

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.”

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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the press reports: "Some teachers are reluctant to cover the atrocity for fear of upsetting students whose beliefs include Holocaust denial." Get it? They are told at home or by Muslim preachers that the Holocaust never happened, and rather than challenge this misinformation, [some] teachers are shutting up so as not to disturb a worldview based on lies.

Considering that anti-Semitic attacks in the UK were up by 50 percent in 2006—as many as 590 cases of violence and vandalism were reported against Jewish people and their institutions—failing to teach the facts of the Holocaust not only magnifies the breach of faith with truth but fans the flames of intolerance.

Equally disturbing is a report that the UK has decided to stop using the term *war on terror*. The reason given is that it strengthens terrorists by making them feel part of a larger struggle. British International Development Secretary Hilary Benn reasons that terrorists are not an organized enemy with a clear identity and a "coherent set of objectives." Rather, said Benn, they are a "small number of loose, shifting and disparate groups who have relatively little in common apart from their identification with others who share their distorted view of the world and their idea of being a part of something bigger."

In other words, we've badly overstated the case and there is no global war of terror. We're simply dealing with a ragtag band of misfit thugs who want to puff up their own egos through our use of the term. Not only is such a view an extreme case of denial, but it also will reap dire consequences for those ostrich-like thinkers who insist on thrusting their heads into the sand.

So What's the Message?

First, we must recognize that we do not live in a tolerant, loving, caring, want-to-do-the-right-thing world. In fact, much of humanity doesn't have a clue about such niceties. And hostility toward serious believers is growing more intense each day.

Second, we cannot create Christian cocoons, or safe zones, that minister only to those we can touch or feel. We must have a coherent understanding not only of the needs of those in our circles—be it church, family, or friends—but of conditions outside our immediate spheres. To have a "worldview," one must be exposed to the facts of life in the wider world fellow believers occupy.

As a former pastor, I would suggest that it is essential to weave into pulpit and teaching presentations information (even if it is unpleasant) that affects us and our extended Christian family, meaning believers around the world.

Third, as people charged to obtain and exercise discernment, we must understand the facts, trends, and prophetic implications that are developing. We can only do so if guided by a biblical intimacy that means being grounded in the Word.

I am reminded of the words attributed to the Rev. Martin Niemöller, a German pastor during World War II who fell out of favor with Hitler, was arrested for treason, and spent time in concentration camps. He wrote the following:

First they came for the Jews
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for the Communists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Communist.
Then they came for the trade unionists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for me
and there was no one left
to speak out for me.

Then they came for me. May that never be said of us because of our failure to stand up, speak out, and extend a hand of help to the oppressed. ■

Elwood McQuaid is executive editor for The Friends of Israel.

—Reprinted with permission from *Israel My Glory*, July/August, 2007

Person of the Month: *Gladys Aylward* (1902-1970)



Part 1

Born into a working-class family February 24, 1902, in Edmonton near London, England, Gladys Aylward was the oldest of two sisters and one brother. Her father was a postman.

Although her schooling was considered by some to be adequate, it would later be a cause for rejection.

As a child she enjoyed play-acting and service. When the Zeppelins would fly over during World War I she would gather all the children on her street into her parlor and play and sing hymns loudly with the foot organ in order to drown out the noise of the bombs.

In 1918, at the age of 14, Gladys went to work as a parlor maid in the rich West End manors.

Aylward was raised in the Anglican Church but attended only occasionally. However, in 1922, at the age of 18, she accepted Christ as her Lord and Saviour after attending one such service in her local church. After her conversion she definitely felt the Lord calling her to be a missionary to China. She tried to prepare herself for missionary service. She applied to the China Inland Mission but after three months of training she was turned down due to the fact that her education was not considered adequate enough. The director of the mission found her a job doing house-keeping for two retired missionaries. They were of much help to her and encouraged Gladys to continue her pursuit of missionary service. They got her a job as a Rescue Sister in South Wales finding runaway girls down by the waterfront and taking them to a place of shelter.

While in England, recuperating from pneumonia, she heard of a widowed missionary, Mrs. Jeannie Lawson, in China who needed someone young to help in the work there. She contacted Lawson and was told to come to China. She had no money to make the trip so she got a job as a maid for an author, Sir Francis Younghusband, who had traveled all over China. He had many books about the country that he loaned to her to read.

Aylward went to the agent of the travel office enquiring about a ticket to China. She made a bargain with the agent that she would bring him money every Friday against the price of the ticket. Gladys worked for two years to save enough money for the trip by rail, as traveling by boat was too expensive. On October 15, 1932, she said her good-byes to her family and left with two and a half pennies in her pocket on an adventurous trip to China. It was a difficult task to get to China by train since Russia and China were involved in an undeclared border war, but in November of 1932, after four weeks, 5,000 miles, and many trials she arrived at her destination in the city of Yangcheng, located in a mountainous region south of what is now called Beijing. When she stepped off the train she knew why God had made her 4' 10" tall, with black hair and a round face, instead of blonde curls like her childhood playmates.

