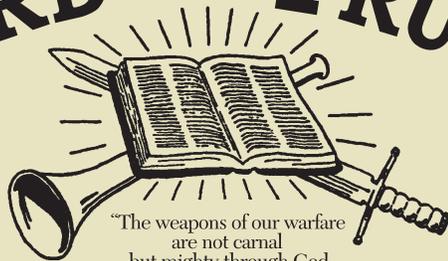


# The SWORD and TRUMPET

"Blow ye  
the Trumpet  
and warn  
the People."



"The weapons of our warfare  
are not carnal  
but mighty through God  
to the pulling down of strongholds."

"Take the Sword  
of the Spirit  
which is  
The Word of God."

## *Guidelines*

**SPECIAL ISSUE: Salvation**



CHARLES WESLEY

AUGUST 2005

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## The Sword and Trumpet

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

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**SWORD AND TRUMPET GUIDELINES** monthly magazine is a faith ministry directed by a Board representing various constituencies of the Mennonite Church. It is committed to defending, proclaiming, and promoting the whole Gospel of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It emphasizes neglected truth and contends for “the faith which was once delivered to the saints.” This publication exposes and opposes doctrinal error which compromises that faith and leads to apostasy.

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# Person of the Month:

## Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Charles Wesley, born to Samuel and Susanna Wesley, on December 18, 1707, in Epworth, Lincolnshire, England, was the eighteenth of nineteen children and the youngest and third surviving son of the Wesleys.

Charles' mother, Susanna, spent time with each of her children every day to teach them the Bible and the Prayer Book as well as matters of conduct. In 1716, at the age of nine Charles went to London to attend Westminster School. In 1726, at the age of 19, he was elected to attend Christ Church College in Oxford. There he translated the Greek and Latin classics into English verse. During the first twelve months, however, he did not engage himself in serious study as his attention was diverted by other things. Then in 1729, along with his brother and several other students, he initiated what became known as the "Holy Club." His life took on a new focus. These students were interested in pursuing salvation. They spent their time each day in prayer and Bible study. They also were involved in many good works to those in need. Their lives were lived according to a fixed schedule—hence, they were nicknamed the "Methodists."

Though not yet converted, he was ordained in 1735 so that he could assist his brother John on a mission to Georgia. There he served as secretary to the governor. Unlike his brother John, Charles was given to more extremes emotionally. As a result, before long he was physically exhausted and feeling in despair spiritually. After several months he returned to England.

Both Charles and John were brought to the Lord through the influence of the Moravians. In 1738, on the Sunday after Pentecost (Whitsunday) Charles experienced personal salvation in Christ. At the time of his conversion Charles was 30. John would also accept Christ three days later.

He began trying to evangelize his friends and people in prison. He also preached in churches but eventually he was not welcome there. He then began preaching in the outdoors. This was during the time of the Great Awakening in America. He became one of its most powerful preachers. The preaching of Charles and his brother John were used of God to bring the Good News of salvation to Britain and to found the Methodist Church. This was a time in Great Britain's history when problems for the nation were looming large on the horizon. God used the ministry of the Wesleys to avert disaster.

Though an open-air preacher, Charles still believed that the organized church should ordain its leaders. This caused a rift between him and his brother John, since John believed he could ordain men to the ministry and went about doing so.

In 1749, at the age of 42, Charles married Sarah (Sally) Gwynne. The Lord blessed their family with the birth of eight children. Unfortunately, five of the children died, leaving only two sons and one daughter.

*(continued on page 5)*

## *And Can It Be*

And can it be that I should have  
An interest in the Saviour's blood?  
Died He a wretch like me to save,  
For me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! how can it be  
That Thou, my Lord, shouldst die for me?

'Tis mystery all! th' Immortal dies!  
Who can explore His strange design?  
In vain the first-born seraph tries  
To sound the depths of love Divine!  
'Tis mercy all! let earth adore!  
Let angels' minds inquire no more.

Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night,  
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray;  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
My chains fell off, my heart was free;  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee!

Still the small inward voice I hear  
That whispers all my sins forgiven,  
Still th' atoning blood is near  
That quenched the flaming wrath of heaven;  
I feel the life His wounds impart,  
I feel my Saviour in my heart.

No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!  
Alive in Him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness Divine,  
Bold I approach the eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

—Charles Wesley

# THE NEW LIBERALISM

## *An Overview of What's Going on in America's Theological Backyard as Compromisers Adjust Christianity to Fit the Culture*

by Vernon C. Lyons

One hundred years ago modernism was infiltrating our seminaries and key pulpits. Though peddled as the latest in theological thought, it was only the old rationalism from the theological departments of German universities.

By the 1920s the modernist-fundamentalist battle was roaring full blast.

Fundamentalists fought with words: pamphlets, sermons and Bible conferences. But the modernist strategy captured the machinery of the major denominations, the publishing houses and schools.

The 1950s birthed the New Evangelicals, who claimed to hold fundamental beliefs, but were soft on behavior. It was a “doctrine is important, but don’t let it interfere with your lifestyle” approach to Christianity.

The New Liberals are the children of the New Evangelicals. They have also been influenced by the 1960s religion.

### *Survey or Scripture?*

Most Americans are pragmatists: “If it works, it’s right.” But this is not a biblical philosophy.

Biblical success is faithfulness to the Lord and what He says in Scripture. However, the typical American standard for success is the numbers.

During the last part of the 1900s, some success-hungry preachers took surveys to discover what kind of church the people wanted. Substituting the survey for Scripture, they found that people desired diluted doctrine, low commit-

ment and entertaining services; namely, Christianity lite.

The result was a Christianity that is cheap, because it is not the original, but a spin-off.

### *Seeker-Sensitive or God-Sensitive?*

Certainly we must not erect barriers to keep people from Christ, rather bridges to bring people to Him.

If “seeker-sensitive” means an accessible location, adequate parking, clear signage, clean washrooms, quality child-care and helpful ushers, then we are all for it!

However, the New Liberals have massaged the message of Christianity to make it people-pleasing. We believe a real church is to be theocentric (God-centered), not anthropocentric (man-centered).

The New Liberals declare the authority and inspiration of Scripture from the pulpit, but deny it in practice.

Jesus is presented as Saviour, but salvation is more of a human decision than an act of God.

Because the Bible is affirmed and Jesus is announced as Saviour, some think they have found a Bible-preaching church.

In the New Liberals’ approach, people are dysfunctional, maladjusted, inadequate or addicted; but what about sin?

If the whole truth about our sinfulness is not clearly and repeatedly stated, how can people be helped? If there is no conviction, then there is no conversion. A “seeker-sensitive” strategy dictates that we must not offend people. However, to be faithful to Scripture, one must preach

against sin and call for repentance.

The Old Testament prophets preached repentance (Isa. 1:10-20). So did John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2), Jesus (Matt. 4:17), Peter (Acts 3:19) and Paul (Acts 17:30).

Biblical Christianity is offensive (1 Cor. 1:23). "The offence of the cross" is unavoidable (Gal. 5:11).

### ***Many or Few?***

Every preacher wants to reach as many people as possible.

But the Bible message is not only about love and light; it is also about sin and judgment. The good news of salvation must be preceded by the bad news of our sinfulness.

The preacher's problem is that people don't want to hear about sin, wrath, judgment, and Hell.

The New Liberals' preachers are insecure and need success, evidenced by crowds, and need to be accepted by these people.

The New Liberals are soft on sin. Sermons are more likely to deal with life's everyday problems. The objective is to help the listener cope and give him an inspirational lift to get him through the week. Since the negative doesn't attract crowds, it is avoided.

God works through "minorities." Gideon had to trim his army from 32,000 to 300 before he could win the battle (Judges 7:3-6). After Christ's three years of public ministry, only 120 were in the Upper Room. Even the three thousand (Acts 2:41) and later the five thousand (Acts 4:4) were still a minority in Jerusalem. The biblical preacher should seek approval from God rather than from people.

### ***Label or Transdenominational?***

During the 1900s we were accustomed to denominational labels. The New Liberals want to be transdenominational. They want to welcome everybody but not identify with anybody. Sometimes there is a denominational label in small print

to indicate that it is not important.

The minidoctrinal core of Scripture authority and Jesus as Saviour gives comfort to anyone who is broadly evangelical. This is "Big Tent" theology, wide enough to accommodate Presbyterians, Lutherans, Campbellites, Episcopalians, and Baptists. Those eternally secure in worldliness, the lose-your-salvation folk, baby sprinklers, and charismatics all feel at home in the ecumenical mix. Especially welcome are fundamentalists who find their faith too restrictive.

Rather than serious Bible study classes, there will be recovery groups for addicts, divorcees, and the bankrupt. Someone will hold your hand while you take the twelve steps, not realizing that one step to Calvary is the solution. To be fair, they do have a doctrine of sin. "Sinners" to them are those intolerant people who criticize the New Liberals.

### ***Culture or Christianity?***

The New Liberals are sensitive to folk who are caught up in American pop culture.

Traditional Catholics, Orthodox Jews and even some secular columnists are appalled as America is "slouching toward Gomorrah."

Devout Muslims want to protect their children from an America besmirched by Hollywood.

However, giving people what they want instead of what they need, birthed the New Liberalism—a religion that costs less because it is worth less. The New Liberals bend to the culture like willows instead of standing straight like cedars.

Dad and Mom like the New Liberal church because the Saturday evening service leaves the Lord's Day to be their day (Rev. 1:10). The teens like the music, heavy on drums and guitars. The "dress down" style enables the family to go from "worship" to a restaurant and on to a movie.

Also, the "come as you are" invitation seems to mean "stay as you are," since in this venue one can "accept Christ"

and not be bothered with a changed life (2 Cor. 5:17).

The New Liberals now have a new Bible translation. *Today's New International Version*, which accommodates the culture with its gender-inclusive language.

Jesus said we are to be "in the world" but "not of the world" (John 17:11, 16). The New Liberals want to be like the world so they can reach people who love the world (1 John 2:15). The accommodation to the culture hardly fits with being a different or "peculiar" people (1 Peter 2:9). We don't belong to this world (1 Peter 2:11).

Separation, not identification, is the Biblical mandate (2 Cor. 6:17). The believer is to be transformed, not conformed (Rom. 12:2). As a result, this casual-style Christianity simply does not appeal to deeply committed Christians.

#### ***Community or Church?***

The New Liberals tend to call their congregations "community churches."

"Community" means the general population; it is inclusive. "Church" means a people who are called out from the general population. This term is exclusive.

Therefore, the phrase "community church" is an oxymoron. If it is community, it's not church; and if it's church, it's not community.

There is an International Council of Community Churches. This is an ecumenical organization with nebulous doctrine. It is a member of the National Council of Churches and also the World Council of Churches.

#### ***The Future?***

We need a return to solid preaching of the entire Bible. A straightforward presentation of the opening chapters of Genesis lays the foundation for everything else. In a time of theological mush, we need clear doctrine on the local church, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Church discipline is not to be neglected.

The New Liberalism is a fad that will

fade. Heresy, like mosquitoes, multiplies in stagnant water. The salve for the soul offered by the New Liberals is not a substitute for the real regeneration of the lost sinner.

The unregenerate will drift from the New Liberalism, still seeking they know not what.

The real believers will slowly realize that they have been scammed and, starving spiritually, will seek a table with more food. ■

—Used with permission from *The Sword of the Lord*



Charles was active with the Methodist movement in both Bristol and London but a controversy concerning John's proposed marriage to Grace Murray caused a rift in their relationship. Because of that, and also Charles' stronger ties to the organized church with regard to ordinations, he gave up active leadership of the Methodist societies.

Although a great preacher, Charles is probably best known for his many (over 7,000) wonderful hymns. He published over 4,500 of them, the rest being left in manuscript form. These hymns became important in the work of evangelism. The one entitled "And Can It Be" (see page 2), aptly describes his conversion. How many hymns can you find in your hymnbook written by one of the greatest hymn-writers of all time? Such familiar hymns as "Christ the Lord Is Ris'n Today"; "Jesus, Lover of My Soul"; "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"; and the carol "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" are just a few.

