness, humility, obedience, long suffering, righteousness, modesty, honorableness, purity, peaceableness, steadfastness, mercifulness, wisdom, diligence in good works, faith, hope and love. Love God above all that is in the world and do to your neighbor as you would have men do unto you. –see *Galatians 5:22-23* and *Titus 2:3-5*. Remember that Jesus said: *...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets* –Matthew 22:37-40.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints –Revelation 19:7-8. My daughters, this is the adornment of the saints; labor for such a wedding garment, so that you may enter into the marriage of the Lamb, where they *...the righteous, [shall] shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father...* –Matthew 13:43. May the Lord lead you as He led Israel out of Egypt, and bring you to the New Jerusalem, that we may see each other with joy in the day of the resurrection. I commend you to the Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; may He keep you to the end of your lives.

In conclusion, O my dear children, I have written this in tears, admonishing you out of love. My prayer and solicitude are constantly for your salvation. I hope and pray constantly that He, in His mercy, will preserve you, just as He preserved Joseph, Moses, and Daniel in the midst of wicked men. And He will do this if you give diligence to follow the truth.

This is my last farewell, my dear lambs. always remember each other in love; diligently learn to read and write and obey everyone in that which is good. I bid you adieu, my dear children Betgen, David and Tanneken. Adieu all my dear brethren and sisters, and friends everywhere.

Written by me, Soetgen van den Houte, your mother in bonds; written in haste (while trembling with cold), out of love for you all, amen.

Why I Have Not Gotten the Covid Shot

by Simon “Sim” Yoder
Dublin, GA

I have enjoyed listening to, and even taking part in, discussions about the Covid shot—about why someone has, and why the other has not, received it. I venture to say we could have seven people give their viewpoint on the subject and maybe have eight different ideas.

I begin with the disclaimer that these are my thoughts, and I am quite okay with someone disagreeing. In fact, I would welcome others to share their viewpoints.

One of the things you will notice in this writing is that I don't call the Covid shot a 'vaccine'. Not that it doesn't technically fit the official definition, but rather that it doesn't function the way we have known vaccines to work. I remember when I was a lad about four years of age, I went with my mother to the health department and received a vaccination in my upper arm for smallpox. (The pock mark is still there) I remember some years later when the whole community gathered at our local public school for the sugar cube treatment which was an oral vaccination against polio. I don't remember if I had any other vaccinations or not. My point is that these vaccinations were immunizations against a disease. We were assured that we would not get smallpox, polio, measles or whatever else we were vaccinated for. And we didn't—not just a lesser amount or a case not as severe. We understood that we were *immunized*, and the fight was over.

During the current pandemic we kept hearing about the vaccination that was coming. It sounded like this was going to be the answer to this pestilence that had settled on the world. Some of us wondered if this would be like the flu shot that targets certain viruses, while it misses the other flu viruses. As the drama unfolded, we soon began to hear of variants and the need for booster shots. We now know for sure that this shot does not give an immunization for Covid 19, and hence, for clarity it is better to call it a flu shot.

I remember so well farming in the early 90's and hearing about Roundup-Ready crops. It seemed too good to be true to be able to spray glyphosate (Roundup) over the top of the crop and take out all the weeds while doing no harm

to the crop. The manufacturer did keep telling us to spray maximum rates so as to 'kill' every weed. Theoretically they were right, if we could have killed **every** weed, without missing one, we would not have had the next problem—spray-resistant weeds. We didn't realize how fast our troublesome 'pigweeds' (and other weeds) in the south, would mutate and develop a resistance to glyphosate.

Sure, farmers had several good years with an easy way to keep out the weeds, but that didn't last and now the situation is worse than it was before. Today, every farmer knows about 'Palmer amaranth Pigweed'. You can almost 'pour' glyphosate on it, and still it thrives. These weeds mutated very rapidly and became resistant.

I think we have a similar scenario with the Covid shot. I'm certainly not a scientist but it does seem to me that since the shot admittedly mostly reduces symptoms instead of producing immunity, then it will most likely speed up the mutation of the Covid-19 virus. This seems like the normal 'struggle for survival' principle of life.