Mule caravans laden with goods regularly stopped in the city overnight on the journey over the mountains to other parts of the country. Mrs. Lawson and Gladys felt that they could have an opportunity to share the Gospel by opening an inn to house the muleteers. In addition to providing good food, a warm bed, and provisions for the mules, the ladies spent

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A View of Morality

by William Brown, Ph.D.

Homosexuality has become a watershed issue of American culture. Sex as God intended it has been lowered from the sacred intimacy of a one-man, one-woman covenant relationship to a complex web of social, cultural, and personal issues complicated by confusing scientific and psychological studies.

Studying the topic of homosexuality from a worldview perspective provides a unique opportunity to understand the broader issues at the heart of the discussion. The three major worldviews—transcendentalism, naturalism, and theism—approach sexual behavior differently, though almost always as a product of personal morality.

Transcendental Hesitations: Don't Ask, Don't Tell

The transcendental worldview assumes there is no God “out there” but that the divine reality is present in all things. Morality is determined by that which promotes unity with others and the cosmic oneness of all things.

In traditional transcendental religions, there are disagreements about how homosexuality is integrated into basic beliefs and society. In most transcendental cultures, homosexuality is discouraged for both religious and cultural reasons. For example, Tibetan Buddhism bans homosexual activity but does not condemn homosexuals for their sexual orientation. Hindu sacred texts contain little mention of homosexuality, but interestingly, the world's most Hindu nation, India, prescribes life in prison for homosexual acts. Thailand, on the other hand, is essentially tolerant of all kinds of sexual expression.

Western forms of transcendentalism (New Age, Wicca, Scientology, etc.) usually accept and encourage homosexuality. The guiding ethic in these movements is to choose activities that are mutually beneficial, do no harm to another person, and break no commitments.

Natural Freedom: Be All You Are

Naturalism as a worldview holds that there are no moral restrictions outside of human reason and discourse. The idea that there is a God who directs the affairs of man is seen as dangerous. Naturalism generally follows a utilitarian ethical guideline for all sexual practice.

Since naturalism embraces the idea that all reality is physical, homosexuality, it is believed, is physically determined by genetic predisposition and social influences. Sexual orientation is thus hard-wired into each person, and environmental influences mold desires and behavior. Any moral restrictions, religious or otherwise, are against these natural impulses and are viewed as backward and oppressive.

One writer noted simply, “One of the best ways to defend atheism is to defend homosexuality.” But if this were true, you would expect believers in God to oppose homosexuality. Sadly, this is not always so.

Theistic Truth: In the Name of Love?

The most interesting collage of views concerning homosexuality exists among those who would be described as having a theistic worldview. Most Muslims and

(continued on page 4)

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

Seeing or Just Looking?

by Dan Stetler

I know he saw me! He had to! He looked directly at me! But he obviously did not see me! All those thoughts raced through my mind as I lay sprawled across the hood of a car and looked through the windshield into the face of a shocked man who had just pulled directly in front of me as I was riding my ten-speed bike. He jumped out of his car shouting, "I'm sorry. I am so sorry! I didn't even see you! Are you hurt?" But he **HAD TO SEE ME . . . HE LOOKED DIRECTLY AT ME . . .** No, I was not hurt except for a few scratches. My bike was a little worse for the experience and his fender had a new crease in it, but I still wonder how he could not have seen me.

Sometimes, like the man I just described, we simply do not see what is really there. Our attention is elsewhere. Our brain is in neutral. We are captivated by a thousand distractions. As a result, eyes which can see and should see, simply do not see. We don't see the opportunities we are missing, the pain we are causing, the unmet responsibilities that have our name all over them. **WE JUST DO NOT SEE!**

Jesus repeatedly talked about people who had the ability to see and the opportunity to see, but did not see. He seemed rather amazed at the blindness of the Pharisees after He healed the blind man in John 9. When He was explaining the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13, He spoke of those who "seeing, see not and hearing do not understand." In these cases, people had the opportunity to see Jesus with their physical eyes and watch Him perform miracles, but they could not see Him for who He really was! They let the opportunity of a lifetime, and eternity, for that matter, slip through their fingers.

I don't know about you, but I shake my head in amazement and ask myself how they could possibly miss something so obvious. And yet I know that I am in danger of doing exactly the same thing! I take time to read God's Word every day, but I am in danger of reading it until it becomes common to me. I see the words on the page, but I do not see the message it contains for me.

I see the world around me every day, but after having seen this world for over fifty

years, I am in danger of seeing only the vice and sin which is so troubling. The world of Jesus' day was just as sin-cursed as our world is. It had rejected Him, hurt Him, and mocked Him, but when He looked at His world He looked beyond all the sin, and saw a world He had come to save. His response was to cry out, "Look at the harvest! It is white and ready to harvest!" He looked at a world that had rejected and crucified Him, as He was about to return to heaven, and He felt so passionately about it that some of His last words were "GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD." I cannot speak for you, but I know I am in very real danger of seeing that world, but not seeing it at all!

