

The Heartbeat of 
The Remnant

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A ministry of 
The Berean Voice



TABLE OF CONTENTS

4	Heroes	
8	Chosen By Grace and Called To Faith	
12	O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go	—Hymn Histories
14	The Foolishness of Preaching	
17	God Would Not Let Me Go	—For the Youth
20	Mother Was Right	—For the Children
22	Spiritual Gifts	
26	Lessons From Second Chronicles Twenty	—For the Sisters
28	The Christian's View of Science	
32	Discipleship—The Path of Healing	

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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

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FROM THE EDITOR



Greetings of brotherly love to one and all. The year 2022 is almost gone. A lot has happened. Another year of devastating storms, floods, fires, earthquakes, wars, and rumors of wars. America has gone through another season of political elections, causing the conservatives and liberals to become even more polarized into opposing parties.

Recently, I have been reflecting on the current status of life as a committed Bible-believing Christian in our world today. Sure, there are certain places in our world where Christians live in constant threat of imprisonment or death simply because they are trying to live according to God's Word. However, the world, seems to be moving towards an increasingly negative perspective of God's people. In an increasingly developing trend, there is a surprising rise of hostility towards the committed believer.

What is happening? I have had numerous conversations with various believers from around the country who seem to have a growing alarm about the current victorious march of evil over good, of liberal agendas over a conservative lifestyle, and the list goes on. Current skyrocketing inflation, the potential of unprecedented heating costs for many, the rumors of rising interest rates, and the ongoing shortage of goods all tend to cause a person to be jolted out of a sense of normality.

For us as Christians, let us always keep our focus fixed on the God of heaven. This is the God that Paul declared on Mars Hill—*God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; –Acts 17:24-25.*

Let's stop focusing on the fact that evil seems to be prevailing and increasing around us and then concluding that somehow Satan has the upper hand right now. Rather, let us be reminded about what God's Word says. *But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works –2 Timothy 3:13-17.*

Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus ...*the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God –Hebrews 12:2.* Instead of believing Satan's lie that he is somehow winning the battle for Truth right now, let's remember that the Bible reveals that Satan can do nothing without God allowing him a temporary free rein. It seemed to those looking on that Satan had the complete upper hand when Jesus was crucified and buried. Surprise, surprise! Satan had unwittingly allowed God to use him to accomplish everything that had been prophesied throughout the Scriptures. It is the same today... God will again allow Satan whatever free rein is necessary to bring to fulfillment all that the Bible has foretold will come to pass regarding the end of time.

In this issue of the magazine, we have once more endeavored to bring you information in the articles that is both helpful and relevant to our time in history. Brother Leonard Martin, a bishop in one of our churches has shared an exhortation on spiritual gifts in the church with a number of clear, practical observations for us today. The article that we have chosen to share from "Bible Helps" in this issue is one of the best discourses on the subject of "faith and works" that I have ever read. The writer even delves, with biblical simplicity and clarity, into the controversial subjects of divine election and predestination. Finally, we have The Foolishness of Preaching an evaluation regarding the basis of churches using "the altar call"—is it founded in the Scriptures and the history of the church or is it a method that the church has borrowed from the world in more recent years?!

All of this is sure to stir thoughts and discussion—which is our goal with these types of articles. Please feel free to respond via email or regular mail with your thoughts of caution or encouragement. This is helpful for us and our writers. When you write, we also ask that you mention yes or no if we can use your questions or comments in our magazine. We have had various requests to establish a section in our magazine dedicated to hearing from our readers.

One final thought... over the years our readers have, at times, shared with us ways that they think we could improve our magazine for the good of all who read it and to present a more clear gospel message. We welcome this to continue.

May God richly bless each of you,

Curvin L. Wenger

Heroes

by Joshua Yoder
Big Prairie, OH

The history of our world has been defined by its conflicts. From the earliest disputes of Cain and Abel to the military operations of the twenty-first century, humanity has never ceased to attack one another. Peacetime is simply a waiting period for the next battle; treaties and ceasefires are only delays in the violence.

The wars of the spiritual realm have been equally as long and as brutal as the physical wars. These battles have reached us from the earliest dawn of time, where they originated in the hearts of Adam and Eve. The struggle against temptation and rebellion is present in each of us, whether it is acknowledged or not. Few emerge victorious into a true peace, and even that peace is a watchful peace that can be shattered in a moment of wavering.

The following account is but a brief spark in this trying fire of strife.

The year was 1942, and all across the world there raged a war the likes of which had never been seen before. Destruction and carnage had become commonplace, none more so than in the Pacific theater. There, speckled amongst the vast blue expanse of the Pacific Ocean, its tropical islands hosted battles of unparalleled ferocity and savagery. Suicide charges, artillery annihilation, and aerial bombardments made life for the common soldier a living nightmare. At any moment a banzai charge (a typically nocturnal all-out attack of massed infantry yelling at the top of their voices as they charged) might split the night air into a rush of charging enemies whipped into a killing frenzy. A wayward shell, some weighing as much as a small car, could fall from the sky with deadly results. Death was ever present, claiming lives seemingly at random.

Four thousand miles to the east, another battle was raging. This one was as deadly as the first, encompassing hundreds of young men in an all-out struggle for their spiritual survival. Instead of the **physical** fighting on the Oriental islands of the Far East, this battle would be fought in the **hearts and minds** of those involved in this battle. Instead of machine guns and grenades, they would be armed with the

sharpest of two-edged swords (The Holy Scriptures), guided by a power (The Holy Spirit) greater than any naval fleet.

These young men were called to a term of service in the physical warfare that was raging. Two years earlier, the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 had been passed before the United States entered the war. This Act required all men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five to register for the draft. Those selected were expected to serve a one-year term. Once war was declared, this term would be extended until the end of the fighting.

To these young men, this draft and the current war prompted their memories of stories of a similar war and a similar draft, scarcely a generation prior, that had called away their fathers to the training camps of the United States military. There, the older generation had been subjected to all manner of malicious maltreatment. At that time, it was expected that all able-bodied young men would not only be willing, but also eager, to serve their country in battle against the enemy. This prevailing sentiment had brought about a general anger and animosity towards the conscientious objectors of the First World War. Pressure was applied to make them join in the drills and decorum of the armed forces, and penalties of various kinds could be and were enforced against those that refused. So severe were the punishments that many suffered physically, and several were killed by the treatment they received.

In like manner to their fathers, these young men were being called to serve their earthly country by bearing arms. Draftees were to report to their local recruiting office, where they would be organized and shipped to one of several training camps around the country. There they were to be molded into soldiers, prepared to kill their fellow man, and then sent overseas for that purpose. Yet their faith decreed otherwise.

Fortunately, they were not the only ones who remembered the First World War. In the two and a half decades since that war, both Mennonites and various concerned individuals had been at work, ensuring that if the need arose, there

would be an option that could satisfy the government's requirements of service while not going against the principles and convictions of conscientious objectors. Thus were born various organizations and programs that afforded an exemption to military duty. Conscientious objectors were placed in various service roles through these programs. They served in hospitals, built roads and irrigation canals, and provided labor for conservation efforts. In this way they could fulfill the law without breaking the Law (see Mark 12:17).

Despite the bureaucratic acceptance of the conscientious objectors' (COs) convictions, and their subsequent alternate service, public feeling often still ran hot against, not only the nonresistant Mennonites and Amish, but against any conscientious objectors. Individuals who refused to fight could expect that not only would they personally be brought under pressure, but that their families and friends would also be scrutinized. Some of their families were shunned or looked down on, with the local community boycotting their businesses. In some cases, local law enforcement would turn a blind eye to the mistreatment of non-resistant people within their jurisdiction. In extreme instances, patriotic fervor would boil over, resulting in mob violence, property damage, and in a few rare instances, direct attacks against the perceived slackers.

Although most of Europe and its allies had been embroiled in this war since Hitler's invasion of Poland in September of 1939, the United States did not join in the initial dispute. While the German army stormed through Europe, the early years of the war in the Pacific were dominated by Japan, who had already invaded China as early as 1937. The United States remained neutral during this time, motivated by a general feeling of isolationism. This would all change on the morning of December 7, 1941, as the Japanese Navy launched a surprise attack on the United States, attacking ships moored in Pearl Harbor, the home of the United States Pacific fleet. Retaliation was swift, and war was declared on Japan and its allies. Japan redoubled their offensive, sweeping over the island nations scattered across the Pacific. The Japanese commitment to the war was personal and intense. Honor, even in death, was esteemed higher than life. The emperor was worshiped as infallible, and Japanese soldiers hurled themselves into battle in his name, even in the face of overwhelming odds. Spurred by its fanaticism and an efficient, well-supplied attack force, Japan set its sights on the Philippines. There its army was met by a force vastly inferior to their own.

Meanwhile, at their various stations throughout the country, the COs were facing their own attack. They had been afforded the relief of not needing to fight a physical fight. With this exception came unforeseen opportunities for serving the suffering individuals under their care.

Throughout their various ministries, they would encounter all manner of people. Each encounter was another opportunity to show a Christian's peace and love in the midst of the on-going war, especially in the mental institutions and hospitals that employed some of the COs. The state of the mental hospitals at the time was deplorable. Patients were treated roughly, or simply neglected. Troublesome ones would be bound in strait jackets for weeks or forced to live in their own filth. Food and sanitation did not begin to meet the needs represented. Several of the young men brought attention to the situation of the mentally handicapped, through writing to newspapers or detailing their observations about the abuse to their contacts at home. These actions led to growing public awareness and concern about the treatment of the disabled, which would be the catalyst for change in the care of those unable to care for themselves.

Unfortunately, the opportunity to serve came at a cost. The COs were young and separated from their church and family. Ungodly influences abounded around them. Because they were separated from their churches and families, these influences weighed more heavily on the young men's minds than they would have at home. The battle was still being waged, and now more than ever they had to lean on God as their strength, support, and defense.

In the Pacific, Japan moved in for an overpowering assault of the Philippines. The island nation had long been preparing its defenses, and now it would be tested by the impetus of the Japanese invaders. This defending army was a product of the training and leadership of General George A. MacArthur. MacArthur was somewhat of a prodigy of the United States military, emerging from his service in World War I as the youngest divisional commander in the Army. Since then, his time between the Wars had been spent largely in the Philippines, whose beaches and jungles he was now defending. In the months leading up to the invasion, he requested reinforcements, updated equipment, and sufficient materials to withstand an attack. Because the focus of the United States at the time was squarely focused on winning the war in Europe first, his requests were denied, and he was therefore out-manned and out-gunned. Nonetheless, MacArthur dug in and prepared to defend against the inevitable landings and subsequent inward crawl of the invaders. His troops suffered massive casualties in their slow retreat. Although defeat soon became apparent, the General refused to leave the island. Not until the time when the island was all but taken, was he finally persuaded to slip through enemy lines, evacuating to Batchelor Field, Australia. Here it was that he made a solemn promise to those he had left behind: "I shall return."

The COs, now spread across numerous projects and fields of service, faced an equally diverse set of challenges.

Instead of the steady guidance of their home congregations, they were now under the leadership of government appointed directors. Their camp schedules kept them at work, up to six days a week. Sundays were generally reserved for worship services. The influence of a world at war all around them had set in. Harry Litwiller, a Mennonite youth in Canada, was one of those who fell to the influences of the world. He was put into the army, where he quickly filed for CO status. While his request was being processed, he picked up gambling and drinking from other recruits. Word of his new habits soon made their way to his military superiors, and his request was denied. Churches prayed, wrote letters, and otherwise made efforts to support the young men in their trials. They could not know it, but their time of testing would soon be drawing to a close.

Finally, the year was 1945. The last months of the war had seen the conscription of young boys and old men into the German Army as Hitler made a last desperate stand, caught between the allied armies of the Eastern and Western fronts. Unable to continue, the Germans sued for peace. Now that the war was over in Europe, the tide of war shifted to the Pacific. America rallied, propelled by its greater industrial capacity and natural resources, causing the Japanese advance to grind to a halt—thus, the American counter-offensive began. Slowly, island-hopping across the ocean, General MacArthur drew ever closer to Japan.