The rapid speed with which this shot came on the market is another concern. We really don't know what all it will bring down the road nor the side effects it may cause. We don't know how many boosters will be called for. It seems the world is the test field at the moment, and from what I'm seeing it is not working too well and many of the people who have had the shot don't really trust it. The people who have had the virus have built an immunity that is far superior to the protection of the shot. We've known since childhood that when we had the flu, our body would build immunity to that strain. This is the way our Maker designed us. One of the first people I personally knew that had Covid was told they would have six months of immunity. I wondered how they figured that out so quickly. This was a new virus, and we had no experience to draw on for this virus. Also, the viruses we were familiar with gave lifetime immunity to that strain. So what science was behind this?

Hence, I think it much better to take precautions and do what we can to boost our immune system. It is an excellent

time to remember we are to be stewards of the body that God gave us. It's a good time to put a plan in place of good nutrition, exercise, and weight loss. If you are overweight, you are much more likely to be affected by this pestilence and many other illnesses. If you regularly consume sugary drinks or unhealthy foods of any kind, it is an excellent time to kick the habit and reduce your sugar consumption. If you are overweight or out of shape physically, there is no better time than now to bring your body into a condition that will be much healthier, so you will be better able to ward off this virus and many other illnesses.

My belief is that in the long run it will be safer and better to do my part and let this body build the immunities to protect itself against this virus. I realize there are those who have died after contracting this illness. I don't belittle this fact and I am sorry for the loss of life. I do believe too that we as Christians should constantly commit our lives to God and look at the whole picture of life and its preservation through the lens of Christian ethics.

It is unprecedented that an illness with a recovery rate of somewhere around 99%, would cause such a stir, the world over. We know that if it wouldn't be for the invention of social media there would not have been near the panic and turmoil. One of my greatest concerns is how we are being 'conditioned' for more to come. Who would have ever thought that a flu virus would be the instrument that ushers in a global push for something that will be the benchmark for whether we can travel, go to eating places, gather for public events and other such restrictions. It sounds strangely similar to what God says will one day be a reality—*And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name* –Revelation 13:16-17.

I have been almost ridiculed for even mentioning the mark of the beast. Still others think this passage is to be spiritualized and has nothing to do with the end time system of government. Still others think the bride will be raptured before this, hence nothing for us to be concerned with. I could wish one of these views would be right, then I could move along in silence hoping that all would be well.

I will hasten to say that I don't think this is the 'mark of the beast', but rather I see it as another step closer to that event. I also hasten to say that this is not a writing to ridicule another belief nor is it an effort to try to pull together certain Scriptures to try to support a particular doctrinal agenda such as the idea that all believers will be raptured prior to the unfolding of end time events, thereby escaping what the Bible refers to as "great tribulation". –See

Matthew 24:21 and Revelation 7:14. It's time we open our eyes to the 'conditioning' that our society is having upon us in general, and the conditioning of this shot in particular. There are all kinds of good reasons we will go ahead with it—it makes good sense, it defies science not to, I've even heard we can be better witnesses if we have had it, and the list goes on. All the while we are being 'conditioned' to do what it takes to keep rolling down our economic road.

So, my plea is that we consider where we are headed. One day God's people will need to jump off the train of this world—*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you* –2 Corinthians 6:17. Revelation 14:10-11 declares that all who take the mark will seal their destiny in hell. The next verse gives a calling for the endurance of the saints—*Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus* –Revelation 14:12.

So, my plea is that we consider where we are headed. One day God's people will need to jump off the train of this world

There will be hard times—*Read Matthew 24:4-28.* Consider the famines, pestilences, and earthquakes that are promised will come. Jesus said all these are the beginnings of sorrows—literally birth pangs. He said along with this, 'the end is not yet'. Yet we have the promise of triumph—*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death* –Revelation 12:11. I say again, "One day the saints will need to jump off the economic train."

I think now is an excellent time to evaluate our attachment, whether it is connected to this world or to our future heavenly reward. Let's make a commitment anew to identify with our soon coming Lord and King. Also, it's an excellent time to share the gospel of Jesus' Kingdom with a society that is bent on going away from the Creator.

So, for now, I'm content to feel safe with the immunity in my body as God created it and I am purposing in a new way to seek the immunity from the ways of sin and evil and to be inoculated with the Holy Ghost from heaven. Will you join me in this commitment?