In the Book of Revelation Jesus specifically addressed this problem of seeing but not seeing with the church at Laodicea. They saw themselves as well-fixed and not really needing anything (Revelation 3:17). But it was obvious that they were not seeing what He saw because His assessment was that they were wretched, miserable, poor, naked, and blind (Revelation 3:18).

This glaring difference in perception is frightening. How is it possible that people could be so totally deceived about their true condition? Is it possible that I, that we, could think we "have it all," only to find in the great day of judgment that God saw us as poverty-stricken and deceived because we didn't see what we should have seen?

I am happy to tell you that we have not yet finished this story! There is wonderful news at the end of this story! Christ does not just leave them in their deception. He offers them a solution! He throws the door open and invites them to come to Him for true wealth, true righteousness, and true seeing! In fact, He goes a step farther. He says, "I am not just here waiting for you to come to me, I have come to you! I am at the door knocking and if you will open the door I will come in" (Revelation 3:20).

Are you seeing right today? How do you know you are? Have you asked God recently to show you your heart as He sees it? I know that could be embarrassing, but isn't it better to see ourselves now, while we can do

something about it, than to see what we truly are when it is too late to change anything? The good news is that if you will ask, He will show you yourself. And He will not only show you yourself, He will come into your heart to clear your vision, heal your wounds, and become your friend. Are you really seeing? Or are you just looking? ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Torch* of Hobe Sound Bible College, 2007

A VIEW OF MORALITY . . .

cont'd. from pg. 2

conservative Jews reject both homosexual orientation and behavior. Liberal Jewish groups are generally more tolerant of and sometimes supportive of homosexuality.

What determines the approach to homosexuality is how moral authority is derived. Those who believe their Scriptures are the final word on sexual conduct (the Qur'an for Muslims and the Old Testament for the Jews) prohibit homosexual behavior.

The same is true for Christians. For those of us who believe that God's inerrant Word is the ultimate authority, a normal reading of both the Old and New Testaments clearly reveals the prohibition of homosexual behavior.

To be consistently biblical, Christians also recognize the distinction between homosexual acts (which the Bible condemns) and same-sex attraction. Most of us know believers who struggle with this attraction yet wish they didn't. They know that acting on this inclination, like any other inclination to sin, is something they must avoid (1 Corinthians 6:18-20). There is freedom promised in Christ even in the midst of the struggle with sin.

The biblical view of human sexuality is clear: God designed sex as a blessing to be enjoyed by one man and one woman within the context of marriage. ■

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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

Introduction to the Spring Quarter's Lessons

The lessons for the Spring Quarter under the general theme of God, His Covenant and His People, cover a wide scope of Israel's history. They begin some 800 years after the events we studied last quarter, which ended with Israel blessing and adopting Joseph's sons prior to his death. The events of this quarter's lessons span an additional period of approximately 500 years and cover the returning of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, to the renewing of the Covenant under Nehemiah after the return from exile.

Remember that the Old Testament is history, history with a purpose and a goal. The stories we will be studying are not iso-

lated events, but integral pieces of the mosaic God is forming of His people, leading to His ultimate purpose of bringing the Redeemer into the world of lost mankind. Study them with that in view and be sure to study context and intervening events in order to see the complete picture of God at work among His Covenant people.

These lessons speak of God's faithfulness to His people through varied circumstances and events and His use of various individuals to forward His purposes. These lessons are for our instruction and learning. Let's be sure to learn the lessons therein for us.

May God bless your study.

MARCH 2, 2008

The Ark Comes to Jerusalem

1 Chronicles 15:1-3, 14-16, 25-28

The Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God's presence among His people, had been taken into battle against the Philistines on the foolish assumption that it would serve as a rallying point for the children of Israel so they could defeat their opponent. However, Israel was summarily defeated and the Ark captured. First Samuel 4:1-7:2 tells the story. First Chronicles 13 provides the immediate background for today's lesson. The Ark was back in Israel, but not yet in Jerusalem, the capital city and center of worship.

Early in David's reign, after he was firmly established in the kingdom, one of his first actions was to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. We note in verse 1 that he set up a tent in a special place as the abiding place for the Ark. David saw this as a temporary arrangement

for we note in 1 Chronicles 22:7, where David gives instructions to his son Solomon, that he says "it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God." (2 Samuel 7 tells the story of David's plans.) David recognized that it took special people, the Levites, to move the Ark and that it must be moved by carrying (see Deuteronomy 10:8). After the aborted attempt to bring the Ark to Jerusalem as recorded in Chapter 13, David was careful to explicitly follow God's instructions to the letter this time.

David called the Levites together and charged them with the task of moving the Ark. They were to sanctify themselves for this task. Some were appointed to be singers and musicians. This moving of the Ark was to be a joyous act of worship and carried out according to God's instructions to Moses those many years before.

Note, too, that David called all Israel to Jerusalem to witness and participate in this significant event (v. 3). David had established

Jerusalem as his capital city and he was here beginning the process whereby it would also become the center of worship for the nation. He wanted the people, his subjects, to see the importance of this event. (Verses 17-24 detail the appointment of the various singers and musicians who were to lead this entourage bearing the Ark of God.)