**Charles Wesley** has left us with a great heritage of Biblical instruction, worship, and celebration through majestic hymnology.

Charles Wesley died in London, March 29, 1788, at the age of 80.

—Gail L. Emerson

## **From the Editor's Desk**



Paul M. Emerson

# **The Absolute Essential**

This issue of *Sword and Trumpet* marks the midpoint in the special considerations of what we earlier editorialized as “The Big Five.” Undoubtedly this is the most important of all because the biblical teaching on salvation is the great divide between those who are hopelessly lost and those who are heaven bound. There is no room for discrepancies here. The Biblical gospel must be clearly understood and plainly communicated.

The message of salvation has been under assault by the Serpent since the fall. He does not care how we miss the mark. His goal is simply that we miss it. We can move to the right into legalism and trust in our own efforts. Or we can move to the left into a cheap grace that produces no life change. Our Enemy is happy in either case because we have missed the mark of the truth and will not be truly saved.

We unashamedly proclaim the gospel of grace through faith apart from meritorious works. At the same time, we recognize that genuine faith always produces

righteous works.

The White Throne Judgment will likely reveal many surprises. Those who consider themselves followers of Christ, while at the same time actually trusting in their works as meritorious, will hear the Judge say, “Depart from me, I never knew you.” Those who recklessly trust in grace/faith while continuing in the religion of self, will hear the Judge pronounce eternal condemnation.

We must consider the Biblical message of salvation very carefully, accept it as it has been historically understood by true Christians, and avoid modern digressions. These digressions include the attempt by some contemporary Anabaptists to develop an Anabaptist gospel that is neither genuine biblically nor consistent hermeneutically. As the wise man said, “There is nothing new under the sun.” The value of Anabaptism is not in finding something new and different, but rather in reclaiming the historic Christian faith as taught and understood by the New Testament church. ■

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**SWORD AND TRUMPET**

# THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



*A Devotional Commentary*



by David L. Burkholder

**AUGUST 7, 2005**

## ***Jesus Defines His Ministry***

Luke 4:16-24, 28-30

August's lessons are taken from the Gospel of Luke and continue our focus on Jesus' ministry. Today's lesson from Luke 4 moves back again to the beginning of Jesus' ministry where He proclaims His mission to His neighbors gathered in the synagogue at Nazareth. This proclamation follows His baptism and temptation in the wilderness (see 4:1-13). In the meantime, He had been teaching and had developed a following among the people. (See verses 14, 15.)

Jesus was now back home in Nazareth where He had grown up and, "as his custom was, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day." When given the scroll for the reading He turned to the prophetic words of Isaiah (Chapter 61, verses 1 and 2). His friends and neighbors were in expectation. They had no doubt heard of His fame and were now eager to hear Him in person.

Jesus read from Isaiah the prophecy concerning the ministry of Messiah—to preach the gospel, heal the broken-hearted, bring deliverance to captives, give sight to the blind, release for the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. He then closed the scroll and returned it to the attendant and sat down to speak. "Today," He said, "this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus was declaring Himself to be the promised Messiah, the deliverer, the healer.

Notice that all spoke well of Him and marvelled at His gracious words (v. 22). But, they said, "Isn't this Joseph's son?"

In other words, we know Him as one of us, a villager just like us. From where comes His teaching? Obviously they were not making the connection between Jesus and the prophecy of Isaiah. They failed to catch the significance of the first part of verse 18 in relation to what Jesus said in verse 21. To them He was merely Joseph's son.

Their failure to understand and accept Him portrayed their unbelief which precluded His doing miracles among them. (See Matthew 13:53-58 and Mark 6:1-6.) Jesus understood their eagerness to see miracles and also their doubt about Him as being anyone out of the ordinary (verses 23 and 24). What He had done in Capernaum, among people who did not know Him from childhood, was well received and He gained fame. But Jesus knew that He would not be so well received in Nazareth (v. 24).

In explaining why He had gone abroad to perform miracles He used examples from the ministry of Elijah and Elisha. (Read verses 25-27.) At the very suggestion that such non-Jewish persons as the widow and the captain were worthy of God's favor, the congregation erupted in anger and ushered Jesus to the top of the hill, intending to end His life for the heresy He had uttered. But by an act that displayed His miraculous power, He calmly turned and walked away.

Truly He was not accepted in His hometown, by His former neighbors. But He had a mission to those who would accept, so He moved on. (Read to the end of Chapter 4.)

### ***For thought and discussion***

1. Why is it so often true that a hometown

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- boy who has made a name for himself is not so well accepted by his hometown friends?
2. You will notice that Jesus stopped reading before completing Isaiah 61:2. Why did He stop where He did?
  3. There are many instances where Jesus simply taught by quiet example, as by His going to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Can you find other such quiet examples in His life?
  4. Why did the Jews who had waited so long in expectation of Messiah's coming fail to recognize in Jesus the fulfillment of prophecy?
  5. What was wrong with the people at Nazareth? How would you evaluate their uproar at Jesus' words? How can we guard against similar attitudes?

## **AUGUST 14, 2005**

### ***Healing and Life-Giving Power***

Luke 8:40-56

Jesus' ministry was well under way. He had been teaching and healing and casting out devils. His popularity was rising among the people but the scribes and Pharisees continued to question His teaching and healing methods and principles. In the setting for today's lesson, where we see Jesus healing the sick and raising the dead, He had just returned from Gadara where He had cleansed a man from a legion of devils. Verse 40 well describes the attitude of the multitude—they were eagerly awaiting His return and anticipating His further ministry among them.

Jesus was approached by Jairus, ruler of the synagogue (likely at Capernaum) whose twelve-year-old daughter lay dying. She was an only child and much loved by her parents as indicated by Jairus' concern. He was a person of prominence and position, yet in his anxiety over his daughter's condition he

prostrated himself at Jesus' feet. Times of great need produce humility. In response to his urgent request Jesus began making His way to his house. But there were interruptions.

In the press of the crowd was a sick woman who sought help. In her weak and unclean condition she reasoned that if she could simply touch Him she would be healed. And it happened. But Jesus was aware that healing power had gone out of Him and looking around asked, "Who touched me?"

In light of the thronging multitude that question, to Peter, seemed absurd. Many were jostling Jesus. But He knew that someone had touched Him on purpose, for a purpose. Trembling, the woman presented herself, confessed her need and her deed and how she had been instantaneously healed of her infirmity. Jesus pronounced a blessing on her faith and bade her go in peace.

Meanwhile, Jairus' daughter had died and a messenger told him to trouble the Master no longer. However, Jesus, hearing the comment, responded with His trademark phrase of comfort, "Fear not." And He added, "Only believe." When all seemed hopeless, Jesus injected new hope into a despairing situation. He promised healing for the little girl.

However Jairus may have felt regarding Jesus' words, the mourners were not easily convinced. They were certain that the little girl was dead and that was the end of the matter. Interestingly, Jesus put the unbelievers out and in the presence of her parents and His three closest companions raised the girl to life.

We can easily imagine the astonishment of the parents at what they had just witnessed. Jesus told them to give her something to eat and to get on with life. And so life went on for this family and for the healed woman. But it would never be the same. They had encountered the Healer we met in last Sunday's lesson (Luke 4).

### ***For thought and discussion***

1. Contrast again the eagerness of the common people to hear Jesus and the growing antagonism of the scribes and Pharisees toward Him. Explain the difference.
2. Why is it that so often it takes a desperate situation to draw out our deepest faith?
3. We cannot physically touch Jesus today, but we can still tap into His healing power. Does He still miraculously heal today? Has He touched you with His healing hand? Perhaps a testimony time would be in order.
4. Reflect on the joy of the woman and the girl's parents. What did this do for their faith? their witness?
5. Do too many people today accept Jesus as only an insurance card instead of a friend, Lord, and constant companion? Think about it.

**AUGUST 21, 2005**

### ***Who Is My Neighbor?***

Luke 10:25-37

Jesus certainly had a unique way of getting people to answer their own questions, and shatter their preconceptions in the process. We see that portrayed so vividly in today's lesson, the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Jesus was no foreigner to the snares of entrapment. Many times during His ministry He was approached with questions, or posed situations, designed to put Him in a bad light. In today's text from Luke 10 we have an example of how He used such a situation to teach a valuable lesson—a lesson still pertinent today.

That the lawyer's motives were not pure we deduct from the text. In verse 25 it states that he was testing Jesus. In verse 29 he attempted to justify his personal righteousness in regard to keeping the Law as he understood it.

The expert in the Law answered correctly when Jesus put the question to him regarding the essential elements of the Law: Love God; love your neighbor. This was the summation of the Old Testament Law. (See Matthew 22:35-40.) To the strict Jew, however, the term *neighbor* carried a very narrow meaning. Only a fellow Jew was thought worthy of such appellation. Jesus then used a very pointed story to broaden the lawyer's perspective on neighborliness.

The lawyer was certainly familiar with the treacherous road from Jerusalem to Jericho. It was likely the scene of many robberies, passing as it did through rugged, desolate country. The victim, a Jew, had been robbed, beaten, stripped, and left to die. A grim and horrific scene. A setting for a display of either compassion, or indifference.

The first men Jesus had appearing on the scene were those from whom, because of their position and function, one would expect to show mercy. However, either from a false sense of duty elsewhere, or an extreme case of indifference, they steered clear and hastened on their way. Perhaps, just perhaps, they at least breathed a prayer in passing.

Can't you imagine how the lawyer's ears must have perked up when Jesus mentioned that the next traveler was a despised Samaritan? And then he showed compassion, treating and binding up the man's wounds and taking him to an inn for further treatment and recovery. He even paid the innkeeper for the man's lodging and promised to cover any additional charges upon his return. What sort of man was this Samaritan, anyway?

To clinch His lesson Jesus then asked the lawyer who was neighbor to the man in need. The answer was obvious, and unavoidable. But even in giving the correct answer the lawyer could not bring himself to identify the compassionate caregiver by his nationality. It was "he

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that showed mercy.”

Then Jesus, in answer to the lawyer’s original question, bade him, “Go, and do likewise.” The route to heaven is through compassionate, humble, and willing obedience to all of God’s commandments—even when it means getting our hands dirty to help someone in need. The lawyer learned a lesson that day. Have we?

***For thought and discussion***

1. Has anyone tried to trap you with a loaded question? How did you respond? How should one respond? Discuss.
2. What is usually wrong when a person must attempt to justify himself, his actions, or attitudes?
3. Review again the value and validity of storytelling as a means of driving home a lesson. How can one develop this skill?
4. It’s true that we cannot help everyone in need, but just how does one determine where he can and should help? Are there some guidelines? What has been your experience? Perhaps this would make for some good class discussion.
5. Do you see how futile it is to attempt to justify your goodness before God? I challenge you to put your religion to the test this week by helping some “neighbor” in need.

**AUGUST 28, 2005**

***Jesus Teaches Humility and Priorities***

Luke 14:7-11, 15-24

In today’s lesson Jesus used the setting of a meal in a Pharisee’s house to teach lessons in humility and priorities. He also taught a valuable lesson on mercy and compassion in verses 1-6. Jesus knew He was under scrutiny (v.

1), but He nevertheless seized the opportunity to teach important lessons to His adversaries. Although opposition against Him was growing, He was still intent on reaching even His adversaries with a message of love and concern for others—teaching them the principles of His kingdom.

Apparently at the meal in the Pharisee’s house there had been some jockeying for position at the table (v. 7). Jesus observed this and used the occasion to teach a lesson on humility by means of a parable. He was saying that those who seek honor for themselves will be put to shame, but those who humble themselves will be honored. He didn’t point fingers, but the point could hardly be missed by those to whom the parable was directed.

In response to Jesus’ teaching, one of the guests made a comment (v. 15) which elicited another teaching story from Jesus. Whatever all the man may have meant by “eating bread in the kingdom of God,” Jesus certainly expanded the meaning beyond the scope in which it was expressed. The man undoubtedly was thinking rather narrowly about heaven and who would be allowed there—orthodox Jews. (Note in verse 3 who was in attendance at the meal.) However, Jesus expanded the scope to include the poor, the blind, the lame—society’s outcasts, not just persons of wealth and favored position.