Depression

by Vincent "John" Waldron MD
Gladys, VA

"Dr. Waldron," the lady sitting across from me said. "I have been struggling a lot lately."

"Tell me what's going on," I said.

"I don't know how to explain it," she hesitated... "I just feel tired most of the time. I can't concentrate anymore, and I just don't enjoy most of the things that I used to enjoy. I'm getting through my days, but that's about it. Do you think I have a thyroid problem or am low in some mineral or vitamin?"

"That could be," I told her. "We can certainly check those things, but I think something else is going on here."

* * * * *

I am a family doctor and probably thirty percent of the people who come to my office to see me have symptoms of depression. This doesn't mean that they are on medication for it or feel that they need special help, but it does say that these symptoms are widespread in our world.

Even in Christian circles, surveys indicate that about 15 percent of Christians self-report having been diagnosed with depression at some point in their life. This is 25 percent lower than in society as a whole, but it is still higher than we would like to believe.

In the very beginning, God created the world and Adam and Eve. *And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good...* –Genesis 1:31. Before the Fall, everything was perfect.

I don't think we know entirely what this meant. Obviously, there were no physical diseases or maladies to afflict either the humans or the flora and fauna of Eden. More than that, Adam and Eve didn't suffer from anxiety or depression. Their hormones didn't get out of balance, they didn't get stressed out (even if there could have been stress in a perfect garden), and they wouldn't have gotten upset or angry at any point.

Everything changed with Adam and Eve sinning. We see this in the tension between them after they ate the fruit

with Adam blaming Eve, and Eve blaming the snake. *And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat* –Genesis 3:12-13.

Feeding a family suddenly became hard work. Viruses and bacteria became pathogenic and at some point, in the first families, people would have begun to struggle with emotional and mental health challenges.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return –Genesis 3:16-19.

I would like to explore what depression is as defined by the medical world, some of the sources of it, and then discuss how we can deal with it, both in our own lives and in the lives of our friends and family.

Diagnosing Depression

As mentioned earlier, many people have some symptoms of depression. They may feel more fatigued, cry easily, or have other symptoms that aren't usual for them. Most of them do not actually have true **clinical depression**.

Most people do not have all of these symptoms, but when they are continually present without dissipating for two weeks or more, especially if they are strong enough to hinder normal day-to-day responsibilities or the ability to get proper rest, then it is time to do something.

It is important to remember that there is a large or broad

continuum regarding depression. Some people have mild discouragement, some have deep feelings of sadness, and some have enough depression that they are at risk to cause harm to themselves or others.

Causes of Depression

There are different examples of people in the Bible who seem to have exhibited symptoms consistent with **depression**. Two of them stand out to me.

First is Naomi. We know that she went with her husband and her two sons to Moab because of a famine that was affecting southern Israel. She spent ten years in this foreign land and during that time, her husband and both of her sons died.

The book of Ruth tells us that when she returned to Bethlehem, she said to the people, ... *Call me not Naomi [pleasant], call me Mara [bitter]: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?* –Ruth 1:20-21.

There is no way to interview Naomi and find out all the things that she was feeling, but this seems to be more than simple grief. She had lost all the things that were of value to her, and to her it seemed that even God had turned against her.

As we read the story of Ruth, we see that things did improve for her throughout the book—mostly through the ministry of her daughter-in-law, Ruth, but also, through God gradually restoring things of value back into her life, and through others encouraging her in the Lord's goodness. *And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it* –Ruth 4:14-16.

Another one that comes to mind is the Prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah was called when he was a young man, and he had a very long career speaking God's Word to a group of kings and other people who simply weren't interested in what he had to say.

Jeremiah's life was constantly under threat. At one time, he was thrown into a dungeon full of mud and was only rescued at the last minute. Jerusalem was besieged three different times before the Babylonians razed it. Through his decades of ministry, Jeremiah told the people what God was asking of them, and the people constantly ignored it.

Perhaps it is no wonder that Jeremiah is known today as the **weeping prophet**. He said, *Cursed be the day wherein*

I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad. And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide ... Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame? –Jeremiah 20:14-18.