David, the elders of Israel, and the high military commanders, went to the house of Obed-edom to move the Ark to Jerusalem. David had noted how God had blessed the house of Obed-edom while the Ark resided there and he coveted that blessing of God to rest upon Jerusalem, the city he had chosen as his headquarters and where he intended to establish the center of worship for the nation.

The sanctity of this event is symbolized by the robes of fine linen worn by David and the Levites who carried the Ark and who led the singing. Soon after they started back with the Ark they stopped to offer sacrifice to God (see 2 Samuel 6:12, 13).

This was a joyous event, carried out in strict accordance with God's instructions, attended by a joyous throng. All Israel participated, thereby confirming the action of their king and cementing their relationship to the God of the Ark. This was another significant step in the establishing of the kingdom. (Read through Chapter 16 to see the conclusion of events in today's lesson.)

For thought and discussion

1. One important lesson to learn from this text and its context, is that when doing God's work it must be done God's way to be certain of success.
2. The Ark was a symbol of God's presence with His people. What are some symbols we use in our worship of God today?
3. What does David's preparations for moving the Ark say about our approach to the worship of God? Discuss.
4. Contrast the outward manifestations of the worship of God under the Old Covenant with the worship of the heart with which we approach Him today. Cite some differences. And the whys.

5. David involved all Israel in this event. Discuss the value of corporate worship. Why is it necessary? What are the benefits?

MARCH 9, 2008

God's Covenant With David

1 Chronicles 17:1-15

Today's lesson immediately follows the conclusion of events in last Sunday's lesson, the bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem and the joyous assembly and celebration surrounding that event. David also provided for the ongoing care of the Ark by appointing custodians from among the Levites. With that in place he turned his attention elsewhere, to the idea of building a more permanent structure to shelter the Ark of God's presence.

David and God had a good relationship. God had helped David through many difficult and trying circumstances and David was grateful. Now, in response to God's blessing, David wanted to do something of lasting significance for God: he desired to build a permanent residence for the presence of God among His people. He said it wasn't right that he dwelt in a house of cedar and the Ark of God's Covenant resided under curtains.

David shared his plan with the Prophet Nathan who told him to "do all that is in thine heart, for God is with thee." However, God had other plans and spoke to Nathan that night and gave him a message for King David. It would not be David who would build the temple; it would be his son. (In 1 Chronicles 22:7-10 we see God's reason for not allowing David to build the temple. He was a man of war. It should be built by a man of peace.)

It would seem that God was not overly concerned about having a more permanent place for His presence among His people (vv. 6, 7). However, He did recognize that the wandering of His people was over and that He was now establishing them in a permanent location (v. 9). He also assures His people of His protecting care.

God also reminds David of how He had elevated him from shepherd to king, had been a constant presence during his wanderings, and had preserved his life from his enemies. God had so honored and blessed him that he had a reputation among the great men of the time. But God would not permit him to build a permanent tabernacle for His presence. However, God does promise to build something of more lasting significance for David—a dynasty.

God promised David that his son would succeed him on the throne and that He would through him establish an everlasting kingdom. Did David understand the Messianic implications of God's promise? We don't know. But be sure to read David's response to God's gracious promise in the verses that follow our lesson text (vv. 16-27). David was humbled that God looked so favorably upon him. Is it any wonder that God referred to David as "a man after mine own heart"?

Was David disappointed that God thwarted his plan to build a temple for the Ark? Undoubtedly. However, that did not discourage him from making preparations for the task Solomon would face in building the temple. In next Sunday's lesson we see David passing the torch to Solomon, and in the context we see his involvement in preparations for building the temple.

David was not a person to become discouraged when things didn't go his way. Rather, his commitment to God was such that he willingly cooperated with God's plans and expended his energies and resources in their fulfillment. That's why God chose him and blessed him with His Covenant.

For thought and discussion

1. When wishing to do something for God, what should be the first step toward that goal?
2. In the Old Testament era God spoke directly to individuals. How does He communicate His will to His people today?
3. Use David's experience to realize that at times when we may be disappointed in our desires, God has something better in store for us.

4. What traits of David, as observed in this passage, qualify him for being "a man after God's own heart"? Discuss.
5. Are you willingly cooperating with God's plan for your life? Use this lesson to search your motives and commitment.

MARCH 16, 2008

God Chooses Solomon to Build the Temple

1 Chronicles 28:1-10, 20, 21

As David neared the end of his life he made plans for a smooth transition of power to his son, Solomon, the one chosen by God to be his successor. In the preceding chapters we also note the preparations he made for the establishment of a pattern of worship that would serve the nation into the future. We also note, from David's various military victories, the source of gold and silver he later so generously donated to the temple project.

Today's text opens with David calling an assembly of those he had appointed as spiritual leaders, stewards of material goods, and military leaders to come to Jerusalem. He had something important to tell those responsible for running the affairs of the kingdom. He informed them that he was turning over the reins of the kingdom to his son Solomon, and that it would be he who would build the temple.