Jesus wanted it to be clear that the invitation into God’s kingdom was not restricted to privileged position, but open to one and all. This in itself would certainly have stirred resentment among those who thought themselves above the poor, the blind, the lame.

The parable which Jesus used (verses 16-24) “depicts the indifference of the Jews to spiritual things, their rejection of the gospel, their exclusion from the kingdom, and the subsequent calling of the Gentiles” (New Bible Commentary). Notice that the excuses the persons used

for not attending the feast were just that, excuses. There was no solid reasoning behind any of them. It was simply a matter of putting personal interests above obligation.

Those who rejected Jesus did so at their own peril. Jesus' mission was first of all to His own people, the Jews, but their rejection opened the way for Gentiles to enter the kingdom. Jesus had harsh words for those who, because of preconceptions and selfish interests, spurned His invitation. They would be excluded from His kingdom while those they thought unworthy would be welcomed.

Did the Pharisees and lawyers gathered there that Sabbath day in the Pharisee's house catch the significance of what Jesus was saying? Did they realize He was speaking of them, condemning their pomposity and religiosity? If so, it had no changing impact, for they continued to reject Him and shortly thereafter engineered His crucifixion. Their priorities were wrong. Pride stood

in their way to accepting God's invitation into His eternal kingdom. A tragedy of eternal proportions.

### ***For thought and discussion***

1. What drives the all-too-human tendency to put oneself first?
2. One thing we learn from this lesson is that Jesus was a very social person. Think about how we can use social occasions to witness for our Lord. Maybe some discussion?
3. We see again in this lesson the universality of the gospel message. Let's be sure our thinking includes all races, nationalities, social and religious categories. What more can we do to reach the unreachable?
4. What kinds of excuses do we make for not doing God's service? Are they valid? Why do we make them?
5. What kinds of excuses do people make for not accepting the invitation into God's kingdom? How can we persuade them over their obstinacy? ■

## **Ready Bible Answers**

by *Geo. R. Brunk I*



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# Newslines . . .

by Rebecca Good

incidents events occurrences facts illustrations episodes committees vignettes proceedings problems  
experiences crises adventures transactions meetings tragedies scoops reports conferences happenings  
bulletins questions reports affairs dramas encounters personages actions tidings et cetera

## Pure Religion

Christian singer Steven Curtis Chapman is challenging Christians to obey the Bible's command to care for orphans. He and his wife, Mary Beth, have adopted three baby girls from China, after having several biological children. While only 120,000 adoptions occur in one year in the entire world (100,000 of those within the U.S.), it is estimated that there are 40 to 50 million orphaned children worldwide. The need for adoptive parents to take these children into their hearts and homes is tremendous.

Many Christian families are intimidated by the thought of international adoption because of the money (\$15,000 to \$20,000) and paperwork involved. The Chapmans have established the Shaohannah's Hope fund to help. The charity offers grants to families to help with the costs of adoption. Scott Hasenbalg, executive director of the fund, says that while the church often strongly opposes abortion, it has generally been too reticent about encouraging families to adopt. The two should go hand in hand: adoption is the plank in the pro-life platform that even pro-choice folks respect. It is the fervent desire of Shaohannah's Hope that churches will get involved and give strong support to families who have the desire to adopt. —from *WORLD*

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## Human-Rights Issues in Vietnam

On May 5, the U.S. announced that it had reached an agreement with Vietnam based on that nation's pledges to expand religious freedom. Last September, the U.S. had named Vietnam to its world's

worst violators of religious freedoms list, and was threatening sanctions. Apparently, U.S. pressure sparked a willingness to negotiate within Vietnam's communist government. Vietnam has banned forced recantations of faith and released around 12 religious prisoners. It still retains about 100 religious prisoners, and 1,000 churches are still closed.

One of the 12 prisoners released was Le Thi Hong Lien, one of the "Mennonite Six" imprisoned the last year. Ms. Lien was rearrested three days after her release for attending a Bible study. After undergoing police intimidation, Ms. Lien was released the same night as her second arrest. Reportedly, a drunken officer told the Christians that he had orders to harass them until they stopped meeting at the home of imprisoned Mennonite human-rights lawyer Nguyen Hong Quang, another one of the "Mennonite Six."

Most of Vietnam's Protestants are ethnic minorities who worship in unregistered house churches; those in the Central Highlands are known collectively as Montagnards. These minorities are often in opposition to the communist government as they attempt to claim land-rights. Connections between house churches and protest movements give the government an excuse to persecute house-church members. It sees the house-church movement as a solidarity movement with the Montagnards. The communists may arrest, torture, and suppress house-church members, claiming that they are part of protest groups who are seeking independence or opposing the government. —from *WORLD*

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

## **Memento Mori**

The average life is less than 30,000 days long, and sleep takes up a third of that time. —from *Commonweal*

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## **Imitatio Dei**

How do Christians glorify God? According to Wayne Grudem in his book, *On Kingdom Business*, Christians glorify God through worship, evangelism, giving, faith, and imitation of the attributes of God. Can people really dare to imitate God? Humans are created in God's image, which means to be *like* God, and to *represent* God on earth. We are more like God than anything else He made. Scripture exhorts us to "be imitators of God as beloved children" (Eph. 5:1). —from *christianity9to5.org*

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## **Possible Causes of Parkinson's Disease**

Every year, 50,000 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Some experts believe that exposure to toxic chemicals is one cause. Sometimes water is contaminated with chemicals. Many people use pesticides, both outdoors and indoors.

Concussions are also linked with Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases.

Also, those who are overweight from lack of exercise are at three times the risk of developing Parkinson's disease.

—from *cbn.com*

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## **What Makes America Unique?**

Two Brits recently toured America, searching for the answer to this riddle. They published their findings in a book, *The Right Nation*. The answer: "America is the most religious country in the rich world, with churches full, evangelicals on the march and the Almighty popping up all over public policy."

Alexis de Toqueville drew much the same conclusion when he toured America

over 170 years ago. He published his conclusions in *Democracy in America*, published in 1835. The French de Toqueville observed that America's deep devotion to Christianity was a defining characteristic of its success. He saw that "religion preserves freedom because it constantly invigorates the governments' judgment."

—from *Citizen Magazine.org*

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## **The Foolishness of Preaching**

Frank Meyer says he is used to rejection, stares, and insults. Why? He preaches to captive audiences on New York City's commuter trains. How? The 42-year-old evangelist usually sings a song then launches into a mini-sermon. Sometimes he leads a team in a skit.

Meyer also trains people in evangelism methods under Mission NYC; this organization plans to train 2,000 to 3,000 people in evangelism this year.

—from *Crosswalk.com*

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## **How Far Do We Have to Go?**

Thirty-three percent of the world's six billion people consider themselves Christians.

—from *Crosswalk.com*

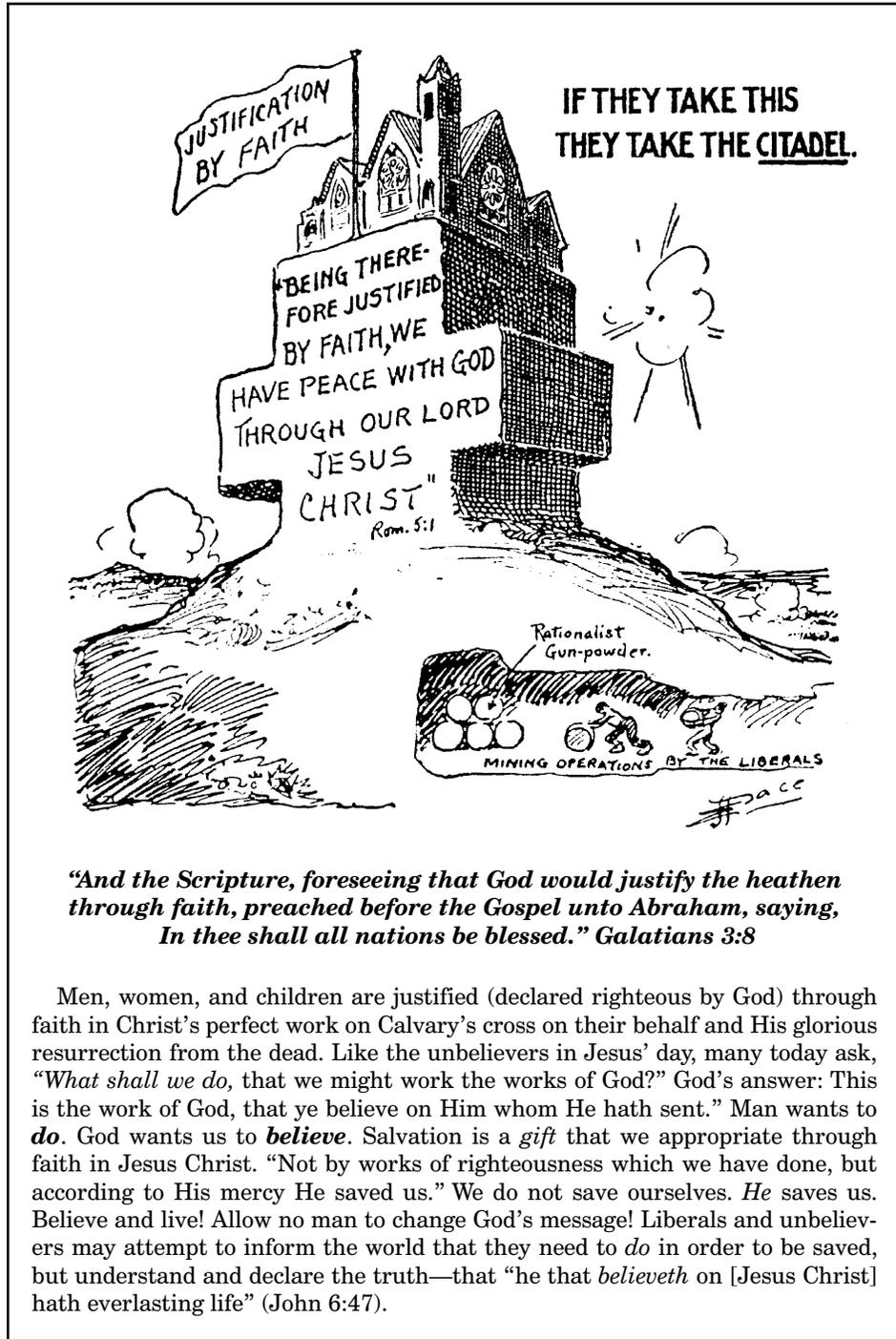
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## **The Church's Silver Bullet**

A recent Gallup poll found that friendliness makes or breaks a church. People join churches because of friendships and are more satisfied and involved with their churches if they have best friends at church.

Congregations should create an environment where friendships can flourish and congregants can truly get to know one another. Churches could accomplish this by getting people together to share activities that they enjoy. Two examples mentioned in the article: scrapbooking and car refurbishing. In this way, people can share more of their lives with one another.

—from *Crosswalk.com*



Taken from: *Foundation Magazine*

# “Instead of Me”

by Horatius Bonar

Many years ago, I was walking with a friend along the pleasant banks of a Scottish river, in one of the early months of summer, when the trees had just begun to show their fresh verdure and to offer us a shade from the sun. A man in rags came up to us begging. We supplied his wants somewhat, and entered into talk with him. He could not write nor read. He knew nothing of his Bible, and seemed not to care about knowing it.

“You need to be saved, do you not?”

“Oh yes; I suppose I do,” he said.

“But do you know the way of being saved?” we asked.

“I dare say I do,” was the reply.

“How, then, do you expect this?”

“I have not been a very bad man; and am doing as many good works as I can.”

“But are your good works good enough to take you to heaven?” we asked.

“I think so; and I am doing my best.”

“Do you not know any good works better than your own?”

“I know about the good works of the saints; but how am I to get them?” he asked.

“Do you know of no good works better than those of the saints?”

“I don’t think there can be any better,” he said.

“Are not the works of the Lord Jesus Christ better than the works of the saints?”

“Of course they are; but of what use are they to me?”