MacArthur had not forgotten his promise to the Filipino people. In his four years of absence, battles had been fought over the smallest of atolls—coral islands just large enough for an airstrip and a garrison. Even as the Japanese were uprooted from these strongholds, they maintained a solid footing in the Philippines. The island nation had suffered through the years of the enemy occupation. It was home to prison camps—housing prisoners of war and those accused of aiding the allies.

Time was now running out for the Japanese. Spread thin—with troops, equipment, and resources dwindling—they fought a desperate defensive campaign. On

October 24, 1944, an Allied force landed on the eastern coast of the island of Leyte. The battle for the Philippines would last for two months, but at its end MacArthur emerged victorious. Many months earlier he had overseen the island's surrender, now he commanded its repossession. His promise was fulfilled.

The war dragged on. In Europe, it was over, but the Pacific was yet to be won. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had led the nation through the war, sickened and died. His vice president, Harry S. Truman, was sworn into office. His first decision was one unlike anything he could have ever imagined. Should he expend hundreds of thousands of lives to take Japan by land, or make them a gruesome example of a newly developed atomic bomb being dropped from the relative safety of the air? Truman deliberated and made his choice.

The war ended in the blink of an eye. The devastation of a pair of atomic bombs shocked Japan into surrender. They sued for peace, and peace was given. Except for the formalities, the war was over. Over, but the temporary peace was bought with an astronomical price of human life. Millions would never return to their grieving families.

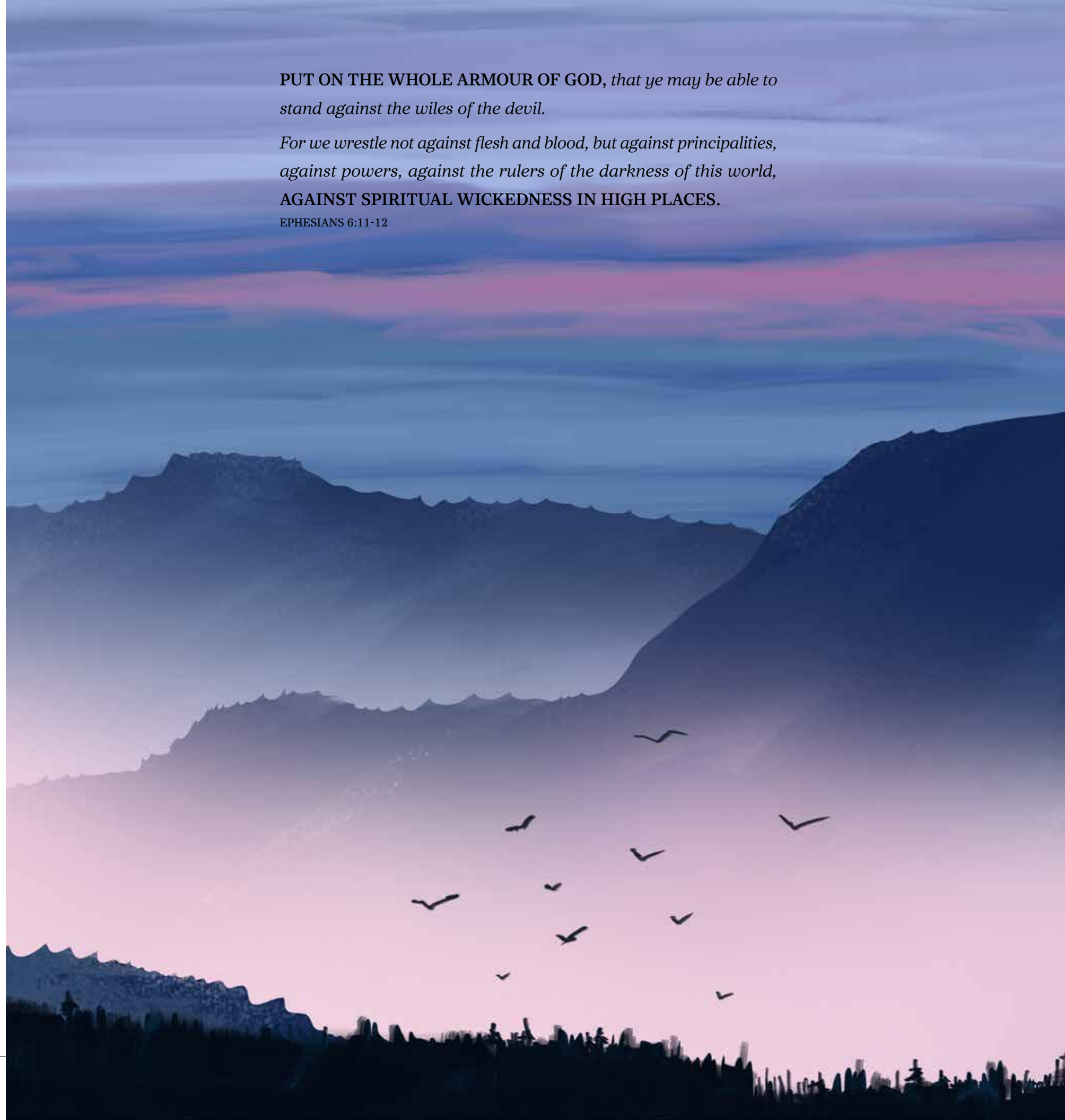
For the COs, it was a return to a new normal. They were returning to their families, their churches, and their homes. But the war had changed them. Months and years had been spent away from spiritual oversight. Many would settle into their communities, raising their families and living out their Christian faith. Yet there had been casualties, with some, like Harry Litwiller, having given up their faith. The battle had been fierce, and not all its contestants had been wearing the full biblical armor available to them.

Both MacArthur and the victorious COs persevered to the end. Each believed in their cause, MacArthur in the devastation and destruction of war, and the COs in the redemption and peace of a fully surrendered life. They parallel each other here only in the fact that they both fought. The crucial difference is in what they fought for, and how they fought for it.

PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, AGAINST SPIRITUAL WICKEDNESS IN HIGH PLACES.

EPHESIANS 6:11-12



Chosen By Grace and Called To Faith

by Paul Shirk

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PO Box 391, Hanover, PA 17331

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There are two predominant themes in the New Testament which relate to our salvation—the one is grace, and the other is faith. Grace can be defined as the unmerited love, favor, and enabling power which God has chosen to extend to unworthy sinners through Jesus Christ. Faith is spoken of in Scripture as man's personal decision to obey the call of God to trust in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ alone for salvation. There are certainly other aspects of both grace and faith, but we will focus our thoughts in this study on these two concepts. We will first consider the divine side of salvation (which pertains to grace), and the human response to grace (which is faith). And then we will notice how they correlate.

1. God Has Graciously Chosen Us unto Salvation from Eternity Past.

God's plan of salvation, as portrayed in the Scriptures, originates in the grace of God from eternity—before the creation of this world. The grace of God in salvation is from eternity, yet it was revealed to us in time by the manifestation of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 1:9-10). Paul says in Ephesians 1:4 that we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. We can know God only because He has graciously planned from eternity past to reveal Himself to us in time. He did it in a personal way, through Jesus Christ. God has desired this relationship with us before we were born, before Christ came, before man sinned, and before the world was created. It is with this concept in mind that we begin to get a glimpse of the magnitude of God's grace to sinners. God loved us and chose to save us already in the eternal ages past. There is nothing that we can do in time which would merit God's grace. In this respect, salvation is all of grace. Had God not chosen to extend grace to us, we would have been doomed for eternity by our sin. Salvation is ascribed to God's grace in the following Scriptures:

- *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption*

that is in Christ Jesus –Romans 3:24.

- *That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life –Titus 3:7.*
- *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) –Ephesians 2:5).*
- *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: –Ephesians 2:8.*

If God had not chosen to extend His grace to us in salvation through the gift of His Son, we would not have a choice at all in the matter of salvation, for there would be nothing to choose. Therefore, God's choice to save us precedes our choice to be saved. Without God's grace there could be no faith, for... *We love him, because he first loved us –1 John 4:19.*

2. Election and Predestination are Terms in Scripture Which Express God's Gracious Choice to Save Us.

There are many who shy away from these terms which are given in Scripture because of the way some people have chosen to interpret them. Both terms are only used in the positive sense in the Bible. The purpose is to declare the security of the believer in Christ and to show God's eternal plan for their lives. The following Scriptures reveal this:

- *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied –1 Peter 1:2.*
- *Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God –1 Thessalonians 1:4.*
- *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called,*

them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified –Romans 8:29-30.

- *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. Ephesians 1:5-6.*

If God had not chosen to save us, there is nothing we could have done to save ourselves. Election refers to God's choice to save us, and predestination implies God's plan and destiny for the believer's life. Ultimately, our salvation was not an invention of man, but the plan of God. It is God's choice for us which empowers us to choose Him by faith.

Since our relationship to Christ in the Church is compared to a marriage, we will look at an illustration about marriage to help us understand the concept of the election of grace.

I chose my wife potentially for marriage before she ever knew that I had any interest in her. Before I expressed my interest to her, she had no knowledge of my choice of her as a potential partner. When I expressed my desire to her, she had a choice to make, based upon the choice which I had already made. My choice of her did not take away her ability to choose, but rather enabled her to make a life-changing choice. If I had not chosen her first, her choice of me would not have been effectual. By my choosing her first, she was empowered to make an effectual choice to be married. My choice of her is a picture of grace (though mine was not unmerited as God's is), but her choice of me was a response of faith—that I would be the type of husband she desired. When she accepted my choice, by choosing me, she became my chosen bride. She could not be my elect bride without choosing me (accepting my choice), though her election was initiated by my choice and not hers.

In like manner, God's election of grace (to enter into a relationship with us from eternity), empowers us in time, by faith, to respond to His choice of us and become one of His elect. Though we become one of the elect by faith in time, yet our election to salvation was of grace before we were born. It is only through faith that we receive God's saving grace, yet His grace flowed to us from His eternal election to save us through Jesus Christ.

3. It is the Will of God to Save All Men Through Jesus Christ.

Some people suppose that since God is all-powerful, He can do anything, but, in reality, He can only act in harmony with His own nature. God cannot lie, for He is truth. He cannot sin, for He is holy. God also has bound Himself to honor His own Word, so that it cannot be broken (Psalm 138:2; John 10:35). Therefore, God's will for man's salvation is always consistent with the expression of His

gracious nature. God has made His will plain concerning the salvation of all men in His infallible Word.

- *Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth –1 Timothy 2:4.*
- *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance –2 Peter 3:9.*

If the will of God is to save all men, then that would suggest that He has given His grace to all, so that they can believe in the gift of His Son. The concept of God's saving grace being extended to all is expressed in the following passage:

- *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, –Titus 2:11.*

If it is the will of God to save all men, and the saving grace of God has appeared to all for this purpose, then it would also follow that Christ died for all. If Christ is the only way of salvation, then His death for all men is essential, if all can be saved. The Scriptures contain some key passages which irrefutably prove that the atonement of Christ has reached all men to the same extent as the curse of sin. Notice this thought identified in the following texts:

- *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all –Isaiah 53:6.*
- *Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life –Romans 5:18.*
- *For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all –Romans 11:32.*
- *“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead” (2Co 5:14*
- *For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead –2 Corinthians 5:14.*

In these texts the word “all” is used to show that the grace of God through Jesus Christ has reached to the full extent of Adam's curse, so that none might question whether God's grace has been extended to them. In fact the Apostle Paul goes one step further and says that grace has exceeded the extent of sin—... *where sin abounded, grace did much more abound –Romans 5:20.* Grace abounds to all that all men might be without excuse to believe the gospel. Nor should anyone be fearful that he is beyond the reach of God's grace. It is God's will to save all; He has extended grace to all

and has given His Son for all. Yet God has chosen to make personal faith of each individual to be a necessary response to His grace in order to be saved.