It is important to note that in both of these examples from the Bible, sin is not revealed to be the issue (or the reason) that pushed these people into depression. For Naomi it was probably a mixture of isolation from her homeland and loss of people she loved dearly. For Jeremiah, it was the constant stress of trying to serve God in a nation that didn't care about God.

* * * * *

Depression is always multi-factorial. That is to say, there are usually a mixture of internal and external factors that break a person down.

There are genetic and hormonal components that come into play here. There is no doubt that some individuals and some families are more prone to depression than others. It is thought by many doctors and researchers that changes in genes which transport the chemical, Serotonin, through the brain can make some people more susceptible to depression than others.

These differences in genetic makeup can help us understand why some people require very little stress to bring them down, while others seem very resilient. Since we can't change our genetic makeup, there is no sense gloating if we have a more upbeat personality than someone else. And, if we recognize that we have a greater tendency towards depression, we don't need to feel discouraged by this fact. If God created us in such a way that we tend towards being moody instead of being naturally upbeat, we need to use wisdom in doing what we can to manage as many external factors as we can so as to minimize the risk of debilitating (extreme) depression.

External stressors are often the thing that triggers these sorts of feelings (discouragement). It can be the death of a close friend or family member, or it can be a financial misfortune. It is important to remember that even good events can produce large amounts of stress. Mothers with newborns are often functioning on very little sleep, even while they have large physical changes taking place in their bodies.

Some people may have poor coping skills. Unfortunately, many turn to street drugs or alcohol to try to smother the feelings that they can't control otherwise.

As a final thing, sin and guilt can trigger depression or make it worse. We can see this present in David and Saul's lives. (See Psalm chapter 32) This is not to say that all depression is the result of sin—far from it—but sin needs to be dealt with, and repented of, in order to move forward.

Perhaps as a side note, I will mention that in my experience, deeply depressed people often struggle with horrible guilt. They don't even know what sin they might have committed; they are only certain that God is angry with them, and they must have done something wrong. Fixing the depression will help with the assurance of salvation issues that these people tend to deal with.

This leaves us with the question of how to help someone who is dealing with this sort of thinking.

Listen

Listening is a powerful tool for helping other people. Listen actively and without jumping in to interrupt negative thinking.

You may be able to see that all is not terrible and that there is much positive in the world. The fact that they can't see these things has more to do with their mindset than with how terrible things really are. A person struggling with depression may know that there are people worse off in the world, but it doesn't really help them much to point that out to them.

Encourage

Encouragement can simply be saying good things that you see in the life of the person who is struggling. This is something that all of us need more of.

More than this, we need to encourage people to do things that are healthy for themselves. They need to get out of their home, they should try to exercise, and they should make an attempt to eat healthy. We can help them do better in all of these areas. (See Galatians 6:2)

Pray

...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much –James 5:16.

These people need someone to pray with them. They need someone to pray for them. Jesus asks us to pray in secret, but it is also really encouraging for someone who is struggling to hear themselves being prayed for. This helps them to know that there are many people who are lifting them up with prayer support.

Be Willing to be the Initiator

People with depression have very low energy levels. Beyond that, they don't see themselves as having any value. At least such that someone else would want to spend time with them. They aren't going to call or text, and they certainly won't set up a lunch meeting or prayer time.

Even though they crave all of these things, it is just really difficult for them to take the first step to reach out to others. It therefore falls to the rest of us to be willing to do those things.

Don't Jump to Conclusions

We know the story of Job's friends. They rode up to see Job after disaster fell on him and sat quietly in shock for several days upon seeing the devastation that had happened to him. When they finally began to speak, it was to judge him for the terrible sin they assumed he had committed.

It isn't wrong to ask about sin, but there are plenty of times where depression isn't sin-related. Focusing in on sin prematurely, or if it is assumed, will simply drive wedges that will make it less likely that you can help a person find healing.

What if you are the person struggling with depression? How should you deal with it and what things can help?

Deal With Issues Early

Everyone has moments when they are stressed out and really discouraged. We use terms like "burn-out" and "compassion fatigue" in the medical field when people are heading in the wrong direction. These struggles manifest themselves when we are being irritable with the people around us, when we're feeling tired most of the time, or when we're feeling discouraged most of the time. When we see that these symptoms are popping up, it is time to do something to keep things from getting worse.