“They may be of great use to us, if we believe what God has told us about them.”

“How is that?”

“If God is willing to take these works of Christ instead of yours, would not that do?”

“Yes, that it would. But will He?”

“Yes,” we replied, “He will. For this is just what He has told us; He is willing to take all that Christ has done and suffered instead of what you could do or suffer; and to give you what Christ has deserved instead of what you have deserved.”

“Is that really the case? Is God willing to put Christ instead of me?”

“Yes, He certainly is,” we said.

“But have I no good works to do myself?”

“Plenty,” we responded, “but not to buy pardon with them. You are to take what Christ did as the price to be paid for your pardon; and then, having thus got a free pardon, you will work for Him who pardons you, out of love for His love to you.”

“But how can I get this?” he asked.

“By believing the gospel, or good news, which tells you about the Lord Jesus Christ: how He lived; how He died; how He was buried; how He rose again—all for sinful men; as the Bible says, ‘Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things.’ ”

The beggar stood and wondered. The thought that another’s works would do instead of his own, and that he might get all that this other’s works deserved, seemed to strike him. We never met again. But the Word seemed to tell upon him; he seemed to take it with him as something which he had never heard before—something which seemed almost too good news to be true.

I have more than once spoken of this since, in illustrating the gospel, and it seemed to tell. The man’s wonder that another’s works should do instead of his own was in itself an insight into the effects produced by the gospel of Christ. “Christ for us,” is the message which

we bring; Christ “bearing our sins in His own body on the tree”; Christ doing what we should have done, bearing what we should have borne; Christ nailed to our cross, dying our death, paying our debt—all this to bring us to God, and to make everlasting life ours; this is the sure word of the gospel, by which whosoever believeth is saved, and shall never come into condemnation.

There are few who do not know what the word *substitute* means when used concerning common things; but it is well that we should see how the right knowledge of this word is the key to the right understanding of the gospel. “Christ for us,” or Christ our Substitute, is the gospel or glad tidings of great joy which apostles preached, and which we can tell, even in these latter days, to the sons of men as their true hope. The good news which we bring is not of what we are commanded to do in order that God may be reconciled to us, but of what the Son of God has done instead of us. He took our place here, on earth, that we might obtain His place in heaven. As the Perfect One, in life and in death, as the Doer and the Sufferer, He is presented to us that we may get the complete benefit of that perfection so soon as we receive His gospel. All our imperfection, however great, is lost in the completeness of His perfection, so that God sees us not as we are, but as He is. All that we are, and have done, and have been, is lost sight of in what He is, and has done, and has been. “He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

It is this sin-bearing completeness of the Son of God, as the Substitute, that the sinner rests upon. It is on this that we take our stand in our dealings with God. We need a sinbearer; and God has given us One who is altogether perfect and divine. “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.” “He, His own

self, bare our sins in His own body on the tree.”

We once dealt with a young man as to this. He sat, with his Bible before him, pondering the way of life, and asking, What must I do to be saved? He was in darkness, and saw no light. He was a sinner—how was he to be saved? He was guilty—how was he to be forgiven?

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done.”

“No, certainly; but how then?” was his question.

“By Christ doing the whole.”

“But is this possible?” he asked. “Can I be saved by another doing the whole for me?”

“It is not only possible, but it is certain. This is the way; the only way. It is God’s one way of saving the sinner.”

“And have I nothing to do?” he asked.

“Nothing in order to be saved,” we replied.

“But tell me how this is to be.”

“Let us come back to the truth about the Substitute. You know what that is?”

“I do. But how does this bear upon my case?”

“Christ offers Himself to you as your Substitute; to do what you should have done, to suffer what you should have suffered, to pay what you should have paid.”

“Do you mean that Christ has actually paid my debt, and that this is what I am to believe in order to be saved?”

“No. Your debt is not paid till you believe: then it is paid—paid once for all, once and for ever; but not till then.”

“How, then, is the work of Christ, as the Substitute, good news to me?”

“There is enough money lodged in the bank to pay all your debts twice over; and you have only to apply for it. Hand in your check, and you will get the money at once.”

“I see; I see,” he said. “It is ‘believing’ that brings me into actual possession of all the fruits of the sin-bearing work upon the cross.”

“Yes; just so. Or, let me put it in another way. Christ died for our sins. He is the Substitute. He is presented to you as such. Are you willing to take Him as such, that He may pay all your debts and forgive all your sins?”

“Yes. But let me see this more fully; for it seems too simple.”

“Well; put it thus: God has provided a Substitute for the guilty, who, eighteen hundred years ago, suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust. The Father presents that complete Substitute to you, and asks your consent to the exchange. The Son presents Himself to you, offering to be your Substitute. The Holy Spirit presents Him to you as a Substitute. Do you consent? The Father is willing, the Son is willing, the Spirit is willing. Are you willing? Do you give your consent?”

“Is that it?” said he.

“It is. Your consenting to take Christ as your Substitute is faith.”

“Is that it?” said he again.

And the light broke upon him. “Christ our Substitute was the dawning of the day.”

Thus it is that the sinner’s chain is broken and he is set free to serve God. First liberty, then service; the service of men set free from condemnation and from bondage. It is in accepting the Divine Substitute that the sinner is set free to serve the living God. The liberty flowing from forgiveness, thus received, is the true beginning of a holy life.

If, then, I am to live a holy life, I must begin with the Substitute. I must deal with Him for pardon and deliverance. Thus being by Him “delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.”

If I am to serve God, and if I am to possess anything of “true religion,” I must begin with the Substitute. For religion begins with pardon; and without pardon religion is a poor and irksome profession. “There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared.” This is the Divine watchword. Not first the fear of God, and then forgiveness; but first forgiveness, and then the fear of God. ■

—Taken from *alliancenet.org*

Surely it is the duty of everyone who believes in the Godhead of Christ and the final authority of the Bible to rise in indignant protest against the prostitution of the pulpits and property of the church for the propaganda of doctrines which are subversive of the foundations of the Faith. Some seek to excuse themselves on the plea that they do not possess the necessary learning to grapple with these errors. It takes no learning to understand that to pretend that the denial of the proper deity of Christ can be reconciled with the New Testament is a manifest absurdity. If the doctrines enunciated by the Modernists are true, then the Christian Faith has been a great delusion to be numbered with the exploded errors of mankind, and the sooner it is openly abandoned the better. It requires no learning to see that men who hold such views have no right to call themselves Christians. It requires no learning for those who are convinced of the truth of the Christian religion to say plainly to such men: “We cannot recognize you as Christian teachers, and we cannot regard your action as being in harmony with Christian ethics.” To every one who stands on one side and silently winks at the use of the high places of the church for the proclamation of assaults upon the Faith and who plays the coward’s part by leaving the few to bear the brunt of the conflict for the Truth, the ancient denunciation applies with terrible force: “Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty” (Judges 5:23).

—*Journal of the Wesley Bible Union, 1927*

# The Scourge of Legalism

*The problem of legalism has been around  
as long as the Church has existed.*

by John A. Knight

Nothing detracts more from the radiance of true Christian holiness than the judgmental spirit of legalism. Legality, the condition of conforming to law, is desirable. "Legalism," however, is a dependence on keeping the law as the means of salvation. It is an excessive bondage to the letter of the law, which overlooks the law's purpose and fails to be motivated by love. This is a poor substitute for genuine Christian faith.

In the postexilic period, the Jews fanatically observed the written law and a collection of oral traditions. This resulted in a rigid legalism of slavish obedience to commandments, statutes, regulations, rites, and sacrifices.

In the earliest days of the Christian Church, when believers were both Jews and Christians, many continued their legalistic practices. As the Gospel spread to the Gentile world, advocates of legalism, known as Judaizers, tried to impose their convictions on the non-Jewish pagan converts. That caused the first major doctrinal conflict in the young New Testament Church. The issue was officially settled at the first Christian counsel in Jerusalem where legalism was rejected (cf. Acts 15). However, the struggle and practice continued throughout much of the first century.

Paul, who had been dramatically delivered from the bondage of legalism (Gal. 1:13ff; Rom. 7:7ff), understood that observing the Jewish law as essential to salvation was a form of works righteousness that contradicts justification by grace through faith. It rejects Christ and His saving cross (Gal. 2:21), and results in a galling bondage (5:1).

The scourge of legalism has plagued the Church from the first century to the present. "Today the appeal is not to adopt the Jewish law, but to drift into moralism, a 'Christian' version of legalism . . ." says Richard E. Howard in the *Beacon Dictionary of Theology*. "Religion thus becomes primarily a matter of following a set of rules and regulations. The believer is entangled in the web of *works* righteousness that very easily becomes a *self*-righteousness. In turn, such self-righteousness often causes one to live by a 'legalistic letter' that results in a cutting, critical, and condemning spirit toward other people. This expression of legalism is a tragic contradiction of the love that is the heart of the Christian faith.

"The corrective for legalism is not license (Gal. 5:13ff) but that Spirit-generated love which fulfills the spirit and intent of the law from the heart, in true freedom."

When Christ is the ruler of a person's life, He alone sets the standards for holy living. When He exercises lordship over mind, body, and spirit, He marks the directions of our lives, and establishes the guidelines by which we live.

If Christ is *not* in charge of our lives, only one alternative exists. We are on our own. We must establish the guidelines and parameters for living. Unfortunately, humankind without God is not equipped for such responsibility. God alone can set the standards of right and wrong.

Even the thought of our trying to do so is ludicrous. I heard of one lady who had strong "convictions" about doing any physical activity or work on the Lord's Day. She maintained this position not only

for herself, but for others as well, judging their spirituality by their adherence to her view. Someone reminded her that the Lord defended His disciples when they plucked grain on the Sabbath. Taken aback initially, she recovered momentarily, and then remarked: "Well, it didn't make me think any more of Him."

Blinded by her own false sense of adequacy and "spiritual correctness," she failed to see that she was usurping God's place by establishing the standards for holy living and judging others. The height of sinfulness is to put ourselves in God's place, taking upon ourselves His authority, and ignoring His offer of grace, guidance, and mercy.

Almost any cursory view of culture and society in North America, particularly the U.S., reveals that people are evenly divided about the leading moral and social issues confronting citizenship. The Church likewise, reflecting the culture, appears to be equally polarized in its internal agendas.

Uncertainty, unrest, and resistance fill many lives as a result of changes in societal norms and cultural and family values, transitions in the workplace, acceptance of moral and spiritual relativism, and the disappearance of national and social boundaries. What an opportunity for holiness adherents to demonstrate the spirit of love and hope through Christ without compromising their tested convictions. What a chance to accept, with Christ's love, those who disagree with them.

The diversity of our world has brought diversity into our churches. A myriad of perspectives regarding almost every issue is raised within the church—views on church music, administrative organization, social choices, and more. It has been reported that 60 percent of the total membership of one denomination has entered the church in the last decade. Therefore, we should expect such variety of opinion. Add the fact of the external and extensive changes in our society dur-

ing the last twenty years, and an absence of consensus is inevitable.

The Apostle Paul faced a similar challenge with the Galatian churches. The main purpose of his epistle to them was to correct the double error of legalism: 1) that a person is saved *initially* partly by faith and partly by good works; and 2) that one is kept saved and *finally* perfected by a combination of faith and works. The Judaizers were teaching that one must have Christ *and* Moses, faith *and* circumcision, grace *and* law. Their error was not that they substituted something for Christ's work, but that they tried to add something to it. Modern Judaizers, too, quickly outline a set of rules or administer a litmus test for new believers and old!

Paul never said it was wrong for the Christians to be circumcised, or to keep the law, or to observe the festivals. He only insisted that these things had nothing to do with deserving or earning the gift of salvation. Not only so, but he also recognized differences of sphere appointed by God. Paul was to go to the Gentiles, James and others were to work among the Jews. To all then was given the "right hand of fellowship." Mutual trust, acceptance, and recognition are a good platform on which all must work. And yet Paul fought this error of legalism tooth and nail as being a denial of the Gospel he preached.