4. Faith is a Gift of God's Grace Which Makes Us Accountable to Believe in Jesus Christ.

God has extended to fallen man the ability to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ. Faith does not come from our own nature, for our carnal nature is in rebellion against God (Romans 8:6-8). We are children of disobedience by birth (Ephesians 2:2; 5:6). Before conversion, our human will is in bondage to our fallen nature so that it cannot overcome our sinful depravity (Romans 7:18). In our natural state we are unable to respond to God's grace for we are dead (unresponsive) in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). Because of our sinful depravity, God's grace is needed to "teach" us of our sin and the way of salvation. This thought is expressed in Titus 2:11-12 where we read, "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."

Furthermore, faith comes to us from God's grace as a divine gift and not from within us. The Scripture is clear in portraying our faith as that which is "given" to us as a gift.

- *John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven –John 3:27.*
- *And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father –John 6:65.*
- *For unto you it is given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake –Philippians 1:29.*
- *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is*

true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life –1 John 5:20.

We have now identified that both grace and faith are unmerited gifts from God. However, God requires us to exercise the gift of faith—that is to believe in Jesus Christ. Unbelief alone is sufficient to damn our souls (Mark 16:16; John 8:24). God holds human beings accountable to believe the gospel. God does not, and will not, believe for us. He has given to all humanity the ability to respond to His grace by believing. God, by His sovereign will, has chosen to limit salvation by grace to those who exercise personal faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

5. Faith is the Means Through Which We Receive the Grace to Obey the Commands of God.

The Scriptures we have examined have declared that salvation is by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ alone. However, there are two errors concerning faith which must be avoided in our understanding of salvation.

The first error teaches that faith is nothing more than a mental persuasion to believe in Christ without any obligation to obey His commandments. James 2 unequivocally declares that a person's faith which has no works is dead, useless, and no greater than the faith of devils. (James 2:19)

The second error takes the same teachings from James and asserts that faith and works are both essential for salvation if the right mixture of the two is obtained. This is a distortion of what James is actually teaching, for James is not saying that faith plus works equals salvation, but rather is illustrating the difference between a true and false faith, a dead and a living faith, an active and an inactive faith. James is telling us how we may discern what true faith really is. True faith is alive and working. To interpret James 2 in such a way as to make good works essential for salvation would be to contradict the other Scriptures which emphatically state that we are not saved by good works (Romans 4:1-5;

11:6; Ephesians 2:9; Titus 3:5). Those that are yet in the flesh before salvation cannot please God by any good works. Good works are not the cause of our salvation but the fruit of our salvation.

It is by faith that we pass from death to life and experience the grace of God working in us to obey His commandments out of a heart of love. Through faith our rebellious old man is crucified with Christ, and we rise in newness of life to live in a completely different manner (Romans 6:1-7). The commands which we once could not keep are now fulfilled in us who walk in the power of the Spirit. By faith we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Good works are the inevitable fruit of a living faith. It is the grace of God, working in us mightily, which constrains us to obey God's Word. It is impossible to be saved by grace through faith, and still choose to willfully live in disobedience to the commandments of Christ (1 John 2:3-5). It is the grace of God, received by faith, which inwardly motivates us to obedience and good works.

- *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure –Philippians 2:13.*
- *Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily –Colossians 1:29.*
- *But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me –1 Corinthians 15:10.*

All that we can ever accomplish for the glory of God is based solely on His grace working in us. Let us choose to reach out to Him in faith, that His eternal purposes for us (in our predestination) may be manifested in our works. What greater motivation can we have for living by faith, than by knowing that God has from eternity past extended His grace to work in us both to will and to do His good pleasure!

6. Concluding Thoughts

Perhaps the reader is thinking that the concepts and

relationships of faith and grace are beyond his ability to fully grasp. It certainly is beyond the comprehension of the writer. It is this mystery and wonder which makes it "marvelous grace." Our finite minds will never fully understand the magnitude of God's infinite grace—else it would no longer be grace. Nor can we fully describe why we feel compelled by God's grace to put our faith in Jesus Christ. But He draws us to Himself. Grace by its very nature far exceeds reasonable understanding and explanation. God does not ask us to fully understand His grace, but rather by faith to receive it, by accepting Jesus Christ into our lives. Christ is the personal manifestation of the grace of God.

Without Christ coming in the flesh to die for our sins, we could never experience the grace of God. Only by believing in Christ do we enter into God's grace.

- *For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ –John 1:17.*
- *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace –Ephesians 1:7.*

Those who experience God's grace through the gift of His Son will have a spiritual transformation. By faith we can know for sure that God's grace has saved us and is working in us His eternal purposes for His glory. To receive God's grace is to find meaning and purpose in living. It is a wonderful thought to know that God has planned from eternity past to graciously give us eternal life by sending His Son. God has not required us to fully understand His grace, only to receive it by faith.

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Robert Lehigh, Editor

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O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go

by Joel A Hostetler
Coshocton, OH

This hymn is generally thought to be one of the most loved hymns written during the latter part of the 19th century. The writing of this thoughtful and beautifully constructed text is even more amazing when we consider that its author was one who was almost completely blind and who describes the writing of this hymn as the “fruit of much mental suffering,” and “the quickest bit of work I ever did in my life.”

Born in Glasgow, Scotland, March 27, 1842, George Matheson had only partial vision as a boy, and, after entering Glasgow University, his eyesight continued to fail rapidly. Except for “moments of shadowy eyesight”, he was totally blind by the age of 18. This affliction of blindness seemed to be a tragedy since he was an eager and avid scholar, yet it caused him to trust in the Lord, and it strengthened his walk with God.

He entered the university at the early age of 15 and graduated with high honors in 1861 at the age of 19. He was a brilliant scholar, even spending four more years after graduation in more theological studies, all the while remaining single. After his graduation he became entirely dependent on others, relying much upon his two sisters, who were so dedicated that they learned Latin, Greek, and Hebrew since they thought it might aid him in his theological studies. One of them continued to be his faithful co-worker and helper throughout his life, assisting in his calling of being a pastor and other ministerial duties.

After completing his theological course, he became assistant pastor to the renowned Dr. Macduff, in whose church of thousands of members he had been brought up. Soon, however, he was chosen minister of the Church of Scotland in the seaport summer resort of Innellan. Here he stayed for eighteen years. Many families came to spend the summer there chiefly to be inspired by his preaching ministry.

Whenever he preached, the open Bible was before him as he stood in the pulpit, and to the congregation, he seemed to be reading from it. During the messages, his eyes looked

straight at the congregation, and many went away with no clue that they just listened to a blind preacher. It was during this time that he made a practice of memorizing his sermons, as well as the passages of Scripture he used in his messages. His memory was so sharp that if someone read one of his prepared sermons to him twice, or whatever else he wanted to memorize, he could from then on repeat it perfectly. One Sunday, however, after doing this for 12 years, when in the middle of a powerful sermon his memory completely collapsed, and the topic on which he was preaching vanished from his mind. He sat down and commenced to request a psalm to be sung, and, after the song, with perfect calmness told the audience what had happened. With this done, he stood to his feet, gave out a new text, and preached an impromptu sermon of great power. After that experience George wrote little of his sermons, and finally prepared only an outline from which to preach.

Dr. Matheson’s final pastorate was taken up in 1886 at the age of 44 where he became pastor of the large St. Bernard’s Parish Church in Edinburgh, where his eloquent preaching consistently attracted large throngs of people to the services. Here he remained for 13 years, his church growing from 1,494 members to 1,703 in the first 5 years. He continued faithfully preaching the gospel and became well known as one of Scotland’s outstanding preachers and pastors and was greatly esteemed in Edinburgh where he resided.

Many speculations have been made regarding the cause of the mental distress which prompted the author to write this text. A very popular account, although never verified, is that this text was a result of the severe trial Matheson faced after his soon-to-be bride left him just before their marriage when she learned of his impending total blindness. Although this story cannot be documented, there are many significant hints in this hymn reflecting a saddened heart, such as the “flickering torch” and the “borrowed ray” in the second verse, the tracing of the “rainbow through the rain” in the third stanza, as well as the “cross” in the last verse.

Fortunately, Dr. Matheson did relate an account of his writing of this hymn:

“My hymn was composed in the manse of Innellan on the evening of June 6, 1882. I was at that time alone. It was the day of my sister’s wedding, and the rest of the family were staying overnight in Glasgow. Something happened to me, which was known only to myself, and which caused me the most severe mental suffering. The hymn was the fruit of that suffering and was the quickest bit of work I ever did in my life. A genuine inspiration, I had the impression rather of having it dictated to me by some inward voice than of working it out myself. I am quite sure that the whole work was completed in five minutes and equally sure it never received at my hands any retouching or correction. I have no natural gift of rhythm. All the other verses I have ever written are manufactured articles; this came like a dayspring from on high. I have never been able to gain once more the same fervor in verse.”

The hymn first appeared in the Church of Scotland monthly magazine, *Life and Work*, in January 1883. The tune was composed one year later by a prominent Scotch organist of his day, Albert L. Peace, who was asked to write a tune especially for Matheson’s text.

Peace’s own account of the writing of this fine tune is as follows, “After reading it over carefully, I wrote the music straight off, and may say that the ink of the first note was

hardly dry when I had finished the tune.” The origin or the tune name, *St. Margaret*, is unknown except that it is a name much revered in Scotland, and certainly because of the beloved Queen Margaret of Scotland.

The later years of Matheson’s life from the age of 57 to his death at age 64 were spent in writing some of the finest devotional writings in the English tongue, including *Moments on the Mount*, *Voice of the Spirit*, and *Rests by the River*. Although this is his only hymn found in most hymnals, he did write a few other fine hymns, including “Make Me A Captive Lord”, and “Then I Shall Be Free.”

The four key words of “O Love, That Wilt Not Let Me Go” are: love, light, joy, and cross. These words have been described as the complete satisfaction for any believer whose life is totally surrendered to the will of God. It could take the rest of one’s life to completely discover the personal significance of these four expressions.

References:

101 Hymn Stories

Treasury of Hymn Stories

Author -George Matheson, 1842 – 1906

Composer -Albert L. Peace, 1844 – 1912

O LOVE THAT WILL NOT LET ME GO

ST. MARGARET 8. 8. 8. 8. 6

George Matheson, 1882 Albert L. Peace, 1884

1. O love that will not let me go, I rest my wea - ry
 2. O light that fol - l'west all my way, I yield my flick - ring
 3. O joy that seek - est me thru pain, I can - not close my
 4. O cross that lift - est up my head, I dare not ask to

soul in Thee; I give Thee back the life I owe, That
 torch to Thee; My heart re - stores its bor - rowed ray, That
 heart to Thee; I trace the rain - bow thru the rain, And
 hide from Thee; I lay in dust life's glo - ry dead, And

in Thine o - cean depths its flow May rich - er, full - er be.
 in Thy sun - shine's glow, its day May bright - er, fair - er be.
 feel the prom - ise is not vain That morn shall tear - less be.
 from the ground there blos - soms red Life that shall end - less be.

The Foolishness of Preaching

by Lee Rufener
Athens, WI

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. ...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe –1 Corinthians –1:17-21.

The modern Christian world has duly accepted many of the lowly vehicles that God used to usher in the Kingdom. The virgin birth, the rough-hewn manger, and the swaddling clothes have become sovereign monuments that we could scarcely do without. Even the rude donkey is appreciated on Good Friday and the old, rugged cross has become a spiritual emblem nominally displayed on neck chains and ornate pulpit carvings. While man remains infatuated with the traditional symbols of the gospel, there remains an absurd avenue of God's choosing that is becoming increasingly despised.

For centuries, the Gospel was heralded by foolish and unlearned men (according to their elite and intellectual counterparts). The biblical truth spoken in simplicity was sufficient of itself for God's Holy Spirit to use to convert the sinner. While there is no lack for preaching in these days, it appears that much of it is of a different sort than the original form that Christ exemplified. If anyone was capable of articulating a flourish of orations in an accurate philosophical language it would have been the Apostle Paul. Yet, he refused to preach the gospel in this manner, *...lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect –1 Corinthians 1:17*. He preached carefully, lest the success should be ascribed to the force of art, and not of truth itself.