David rehearsed the situation we studied in last Sunday's lesson, how in spite of his intentions God had not allowed him to build the habitation of God among His people. David readily admits the reason for God's disapproval of him—he was a man of war—he had shed much blood. David also enumerates the provisions he had gathered and the preparations he had already made toward the project.

David also acknowledges God's special call to the tribe of Judah, to his father's family, and of himself as the chosen one of God to lead His people Israel. David was here establishing the basis for his next announcement, that his son Solomon, from among all his

sons, was the one God had chosen to succeed him and that he would have the honor of building the house of God. He also reiterated God's promise to be a father to Solomon, to guide and direct him in his role.

David then charged those present, those leaders of the people, to faithfulness in living out the commands of God. Their faithfulness would secure for them the land—for themselves and for their posterity. Theirs was a solemn responsibility. They were at the forefront, observed and followed by the people of the nation. Upon them weighed the responsibility of unwavering faithfulness and the resulting continuance of God's blessing and providential care of His people.

David then turned to Solomon and charged him to faithfulness, to know God and serve Him with perfect heart and mind. He reminded Solomon that God searches the heart, understands the imaginations of man, and is near to those who seek Him. But He will also forsake those who forsake Him. Too bad Solomon did not remember those principles throughout his life. David also charged Solomon with the responsibility of building a house for the sanctuary of God.

David challenged Solomon to "be strong, and do it." He assured him of God's constant presence and help. He also assured him of the support and help of those appointed to spiritual service in the house of God and the workmen and artisans assembled for the project. The throne was passed to Solomon. Now he was in charge. The responsibility lay on his shoulders.

For thought and discussion

1. Discuss again the various attributes of David that qualified him for his position as God's favored man.
2. Think about, and discuss, the various ways God endows and calls people to special tasks in His kingdom.
3. It is sobering, and humbling, to realize that God knows all about us and our proneness to failure, and yet chooses to use us to build His kingdom. Resolve to be ever more faithful to Him and to the task He has called you to fulfill.

4. We note in today's lesson the importance of a cooperative effort in the work of God. Are you doing your part to move the work of God forward?

5. It isn't always easy to see someone else chosen for a task we would have liked. Take a lesson from David in submission and helpfulness.

MARCH 23, 2008 (Easter)

God Fulfills His Promise

2 Chronicles 6:12-17; Luke 24:44-49

In last Sunday's lesson David passed the throne to Solomon and told the assembled leaders that Solomon was the one chosen by God to build the temple. In the chapters between last Sunday and today we note how David generously gave many provisions for this building. We also note how Solomon became established in the kingdom and was blessed of God for asking wisdom instead of riches, honor, long life, or power over his enemies. We also note (2 Chronicles 3:1) that "Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem." In Chapter 5 we see where the temple was finished and furnished.

Chapter 6 begins with Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple and his emphasis on the fulfillment of God's promise to his father David. That promise had now been partially fulfilled in that God's house had been built and Solomon was now on the throne of Israel. (Further fulfillment will be seen in the second part of our lesson text.)

In our lesson text we see Solomon acting in a priestly role, as did his father David, when the Ark was brought to Jerusalem (see 1 Chronicles 15:25-16:2). For the occasion of the dedication of the temple, Solomon had erected a bronze platform in the inner court of the temple from which he blessed the people and prayed to God. In his prayer he acknowledged the majesty and sovereignty of God, that He was faithful to His promises and merciful to His people.

In recognizing that God had brought

them to this point, Solomon asked (v. 16) that God would also fulfill His promise of extending David's dynasty. Solomon likely had no awareness of the Messianic impact of God's promise but was simply asking for a long and uninterrupted earthly reign for David's descendants. He pled with God to honor His promise.

In our passage from Luke we see further fulfillment of God's promise to David a thousand years before. (See also the angel's message to Mary in Luke 1:32, 33.) Our text from Luke 24 is lifted out of Jesus' surprise appearance to His disciples the evening of His resurrection day. He appeared in their midst while Cleopas and his friend were rehearsing to the bewildered disciples the events that had befallen them on the road to Emmaus.

Then Jesus reminded them that the events of the past few days were all in harmony with what He had taught them from the Scriptures during His ministry. Their minds had been closed. Now Jesus enlightened them and gave them full understanding. He also briefly rehearsed His mission: to die, to rise again. Now the mission was theirs: preach repentance in His name to all nations. What a glorious privilege was theirs to have been witness to these things.

But wait, He said. First, you must be empowered. That power was manifested a few days later at Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit.

So God fulfilled His promise to David. And his "Son," the risen Lord, sits on an eternal throne. His kingdom shall never cease.

For thought and discussion

1. Explain the reasons for the difference between the highly ceremonial and extravagant methods of worship in the Old Testament and the simple, unadorned worship experiences of God's people today. Why the difference?
2. What assurance did these Old Testament saints have of God's faithfulness to His promises? Does that differ from our means of assurance today?