Paul insisted that believers in Christ live in *spiritual unity*. He saw that even those who were apparently sincere could disrupt the Body of Christ. If men and women are sons and daughters of God through Christ, no classes can exist—Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female (Galatians 3:26-28). What matters is not circumcision or any similar requirement, but faith and a new act of creation by the Spirit (Galatians 5:6; 6:15).

May this ever be so among all of those who believe! ■

—Taken from the May/June 2005 issue of *Holiness Today*. Reprinted with permission.

# Salvation by Faith

by Herbert McGonigle

John Wesley's theology emphasized *salvation by faith*. The good news of the gospel is that we can be saved from our sins through faith in Christ. By *salvation* John Wesley meant the whole process by which we are changed from being sinners and become the children of God. It works like this: When we hear the gospel, usually through preaching, the Holy Spirit convicts us that we are sinners. But the gospel also shows us that Christ died for us and that salvation is by faith in Him. The Spirit enables us to turn away from sin—that is, to repent—and to believe in Jesus as our Saviour and Lord. Of the thousands of sermons John Wesley preached, mostly in the open air, he returned again and again to two of his favorite texts: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31) and "By grace ye are saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). Quite simply, Wesley believed that salvation by faith is the Christian gospel, and all his work for 50 years was concerned with proclaiming this fundamental truth. Theologians often use the term *soteriology*, meaning

"the doctrine of salvation." John Wesley's theology was by priority soteriological. Once, in a letter to his brother Charles, he wrote, "You and I have nothing to do but save souls." He meant that proclaiming the doctrine of salvation by faith was their primary task as preachers.

This doctrine of salvation by faith does not mean that God does everything and we have nothing to do with our own salvation. Only God's grace can save us, but God does not force that grace upon us. When John Wesley preached salvation by faith, he argued and explained and encouraged men and women to respond to the gospel's invitation. God gives sinners the grace by which they hear the gospel, by which they understand the gospel, and by which they are enabled (but not forced) to believe in Christ. The doctrine of salvation by faith treats us as responsible men and women. We can respond to God's grace and be saved. Equally, we can ignore or refuse His grace and thus bring about our own judgment and condemnation. ■

—Reprinted from *Holiness Today*

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# What It Means to Be Really “Born Again”

## *A Word to Professing Christians*

by I. C. Herendeen

“Not every one that *saith* unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father” (Matt. 7:21).

“Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead” (Rev. 3:1).

This is a day of great religious profession. Multiplied thousands have joined churches who have never been “born of God” and become “new creatures” in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Millions have put on the cloak of religion under the delusion that they are then saved and bound for heaven, and sure to enter the pearly gates of the celestial city when they die. They settle down complacently in their false profession with never a suspicion that they are deceived to their eternal undoing unless the Lord in His grace awakens them from their sleep of death. Great is the danger of being deceived by the great deceiver of souls, Satan, and this makes it vitally important that we “give all diligence” to heed the Divine warning. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; put yourselves to the proof” (2 Cor. 13:5, *Conybeare’s* translation). It is not enough to say “Lord, Lord” if we do not bow to Him as our Lord and Master, or if we are indifferent to His commands. Lip service is worthless where practical godliness is lacking: it is horrible mockery to call Him “Lord” while we do only that which is pleasing to ourselves. An outward profession of the most orthodox religion is useless or worse if not

joined with vital godliness and sincere obedience.

In a matter of such paramount importance as the eternal welfare of our soul, we should take nothing for granted nor give ourselves the benefit of any doubt—far too much is at stake. We have good reason to question the reality of our profession if we cannot answer honestly and sincerely in the affirmative such questions as, for example, the following. *Have* I really been “born-again”? (1 John 3:9). *Is* sin now a burden and a grief to me? Do I have a heart-longing to be done with sin—all sin? *Do* I “mourn” (Matt. 5:4) over my sins, and “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matt. 5:6)? *Am* I “pricked in my heart” (Acts 2:37) when I sin? *Do* I humbly and brokenheartedly confess any and all my sins? Do I conscientiously endeavor to “obey the gospel” (2 Thess. 1:8)? How much we need to “search and try our ways” (Lam. 3:40) by the unerring standard of the Word of God, and make our “calling and election sure” if we would never “fall” (2 Peter 1:10).

It may be you have gone forward to some evangelistic service under the pleading of the evangelist, have shaken the preacher’s hand, signed a “decision card,” joined “the church of your choice,” been baptized, taken communion, etc., etc., with the idea you were then saved, and thus are caught up in the toils of a false confidence. It is not “by works of righteousness which we

have done” (Titus 3:5) that we are saved, but “according to his mercy” and by “the washing of regeneration.” So many rest in these outward works whereas He says, “My son, give me thine *heart*” (Prov. 23:26). Unless the Lord has our heart all else will be but mocking Him, and Galatians 6:7 tells us “God is not mocked.”

Many attend church services with more or less regularity as a matter of duty and because it is expected of them rather than out of loving obedience to the Lord whose they profess to be and serve. And after the service is over they greet their friends and talk with them about worldly matters rather than about the things of God. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” Matthew 12:34 tells us. Then, too, they are very likely to spend the balance of the Lord’s day dozing, watching TV, visiting their friends or joyriding with the godless, giddy, hell-bound worldlings, and conspicuous by their absence from the evening church service.

The fact that most likely they do not open God’s Word and read therefrom from one week’s end to the other, that they do not spend time each day in prayer as they should (if, indeed, they pray at all other than when called upon they utter a few pious words and call it prayer), do not feel any obligation or manifest any heart’s desire to be present at the weekly prayer meeting, does not disturb their consciences in the least. And yet in spite of all this they try to make themselves and others believe that they are really Christians and on their way to glory. Alas, what a rude awakening such will have when they are called away from this earthly scene to find themselves in “the everlasting burnings” (Isa. 33:14) instead. O reader, “take heed that ye be not deceived” (Luke 21:8).

Most likely there never was a time when there were so many nominal

Christians and so few real ones. The profession of multitudes today is but an empty, lifeless, fruitless one, consisting only of external works of piety. This should greatly disturb us all, and cause us to ask ourselves, Is this true of *me*? It is not enough to be moral, upright, honest, a good citizen, attend church services with more or less regularity, and the like. These things are good in themselves and ought to be practiced by all of us, but they will not save our souls. Ephesians 2:8, 9 tells us “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” Hypocrites can and do pray loud and long as did the Pharisees (Matt. 23:14), “hear gladly” as Herod (Mark 6:20), but all in vain so far as salvation is concerned. To be accepted of God all our works must be done out of fervent love, devotion, and a humble and obedient submission to the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and Master. As another has said, “There are many who name the name of the Lord Jesus Christ who do not ‘depart from iniquity’ (2 Tim. 2:19); who profess that they ‘know God’ but who ‘in works deny him’ (Titus 1:16). If you or I are such, will God receive us as one of His converts? What, converts from sin while still living in sin? Perish the thought. That would be a visible contradiction.” In Matthew 7:22, 23 we find that not only professing Christians but preachers, and even wonder-workers will be rejected because, Christ says, they are those who “work iniquity,” and to such He will say in that Day “I *never* knew you: *depart from me.*” What awful words to fall from the lips of infinite Love. God in His grace grant that He may never have occasion to say them to you or to me.

“All have sinned” (Rom. 3:23) is the Divine verdict, and unless we are renewed by a thorough and powerful change by being made a “new creature” in Christ Jesus, we shall never escape

“the damnation of hell” (Matt. 23:33). “Be not deceived; God is not mocked” (Gal. 6:7). I tell you plainly upon the authority of God’s Holy Word that whether it be baptism, taking communion, or any other such thing you are depending on for salvation, if you are not holy, strict, and self-denying, you are not and will not be saved (Matt. 15:12; Heb. 12:14). You may not be an adulterer, extortioner, blasphemer, unjust, etc., but you must have something more than this, more than a negative righteousness to justify you or a holy God will condemn you. Salvation is not to be found in moral righteousness. If it was, then “the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees” would have brought them into the kingdom of God (Matt. 3:20).

Many think that because they have been troubled in their consciences for their sins that all must be well, miserably mistaking conviction for conversion. If such were true, wicked Cain might have passed for a true convert. He ran up and down the world like a man distressed under the rage of a guilty conscience. When conscience holds a whip over a man he will pray, read, hear, and forbear his delightful sins, but should his conscience sleep then he will be at his sins again like “the sow that was washed” returned to her “wallowing in the mire” (2 Peter 2:22).

A true Christian will always live under the searching eye of God and in “the fear of the Lord.” Psalm 139:7 asks, “Whither shall I flee from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?” If we are what we profess to be then our every act will be performed in the light of our intimate relationship to God, and “with reverence and godly fear” (Heb. 12:28). We will take holiness for our path, not out of necessity but because “the love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor. 5:14). We will say with the Psalmist in 119:173, “I have

*chosen* the way of thy precepts.” All our affections will run in a new channel, and our desires will no longer be after good but after grace. Our constant and earnest prayer will be, Lord, subdue mine iniquities and restrain the corrupt flesh in me, and “lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa. 139:24). We will constantly and earnestly beseech the God of all grace to constrain us to “seek those things which are above” and strive to do all “heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men” (Col. 3:1, 23). Our anger will burn against sin, all sin, even so-called little sins as we are wont to think them. Sin will be the object of our indignation. Whereas we once had light thoughts of sin we will now see sin to be “exceeding sinful”; we will loathe ourselves for our sins, and be quick to run to Christ and cast ourselves into that “fountain opened for sin and uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1).

We will bridle our tongue, be careful to “redeem the time” (Eph. 5:16) not to over indulge our appetite, abstain from all evil companions, and mourn when we neglect Bible reading, prayer, and the hearing of the Word. Worldly company will be most distasteful to us, especially worldly-minded religionists. The world and love of the things of the world will not be uppermost with us. If they are we can have no surer evidence that we are in an unconverted state regardless of our profession. Many a hypocrite can talk like an angel, speak the language of Canaan, converse of God and Christ and matters of the other world while all the time his eye is filled with covetousness and his heart with rottenness. He is all for self, ever seeking his own advantage though it be at the expense or the detriment of his neighbor.

As another has so well said, “There is a vast quantity of religion in the world which is not true, genuine Christianity. It passes muster; it satisfies sleepy consciences; but it is not good money. It is

not the real thing which was called Christianity 1800 years ago. There are thousands of men and women who go to churches and chapels every Sunday, and call themselves Christians. Their names go on the baptismal register. They are reckoned Christians while they live. They are married with a Christian marriage service. They mean to be buried as Christians when they die. But you never see any 'fight' about their religion. Of spiritual strife and exertion, and conflict, and self-denial, and watching and warring, they know literally nothing at all. Such Christianity may satisfy man, and those who say anything against it may be thought very hard and uncharitable, but it certainly is not the Christianity of the Bible. It is not the religion which the Lord Jesus founded and His apostles preached. It is not the religion which produces holiness."

True Christianity is a "laying hold on eternal life" unto the end of life. It is not a life of sleepy indolence, religious ease, indifference, and carelessness. We cannot sleep or doze our way to heaven like one on a plane who depends upon the pilot to get him safely to his destination. True Christians, like soldiers, are meant to "fight," but not with other Christians in a perpetual controversy. The Christian warfare is no light matter. To be at peace with the world, the flesh, and the devil is to be "at enmity with God."

Many who profess to receive the Word "with joy" (Matt. 13:20) shortly after go back to their old manner of life thus proving that "the root of the matter" (Job 19:28) is not in them. To be a Christian outwardly only costs little: it entails no self-sacrifice or self-denial, whereas to be a Christian in reality and not merely in name will cost us *all* our darling sins, for we must be willing to give up *every* habit and practice that is wrong in the sight of God. We must hate *all* our sins big and little, small

and great, and "hate every false way." All must be thoroughly renounced and forsaken.

To be a true Christian will cost us our love of ease. The Christian life is likened to a race in the running of which we are to stretch every nerve, and "so run as to obtain the prize"—heaven. As Bunyan has so well said, "He who would have heaven must run for it." As the hymn puts it,

A charge to keep I have,  
A God to glorify,  
A never-dying soul to save,  
And fit it for the sky.