Paul had been ingrained in Jewish learning at the feet of Gamaliel and was affluent in understanding both Hebrew and Greek, but in preaching the cross of Christ, he laid his learning aside. He spoke the words of the Gospel in a language void of human power lest the honor belonging to Christ be eclipsed by his own personal power. *For his*

letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible –2 Corinthians 10:10. It is here where the modern church has spurned the meager vehicles chosen by Christ and the Apostles while diverting to a route more acceptable to in our day. Modern day efficiency demands a more direct route to the end, and if the Bible doesn't forbid it, we feel that it is our prerogative to employ it.

While evangelical films, music concerts, and a host of other questionable venues of ministry could be mentioned, I wish to speak primarily to the modern invitation system known as the "altar call". While it is commonly associated with the "old fashioned meetings" of the past two centuries, it is indeed modern due to the fact that for nearly nineteen centuries no one had ever heard of the practice. Evangelists such as George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and even John Wesley had never heard of such a custom. Even Charles Spurgeon (heralded as the "Prince of Preachers") strongly criticized it and refused to adopt it.*

Thus, we observe, the practice was not born in the apostolic church. It is not found in the ministry of Jesus, His apostles, or even the church of the post-apostolic period. We do see Jesus and the apostles inviting men and women to come to Christ and to be saved, but never by means of this particular method. So why has this practice become such an essential tool in most evangelical and in many Anabaptist churches today? The answer—pragmatic results. Immediately following the sermon, the congregation will sing a hymn during which the preacher calls men and women to walk to the front of the auditorium (to the "altar") to make a public decision for Christ. Salvation is offered to all who will but come to the front and receive it. Those who come often receive the personal attention of a counselor to pray with them and lead them through confession.

This practice was designed to encourage decisions and obtain results. So, it did. And with slight variations the

new method spread with increasing popularity through Charles Finney, and later, Dwight L. Moody, and finally, into virtually all of nineteenth and twentieth century evangelicalism. Peter Cartwright, Sam Jones, R. A. Torrey, Billy Sunday, Bob Jones, Gipsy Smith, John R. Rice, Billy Graham, and George Brunk all employed the method with impressive success. Thus, the invitation system became the accepted normal practice and those who question it are often deemed spiritually eccentric.

Why should we take issue with the practice if the scripture doesn't forbid it? The answer lies in the question of the propriety of the invitation system. Let us first note that the Scriptures abound with invitations to salvation. Such offers as, *Come unto me, ...and I will give you rest –Matthew 11:28*, and, *...If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink –John 7:37*, are marvelous offers of life to those who will trust Christ. The apostles also did not hesitate to show forth Christ as Savior to all who would listen to their message.

They preached indiscriminately, *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out... –Acts 3:19*, and *...we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God –2 Corinthians 5:20*. And they testified *...to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ –Acts 20:21*. With all this, every Christian should not only agree but also rejoice.

Finally, *...compel them to come in, that my house may be filled –Luke 14:23*, is another Bible verse which could be used to lend support to the altar call method. Still, this says nothing to bolster the correctness of the altar call. As we examine the practice at its roots, we cannot help but observe a few deficiencies:

...Extra-Biblical

This is no reflection upon the multitudes who have found salvation at such an event. The angels in heaven rejoice at the repentance of every sinner no matter how he arrives there. We simply wish to hold forth the simplicity of the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. The altar call is used as a specific addition to the sermon to bring to fruition what the foolishness of preaching itself could not do.

The altar call gained popularity in the 1830's with the preaching of Charles G. Finney who wrote, *"A revival is not a miracle, or dependent on a miracle, in any sense. It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means."*** We cannot accuse all who practice the altar call of believing this, but it is rather revealing that the preacher who brought it to popularity seemed to liken it more to a mathematical equation than to divine involvement.

When the truth falls on the soil of a good and honest heart, the seed veritably takes root and produces fruit. This seed of truth needs no artificial dress. It shines out with the

greatest majesty in its own light and prevails in the world by its divine authority. It is a demonstration of the Spirit, without need of human invention or intervention. The plain preaching of a crucified Christ is more powerful than all the oratory, philosophical, and heart gripping modes of the world.

...Emotional Thrust

The altar call requires a seeker to leave his seat and walk to the forefront for pardon. These invitations are often preceded by fearfully moving accounts, sad stories, or testimonies that stir the emotions to fear, guilt, or regret. Flanked by a soft hymn sung by the congregation, the emotions are ripe to move forward. Those who choose to repent from their seat without responding are often esteemed as "missing an opportunity".

And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended –Mark 4:16-17. We refuse to deduce that all who were converted under this type of ministry are stony ground hearers. Yet, the vast majority of those who receive it in such a charged emotional environment will often have a less than sincere conversion.

I once had an exuberant client in my shop who informed me that their church had sponsored a national evangelical ministry to preach at the public high school. "There were over 400 decisions for Christ!" While we all wish to rejoice with the angels, one cannot but question how many of them were still in church a year later. While the lack of true commitment may not fall upon the use of the altar call alone, we may be sure that the seed so quick to spring up will surely manifest itself at the moorings of an emotional invitation. Those that have no root would be better off never having responded prematurely.

Conversions wrought through emotional channels are often questionable and transient. Holy Spirit promptings do not need human strength, wisdom, or efforts to convey them forth. Revival methods such as shouting, overt weeping, emotion eliciting music, and the telling of sentimental stories is the man-made art of preaching. It is also found in many other public venues that are designed to elicit a specific predetermined response from the hearer. Each of these dimensions is quite natural to human behavior and, at times, there may be a fine line between what is acceptable and unacceptable in preaching. Great care should be taken that we do not create an emotional climax and eclipse the message in an inordinate manner lest the power be of men and not of Christ.

...Encroachment to Parental and Local Church Authority

Children are often a target at such a time. They may feel guilty for some childish misdeed, but a fiery message followed by emotional pleading can be very unsettling. These are times when a parent should speak to the heart of their child and connect in a spiritual way. Instead, often the child is moved to the front and given a church counselor for them to pour out their confession.

I know a woman whose father was an itinerant evangelical preacher. She claims that she responded “hundreds of times” to the altar call. A casual and honest appraisal would reveal that while the altar call may bring commencement to many sincere conversions, it also avails itself equally to a host of premature decisions and pressure-driven commitments. This often leaves many unstable souls wallowing in spiritual instability and struggling with a lack of assurance of salvation for years to come.

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me –1 Corinthians 4:15-16. God has ordained fathers and mothers to bring birth to their children, both physical and spiritual.

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ –1 Corinthians 11:1. The skilled itinerant evangelist has no intention of begetting spiritual children and making followers of himself. This he leaves to others, for he has found his gift in compelling people to make decisions.

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake... –1 Thessalonians 5:13. But there is to be a God-given loyalty to those spiritual fathers who labor over us and bring us to birth beyond the many instructors upon life's pathway. The contemporary emergence of thousands of “hit and run” ministries should cause us concern.

While public confession of sin is obviously an important doctrine of Christ to accompany salvation, these confessions belong in the hands of the spiritual authorities who can discern the situation and help further the soul through tomorrow's temptations. When those who know the convert are personally engaged, a more thorough and honest examination can be employed to bring about a sincere conversion. This will lay the groundwork for the deep digging required to lay the foundation upon the Rock and establish the soul, both in the home and in the church.

...Engineered Faith

When people are continually subject to revival scenes, there is often an unspoken expectation that the meetings

are the place to do business with God. This has a tendency to confuse “saving faith” with a “saving act”. The emphasis on “coming forward to receive Christ” confuses the meaning of faith. Christ is the strong consolation, to whom we ... *have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast... –Hebrews 6:18-19.*(emphasis mine)

The invitation of Christ to ... *Come unto me... Matthew 11:28*, should never be confused with “coming to the altar” (walking to the front). The foolishness of preaching is the invitation, and “Christ” is the destination. The power of the oration shall not lie in the dynamics of the preacher but within the truth of the message. *We become like paper figures, having no power at all in ourselves. All power must come from above; all methods used must also come from above. –Watchman Nee ****

The wind bloweth where it listeth... John 3:8, likewise the Holy Spirit, and the preacher must be content with that. I trust that many who give altar calls have the best of intentions and do not wish to circumvent the Spirit. But most works accomplished in the apex of emotion have a strong inclination to be fallacious. *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God –Romans 10:17.*

Endnotes:

* *“Charles Spurgeon, well known for his evangelistic abilities, firmly refused to adopt the practice of altar calls and he severely criticized it. He viewed the altar call as a method to force decisions as results, but he recognized its potential abuse and dangers.” Altar Calls – Bill Brenner*

‘I should like to go into the enquiry-room.’ I dare say you would, but we are not willing to pander to popular superstition. We fear that in those rooms men are warmed into a fictitious confidence. Very few of the supposed converts of enquiry-rooms turn out well. Go to your God at once, even where you now are. Cast yourself on Christ, at once, ere you stir an inch!’ – Pleading and Encouragement – Charles Haddon Spurgeon – Aug 17, 1841

** *What A Revival Of Religion Is – Charles Grandison Finney – The Belknap Press Of Harvard University* A “Revival of Religion” presupposes a declension. Almost all the religion in the world has been produced by revivals. God has found it necessary to take advantage of the excitability there is in mankind, to produce powerful excitements among them, before he can lead them to obey. Men are so sluggish, there are so many things to lead their minds off from religion, and to oppose the influence of the gospel that it is necessary to raise an excitement among them, till the tide rises so high as to sweep away the opposing obstacles. They must be so excited that they will break over these counteracting influences, before they will obey God.

*** *Spirit Force vs. Psychic Force – Watchman Nee*

God Would Not Let Me Go

by Sheldon Bower
Sugarcreek, OH

I grew up in the same church setting in which my parents were born and raised. However, by the time I was 10, my parents began to be concerned with the direction the young folks were going and wanted something different for their children. So, my parents got in touch with a church from another state, which helped them make connections with a small church that was located close to where we lived.

I was more of a quiet, strong-willed child and was quickly turning into a rebellious teenager. My parents did all they knew to do with me at the time. One of which was making the move to this new church since it had more of a godly youth environment. I had a hard time with this change. At our old church, I had friends that were on the same page as me and supported me in my rebellious ways, but at the new church I was more of the “bad guy” and didn't fit in with the other young people.

Over the course of time that church dissolved, and my parents decided to move to another state, closer to a more stable church. So it was, that, when I was 14, we spent our first night in a different state, in a different house, on a different road, and with different neighbors. We went shopping in a different town and went to a different church, with people that I barely knew. I didn't like change. I found it challenging to meet new people and make new friends. I struggled majorly with all these changes, so, I never bothered trying to plug in and be an active part in our new life. Instead, I slowly built walls around my life and heart, all the while growing colder and more rebellious.

As I grew older and harder, my parents tried to work with me, but I would have nothing to do with it. I eventually got a job and was introduced to country music and other worldly things. Since I enjoy work, I poured myself into it and worked long hours. That way I wouldn't need to be around the family or church people, and I wouldn't need to go to church activities. Thus, I became more removed and isolated from those around me.

The church people didn't know how to relate to me; most of them just left me to myself. Deep down I was desperately longing for love and acceptance from my family and church. This caused me to spiral downward. I continued to stuff my feelings and build a wall around myself, all the while hardening my heart further. As time went on, I withdrew more and more from my family and the church. I felt more and more like a social misfit that no one knew what to do with. I decided I was going to run away and live my own life.

Somehow my parents got wind of this idea and tried to do all that they knew to do to help me, but I resented it. Looking back, I know without a doubt that they were doing it out of love and care, but there was a great lack in our relationship. Thus, I continued to grow harder and colder.

The summer I was 17, a visiting minister (‘Mike’) and his family came to our church for meetings. I knew them from years before and somehow through our interaction during the meetings my heart started to soften and open. I'm not quite sure why, but for some reason, I decided that I wanted to go spend the winter with them. So, my parents got in contact with them, and it was decided that I could stay with them for a few months.

My plan was to spend a few months away from everything and then I would return home when I was almost 18. Once I was 18, I was planning to leave home and do my own thing. I was certain no one could stop me because I would be of legal age. However, God obviously had different plans...