3. Spend time recounting some of the promises God makes to His children in the Scriptures. Which one(s) thrills you the most?
4. Be sure you understand how the passage from Luke 24 fits in with God's promise to David.
5. Are our minds clouded at times to the truths of God's Word? How can we receive enlightenment?

MARCH 30, 2008

Josiah Renews the Covenant

2 Chronicles 34:14-33

This lesson finds us about 337 years and 16 kings after last Sunday's lesson and Solomon's dedication of the temple. Josiah was one of only eight good kings during that 300-year period. The spiritual temperature of Judah (we're now in the divided-kingdom period) fluctuated widely during this time with some kings dragging the nation away from God and others leading them back. Josiah, in today's lesson, followed two bad kings and a 57-year period of spiritual decline.

Josiah was only eight years old when he ascended the throne and inherited a kingdom badly in need of strong spiritual leadership. One of his first acts was to tear down the idol altars. Then he set about repairing the house of God that had fallen into disuse. That action provides the setting for today's lesson where the neglected book of the Law was found and taken to the king.

When Shaphan the scribe read from this book in his presence, the king became alarmed because he realized their practice was far from God's requirements. He immediately sent an entourage "to inquire of the Lord for me." They went to Huldah the prophetess who gave them a very sobering and devastating message to carry back to the king. God would mete out certain judgment for their failure to follow Him and their

turning to the worship of idols.

However, because Josiah humbled himself before God, mourned and wept over his people's sins, God said He would spare His judgment during his lifetime. God, ever merciful, though always just, spares those who honor Him. Righteous Josiah was spared the destruction of Jerusalem 35 years later (Josiah had already died in a battle with Necho, the king of Egypt) when Nebuchadnezzar sacked the city and carried many away captive to Babylon (see Chapter 36).

After hearing God's message through the prophetess, Josiah called a national assembly of the religious leaders and the people to hear the Word of God. The king stood in the presence of his people and read God's Word to them. Then, as their leader, he publicly made a covenant "to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, testimonies, and statutes, with all his heart and soul." He declared himself and then called his people to commitment. They responded positively. It was a great day for the nation and another forward step in Josiah's reforms in bringing the people back to God.

To confirm the covenant and safeguard the commitment to follow God, Josiah removed all idols throughout Israel (see 2 Kings 23:4-14). Josiah was serious about returning to God and leading his people from idolatry to worship of the

true God. He did all in his power and used his position and influence to guide his people. We see the tremendous impact of his influence at the end of verse 33: "As long as he lived, they did not fail to follow the LORD, the God of their fathers."

Sadly, Josiah's reforms did not last and he was followed by four bad kings who led the nation away from God and incurred God's wrath, resulting in the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of many of her inhabitants.

To be effective, covenants must continually be reviewed and followed.

For thought and discussion

1. Reflect on the tremendous influence leaders, both political and spiritual, have on their people. What can be done to offset that influence when it is negative?
2. Reflect again on how easy it is for people to stray from God's purposes. Discuss ways to avoid this.
3. How can we keep the Book of God from becoming a neglected, forgotten aspect of our lives? Discuss.
4. How do we develop a God-sensitive spirit as exhibited by Josiah?
5. Notice from Josiah's experience the long-term effects of a godly life. Determine that you, too, will so serve God that your influence will challenge and inspire others to follow Him. ■

GLADYS AYLWARD . . . continued from page 1

the evening telling the muleteers stories of Jesus. The muleteers, saved and unsaved, recounted these stories of Jesus as they moved from city to city on their caravan journey.

Gladys spent long hours studying her Chinese and was coming along quite well when the elderly Mrs. Lawson died only a few days after having a bad fall. Lawson's death left Gladys alone to run the mission with only one other Christian helper, Yang, the cook.

The taxes on the property were due but Gladys had no money to pay them. She prayed about it and a few weeks after the passing of Mrs. Lawson the local government official, known as the Mandarin, arrived at the inn to enlist Gladys as the foot inspector for women. The centuries-old custom of binding the feet of girl babies, so they would have little feet as women, had been banned, and the Mandarin needed a woman whose feet were not bound to travel the district to see that this decree was enforced. Gladys saw this request as an answer to prayer to pay the taxes and to further spread the Gospel, so she accepted the position.

(To be continued in the April issue)

—Gail L. Emerson

Newslines . . .

by Hans Mast

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

Iraqi Oil Exceeds Pre-War Output

The International Energy Agency has announced that Iraqi oil production is for the first time higher than before the coalition invasion of Iraq in 2003.

—Source: *BBC*

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AP as the Propaganda Arm of AQ

The mainstream media was struck by yet another scandal as one of the Associated Press's Pulitzer-winning photographers was found to be an Al-Qaeda operative. Bilal Hussein was arrested by coalition forces in Ramadi in the western Anbar province of Iraq and will face charges in Iraqi Central Court.