Maybe a first step is simply knowing our limitations. There are times where we will simply need to say no to work projects or even to church activities because it doesn't leave us sufficient time to rest. Certain times of the year could be worse—many people struggle more during the winter months because of less sunlight.

Cutting back in whatever areas we can is important when we see that we are on the wrong trajectory.

Don't Do Comparisons

Everyone is different. Identifying people who seem to "have it altogether" when you are struggling doesn't help you and it probably will make you feel worse.

Struggling with discouragement does not mean that you aren't a Christian or that God is done with you. It means that you are human living in a fallen world. You don't want to continue to live with a depressed spirit, but neither should you believe that you are the only one who has dealt with this. (See 2 Corinthians 10:12)

Exercise

Cardiovascular exercise is really important to boost the chemicals in the brain that are associated with depression. It doesn't really matter what type of exercise you do. What

does matter, is that it increases your heart rate 25 to 30 percent above your baseline heart rate.

Exercise is something that is hard to do, even when you aren't dealing with depression. It is particularly hard when you are fatigued and feeling down.

Spend Time with Encouragers

People need community. When we are dealing with depressive feelings, we really need other people around to lift us up, to pray with us, and to give us encouragement. None of us is better from spending extended times alone. (See Proverbs 27:17)

Deal with Sin

Sin can make prayer feel ineffective. That isn't to say that simply confessing sin will suddenly make someone's depression lift, but it is an important part of reaching healing. *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed...* –James 5:16.

Be Willing to Take Medication

Not everyone needs medication. The hope is that if you do the right (helpful) things (some of which are listed above), you can keep things from getting bad enough that you would need medical help. But there are plenty of situations where someone simply needs to start on some medication in order to aid them in a number of ways: to sleep, to rest a weary mind that will not stop, to dull the emotional pain, etc.

People with severe enough depression may be a risk to themselves. They may even be completely unable to respond to counseling or any of the other non-medical treatments for these feelings. These people really need to start on medication with the goal to transition off of those medications down the road when they are thinking clearly enough to continue on the right path.

Unfortunately, the benefits of these medications seem to be short-lived. Long-term use of antidepressant medications really does not seem to improve quality of life for many patients. A recent study looked at patients who took antidepressant medications and compared them to those who did not and found similar levels of health-related quality of life in the two groups. In other words, when comparing two groups of depressed patients, with

the one group taking medication and the other group not, after a period of time (approximately 6 months) there were no longer any observable differences in their depression levels. So, while these medications may help to stabilize a person who has severe depression, after a period of time the actual medical "help" of the medication starts to diminish. Hopefully, by this time, the person will be stable enough that a safe taper can be taken towards weaning off the medication.

With this in mind, it is very important to do things other than medication to attempt to improve the situation.

Continue, Even When You Feel Better

Many times, when someone has a medical issue, they will consciously change their diet and lifestyle to improve their situation. The problem is that when the symptoms get better, the tendency is to fall back into old eating and behavioral patterns.

If you have dealt with depression in the past, it is important that you continue a path of healthy choices. Exercise regularly, eat healthy meals, manage your stress level (as much as you can), don't over-schedule, and make a conscious effort to meet regularly with godly friends for times of prayer and support.

Periodically take an inventory of how you are doing. If you are struggling, figure out what you are going to change to make things better.

Depression is very common in our society and in our churches. We can have victory over it alone, but with God's help and with the support of Christian brothers and sisters, we can move forward.

You may not be gloriously happy all of the time, but by God's grace, you will have the joy of the Lord in your heart, even on the most stressful days.

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A Call to Holiness

The second article in the series "The Call of Discipleship"

by Donald Brechbill
Chambersburg, PA

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him –Matthew 4:18-22.

Little did they know where this journey would lead them. They received the call, they responded to the call, and now they were on a journey that would forever change their lives. Little do we know when we choose to follow Jesus where that journey will lead us. That is why it is considered a journey of faith.

One thing is certain, walking with Jesus will lead you into a life of holiness. What exactly do we mean by holiness? Holiness is the full sum of the righteousness of Jesus

manifested in our lives by the work of regeneration and the inner renewing of the Holy Ghost.