Somehow ‘Mike’ convinced me to go to along to a week of meetings in another state. While we were there, I don't remember that the conviction was any stronger than any other time. However, one evening after the service he asked me if I wanted to become a Christian and have my sins forgiven. I don't remember what I told him, but we talked for a while. He took me through the Bible, helping me to see what God says about it all; then we prayed. When we got up from praying, I can't say that something major happened, but it was definitely the night that I found salvation! That

night, something changed in my heart. I knew that I now wanted to do things God's way. I knew that my end goal in life was to run the race well and to finish victoriously. That is what has helped me through the years.

On July 31, 2011, I was baptized upon the confession of my faith. The next number of years were definitely not easy. I would even say that at times it seemed to have been harder than in the years before my conversion. Out of respect to others, I don't feel I can share everything that has happened over the years, but I will try to share several main points. You can imagine that with the walls I had built around myself and the comfort I had found in this, that the years following my conversion were full of ups and downs as I tried to relearn how to relate to other believers and to people in general.

Even though I had reached out to God for forgiveness of my sins and had committed my life to following Him, I had many old habits of relating to others in wrong ways that still needed to be sanctified. Things at home continued to improve but there was still room for progress, which added to the stress. As the years went by, my stress level continued to rise. I didn't know what to do with it, so I resorted to taking high doses of NoDoz® with an energy drink before I went to bed, trying to get my nerves to relax enough so I could sleep (don't try this at home, it is dangerous). The next day I would get up and face it all again. One year for most of the year I struggled with thoughts of not wanting to continue on with life. During this time, I had a very close friend who gave me much encouragement. I believe that the regular contact I had with this close friend, the prayers of others, and God's faithfulness all working together kept me from doing something that I would have later regretted.

I had another close friend who had also gone through a lot but seemed to be finding God's answers to life's struggles. We would go out for supper, spending time together talking about life's struggles. I remember times that I would leave his car and tears would be streaming down his face because he wasn't sure if I was going to make it. Then he went to the mission field for two years to teach English.

I'm not sure what all was going on in his life but one day we got word that he was missing. Eventually we heard from him; he was okay and was living back in the states again. My heart was torn... One of the few friends that I had, had now turned his back on what he had once believed and on that which he had once tried to convince me of. Yet here I was, still struggling... Why not just give up fighting...? Why not just go live the easy life...? As time went on, I continued to long for love and acceptance. At times the struggle, the aching, and the longing seemed almost unbearable. But I knew deep down that giving up was not what I wanted. It would not get the end result that I wanted. Once more

through the encouragement and regular contact with my close friend, the prayers of others, and God's faithfulness, I continued to press on.

Another young man started taking an interest in my life and we eventually became close friends. He and his wife were a great encouragement to me. Then due to some disagreements with the church, they became dissatisfied and left the church. They threw aside a lot of what they had once stood for. So here I was once again with a close friend that had turned his back on what he had once stood for. What's the use? Why does life need to be so hard? Maybe I should also give up... But I didn't want to totally throw God out. Maybe I could find a church that was less strict. Once again, I came to my senses and realized that's not really what I wanted. That direction wouldn't take me where I wanted to go. So once more through the encouragement and regular contact with my close friend, the prayers of others, and God's faithfulness, I continued to press on. At the time it was tough, but looking back, I see I have learned a lot by all I have gone through.

In the fall of 2015, I went to Washington state due to a work opportunity. At the time I went, there were things going on at my home church that I was struggling with. Because of all the stress that I was facing, I was feeling quite discouraged about Church life, Christianity, and life in general. I wasn't wanting to throw my Christianity away, but I was wondering, "Is this really what it's all about?" "Why can't people just get along?" Is this really what God had in mind for His people? If we are "little Christs" like we claim to be, shouldn't we be able to get along? Shouldn't we be the ones that are joyful and full of life?

I went to Washington with these kinds of thoughts on my mind. While there, I attended a church that was both Biblical and spiritually minded. It's hard to explain all that went on in my mind, heart, and life during those six months. But I left there and went back home with a renewed strength and vision.

We should be the light of the world! We should have something to offer others! We should be able to get along with one another! Yes, we do go through hard times individually and collectively as a church, but if we fight the good fight of faith, if we finish our course, if we keep the faith, there is laid up for each of us a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing -2 Timothy 4:7-8.

* * * * *

June 15, 2018, at 4:40 pm. the scream of the emergency services' pager split the peaceful afternoon as it crackled to life. "One-car rollover on 'Gingko Avenue,' possible entrapment," was the repeated dispatch. As we walked onto the scene, there sat a young girl who appeared to be in her mid-twenties and was visibly banged up. With blood and tears streaming down her face, she repeated these phrases, "I don't want to die... I'm not ready to die... I may never see my baby again." As seconds turned to minutes, the paramedics tried to calm her anxious nerves. We searched the mangled car and surrounding area for the supposed missing baby. All the while she sat there with lines of worry and fear. She had tears and blood streaming down her face, as she repeated, "I may never see my baby again... I don't want to die... I'm not ready to die."

As first responders, all we found was a car seat that wasn't fastened in, with no evidence of a baby anywhere. As the ambulance crew strapped her to the stretcher and loaded her in the ambulance, she was still repeating, "Where's my baby...? I'm not ready to die... I don't want to die... I may never see my baby again."

As I left the scene that evening, with that image and those phrases running through my mind, I was struck with two sober thoughts. If that was me, miraculously surviving an accident and sitting there beside my vehicle, barely coherent, with blood streaming down my face, what would I be saying?

What would the paramedics and rescue team remember me by? Would I be ready to die? Would I be clear before God?

* * * * *

As Christians, when is the last time we helped someone prepare their soul for death? As believers who have been redeemed from the misery and chaos of a life of sin (see 1 Corinthians 6:9-11), we should ...*be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh [us] you a reason of the hope that is in [us] you with meekness and fear: -1 Peter 3:15.*

In the fall of 2018, God opened the door for me to move to a church in a different state where I have found stability. It was here that God brought a godly young lady into my life, and we were married on November 30, 2019. Being married and having brothers who surrounded me with discipleship, compassion, and prayerful support helped me to grow in the Lord in many ways.

Being here has awakened within me a renewed vision to be the light of the world. Today, I am thankful that God did not let me go. As I kept fighting the spiritual fight, God kept giving me the strength and wisdom to do the next right thing. With each victory, my strength has grown stronger. *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you... -James 4:8.* I thank God for giving me victory and for helping me find my ultimate source of love, security, and purpose—my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.



Mother Was Right

by Eileen Wenger
Dalton, OH



Lunchtime was over and it was that delightful hour of the day when mom said it was time for a break. Since Ellie was ten, she wasn't required to take a daily nap anymore, so she set about trying to decide just how she would spend this free time. She loved being outdoors, so the sunny skies and fresh air of this particularly lovely summer day fairly pulled her outside.

"I know!" she thought to herself. "This would be a perfect time to try some whittling with that knife Paul gave me."

She had spent a week with her aunt and uncle who lived several counties over from hers and while there, her cousin Paul had given her a knife that he had made. It had a short, round handle and he had inserted a small piece of steel into one end. He then honed the blade to a nice sharp edge. He could carve the funniest little faces on small blocks of wood and Ellie was always eager to see what he would create next. She tried to copy him, but it didn't seem as if she would be turning out anything very exciting any time soon. Still, it was fun to try, so she got the knife from her drawer in her bedroom and headed outside.

The large maple tree in front of their old stone farmhouse beckoned to her. Its low hanging branches seemed like the perfect place to perch and try out that knife again. Ellie selected a few large twigs and then hoisted herself up into the cool shade of the tree. Once situated, she began cutting and picking away at her pieces of wood. She still couldn't make eyes and a nose appear, but

she had fun carving notches and shaving off small pieces of bark. It was a relaxing thing with which to be occupied while enjoying the quietness of the afternoon. She was so glad this tree was in their yard, and she was so glad that Paul had given her that whittling knife.

After a time, the branch Ellie was sitting on began to feel rough and hard, and the twigs she was whittling had nearly disappeared. "I should go see what the boys are doing," she thought. She shifted to the lowest branch and sat poised, ready to jump down like she always did to get out of the tree.

She paused, looking at the knife in her hand. "Never jump down from anywhere while holding a knife in your hand!" her mother's voice rang in her memory. "It is a very dangerous thing to do. You could get cut very badly." Ellie sat thinking about that for a little.

"Yes, I know that's probably true," she told herself. "But I think if I am very careful, I could jump down and it will be fine," she reasoned.

She firmly grasped the knife in her right hand, then quickly jumped the distance to the ground. Just as she landed, her ankle turned and gave way under her. She fell awkwardly onto her left leg. And, oh no! That little knife had plunged into her left wrist as she was trying to keep her balance. She quickly pulled it out and watched, with her heart beating rapidly, as the blood welled up, dark and warm. It was a small cut, only about one quarter of an inch long, but it had gone in rather deeply.

What should she do now? Yes, there was no doubt about it, her mom had been right after all! In her heart, she knew the right thing to do would be to go directly to her mother and tell her what she had done. But she felt guilty and ashamed. She had known better than to jump down with that knife, yet she had gone ahead and done it anyway. Guiltily, she quickly pressed her thumb on top of the wound and slipped into the house. The bleeding soon stopped, and after finding a little bandage and placing it on her cut, she quietly put her knife away and found a book to read. She never told her mom what she had done until many years later when she was a grown woman.

Today, as she looks at that scar, which is still visible from 40 years ago, she wonders why God

had protected her. She had been a foolish little girl to not go immediately to her mother and confess what she had done. She could have gotten a severe infection from getting cut with a dirty, slightly rusty knife. Even though she acted foolishly, she is grateful that God protected her, but she still wishes she had confessed her disobedience to her mother.

It is never wise to hide anything from your parents. They need to know those wrong things you do, no matter how embarrassed or ashamed you might feel. Parents need to know all the things that happen to their children. It is God's design for fathers and mothers to be there for their children, to help you when you get hurt, and to guide and teach you as you learn how to be good, obedient children. God's way is always the best.



Spiritual Gifts

by Leonard Martin
Bethel, PA

I want to introduce this article on *Spiritual Gifts* by observing an interesting verse: *Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men* –Ephesians 4:8. Throughout history, when a king went to battle against a city and conquered it, he and his army returned home, to be greeted by their people with great fanfare. They would march through the city with all the spoils of war, after which the king would hand out gifts from the stuff that was taken in battle, giving it to his people.

Likewise, when Jesus was crucified, through His death and resurrection, He conquered the enemy. He took the power from death, hell, the grave and from Satan himself for those who repent and believe in Him. When He returned home (*ascended up on high*) He gave gifts to His people—the Church. Here in Ephesians, we have a condensed list of spiritual gifts: *And he [God] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers* –Ephesians 4:11.

We observe more detailed descriptions of these gifts given to the Church in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 both at the beginning of the chapter and the end of the chapter and in Romans chapter 12 verses 6 to 8. In 1 Corinthians we see the following gifts given—the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, tongues, discerning of tongues, helps, and governments. Then, in Romans, we have more gifts added to our list—ministry, exhortation, giving, ruling, and showing mercy.

If I did not miss any, there is a total of 19 gifts given to the church. What a wealth of *gifts* have been given to the church when Jesus ascended up on high! It would be good for us to do a thorough study on each one of these gifts so that we would be able to recognize them in our congregations. One thing that could be observed is that our Pentecostal friends have taken a select few of these gifts such as miracles, healing, and speaking in tongues, and

have held them above the rest, making them a validation of whether a person is born again, baptized in the Holy Spirit, or if they are more spiritual than those lacking these gifts. Or we could consider how the evangelicals tend to do the same with the gift of evangelism, which has made inroads into many conservative Anabaptist churches. Finally, we might examine how some of us plain churches take only the gifts that have to do with Church government, leaving it only to those who are ordained to have gifts, while most all the rest of the gifts are left unrecognized.