Hussein was a recipient, along with several other AP photographers, of a recent Pulitzer prize for a series of breaking news photographs that he took in Iraq. The U.S. military had suspected him for some time of insurgent involvement, because he would arrive so quickly on the scene of attacks it seemed he had foreknowledge. However, it was only after U.S. soldiers noticed Al-Qaeda propaganda materials and bomb-making parts in his house, while they were using his house as an observation post for an operation, that he was arrested.

Instead of condemning him for Al-Qaeda involvement and apologizing for employing him—the U.S. military claims irrefutable evidence of guilt—the AP is condemning the U.S. military for ill-

defined “abuse” of Hussein’s rights and a “miscarriage of . . . justice and rule of law” and is calling for Hussein’s immediate release.

—Source: *CNN*

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Modern-Day Colosseums

Many elements of modern society seem to be reverting to a Roman-style culture.

A recent incident in which New York Jets’ fans heckled a lady to bare herself and then threw beer bottles and screamed obscenities when she refused is only one anecdote of the increasingly drunken, violent, and obscene atmosphere found at sports stadiums around the world. Soccer fans are especially known for their sometimes violent devotion to their teams. However, American football stadiums have the added similarity to Roman colosseums in the fact that fans are there to see a rather violent sport.

Homosexuality, open sexuality, a very open and permissive view of spirituality, violence as entertainment, and many other new elements of American culture are reminiscent of Roman problems.

Please do not take this piece as condemning sports—I enjoy sports quite a lot. However, there are some rather unfortunate things that go along with certain aspects of sports that any serious Christian needs to carefully weigh as they make decisions about how to spend their time. Also any thoughtful person, who thinks strategically about how our society is changing,

needs to ponder these things. As always, I am open to any further feedback or information on this piece. I am writing this over Christmastime and don't feel I have enough time to do this piece justice (in terms of background investigation and development).

—Source: *WCBSTV*

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A History of Home Values

A very interesting chart of an index of home values (created by Yale economist Robert Shiller) is quite sobering. The index factors in such things as inflation to present a consistent image of home prices since 1890. Its benchmark is 1890 with a baseline of 100. A house sold for \$100 in 1890 would have been sold for \$66 in 1920 when the index was at 66. You have to see the chart (<http://tinyurl.com/2yqbrh>) to catch its dramatic import; however, I'll try to paint the picture. Between 1890 and 1995, home prices seesawed back and forth, but never exceeded 125 or dipped below 65. However, starting around 1996 or 97, it began a climb that topped out at 199, a full 59% higher than any previous peak and 80% higher than a somewhat normative 110 (even this is higher than average). Prices peaked in June 2006 and have since fallen a mere 6%. If historical data is any indication, despite recent home price falls, prices have a long way to go to be in line with historical norms.

—Sources: *New York Times*, *InvestingIntelligently.com*, *StandardandPoors.com*, *Wikipedia*

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Massive Oil Find in Brazil

A new deepwater oil field has been found off Brazil's coast. It holds up to eight billion barrels of light oil and natural gas. It will be difficult to extract, though certainly doable. This is the largest petroleum find in seven years and would make Brazil the nation with the 12th largest oil reserves in the world behind the United States, but ahead of Canada and Mexico.

—Source: *McClatchy Washington Bureau*

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Divorce360 to Walk You Through

“The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) says that there are approximately 2.2 million marriages in the U.S. every year. Some of those marriages work out well. But a big percentage of marriages—up to 1.4 million per year—end in divorce.

“There are sites that help people plan for marriage, like the \$400+ million market cap *TheKnot.com*. And when the time comes, *BabyCenter*, a subsidiary of *Johnson & Johnson*, will help them through the process of having a baby. There's even *Caring.com*, which helps people plan for aging and death.

“But if your blissful union ends in a dissolution, there aren't many places to turn on the Internet for help in getting through the process. And that's a shame, because the average participant spends up to \$15,000 in the months leading up to and after a divorce. Houses are sold or refinanced, new bank and credit card accounts are opened, and someone has to furnish that shabby apartment that Dad has been booted to. And it doesn't stop there, of course . . . the ridiculous hope that the next relationship will end better than the previous one leads divorcees to start checking out the online dating services too.

“That's why new Florida-based startup *Divorce360* makes so much sense. These people are confused, lonely, and need to make major financial decisions fast. *Divorce360* will help them, just like *TheKnot* helps with marriages and *BabyCenter* helps with having a baby. And like those sites, *Divorce360* will find ways to make money through advertising, classified listings, and lead a generation.”

—Excerpt from “*Divorce360 to Walk You Through That Statistically Inevitable Breakup*” on *TechCrunch.com* (<http://tinyurl.com/2fqe2q>)

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Iran's Nuclear Program

The White House has released the summary of the latest National Intelligence

Estimate on Iran. It basically says that Iran put its nuclear weapons' program on hold in 2003.

In practical terms, this new NIE means that the U.S. probably will not attack Iran and greatly weakens the case for sanctions. It also, however, increases the danger that Israel will attack Iran because Israel still believes that Iran is working toward getting nukes, and Israel's survival is at stake.