We must not expect to be carried to heaven on flowery beds of ease. To be a true Christian is no child's play but a daily conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil so that we need to take heed to our behavior every hour of every day. We are commanded to "let our conversation (conduct) be as becometh the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27); to be diligent about our prayers and our Bible reading, and how we use the Lord's Day, for God is "acquainted with all our ways" (Psa. 139:3). A religion which costs us nothing is worth nothing. A Christianity without a cross will prove a useless Christianity in the end, and one without a crown.

Many are convicted, but conviction is not conversion. All blossoms do not result in fruit. Many are hurried into making a profession of Christianity who have never seen the enormity and heinousness of their sins in the sight of a holy God, and when the going gets hard, and the trials and difficulties great, they become weary of the "narrow" way of holiness and return to the "broad road" of worldly activity and thus manifest the emptiness of their profession.

Present-day evangelistic procedure is both sickening and saddening. For example, many are urged to "come forward" and when they go, John 3:16 ("For God so loved the world that he

gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should *not* perish but have everlasting life”) is quoted to them. The seeker is then asked, Who does “the world” include? He answers, “You, me and everybody.” Do you then believe that Christ died for you? When he replies in the affirmative he is thoroughly assured that he is saved and will “never perish.” Such “converts”(?) are then welcomed into the hearts and homes of their new friends, frequent their meetings, and are addressed as “brother” and “sister,” and all this without any Holy Spirit conviction of sin, without any repentance and confession of sin, and without their being made keenly aware that they are deserving of the wrath of a holy God to cause them to cry out with the publican in Luke 18:13, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Alas, alas, that this takes place with such sickening frequency. No wonder the sequel should be so disappointing since there is no evidence that they have been “born of God” (1 John 5:1) and have “the fear of God” on them. And after the emotion and enthusiasm is worn off they go back to their old manner of life yet under the delusion that “it is well with their soul.”

Dear reader, if you make any profession of Christianity, make sure that it is real and not a sham, a mere pretense. Real profession is not a mere outward show, not external piety only but genuine and lasting, a matter of the heart and not alone of the head and hands. You can determine the reality of your profession by the place it occupies in your inner man. You may know the truth in your head, assent to it, believe it, but if it does not govern and regulate your manner of life, your daily conduct will not be acceptable to God. True Christianity is wrought by the Holy Spirit and is a matter of the heart, and this will produce in us a very deep view of the terribleness of sin. We will per-

ceive it to be that abominable thing which God hates, and which we ought to hate and shun; a thing which deserves God’s wrath and condemnation; that cursed thing which is the cause of all our misery, wars, contentions, quarrels, sickness, and death.

As we have shown above it is not enough to be outwardly religious, for one can be religious without “life” and “lost” (Luke 19:10); religious and yet “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). The *heart* must first be changed so as to be brought into conformity with God’s will and nature. To be acceptable to God, all our religious activities must spring from a *heart* that *loves and delights* in doing the will of God cheerfully and without repining.

God is a holy God, and the greater our profession if it be unreal, the greater will be our judgment in the Day of Judgment. We may deceive others by a hollow and false profession, but we cannot deceive Him who “looketh on the heart, who is “acquainted with all our ways” and “understandeth our thought afar off” (Psa. 139:2, 3). A Christian in reality and not alone in name will have a low estimate of himself (Phil. 2:3). Such will keep short accounts with God, be quick to “confess” his sins (1 John 1:9) and seek God’s forgiveness. He will make an honest endeavor to “speak evil of no man” but “be gentle, showing meekness unto all men” (Titus 3:2). He will be “easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality” and “without hypocrisy” (James 3:17); without “bitter envying and strife in his heart” (James 3:14). He will earnestly endeavor to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:10).

Are *you* that kind of a Christian? Are you? God grant it for His name’s sake. ■

—Reprinted from Chapel Library

# The Atonement

by E. F. Kevan

It has been rightly said that Jesus came, not so much to preach the gospel as that there might be a gospel to preach. This takes our minds to a study of what we commonly call the atonement.

No sooner did man sin than God began to show him the way by which he was to be saved from his sin. Because of man's weakness in spiritual understanding, God gave this knowledge to him at the beginning in what we may call a pictorial way.

## *Pictures in the Old Testament*

The first of these pictures is thought by many to be seen in the "coats of skins" which God provided in order to cover man's shame (Gen. 3:21). These "coats of skins" could have been procured only by the death of the creature whose skin it was, and so, perhaps, the first lesson taught us is that the life of sinful man is preserved only by the death of a substitute. This same truth appears to be next taught in the sacrifice from the flock which God accepted from Abel (Gen. 4:4). The meaning of substitutionary sacrifice became clearer at a later period of Bible history, when God gave Moses the teaching about the offerings the people were to make for their sins, but before that time there occurred that remarkable experience of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22), in the course of which Abraham spoke the prophetic words, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering" (Gen. 22:8). Looking back on these things in the light of our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can see that in the substitution of the ram in the place of Isaac there is a clear foreshowing of the death of Jesus—provided by God in the place of sinners. Perhaps the next pictorial action teaching us about Christ's saving work is to be seen

in the killing of the Passover Lamb in the place of the first-born (Exodus 12).

There is no doubt at all, however, that in the sacrifices described in the Book of Leviticus (see Chapters 1–8) we have the most methodical Old Testament teaching about the purpose of Christ's death. Not all the detailed instructions about the manner of making these sacrifices are easy to understand at the present time, but standing out clearly above everything else is the fact that they were on account of sin and trespasses. Much of the meaning of these sacrifices for sin was summarized in the solemn services of the great Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). In the ceremonies of this great day it was made clear that priest and people alike needed the sacrifice for sin (see verses 6 and 15); and the truth was taught that the barrier caused by sin (symbolized in the veil of the most holy place) could be penetrated only by means of the blood of the sin-offering (see verses 11 and 15). If we turn to one of the later books of the Old Testament we come upon the familiar words of Isaiah 53, in which God inspired the prophet to describe One who was offered by God as "an offering for sin" (verse 10) and who, being "numbered with the transgressors, . . . bare the sin of many" (verse 12). When the Ethiopian eunuch asked the evangelist Philip, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this?" Philip "began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:34, 35).

The long witness of the Old Testament was gathered up into the most meaningful statement of all when John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taken away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Jesus stepped into the needy world as the One who, in the once offering of Himself,

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would fulfil all that the sacrificial lamb of the Levitical system had symbolized. There is no adequate understanding of the Saviour's work without a full recognition of all that is meant by such words as sacrifice and blood. These stand for the Old Testament way of approach in worship which God chose to ordain in order that He might teach us the saving worth of Christ's death.

### ***New Testament Teaching***

The distinctive part of the New Testament writings which gives so clear an account of the sacrificial meaning of the death of Christ is the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Books of Exodus and Leviticus in the Old Testament must be read with this "gospel" explanation provided in the New, else they will never be understood; and, similarly, the Epistle to the Hebrews cannot do other than remain a closed book without the key which the Old Testament supplies.

If we turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews we learn that our Lord's death "purged our sins" (chapter 1:3) and was to "make reconciliation ('propitiation' RV) for the sins of the people" (chapter 2:17). Our Lord's sacrifice was spiritual in that it was "himself" (chapter 9:14) He offered; and His amazing sacrifice for sin was final and effectual in that it was made "once for all," and constituted "one sacrifice for sins for ever" (chapter 10:10, 12).

The remainder of the New Testament Epistles provides us with such important truths as the following:

**1. Christ's death was the fruit of God's love.** "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8) and, "hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16). This truth will be more particularly observed when we examine the meaning of Christ's death as a propitiation.

**2. Christ's death was substitutionary in its purpose.** He died "for us" (1 Thess. 5:10) and was "made a curse for

us" (Gal. 3:13). Peter echoes the language of Isaiah and speaks of the Saviour "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on tree, . . . by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). Consult also Numbers 14:34, Leviticus 5:17, and Exodus 28:43, where it is plain that to bear sin is to suffer its consequences. Peter affirms again in 1 Peter 3:18, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." By the substitutionary death of Christ is meant that He took the sinner's place (see the profound words of 2 Corinthians 5:21) and endured all that belonged to the sinner, so that the sinner might stand as free from guilt and condemnation as the Son of God.

*"Bearing shame and scoffing rude,  
In my place, condemned He stood;  
Sealed my pardon with His blood  
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!"*

**3. Christ's death was a propitiation.** This means that as a result of it, God, who must wear a stern countenance towards the sinner on account of his sin, may now smile on him. Sometimes the truth of propitiation is misunderstood as teaching that Christ has to persuade God to love the sinner, but this is a totally wrong idea and is quite contrary to Scripture. Recall the words of John 3:16, and you will at once know that Christ came, not to help God to love us, but because God already loved us. Propitiation, then, so far from being the cause of God's love, is one of the fruits of it. "Herein is love," says John, "not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). God is ever loving, and He loved sinners from the first; but He was able to act propitiously (gently) towards them because of the removal of their sins by Christ.

**4. Christ's death redeems the sinner.** The words *redeem* and *redemption* refer to the liberating of a prisoner or a slave by means of payment. So far, we have not used many of our Lord's own precious sayings, but on this aspect of His

work He spoke most clearly. He says, "The Son of man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). The word *ransom* is the term used in New Testament times for the price paid in a slave-market for the release of a slave. The death of Christ is thus a "liberating exchange price" by which sinners are set free (cf. John 8:36). This truth is taken up strongly in the epistles, as in Galatians 3:13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law"; in 1 Corinthians 6:20, "Ye are bought with a price"; and in Ephesians 1:7, "In whom we have redemption through his blood." Christ's blood is the great purchase price for the freedom of the guilty sinner.

**5. Christ's death provides an atonement.** "Atonement" is one of the difficult words in the Scripture. It is found chiefly in the Old Testament and stands for the idea of "covering." Sin is thus said to be "covered," or atoned for, by the Old Testament sacrifices described in Exodus and Leviticus. These sacrifices were designed symbolically to make

amends for sin, and they pointed towards the effects of the work of Christ. The claims of God's holy law were satisfied by the Lord Jesus Christ, first in His life of obedience, and then in His suffering of the "wages of sin" in His own body on the tree, and so He made an "atonement" for man's sin.

By now you will have begun to see what a vast amount of teaching there is to be found in the Scriptures about the atonement. A short survey of the kind we have just attempted must necessarily fall far short of a full unfolding of the Biblical teaching, but what has been written will point the way to a balanced understanding of this wonderful truth. Perhaps the best summary with which to finish is that provided in the lines of a children's hymn:

*We may not know, we cannot tell  
What pains He had to bear;  
But we believe it was for us  
He hung and suffered there.* ■

—Reprinted with permission from "What the Scriptures Teach"

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## Escape for Your Life

by Joel R. Beeke

God speaks. Sometimes He whispers by the still small voice of the gospel to us in tender overtures of mercy through the preached Word. Sometimes He speaks through His Word with power, warning us to turn from our iniquity. And sometimes He thunders through His divine, providential judgments of famine, war, fire, or some other tragedy.

On Tuesday, September 11, 2001, God spoke to us in thunder. He did so because we as a nation have not been bowing under His Word, have not been repenting under His stream of mercies

showered upon us for decades, and have not repented under the smaller judgments He has sent our way. God sent a just, dreadful wake-up call to America—yes, to every one of us. The staggering destruction of lives at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the subsequent tales of horror, have left us stunned, speechless, and humbled.

Some heroically tried to save those in the buildings, and in the process, lost their own lives. Countless stories have been told of heroic deeds. One, little noticed, contains much spiritual instruc-

tion. A policeman, situated just outside the entrance of the buildings, shouted to the people as they streamed out,

*“Don’t look up; don’t look back; run for your life!”*

Those words remind us of Genesis 19:17b, “Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.”

Let’s examine heaven’s message to us in this time of divine judgment by considering the theme, *Escape for Your Life*, in three thoughts:

1. Realize your danger—“lest thou be consumed.”
2. Forsake all—“look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain.”
3. Run for your life—“escape for thy life.”