This all leads me to ask the question, “Should we be lifting one or two gifts out above the rest and emphasizing them, or should all of the gifts be recognized equally?” The only time that I see one lifted above the rest is in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians in the last verse of Chapter 12, and the first verse in chapter 14, where he exhorts them to covet after the best gift which, with careful reading, we will notice is referring to prophesy. As we continue with our careful reading, we discover that prophesy should hold precedence over speaking in tongues since apparently the Corinthian understanding of speaking in tongues was being abused and misused and the Church might not have been edified by their behavior.

Spiritual Gifts Should Not Excuse Ungodly Behavior

A word of caution might be in order here. There is an emphasis by some, on “knowing what my spiritual gift is.” I think this can be good, but it should not be done to the fault of excusing myself for bad behavior because “I have this gift and not the other.” For example, the prophet might excuse himself for being harsh because his gift is that of a prophet; since he may not have the gift of mercy, people may be unnecessarily hurt. We will all probably have a primary gift or gifts. As much as we may try to be well-equipped with as many of the gifts as we can, some will still be more dominant than others.

I have asked numerous people which gift was primary

in the life of our Lord Jesus and the short answer is that He was full of the Holy Ghost and without measure and had them all. True enough, but even so, since we all want to be like Jesus, maybe we should stop excusing ourselves to one limited gift and pursue to be as fully equipped as possible. I know, and you know, that in this flesh we will not master them all and yet we should be receptive to them all. Having said that, we must realize, we are meant to be interdependent; that is why Jesus handed out these gifts severally to each man and we will all have our primary gift or gifts. But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will –1 Corinthians 12:11. Nevertheless, let’s be careful that we do not excuse wrong behavior, or, on the other hand, negligence of doing good, because “Well, that is just not my gift”.

Spiritual Gifts Are Not The Christian’s Identity

A couple of cautions may also be in place when seeking to understand *spiritual gifts*. Our identity should not be the gift that we have but rather that our identity is in Christ. We are a child of the King; we are not primarily a prophet, a teacher, or an evangelist. However, in being a child of the King, we have been given a gift by Him, to do His work, with His power. Recognizing first and foremost who we are in Christ will keep us in a beautiful place of humility, but if our primary identity is “this gift that I have,” I suppose it would be hard not to fall into pride and thus we open ourselves up to many pitfalls and dangers.

Spiritual Gifts Are God-Given, Not To Be Sought After By Man

Could there be a caution given in how we seek this gift? What does it mean when the Scripture says that God gives gifts according to His choosing? For instance, *God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?* –Hebrews 2:4. Or, *But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will* –1 Corinthians 12:11.

Do you notice in both verses the WILL of God being very involved in the giving of gifts in the Church? Maybe our “seeking spiritual gifts” should be done alone in our closet, asking God to make me humble and endue me with whatever gift He wants me to have to make me a useful tool in the church body that I am a part of—“Not my will, but thine be done”. Maybe He has given me a gift that I am not recognizing or using, and what I actually need is to stir up that gift and not neglect it, but rather use it in the place I fill in the church. Could it be possible that, if I were to seek enough after another spiritual gift, I just might get myself a counterfeit?

Also, it would be good to mention very directly again that when there is a focused seeking after spiritual gifts

usually there is some resulting negative problem. Sometimes a select few are lifted out and taught to be more spiritually important, such as speaking in tongues, miracles, and healing. Some will promote that there is little to no value in the teaching of spiritual gifts and that the only ones which are for our day are the ones pertaining to the ordained church leaders such as government, pastors, and teachers. While some people use their understanding of spiritual gifts to become individualistic and they see little value in being a part of a body. This is wrong, since a careful reading of these Scriptures show us that ALL the gifts are essential so that God will have the ability to make use of all the gifts by a collaboration of all the people. Could it be possible that where certain gifts are elevated above the rest, whether it is speaking in tongues, healings, and miracles; or if it is evangelism; or if it is those more suited for the ordained among us, that there could be an unrecognized element of pride in our midst? We are so prone to disillusionment that it would be good to check our hearts thoroughly when seeking after spiritual gifts.

Spiritual Gifts Are Not Included In The Biblical List of Qualifications For Church Leaders

Paul told Timothy, Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery –1 Timothy 4:14. Maybe rather than seeking out a gift, we need to stop neglecting the gift that has been given to us. Rather than seeking something new and exciting, we should stir up the gift we do have. It has happened that men in leadership have been removed from their post, because they do not have the gift for that which they were ordained. I would be very slow and very prayerful before removing an ordained brother from his office for that reason. Would it not be better to pray that God would increase that gift that had been given him by the laying on of hands? To quickly conclude that he does not have the gift may just be the easy way out.

We would never do that in a marriage. How often has it happened that a wife was more gifted in leadership than her husband? Disannulling the marriage is not an option, nor is it an option to add a third person to the marriage union to bring balance to the perceived lack of a proper balance of gifting. We have often seen that when prayer and the Holy Ghost was involved in a situation like this, God gave the husband what he lacked (1 Corinthians 12:24-25), and the wife learned to yield her gifting in a way that allowed her husband to be the godly head of the home.

God can also give the necessary gift to those in such a marriage and in such a ministry team if they find themselves lacking. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism [division] in the body; but that the members

should have the same care one for another –1 Corinthians 12:24-25. Is there ever a time to remove one from an office because of the lack of gifting? Maybe so, but let's be very cautious, slow, careful, and prayerful.

In the case of church difficulty that seems to be due to the lack of gifting among the ordained, we need to consider the following verses. *Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.* –James 3:13-18. Very rare is the case of church trouble involving church leadership when there is not a major lack by one or more of the ordained to be fully living out of God's will and wisdom as defined herein.

The biblical answer to solving church problems that involves church leaders is three-fold. (1a) The leaders in question must humble their hearts in repentance before God and His Word, before the rest of the ordained, and where necessary before the local church. (1b) If the situation has deteriorated too much, then the wisdom of outside overseers should be sought. (2) The leaders who may be lacking in a specific gift should seek God through fervent prayer, both personally and of the local church, and should seek God's provision for enabling ability through ...*the laying on of the hands of the presbytery* –1 Timothy 4:14. (3) Then AFTER stability is restored the local brotherhood is at a good place to seek God's will together about ordaining another brother to assist.

God's Goal for Spiritual Gifts

I would see two main reasons for the gifts of the Spirit to be given to the Church.

The first reason is for the benefit of the church. In Ephesians we read: *and he gave... [various spiritual gifts to believers] [to some this gift and to others a different gift] ... For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:* –Ephesians 4:11-12. First Corinthians chapter 12 has a long dialogue on how the gifts are to be utilized so as to benefit the body of Christ (the local church) and in verse 25 in particular, that there should be no schisms in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another.

There are those who are going about preaching the need to have spiritual gifts, encouraging specific gifts such as evangelism, healing, miracles, and tongues, and it can be

seen in many cases that this focused teaching actually causes divisions rather than unity. The Bible says that the gifts were given to bring the Church together and if it is not doing that, we should consider whether it is the real thing or if it is a counterfeit. I realize divisions happen for many reasons, but if the gifts in the body are not bringing together but dividing, we had better seek God for answers on why, because the gifts were meant to bring unity, oneness, and edification.

The second reason is for the benefit of the unbeliever. Some of the gifts were given as a sign for the unbeliever. *Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe* –1 Corinthians 14:22. We see that throughout the New Testament tongues, miracles and healings followed the gospel in places where it was being presented to those who had never heard it before. This was a way that God used to solidify and validate in the hearts and minds of the unbeliever that this gospel must be of God because of the supernatural manifestations. We see that tongues also followed the spreading of the gospel so that all could hear it in their own language as on the day of Pentecost.

I would consider these to be the two main reasons and are the primary purposes of the gifts. We would do well to evaluate our gifts in light of these two main reasons to be sure we have the real thing and are using them according to the purposes for which they were given.

It is interesting that of the 19 gifts we are considering, most of these will be best utilized in the local Church. Remember, God uses the church to reach the world. Some of the gifts given to the church are for reaching the world, for instance, the evangelist has a more unique calling to reach the world. Gifts like healings, miracles, and speaking in tongues are some of the gifts that are more prevalent on the frontier of the gospel. This is not to say that these gifts are never seen in the local church. My prayer is that if someone came into our services who cannot understand a word of English, and there is no one who can interpret the preaching of the Word into their language, then may God give us the gifts of tongues so that they might hear the gospel and be edified.

We have seen where there was sickness, and the elders of the church were called and there was anointing and prayer. At times God chose to miraculously heal. However, just because we (believers) have this wonderful gift of healing it does not necessarily mean that God wants all of us to be healed of every illness. The apostle Paul prayed three times to be healed from his recurring illness (2 Corinthians 12:7-12), yet God told him no. If he was not healed when he had healed many others, why would I think it needs to be different for me? So, it is with all the gifts that are

given to the church; they are allowed by God to be exercised according to His will, not ours. It is absolutely essential for me and you to be a part of a local body so we will have the gifts of the Spirit working together through all the members, for the work of the church, in bringing unity, oneness, and edification, and for the ongoing work of the Church in calling men from a world of sin and calling them into His kingdom.

The Gift of Tongues

It is important to consider for a moment the spiritual gift of tongues and specifically the place it fills in the Kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul tells us they are given for a sign. *Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe* –1 Corinthians 14:22.

It is not a sign to the believer that he really has the Holy Spirit, but it is a sign to the unbeliever that the gospel message is real. The classic example was on the day of Pentecost. We do not determine Peter's credibility because he spoke in another language. We all would agree without any doubt, that Peter was born again, and that the many different languages were not for his approval but rather so that the ones hearing would know that this speaking in many different languages was supernatural. It would have taken a stubborn soul to scoff at the message being preached that day.

Recently, I was made aware of studies that have been done by recording the gibberish that comprises most of what is called tongues today. Interestingly, they found that English speakers used English syllables in repetition, and that Spanish speaking people used Spanish syllables, thus, they deducted that most of what is called tongues today is a counterfeit where the person, in their own language, repeats syllables of their native tongue in repetition. I believe that in many cases it is done innocently because of the vast

amount of deception that follows the speaking in tongues.

What I understand as the real thing is the example of a lady in Canada, who only knew French and did not understand any English. This woman happened to come to a revival meeting where the revivalist was preaching in English with no French interpreter. She responded in repentance to the message and those who counseled with her asked her how she understood the message, which was in English. She responded that what she had heard was shared in the most beautiful French she had ever heard. Clearly a miracle took place so that she would hear the message of salvation and be able to respond to it. I am sure it was heartwarming to know how it was supernatural that she was able to hear it. I suspect there is a good possibility that at times, the one speaking in tongues may not even be aware of it. Surely, if God could confound the languages of those working on the tower of Babel, He can also cause the words of an English-speaking preacher to be converted into French words before entering the ears of a French-speaking hearer.

The reason we find in scripture for the gift of speaking in tongues, is twofold, and is for the unbeliever who comes among us. The first reason is so that he would hear the gospel message in his own language. The second reason is that when he hears it miraculously in his own language and the one speaking does not know his language, it is a sign for the unbeliever to cause him to acknowledge that the message he is hearing is of God, and by God.

In conclusion, we find that two of the main purposes of God giving gifts to the church, giving them severally as He wills, is for the unity and edification of the body of Christ, and for the unbeliever to hear and be persuaded of the gospel message. Let us seriously consider whether the spiritual gifts we have and those gifts that are evident in our churches are fulfilling the purpose for which they were given.



Lessons From Second Chronicles Twenty

by Sheryl Zeiset
Lebanon, PA

Jehoshaphat was in trouble. He had just heard the news that a great multitude was coming to fight against him. At that moment he did what all of us naturally do when a multitude of problems come against us. He was afraid. How well I know the feeling of fear, the dread that grips my heart at times. Sometimes it's the big things, like being misunderstood and misused, or the fear and pain of sickness, or the death of a loved one. Sometimes it's small things, like loneliness on a Sunday afternoon. *This is not comfortable, God, and I'm afraid.*

Jehoshaphat laid his fear aside, set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all the land of Judah – verse 3. Even in this seemingly impossible situation of having thousands of men on their way to destroy him and his people, he fell before the Lord and acknowledged His perfect, omnipotent rule. And [he] said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? –verse 6.