John the Baptist said of Jesus: *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire –Matthew 3:11-12.*

This speaks of the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire, and of the thorough purging that Jesus would bring. Jesus did not come with violence and yet His righteous presence swept through Palestine like a winnowing breeze. Those who rejected Him were blown away and disappeared from the narrative. Those who loved Him were set forth as the chosen ones who became the founders of a new kingdom established on principles not known before.



The principles of this new kingdom are demonstrated in the life of Christ and explained in His teachings. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus set forth teaching that challenged the most pious Pharisee and disturbed the apathy of the sinner. Jesus' teachings were such that they could not be lightly ignored for they stirred a deep longing in the human heart for the love and peace that they offered while at the same time exposing the innate selfishness that prevented it.

It was this promise and hope of a new humanity that drew crowds of people after Him. They followed Jesus, some hoping for a miracle, some for bread, but many were drawn to Him by a deep inner longing for deliverance from the stranglehold of sin. Those who truly sought deliverance, found it.

One such disciple was Mary Magdalene. The Scripture gives us only cursory glances of her life. She appears to have been one of several women of whom the Scriptures make mention that followed Jesus. Doctor Luke tells us that Jesus healed her of evil spirits and infirmities. Apparently, she was not only possessed of evil spirits, but also physically infirmed.

And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance –Luke 8:1-3.

Mary became a faithful follower of Jesus. Her presence is especially noted in the Scriptures after the death of Christ. She was first to the sepulcher early on the resurrection morning and she lingered there when the others had gone away. Her diligent pursuit of Christ was rewarded when Jesus appeared first to her.

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master –John 20:15-16.

Mary knew Jesus the moment He spoke her name. This intimacy was born of a passion for Christ that was the fruit of her deliverance. Mary's love for Jesus was the result of having been delivered from seven devils.

Jesus' primary mission in coming to earth was to deliver us from the power of sin. In Luke 5, Doctor Luke records an account of a man who was paralyzed. He could not walk. His friends brought him for healing, but they could not reach Jesus because of the crowd. So, they went up onto the

roof and removed enough of roof tiles to let their friend through and lowered him into the presence of Jesus. How ingenious! How desperate they were to help their friend to find healing.

And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee –Luke 5:20. They sought healing, but Jesus saw the deeper need of this man's soul, so He offered forgiveness. This, of course, raised the ire of the Pharisees who ... *began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? –Luke 5:21.* They were right, only God can forgive sins, but what they did not want to believe was that Jesus was God's Son and that thus He had did have the power to forgive sins. So, Jesus went on to say: ... *What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house –Luke 5:22-24.*

To follow Jesus is to leave your sins. We would be greatly mistaken to suggest that holiness is a product of human effort. Our journey to holiness must be a journey to Calvary. Many "holy men" and "holy women" down through the ages have sought to live a holy life in their own strength. What always happens is that we settle for a form of godliness that falls short of Christ's righteousness. We settle for a religion that is doable.

The apostle Paul, when writing about his Jewish brethren said: *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God –Romans 10:3.*

This "righteousness of God" is an inner righteousness of the heart that can only come about through the work of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. It is for this reason that our journey with Jesus must lead us to Calvary for it is there that we behold our dying Lord—bleeding, dying for our sins—for my sins—for your sins.

The blood of Jesus is the only means to the "righteousness of God". The "righteousness of God" is imputed through forgiveness, and it is the fruit of our lives after being empowered through the Holy Spirit. Either way, the "righteousness of God" is attributed to the work of Christ on the cross. There is no other means to holiness.

In Mathew 22, Jesus told the story of a king who planned a wedding for his son. When the invited guests (the Jewish people) refused his invitation, the invitation then went out to all those who had not been invited, and the wedding was furnished with guests.

When the king came in to observe the wedding, he was pleased with what he saw until he spotted a man who was not wearing a wedding garment. (A wedding garment was

a white linen garment that was provided by the master of the feast.)

I quote Adam Clark: “Among the Orientals, long white robes were worn at public festivals; and those who appeared on such occasions with any other garments were esteemed, not only highly culpable, but worthy of punishment. The person who invited the guests prepared such a garment for each, for the time being; and with which he was furnished on his application to the ruler of the feast. It was this which made the conduct of the person mentioned in the text inexcusable; he might have had a proper marriage garment, if he had applied for it”.