### ***1. Realize Your Danger***

When the cry of “Fire! Fire!” ran up and down the floors of the World Trade Center and filled the streets of New York city, people knew in a moment that danger was imminent. Flames are cruel tyrants and devour remorselessly. The very word *fire* can send chills down our spines.

But that word uttered by thousands of New Yorkers on September 11 is only a shadow of what Jesus called “hell fire” in Matthew 5:22. The eternal cry of “hell fire” that shall ascend from millions of lips in the eternal abyss on the Day of Judgment, comprehends weighty matters that only eternity can reveal. As dreadful as the events of the recent weeks were, they are all but child’s play compared with the wrath of God that will one day be poured out without mixture upon all those who do not repent and believe in God’s Son. God’s wrath against unbelievers has eternity and infinity and deity in it—and where these three oppose a person, woe be to that person! Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire of God’s wrath and with everlasting burning?

We deserve far worse than we have received, for North America has been unfruitful spiritually. We have slighted God’s gospel, despised God’s law, and served the Lord lukewarmly at best. We have neglected personal conversion and reformation. We have grown idolatrous, covetous, worldly, sensual, proud, and self-indulgent, addicting ourselves to a host of evils. We have become a nation of liars, backbiters, and murmurers. The blood of unborn millions is on our hands. Every three days we murder more babies in their mothers’ wombs in America than were killed in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania tragedies combined. We have called evil good, and good evil.

And yet, God is speaking to us from the ashes of the World Trade Center, “Escape for your life, lest you be consumed.”

Our danger cannot be overcome by any human help. Fire engines went to the scene in New York, only to be burned up in the flames. Cranes are now picking up burned out fire engines and casting them aside like toothpicks. The very means used to extinguish the fire were consumed by the fire.

That is your danger, so long as you are unsaved. No means of your devising can enable you to escape the fire of God’s wrath. There is a fire of sin within you that you cannot quench; there is a fire of hell outside of you that you will never be able to extinguish. You are in danger beyond your coping ability, so long as you don’t escape for your life to Jesus Christ. Your most strenuous efforts, naturally and spiritually, cannot deliver you from the wrath of a holy God who cannot dwell with sin and sinners. If you neglect the only way of salvation, how can you escape?

*O sinner, seek His face,  
Whose wrath you cannot bear;  
Fly to the dying Saviour’s wounds,  
And find salvation there.*

Escape for your life. Realize your danger. Don't trifle with your own soul, with hell and heaven, with God, and His bleeding, inviting Son.

Your danger requires immediate attention. Those people who successfully escaped the World Trade Center this week, didn't stop to fill their briefcases. They escaped for their lives! They ran for the stairs. There was not a moment to waste. So it is with you. You have not a moment to lose. "Escape, Lot," the angels say, "for your life—it is now or never. A few more minutes, a few more hours, and it will be too late."

"Escape for thy life, lest thou be consumed" is a present-tense cry. "Behold, now is the accepted time—now is the day of salvation." Now, now, now! Tomorrow's faith is simply today's unbelief. Good intentions will bring you to hell, not to heaven. Procrastination doesn't only steal time; it destroys souls. "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die and not live."

There is but a step between us and death. Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, trembling and needy sinner, and you shall be saved. Don't repent and don't believe, and you will be lost. John 3:36 says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

## ***II. Forsake All***

Lot had to forsake his former friends, who were not believers—including some family members. He had to forsake his former comforts. He had gone to Sodom to live a comfortable life. No doubt he had a well-furnished home. But now, he had to leave everything behind.

Lot had everything at stake. If he had stayed in Sodom, he would have lost all. He would not just have lost his home, his furniture, and his family, but he would have lost himself.

Lot had to forsake all from his heart.

His wife escaped, but not with her heart. She looked back and became a pillar of salt. "Remember Lot's wife," Jesus warned (Luke 17:32).

If you don't forsake all to follow Christ—if you try to cling to this world, or allow your self-indulgence or possessions to stand between you and Christ—one day, soon, you will lose everything, including yourself. What will it profit you if you gain the entire world, but lose your own soul? If you don't forsake all for Christ, Christ will forsake you on the great day, and if your soul is lost in that day, it would have been far better for you to have never been born. Far, far better to enter heaven like Lazarus than to be the rich man cast into hell (Luke 16:19-31).

Escape for your life. Don't look behind you. Don't stay in the plains of this world. Forsake evil friends, materialistic bondage, worldly toys—yes, forsake all to follow Christ. Take up your cross, deny yourself, and follow Christ.

Escape for your life—your immortal life, your eternal life. Will you be content to lose your life; content to perish in your sin? If your house was set on fire tonight, and the cry arose, "Fire!"; would you not immediately leave everything behind and run out of your house to save your life? Today God calls to you that the fires of hell are stoked, and that you must escape for your life.

Dear child of God, you have known what this is. You have forsaken all in the past. Are you still forsaking all in the present? Or, are you like Lot, lingering too much in this world, becoming too cozy with worldly people? Are you in danger again of perishing with the world?

Don't forget: if Lot had not escaped, he would have perished with the Sodomites. God, of course, graciously preserved him. But that doesn't mean that Lot didn't have to forsake all and escape for his life.

### III. Run for Your Life

“Escape for your life, Lot,” the angels said. Lot must not stop to argue. Nor must you. You don’t need more evidence of your need. Your conscience tells you that you must be born again, that you must repent and believe.

As Lot must run from the doomed city of Sodom; as the people had to run from the doomed Trade Center, so you must run from this present, evil world, this City of Destruction. Run for your life.

But where must I run? Run to the mountain. Symbolically, that means don’t return to sin and Satan, for that is looking back to Sodom. Don’t rest in yourself or the world, for that is staying in the plain. But run to Christ and heaven, for that is escaping to the mountain. Entrust your soul, your all, to Him for this life and a better.

If you won’t entrust your soul to Christ, whom can you trust? Will you trust yourself?

Why do you linger? Is not Christ the Physician and His blood the balm that you need? Why are you not recovered (Jer. 8:22)? Your conscience tells you that God is more willing to save you than you are to be saved. You know the good news that Christ came to save sinners. You know that the chiefest of sinners is welcome with Him. Even the dying thief on the cross—whose record may well have been able to compete with the terrorists behind all of this

recent destruction—found mercy.

“Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,” Jesus said. Oh, may God help you to come now, for Christ’s sake.

Yes, but how do I come? You come, by the Spirit’s grace, just as you are, with all your sin, repenting, believing, surrendering all into the arms of God, pleading God’s promises to save the lost. You come trusting wholly in the blood of Jesus Christ to save your soul, forsaking the ways of sin. You come in gracious response to the free offers and promises of the gospel as a poor, needy sinner, trusting in the full righteousness of Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. You come trusting Christ’s perfect, active obedience to the law and His perfect, passive obedience in paying for sin to be your satisfaction of God’s holy justice; to be your only ground of reconciliation with God, as Paul tells us. You come, saying with a poet,

*A wounded, weak, and helpless worm,  
On Christ’s kind arms I fall;  
Be thou my strength and confidence,  
My Jesus and my all.*

Oh, I beseech you, run for your life; run straight to Christ. Don’t run to ceremonies, feelings, ministers, works, orthodoxies—but run straight to Christ. Fall into His arms—the arms of the evangel, the arms of the Saviour who Himself is the gospel.

Don’t look behind you. Run for your life. Be ye reconciled to God. ■

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*“The uplifted arm of vengeance is yet stayed. The collected wrath yet waits a moment. A voice from the mercy-seat, a warning voice, is heard. The Saviour calls. Haste then, O sinner, haste to Christ, the only refuge from the storm. Then, safe from the fear of evil, at a distance you shall only hear the thunders roll; while pardon, and peace, and eternal life are yours.”*

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—Asahel Nettleton

# The Old Cross and the New

by A. W. Tozer

All unannounced and mostly undetected there has come in modern times a new cross into popular evangelical circles. It is like the old cross, but different: the likenesses are superficial; the differences, fundamental.

From this new cross has sprung a new philosophy of the Christian life, and from that new philosophy has come a new evangelical technique—a new type of meeting and a new kind of preaching. This new evangelism employs the same language as the old, but its content is not the same and its emphasis not as before.

The old cross would have no truck with the world. For Adam's proud flesh it meant the end of the journey. It carried into effect the sentence imposed by the law of Sinai. The new cross is not opposed to the human race; rather, it is a friendly pal and, if understood aright, it is the source of oceans of good clean fun and innocent enjoyment. It lets Adam live without interference. His life motivation is unchanged; he still lives for his own pleasure, only now he takes delight in singing choruses and watching religious movies instead of singing bawdy songs and drinking hard liquor. The accent is still on enjoyment, though the fun is now on a higher plane morally if not intellectually.

The new cross encourages a new and entirely different evangelistic approach. The evangelist does not demand abnegation of the old life before a new life can be received. He preaches not contrasts but similarities. He seeks to key

into public interest by showing that Christianity makes no unpleasant demands; rather, it offers the same thing the world does, only on a higher level. Whatever the sin-mad world happens to be clamoring after at the moment is cleverly shown to be the very thing the gospel offers, only the religious product is better.

The new cross does not slay the sinner, it redirects him. It gears him into a cleaner and jollier way of living and saves his self-respect. To the self-assertive it says, "Come and assert yourself for Christ." To the egotist it says, "Come and do your boasting in the Lord." To the thrill-seeker it says, "Come and enjoy the thrill of Christian fellowship." The Christian message is slanted in the direction of the current vogue in order to make it acceptable to the public.

The philosophy back of this kind of thing may be sincere but its sincerity does not save it from being false. It is false because it is blind. It misses completely the whole meaning of the cross.

The old cross is a symbol of death. It stands for the abrupt, violent end of a human being. The man in Roman times who took up his cross and started down the road had already said good-bye to his friends. He was not coming back. He was going out to have it ended. The cross made no compromise, modified nothing, spared nothing; it slew all of the man, completely and for good. It did not try to keep on good terms with his victim. It struck cruel and hard, and

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when it had finished its work, the man was no more.

The race of Adam is under death sentence. There is no commutation and no escape. God cannot approve any of the fruits of sin, however innocent they may appear or beautiful to the eyes of men. God salvages the individual by liquidating him and then raising him again to newness of life.

That evangelism which draws friendly parallels between the ways of God and the ways of man is false to the Bible and cruel to the souls of its hearers. The faith of Christ does not parallel the world, it intersects it. In coming to Christ we do not bring our old life up onto a higher plane; we leave it at the cross. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die.

We, who preach the gospel, must not think of ourselves as public relations agents sent to establish good will between Christ and the world. We must not imagine ourselves commissioned to make Christ acceptable to big business, the press, the world of sports or modern education. We are not diplomats but prophets, and our message is not a compromise but an ultimatum.

God offers life, but not an improved old life. The life He offers is life out of death. It stands always on the far side of the cross. Whoever would possess it must pass under the rod. He must repudiate himself and concur in God's just sentence against him.

What does this mean to the individual, the condemned man who would find life in Christ Jesus? How can this theology be translated into life? Simply, he must repent and believe. He must forsake his sins and then go on to forsake himself. Let him cover nothing, defend nothing, excuse nothing. Let him not seek to make terms with God, but let him bow his head before the stroke of God's stern displeasure and acknowledge himself worthy to die.

Having done this let him gaze with

simple trust upon the risen Saviour, and from Him will come life and rebirth and cleansing and power. The cross that ended the earthly life of Jesus now puts an end to the sinner; and the power that raised Christ from the dead now raises him to a new life along with Christ.

To any who may object to this or count it merely a narrow and private view of truth, let me say God has set His hallmark of approval upon this message from Paul's day to the present. Whether stated in these exact words or not, this has been the content of all preaching that has brought life and power to the world through the centuries. The mystics, the reformers, the revivalists have put their emphasis here, and signs and wonders and mighty operations of the Holy Ghost gave witness to God's approval.

Dare we, the heirs of such a legacy of power, tamper with the truth? Dare we with our stubby pencils erase the lines of the blueprint or alter the pattern shown us in the Mount? May God forbid. Let us preach the old cross and we will know the old power. ■

—This article first appeared in *The Alliance Witness* in 1946. It has been printed in virtually every English-speaking country in the world and has been put into tract form by various publishers, including Christian Publishers, Inc. It still appears now and then in the religious press.