The choice is mine. I wrestle with my own fearful thoughts, turning them over and over in my mind as if hoping to change the situation with my messy and fearful concoctions. Clinging to my fear gives me a feeling of being in control. But it is killing me from the inside out, even without the dreaded “what ifs” becoming reality. Finally, I let go and fall exhausted at my Lord's feet, and my heart echoes the words of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah.

In humble entreaty, Jehoshaphat acknowledges their weakness and need for God's power. *O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee. –verse 12.*

Yes, God, I am nothing in the grand scheme of things. I have no power, not even to be the fruitful worker in Your kingdom that I always dreamed of being. I can't fight this battle.

Jehoshaphat realized that he alone, as one man, had no strength. He called all the people of Judah together, *And all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children –verse 13.* They knew the strength in unity. As they stood before the Lord, waiting for Him to speak, the Spirit of the Lord came down and God gave them the words of help and hope that they were desperate for.

...Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's –verse 15. Often I try to fight my battles inside of myself rather than making myself vulnerable to others. But, as soon as I invite others into my life and into my battles, I find the strength of God through His people. When we are confused and disillusioned, we need the people of God. When we all pray together, we will get an answer to our prayer for direction.

Jehoshaphat heard the next directive from God. *Tomorrow go ye down against them ... Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD ... fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you –verses 16-17.* These words comfort my heart. Often the easiest thing to do is try to fix things, to quickly come up with a remedy of some sort to get myself out of this dilemma, to try to convince myself that everything will be okay. But God tells my heart to sit still without fear and let Him do the fighting. This takes more spiritual muscle than all the action, all the doing, and all the worrying; plus, it accomplishes a lot more.

And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD –verse 18. If I obey and trust instead of worry and sit still instead of jumping into the middle of things, then I will see God do miracles. No, not always in changing my circumstances or removing all the hard things, but He does a miracle in my own soul which changes my focus and attitude. And that causes me to worship because it's a miracle which only the all-mighty, all-powerful God can do.

Do you think any of them slept that night? They knew a fearsome army was on its way to destroy them and yet... they had heard God speak. Just perhaps there was a joyful expectation in their hearts and an eager anticipation to see how God was going to win this battle. When I learn to practice trust in the little things and the big things that pile into my life, I will soon learn to have a heart of excited expectation, because I know He is going to do something! He is going to give me a way out. Even if the worst happens, He will show my heart the way of peace and He has promised to be with me through it all. And after all, the ultimate victory is already won, so what do all these infractions really have to do with my peace and joy? Nothing.

Morning dawned; it was the day God had told them to go out against these enemies. They arose with no delay. They all knew obedience was paramount in receiving God's blessing that day. And as they went out of the city, Jehoshaphat exhorted them. And they rose early in the morning, ...and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, ...Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper. And... he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army... –verses 21-20. He appointed singers to sing as they went, proclaiming to everyone and to the opposing army that they were on the Lord's side.

I would have liked to see that huge army going out of the city, singing. They were facing a daunting task and one that would have made the strongest man tremble, but they were singing. *And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set... [an ambush] against the children of Ammon, [and] Moab, ... which were come against Judah; and they were smitten ... every one helped to destroy another –verses 22-23.*

The people of Judah went to their watch tower and in

amazement saw that their enemies had destroyed each other, and they saw nothing but an army of dead bodies. When a fearsome battle is set in array against me, I can still make the decision to trust and sing. Singing is a deliberate act of worship; it reminds our own souls and the souls of everyone listening that the Lord, He is God. He is the One in complete charge of my circumstances, of my tiny world, and all its problems. Suddenly the enemies are dead. The circumstances may not have changed, but the battle is finished in my soul.

The army of Judah spent the next three days gathering the riches and spoils from the dead bodies of their enemies, collecting so much that they couldn't carry it all away with them. Astonishing! But that is how it is every time. My spirit benefits from the hard things that I endure successfully. Each victory allows me to collect ‘spoils’ which will profit me for the rest of my life. My heart is full of blessing, of being cared for, and being carried by a Heavenly Father. The “armies of Moab and Ammon” have brought blessing instead of ruin.

They came again to their homes in Jerusalem with singing, and harps, and trumpets, overloaded with all their spoil. The fear of God fell on all the kingdoms of the land when they heard how God had fought this huge battle, then Jehoshaphat's realm was quiet. Peace reigned.

The peace of knowing that all I really need is God and His working in my life is the ultimate peace. This broken world can bring all manner of pain, sickness, and disappointments, but God brings rest to the heart that was once so full of tumult and fear. There is rest ‘round about’ and all the ‘kingdoms of the land’ will be amazed and curious at the strength that is within us, because it is the strength that no one can match—the strength of our amazing God.



The Christian's View of Science

by Vincent "John" Waldron MD
Gladys, VA

The year was around 60 AD. The Apostle Paul had been apprehended and almost killed in the Temple at Jerusalem by a mob of angry Jews.

A few days later, he had been whisked off to the Roman Procurator Felix because of danger from a group of Jewish plotters. Felix had heard his case and though there was no evidence to convict Paul, Felix had kept him in prison for the next two years until the new Procurator, Festus, took his place.

King Herod Agrippa II came to visit Festus and the two of them listened to Paul speak. During the hearing Paul ... *reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, [until finally] Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee –Acts 24:25. Then towards the end of Paul's oration ... Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad –Acts 26:24.*

Festus was not speaking of scientific knowledge, but of the fact that Paul was well-studied. Worse yet, Paul was making the governor uncomfortable with his sinful life and his reasoning made clear that the only solution for both Festus and Agrippa was to follow the Scriptures of the Hebrews.

Paul was well educated. He made clear in his letters and sermons, quoting not only from the Jewish Bible, but also from a variety of Greek and Cretan philosophers and poets.

In more modern times, it seems as though science is not a friend to faith. Many scientists claim that the idea of an intelligent designer of the Universe is ludicrous. Further, many of them would say that those who believe such things are the next thing to savages.

It certainly turns many Christians away from science entirely. They do not see something so antagonistic to the fundamental Christian faith as being useful.

I can understand this point of view, but I think that we should not give up learning simply because some of those who claim to be so knowledgeable are, in actuality, quite foolish.

Creation

When I think about the subject of science, I often begin with the subject of creation. This is the beginning of everything and is the first place where "science" and the Bible first come into conflict.

Science is simply unable to accept that there could have been a Creator God who set in motion everything that we see.

There are many books delving into the subject of *intelligent design* and *seeing God's fingerprints* throughout creation. It takes a lot more faith to believe that the universe happened by chance, than to believe in a Creator.

The Bible makes it clear that God was not only present at the time of Creation, but it was also He who began it (John 1:1-3). Paul says *For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse –Romans 1:20.*

People should be able to discern that there is a Creator God involved in our world and the universe from the time of Creation. They should be able to understand a few other things about Him as well. Perhaps most important for our discussion here, we can tell by looking at creation that God is an orderly God and that He created the world to function with a specific structure and laws that govern it.

This is one of the big differences between the Creation account found in Genesis and the myths of creation found in other cultures of the time. The Bible makes it clear that God intentionally created the world, that He did so in an orderly fashion, and that He made certain that every part of it meshed with all the other parts. There is no magic or mystical thinking in the Genesis account.

The Laws of the Universe Still Stand

There are many people who believe that they can alter the way that the universe functions, that they can behave in immoral ways and not suffer the rewards of sin, and that they can do foolish things and not suffer the consequences of their behavior.

The Prophet Jeremiah tells us that there are laws which are in place that will not cease to function. *Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever –Jeremiah 31:35-36.*

There is a whole set of laws that governs the way that the earth rotates on its axis and orbits the sun. Everything from the speed of light to the way that gravity pulls things towards large bodies of mass was instituted at the time of Creation—... *all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation –2 Peter 3:4.*

Since those laws continue and do not fluctuate, we are able to understand them—at least in part. This is what science is—the study of the natural world that we see and an attempt to comprehend the ways in which it works. God created our world in such a way that if you do an experiment the same way every time, you will get the same results every time.

Science Will Never Understand Everything

The Prophet Isaiah says, *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts –Isaiah 55:8-9.*

Even the smartest quantum physicists will admit that they don't understand everything. In fact, the number of questions that they have is greater than the whole storehouse of knowledge that has been accumulated.

Most of us will have far less understanding of the universe than that. We won't understand all the details of how the atom functions. We won't be able to do the calculus necessary to put a satellite into orbit. That's all right. The important thing is that we learn what we can in order to understand what an amazing and orderly God we serve.

Presuppositions are a Problem

The biggest problem that we see in science is not the science itself, rather it is the biases of the people performing the science. *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God... –Psalm 14:1.* By this definition, many scientists are fools.

I don't say this lightly. Atheists observe the universe and since they believe that there cannot be a God, they must then explain how it exists without the presence of an actual Creator. This is the heart of foolishness.

When they come to gaps in their knowledge, they are silent and yet the Christian can explain them in a few simple words. As I said before, when we look at the complexity of the universe, from the tiniest things to the largest galaxies, we can see the hands of God at work.

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? –Psalm 8:3-4. When we think about the world around us, when we read what scientists write, it is crucial that we come to it with a knowledge that God is behind all of this. *For in him we live, and move, and have our being... –Acts 17:28,* and nothing that science can discern will change that.

Science should be like a detective, uncovering God's fingerprints on the universe, not someone bound and determined to discredit His very real presence.

Many Scientists Believe in God

Looking into the past, many scientists were men who believed in the God of the Bible. Isaac Newton, Francis Bacon, Nicholas Copernicus and many others believed in the Bible and were forthright in their expression of this faith to others.

In more modern days, there are many men and women of science who believe in the God of the Bible. Just because one is working in science doesn't mean that they are unable to have a life of faith.

Many people have co-opted scientific discoveries to push messages that are against Christian belief and teaching.

We need to remember that when there is a set of facts, there are usually different explanations that can account for their presence. Creation and evolution examine the same facts of nature, yet from a different perspective or bias, thus they end up with vastly different conclusions. Perhaps it is a little like a Sherlock Holmes story, where Dr. Watson routinely takes the facts and gives an inaccurate explanation of them, while the detective takes the same information and gives the right explanation.

Science and Medicine

It is not against Scripture to research how things work in our universe, as long as we do so within a Biblical framework and understanding that there is a Creator God who is ordering it all.

Modern medicine is an application of many various fields, including anatomy, microanatomy, genetics, and biochemistry. The point, in this case, is to observe the human body the best that we can and then to fix the things that go wrong with it. Doctors can be scientists, but most of them are simply applying knowledge which has been passed down to them through their training.

Observation is where things start. Let's consider diabetes as an example. Aretaeus of Cappadocia in the second century AD was the first person to give a complete description of diabetes and actually gave the disease the name *diabetes*. The problem was that while he was able to diagnose people

with this illness, he had no treatment to help his patients. Observation had only taken him so far.

Over time, other work was done that demonstrated that the problem was an issue in the pancreas and that something was specifically wrong with the islet cells. Even into the early 1900s, there was no cure for Diabetes Mellitus and the only solution that doctors had to offer was an extremely low glycemic diet with severe calorie limits—attempting to keep patients at 500 or 600 calories a day. As can be imagined, this wasn't an ideal treatment.

It wasn't until the 1920s that a couple of researchers in Canada discovered a way to extract insulin from dogs and administered it to a 14-year-old who was dying of diabetes. The extract saved his life and began a new era for people with diabetes.

This is the way that things work. We begin by observing a disease and various medications that seem to be effective for it, then over time and through meticulous testing we can assess what treatments are most effective for that illness.

Studies in which half of the participants with a disease are given a medication or treatment and half are given a placebo (a pill without medical efficacy) are still the most effective way of telling whether something really works.

Why Treatments Need to be Studied

There is a real tendency to believe that the things that you have been taught are effective. We know that George Washington died of pneumonia. His doctors probably damaged his chances of recovery by bleeding him four times for a total of close to 40 percent of his blood volume. They probably would have bled him a fifth time, but he wasn't thought to be strong enough to survive the procedure.