“Not wearing a wedding garment” was to insult the master of the feast, who provided everything, (including the wedding garment) so that all the guests would be equally suited for the occasion. No one needs to be excluded for lack of proper clothing or any other amenity. The king provided the invitation and all necessary amenities, and the guest need only to accept the invitation and receive the gracious provision of the king.

What a beautiful analogy of the Kingdom of Heaven. The King has invited us to His heavenly feast. He wants us to come and enjoy the feast with Him. He wants us to come no matter who we are or where we come from—some from the gutters of sin, some from the depth of ignorance, and some from the temples of self-righteousness. All are invited to come on equal terms—All must accept the invitation, and all must wear the wedding garment.

We are not told the exact condition of this man who refused the wedding garment, but a general understanding of human nature would indicate that he was probably a well-dressed gentleman. Those who came shabbily dressed would have welcomed the wedding garment to disguise their true condition. Most likely this man wanted to display his finery. He did not feel inclined to cover his fine clothing with a simple white cloak.

This is the condition of all who trust in their own righteousness. The best that we can bring to God falls short of the righteousness that God requires. Isaiah wrote: *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away* –Isaiah 64:6.

In this desperate situation we find ourselves in need of a redeemer. God has provided us with a Redeemer in His Son, Jesus. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace* – *Ephesians 1:7*. God has invited us to His feast, and He has provided us with everything that is needed that we can be made righteous.

One attribute of a person who has been cleansed from sin through the blood of Christ, is worship. Luke tells the

story of a woman who “was a sinner” who came to worship Jesus: *And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner* –Luke 7:37-39.

We do not know her name, only that she “was a sinner”. That was her reputation—she was ‘not good’. But she apparently had had a previous encounter with Jesus. She came to Simon’s house to offer her sacrifice of thanksgiving. She brought the best that she had. An alabaster box of ointment said to have been worth a year’s wages. She anointed Jesus’ feet and washed them with her tears—tears of repentance, tears of joy, tears of relief.

Simon observed her worship. He despised her in his heart. He considered her offering a great waste. Jesus challenged him. He said to Simon: *...Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little* –Luke 7:44-47.

He said to the woman *...Thy sins are forgiven* –Luke 7:48. Forgiveness, and freedom from sin, awaken the heart to worship. When a man or woman is set free from the guilt and bondage of sin, praise flows freely. Simon was a Pharisee who was relying on his own righteousness. Yet Jesus brought him to the awareness that he was greatly lacking in love and worship.

Following Jesus will lead us to holiness of heart and life. Following Jesus brings us face to face with the cause and the cure of the sin problem. The cause of sin is our fallen carnal nature, and our fallen nature is revealed in the light of His holiness. Along with Mary Magdalene and the other disciples, as we journey with Jesus, we become aware of our need and our need cries out for His grace. The cure for our sin is Jesus—*...thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins* –Matthew 1:21.

In Augustus Toplady’s famous hymn, Rock of Ages we find this line—

Be of sin the double cure; save me from its guilt (through forgiveness) and power (through sanctification).

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hardening the hearts of ungodly men in positions of power, just like Pharaoh of old, to accomplish His sovereign will for the world.

So, what is the solution when we struggle within our hearts about the direction of our country and its growing instability or when we experience so much pressure from our peers or the society around us to get involved to make a difference? The Apostle Paul gives us very clear direction when he says, *I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 1 Timothy 2:1-2.* The Christian's secret power of influence lies

in the power of prayer that is produced in the privacy of his or her closet. However, for this prayer to have power it must be produced out of a heart of faith—*And Jesus said unto them ... verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you –Matthew 17:20.* Let us always remember that ... *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much –James 5:16.*


Until the next time, may God be with each one and grant you grace and peace as you walk faithfully according to His Word. Let us pray for each other as we go through the trying times in our world today.



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I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: **BUT HE THAT COMETH**
AFTER ME IS MIGHTIER THAN I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear:
he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with
fire. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, **AND**
GATHER HIS WHEAT INTO THE GARNER; but he will burn up the chaff with
unquenchable fire *—Matthew 3:11-12.*