Substitution is the very heart of the gospel. If Christ did not actually and literally die in my place I cannot be saved. The atonement of Jesus is the foundation of my assurance. Preachers need to expound the propitiation of Christ clearly and constantly. —E. Hulse

# The Wretched Man of Romans 7 Sorted Out

by Erroll Hulse

We have seen that the law has an essential role before conversion. "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ" (Gal. 3:24). The law was given by Moses to convince the Jews of their transgressions as well as instruct them as to the requirements of God. The law was given to convince men of the necessity of a Saviour. The law exposed their guilt but could afford no remedy for the removal of it. The law is described as a schoolmaster because the Jews were confined under the discipline and fear of it like schoolchildren at a boarding school not permitted to go out.

Since the law did no more than convince them of their lost and undone condition from which they could not escape, they would be more disposed to follow Christ to freedom since He has the full solution for sin and guilt.

Is there no further role for the schoolmaster once we have received forgiveness and justification? The confinement under the school of the law no longer applies. We are made free now, not to break the law but rather to use it as our guide. This distinction is essential.

In the seventh chapter of Romans the apostle sets out the place of the law in the clearest fashion as follows:

1. The law can never justify (7:1-6).
2. The law served to bring Paul under conviction of sin (7:7-13).
3. The role of the law in the believer's experience (7:14-25).

The fourteenth verse of the chapter is the turning point, for there the apostle switches from the past tense to the present tense. He begins at that point to describe what the law did to him as a believer. As he concludes his description

he cries out, "O wretched man that I am!"

Since true religion was never designed to make men miserable, it is felt by some that this description could not possibly apply to Christians or, if it does, it is an abnormal experience from which the Christian should try to escape as soon as possible. It is unthinkable, it is said, that believers should go about feeling wretched. They should be rejoicing always because of their justification. Because of statements such as these, the idea has become popular that Romans 7 is a state through which some believers pass, but it is only on the way to the normal state described at the beginning of Romans 8. The sooner the condition of Romans 8 is reached, the better.

In contrast to that, there are others who say that Romans 7 describes the Christian in his very best condition, and that the more mature a believer is the more he appreciates the sentiments of the concluding section of Romans 7 as descriptive of himself.

When difficulties and differences of interpretation such as this arise it is good to stand back and view Romans 7 within the perspective of the whole life of the apostle and all his writings. He certainly never went around as a man lamenting his dreadful calamity and smiting his breast continually saying, "O wretched man that I am!" However, we can recognize in him a basic and deep humility which colors all his actions and sayings. We can see the principles of Romans 7 at work all the time. Those principles are the perfect requirements of God's law, love for that law, an ever-present awareness of the flesh being unable to satisfy those demands, and a realistic understanding of

the limitations and inability of human nature. But at the same time there is an appreciation of the corresponding abilities of the spiritual mind as enabled by the Holy Spirit. Constant awareness of indwelling sin (and the need to mortify it) and of life in the Spirit as portrayed in Romans 8 characterized Paul's testimony. There is surely no need to divorce the one from the other. The experience of human inability and of God's enabling is concurrent. There is absolutely no need to set up a conflict between Romans 7 and 8 and divide them asunder. Indeed it is only the man who knows his weakness that lives by God's strength. God's strength is made perfect in weakness.

We need to go further and recognize the ebb and flow, the ups and downs, in the ocean-tide of Christian experience. Surely, it hardly needs saying that the average Christian has occasions of deep conviction of sin. He does not feel that conviction every moment he lives. Isaiah did not spend the whole of his life experiencing the sight of the Lord's glory in the temple and the conviction of uncleanness that followed. Jonah did not spend the whole of life living inside the fish's belly. There are times when the wretchedness of sin is felt by us. The good work of conviction is done and we go forward. The feeling of it passes away, but not altogether. It is there, ready always to return to fulfill a good work in us by portraying the perfection we must strive to attain and our need of spiritual ability to attain it.

To summarize, we see, firstly, that experience of the wretchedness of the flesh and the power of the Spirit are concurrent—not separated into watertight compartments, but felt and experienced together. Secondly, both these aspects of experience form part of the full ocean of experience. There are many other aspects as the chapter titles suggest and no one experience should be isolated and exalted at the expense of the others.

However, the wretched man of Romans 7 is still not sorted out. Can we be sure

that he is indeed a Christian, and not only a Christian but a Christian at the zenith of his experience rather than at an immature level?

To proceed directly then, who but a mature believer of advanced experience holds together at one and the same time very clear views of the various elements which constitute the spiritual warfare of the Christian? Paul brings together the law of God and its demands, an understanding of the nature of the opposition to that law by indwelling sin, and a full view of where our strength lies.

According to Jonathan Edwards, one of the most important signs of regeneration is that a person delights in the holiness or moral excellence of God. That is a very important matter, because it is the opposite of the unregenerate nature. The essence of the unregenerate nature is that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The mark of the regenerate, on the other hand, is that he is subject to God's law. Here we find Paul delighting in the law of God after the inward man (v. 22). The inward man represents the very heart and core of a man, his mind or center of his personality. If in his inmost being he delights in God's law, that surely can only be the result of renewal. If a man in his will and affections is in love with God and his law, surely that is decisive evidence that he is born from above?

With this mind, Paul served the law of God (v. 25). To please God is what absorbed him. He was intent on fulfilling the spiritual content of the law. Such represents the mind of a regenerate man.

How can the objection be answered that Paul in the same context complains about being carnal and sold under sin and doing what he hated? Did not Elijah say to Ahab, "Thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kings 21:20)? But Paul is not saying that he has abandoned himself to evil, but rather that the indwelling propensity to sin was in and of itself totally evil. There could be

no compromise whatever with indwelling sin which he designates or calls “the flesh.” Of that flesh he has nothing good to say. It is wholly sinful, sold under sin.

Now, the more a man is in love with God and His will as reflected in the moral law and all His precepts, the more sensitive he will be to the contradiction to that law that he still finds within his nature as a man. The unwillingness to respond, the sloth, the resistance to that which is right—all this is a cause of trouble and grief to a truly spiritual person. “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day” declares the psalmist (Psa. 119:97). Intimate acquaintance with the law brings a knowledge of its spiritual content and the full import of its requirements. Such a knowledge results in painful awareness of shortcoming and deficit in fulfillment of what is required. Oh yes, we have been forgiven and justified, but how far short we fall of what we desire to be. Instead of being as swift of foot as was Asahel we find lead weights on our feet. Our performance is sluggish and wretched. The cry from our hearts is real, “O wretched man that I am!” It is because we know what kind of performance we *should* give that we are so unhappy with what we *do* produce for God. This is not an exercise in futility. It is an invaluable reckoning with reality and a coming to grips with the limitations we experience as those who are still in the flesh. These factors press us to avail ourselves to the full of those resources the Holy Spirit has for us which are described in Romans 8.

A man in his very best spiritual condition recognizes the conflict and what it is all about— “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that you would” (Gal. 5:17).

The wretched man of Romans 7, then, is not a libertine who says that he couldn’t care less about God’s law. He is not antinomian, that is one who disregards the law and falls into all manner of

sins because he refuses to heed that which is defined by the law as sin. The wretched man is one who delights in the law as holy, just, good, and spiritual.

The wretched man of Romans 7 is not a legalist who is so stupid as to think that he can gain justification by the law. Nobody knows the first six verses of Chapter 7 better than the wretched man himself. After all, the wretched man was the author of the epistle to the Galatians which warns strongly that the law should never be used as a basis for justification. To him the law is knowledge and instruction. Christ only is his justification. Christ who kept the law perfectly for him is his justification. Christ his righteousness vindicated the law. Christ who is his justification expounded the law in the sermon on the mount. Finally, it is Christ who died because of the penalty which the law inflicts upon transgressors.

The wretched man of Romans 7 is Paul the realist who has come to know the nature of the fight, the enemy within and, best of all, the victory that is his through Christ. For this the wretched man is everlastingly thankful.

The wretched man of Romans 7 not only stands for Paul who wrote it, but represents every Christian who is reckoning realistically with the battle of the flesh as it wars against the Spirit. The wretched man, dear Christian, is you! It is you viewed in a particular way. If this is not part of your experience then you still have a long way to go.

God intends that the work of sanctification should form part of our lives. This involves the process of eradicating sin. The law is an essential toil to this end. If a man lives only for his happy experiences he is likely to be a carnal prig. Thinking himself to be blessed, he will be oblivious of the world of sin within which will certainly be observed by others. No man is more wretched than the man who has never discovered his true wretchedness and God’s remedy to deal with it. ■

—Reprinted from *The Believers’ Experience*

## Good News for Troubled Hearts

### *Quotes from early Anabaptists selected by J. C. Wenger*

*Christ takes our sins away.* “O Lord, dear Lord, have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and afflicted; my sins are many and great; my conscience troubles me; my thoughts disturb me; my heart laments and sighs because I have sinned so heinously before Thee. . . . And yet the deeper I am grieved, the more I am consoled by Thy Word, for it teaches me Thy mercy, grace, and favor and the remission of my sins through Christ, Thy beloved Son, our Lord, ignoring the fact that I neither knew nor feared Thee. This promise quiets me. This promise gladdens me; it leads me with the sinful woman to Thy blessed feet with full confidence and clear conscience, knowing that Thou didst not reject Thy returning son although I have spent my paternal inheritance dishonorably . . . in a strange country. . . .” —Menno, *CW*, 77, 78

*Christ’s mission as Redeemer (as Christ might have said it).* “By the kindness of my heavenly Father, I am come into the world, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, I became a visible, tangible, and dying man; in all points like unto you, sin excepted. I was born of Mary, the unpolluted mother and pure virgin; I descended from heaven, sprang from the mouth of the Most High, the firstborn of every creature, the first and last, the beginning and the end, the Son of the Almighty God; anointed with the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel to the poor; to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to give sight to the blind, to open the prison to them that are bound, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. . . . I am the Lamb that was sacrificed for you. I take away the sins of the whole world. My Father has made me unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. . . . Yea, all that believe that I am He, shall have eternal life.” —Menno, *CW*, 115, 116

“. . . I left the glory of my Father, and came into this sad world as a poor slave to serve you. For I saw that you all belonged to the devil, and that there was none to redeem you. . . . Therefore did I come from heaven, and became a poor, weak, and dying man, in all things like unto you, sin excepted. In my great love I sought you out with zeal, found you miserable, sorrowful, yes, half dead. The services of my love I have demonstrated so heartily toward you; your sores I bandaged; your blood I wiped away; wine and oil I have poured into your putrid wounds . . . the law I have fulfilled for you; your sins I took away.” —Menno, *CW*, 147

“Through His suffering Christ has made satisfaction for the sin of all men.”  
—Hans Denck, *Writings*, 124

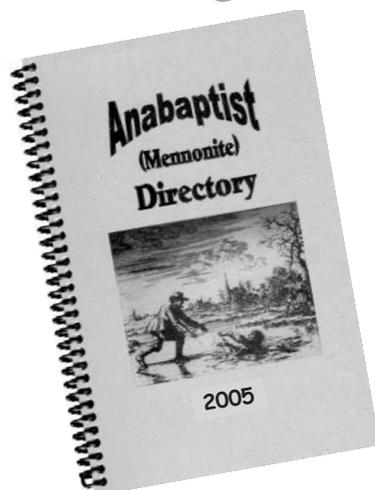
*Christ, the center of the good news:* “That Gospel is the blessed announcement of the favor and grace of God to us, and of forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus. Faith accepts this Gospel through the Holy Spirit, and does not consider former righteousness or unrighteousness, but hopes against hope (Rom. 4:18), and with the whole heart casts itself upon the grace, Word, and promises of the Lord, since it knows that God is true, and that His promises cannot fail. In this the heart is renewed, converted, justified, becomes pious, peaceable, and joyous, is born a child of God, approaches with full confidence the throne of grace, and so becomes a joint heir of Christ and a possessor of eternal life.” —Menno, *CW*, 115

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