Doctors bled patients because they believed that there were toxic build ups in the blood stream that had to be let out. Most of the people who died after bloodletting would probably have died anyway, but bleeding people who are really sick certainly doesn't help them recover.

Maybe the doctors simply wanted to be doing something. Patients expected bloodletting and so they met those expectations, even though it harmed the patients.

Experience is what lets you make the same mistakes with a lot more confidence.

What Makes a Good Study

Good studies—have plenty of patients in them, have a control group (that either receives an inactive pill called a placebo, or the current best treatment for that disease), and have the test group getting the new treatment. It is also important for the control group and the test group to be matched as closely as possible. Finally, the size of the groups in the study is vital to the conclusions of the study.

If there are only ten or twenty patients in the study, it is not a large enough group to really sort out if something works or doesn't.

For many diseases there is something called a placebo effect. This placebo effect is when people get better from an illness even though they are not receiving something that should be effective at treating the malady. Interestingly, in studies, many people get side effects from the inert pills. If 20 percent of the people getting the placebo get better and 45 percent of the people getting the treatment get better, that would indicate that the treatment is effective. If the difference is minimal—say 20 percent of the placebo group and 23 percent of the treatment group improve—then the treatment isn't effective.

Problems

The biggest problem with many treatments is that they simply aren't studied. Vitamin supplements and herbal compounds may work, but many of them have never actually been studied in a trial comparing them with a control group. Most of the information is anecdotal. The fact that someone's grandmother or uncle benefited from something is possibly an indication that it is effective, but it doesn't tell us how effective this treatment is or what dosage level is ideal.

Another issue is when studies simply don't have enough participants to really give accurate information. Many studies only include ten or twenty patients. That is simply not enough to identify how well a treatment works or what side effects can be expected. For a drug to be approved by the FDA, it will typically have been studied on between 1,000 to 3,000 patients with the disease.

A final issue with studies is when they show that a medication is effective, but the effect isn't clinically significant. As an example, a new injectable medication for dementia (aducanumab) was recently approved by the FDA. It is very expensive, and the benefit seemed to be small. Patients who were on it got an average of 1.5 more test questions right on an 85-question mental status questionnaire after 18 months compared to the control group.

One can rightly question if the benefits shown by this medication are worth the 50,000 dollar-per-year cost. More than that, how much of a meaningful improvement in someone's everyday activities would come from using such a medicine? It seems unlikely that it would make very much of a difference.

It is unfortunate, but drug companies will always try to make it seem like their medicine is the best, even if the studies do not show significant benefit over existing, cheaper options.

Conclusion

Christians are faced with a world which does not love

them or their beliefs. Many would try to use science as a way to bludgeon them into giving up their faith. I hope that does not lead us to give up on the scientific method or to give up attempting to understand the laws behind the universe that God created.

The scientific method is valid, even if many of the people who use it are atheists or agnostics. If a treatment works, it should be observable, testable, and repeatable.

Even as we approach it, we have a basic understanding

of the universe that atheists don't have. Knowing that there is a Creator God who loves us makes a major difference as we interpret the results of all the different observations that are being made in the fields of medicine and other places.

Those who do not know God are bound to be *ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth* –2 Timothy 3:7. On the other hand, if we begin with a Biblical understanding, we can use science as a tool to help us to understand the creation that He has placed around us.



Discipleship—The Path of Healing

The Discipleship Series

by Donald Brechbill
Chambersburg, PA

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord –Luke 4:18-19.

Jesus was in His hometown of Nazareth. It was on the Sabbath, and He stood to read the scripture as He had in the past. This Sabbath He read from Isaiah 61. When He finished, He said, ...This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears –Luke 4:21.

This marked the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. In this first sermon He described the nature of His ministry. Notice the many references in this passage to healing: healing to the brokenhearted, deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, and liberty to the bruised. Jesus came to provide a remedy for our brokenness. He came to repair the damage that sin has brought into humanity.

In this article we will look at the possibility for healing that is found in Jesus. Healing is a process that requires inner restoration with outside remediation. Physical healing begins at the cellular level and restores physical function. Spiritual healing begins at the heart level and restores us to fullness of life. Jesus said, ...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly – John 10:10.

As Jesus walked the dusty paths of Judea, He encountered many who needed physical healing. It was His ability to heal that drew many to seek Him out and to follow him. Many brought their friends and family to Him for healing. There is in all of us a desire for healing and wholeness. In the garden of Eden, mankind was created to be whole. When we are not whole, we seek every possible cure. So, crowds gathered around Jesus hoping for healing.

One day as Jesus was journeying through Jericho, a blind man, Bartimaeus, heard that He was approaching. Hope

sprang up in his breast. He began to call out to Jesus, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." They tried to silence him, but he called the louder, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me."

He cast his coat aside and blindly rushed into the street. Jesus said to him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" He said, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." Jesus' response to this simple faith was, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." Immediately, he received his sight, and followed Jesus. This is just one example of Jesus' healing ministry. The examples are many. He healed lepers. He healed paralytics. He healed men and women of unclean spirits.

Does Jesus still heal in our day? I would like to answer that question by sharing my own journey of healing. I realize that not all are healed. Even in Jesus' day, not all were healed. But I want to share my journey of healing to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the physical and the spiritual.

I was diagnosed with cancer in May of 2020. Hearing a doctor say, "You have millions of cancer cells in your body", brought me face to face with my mortality like never before. Oh, I knew that someday I would die, but that was always somewhere in the far distant future. Now I needed to face the fact that I had a disease growing within me which had the potential to destroy my body.

Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much –James 5:14-16.

I have always been a strong advocate of anointing with oil. Just like we are taught in the book of James, I called for the elders of the church and asked them to anoint me

with oil. In the biblical teaching of God healing through the anointing with oil there are a number of things that are expected of those seeking the healing. There is: call[ing] for the elders of the church, the prayer of faith, pray[ing] one for another, Confess[ing] your faults one to another, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man... and the list goes on. So, one of the necessities to seek healing through the anointing with oil is the clearing of the heart of any known, unconfessed sin. Hence, I searched my heart and cleansed my heart of anything that would hinder God's healing of my body.

Notice the close correlation in this passage between the physical and the spiritual. I found in my journey of healing that the one affects the other. Physical healing begins with spiritual healing. A few drops of oil have no therapeutic benefit. This anointing with oil is primarily a spiritual exercise. If we practice this ordinance as James offered it, we cleanse our hearts inwardly and then we ask God for physical healing.

This was my first step to healing, but a long journey lay ahead. We consulted with multiple doctors and eventually we chose a treatment protocol that included radiation and hormone therapy. This treatment weakened me physically and made me feel my humanity. It made me more dependent on God and others and less confident in my own abilities. Living with weakness caused me to draw my strength from my Heavenly Father Who is the source of strength. I relied heavily on the encouragement and support that my wife and family offered.

There are some lessons that can only be learned through human weakness. It was for this reason that Paul was given a thorn in the flesh. He sought the Lord three times for healing. God's answer came back always the same, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in your weakness." I can testify that that is true.

I had multiple radiation treatments in January of 2021. I had scheduled a series of meetings for the month of February thinking that my treatments would be over, and I would be back to normal. What I did not realize was the delayed effect of radiation. I breezed through the treatments, but in February I experienced a lot of digestive issues and a lot of physical weakness.

I was expected to deliver a series of four sermons on four consecutive evenings. We prayed and although I could not get through the day without napping God provided supernatural strength for those evening messages. I praise God that His strength was made perfect in my weakness.

My doctors have plied their trade. I am grateful for the professional medical care that I received. I have done what I could with herbs and supplements and God has been merciful. My last bloodwork came back "undetectable".

May God be praised!

I am sharing my experience to show the correlation between the physical and the spiritual. Physical illness in my experience had a sanctifying effect on my spirit and spiritual renewal conditioned my body for healing. I will be forever grateful for the professional care given by my doctors, but even they realize the limits of their profession. On my last visit to my Medical Oncologist, he said to me, "Now we are going to trust the Lord." Thank God for God-fearing doctors!

There are several examples in scripture that demonstrate this correlation between physical and spiritual healing. In Mark 2 when they let the paralytic down through the roof into the presence of Jesus, He said to the paralytic, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Then He said, "Rise up and walk." When He was challenged by the Pharisees for forgiving sins, He said to them, "Which is easier to say *rise up and walk* or *thy sins be forgiven*", demonstrating that He had the power to do both. If we believe that Jesus has the power to forgive our sins, do we also believe that He has the power to heal our bodies? I do!

In John 5, Jesus healed a man who lay by the pool of Bethesda. He had this infirmity for thirty-eight years. Jesus came by and healed him. Later when He met him in the temple He said to him, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." Note the correlation between the physical and the spiritual.

Physical infirmity has a tremendous potential to open our hearts to spiritual realities if we allow it to. The Psalmist said: *Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word –Psalm 119:67.* Jesus said: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord –Luke 4:18-19.*

Take a fresh look at our proof text for this article and notice that Jesus is offering more than physical healing. He promises healing to the brokenhearted, deliverance to the captives, and liberty to the bruised. These promises are of emotional healing—healing for the hurt that we receive as a result of living in a broken, sin-cursed world.

I am sure that there are many people reading this article who have experienced trauma that I know nothing about. But I want to assure you that you can be healed. Do you believe that? Do you believe that the pain can go away? Do you believe that you can be delivered from fear, anxiety, anger, and bitterness?

We addressed the correlation between spiritual and physical healing. There is also a correlation between spiritual and emotional healing. If you are experiencing a broken

heart, Jesus wants to heal your broken heart. If you are a captive—if you are bound to a past or to an addiction that prevents your freedom—Jesus will set you free. If you have been bruised Jesus will heal you.

My wife and I are appalled at the large number of people in our Anabaptist churches that are turning to psych drugs (mind medication) and secular counseling to find solutions for emotional disorders. The Bible addresses most emotional disorders:

Fear

- *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear –1 John 4:18.*
- *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee –Psalm 56:3.*
- “Fear not” is found 63 times in the Bible

Anxiety

- *Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God –Philippians 4:6.*

Anger

- *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice –Ephesians 4:31.*

This is just a sampling of emotional disorders that we encounter in life, and I realize that behind these emotions there is often deep-seated trauma. Your trauma is not an astonishment to Jesus. He may not have experienced your exact trauma, but he has gone to the depth of your pain, and he has come through it in victory.

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need –Hebrews 4:15-16.

The gospel provides a holistic remedy to man’s sin problem. Our Anabaptist heritage has emphasized the fact that faith in Jesus affects every area of our lives. This faith motivates us to follow Jesus in very practical ways in our daily lives. This results in a life of radical nonconformity to the world around us.

This radical discipleship should also affect our emotional responses to difficult people and circumstances. Or have we become so emotionally fragile that if life does not give us exactly what we want it upsets our emotional equilibrium? Or maybe the gospel that we preach has become a litany of words that appeases the mind but has no effect on our soul.

*Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached **did not profit them, not being mixed with faith** in them that heard it –Hebrews 4:1-2. Is our faith in God so weak (remember that in the Biblical accounts of healing, it was their faith that enabled the healing) that we have more faith in medication or in a board-certified secular counselor than we have in God and His Word?*

This is a discipleship series. Come with me to the mountain where Jesus is teaching. Yes, there is a large crowd, but follow me closely, we will try to get close enough to hear. I hear His voice—He is saying something about “salt of the earth” and “light of the world.” Here is an empty space—just room for two. Let’s sit on the grass and listen:

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”

These are radical teachings. Radical in that they are so opposite from our natural inclinations, and yet, this is the way of peace. Most of our negative emotions such as anger, fear, and anxiety can be remedied by applying these teachings of Jesus to our situations. This may sound overly simplistic, but that is the nature of the gospel and millions of people have found life and freedom through faith in Christ.

Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s –Psalm 103:1-5.



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THE LORD BLESS THEE, AND KEEP THEE: *The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:* **THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON THEE,** *and give thee peace.*

NUMBERS 6:24-25