PajamasMedia—a conservative blogging organization—listed three diplomatic victories that the NIE secured for Iran: #1: Egypt sent a foreign deputy ministry on the first official visit to Iran by any Egyptian official since the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1980. #2: Saudi Arabia invited Iranian President Ahmadinejad to attend the Haj ritual in Mecca. This is the first time the Saudis have invited any Iranian President. #3: Russia announced that problems with Iran's nuclear program had been resolved and that Russia would move ahead with providing nuclear expertise and fuel to Iran. When Putin visited Iran in October, he refused to move ahead with nuclear exports because of international pressure, but now with the NIE, he is moving forward.

There is a large amount of question about the accuracy of the NIE. The *Wall Street Journal* says that three of the NIE's writers are, in the words of an intelligence source, "hyper-partisan anti-Bush officials."

Israel is very upset with the NIE, which they see as containing an erroneous conclusion. They invited the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. Military to Tel Aviv to meet with Defense Minister Ehud Barak and IDF Chief of General Staff. They will lay forth their intelligence that shows that Iran has continued their nuclear program.

Henry Kissinger says in an op-ed in the *Washington Post* that most of the world is misreading the NIE. He says that Iran's nuclear program has three components:

fissile materials, warhead engineering, and missiles. He says that NIE is saying only that the warhead engineering portion has been shut down, nothing else. He also says that the fissile materials program was the most dangerous and that the only thing preventing a working warhead is lack of fissile material.

Finally, an Iranian opposition group (who is listed as a terrorist organization by the U.S. and most of the world) has said that while the warhead program was indeed stopped in 2003, it was restarted in secret in 2004. The NIE says that there is a high probability that it was stopped in 2003 and a medium probability that it was not restarted.

One thing that the NIE does accomplish on a political level is to silence critics who contend that the Bush Administration squelches those in the intelligence community that disagree with its findings.

I am not sure what to conclude. There are many agendas in the shadowy worlds of intelligence and politics and there are many strident voices strongly disagreeing about a set of facts that our powerful government only has the power to surmise about.

Further Suggested Reading: "Details in Military Notes Led to Shift on Iran, U.S. Says" in the *New York Times* (<http://tinyurl.com/2u8omn>); "NIE: An Abrupt About-Face" by Michael Goldfab in the *Worldwide Standard* (<http://tinyurl.com/yugma5>); "The Flaws in the Iran Report" by John Bolton in the *Washington Post* (<http://tinyurl.com/ywm721>); "Misreading the Iran Report" by Henry Kissinger in the *Washington Post* (<http://tinyurl.com/22fcqk>); "Uh Oh" by Jules Crittenden (<http://tinyurl.com/22fcqk>); "High Confidence Games" by the *Wall Street Journal* (<http://tinyurl.com/yoboh8>); "The Van Diepen Demarche" by the *New York Sun* (<http://tinyurl.com/2fy38>).

—Sources: *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Jerusalem Post*, *PajamasMedia*, *Worldwide Standard*, *Wall Street Journal*

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Gunman Attacks YWAM Center, CO Church

A man who had been ejected from the Youth With A Mission training program in a Denver suburb returned to the YWAM center with a gun and a grudge. Matthew Murray arrived right after the center's Christmas banquet and demanded to be allowed to stay for the night. When he was refused, he opened fire killing two and injuring two. He fled.

The next morning, New Life Church in Colorado Springs beefed up their security (to 15-20 security guards) because of the shooting the night before. New Life is the church founded by disgraced former pastor Ted Haggard. New Life has volunteer armed security guards, many of whom are former law enforcement officers. Murray arrived at 1 p.m. (30 minutes after the service ended) with a rifle and two handguns and shot four people in the parking lot, killing two. He went inside and shot one person in the arm. A female security guard saw him coming, so she stepped behind a tree and waited for him. When he came near, she stepped out and confronted him. When he did not respond favorably, she shot him multiple times, causing him to turn his own weapon on himself, committing suicide.

Murray was homeschooled in a very religious family—his brother attended Oral Roberts University. Murray came to hate Christians with a passion and left several online hate diatribes including, "All I want to do is kill and injure as many of you . . . as I can especially Christians."

The very next Sunday, the fifty-nine-year-old man who was shot in the arm was escorted off church property by police at the church's request. Reportedly it was because he criticized other security guards' actions during the shootout. He said that after he was shot, he saw two security guards, "but they weren't doing anything. I asked one of them to give me their gun so I could take the guy out."

—Sources: AP, Denver Post, Wikipedia

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Huckabee Pulls to Front of Republican Race

Mike Huckabee, the unapologetic ordained Southern Baptist minister, has made an amazing rally in the race for the Republican presidential nomination. Pundits are calling it the Huckaboom. Six months ago Huckabee had 2.5% of the vote, coming in a dismal fifth. In a period of several weeks he has rocketed to leading in early state Iowa by as much as 20 points and is in a nationwide statistical dead heat with former front runner Rudy Guiliani.

—Source: *RealClearPolitics.com*

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Suggested Reads

"Year of Global Cooling" by David Demin in *The Washington Times* (<http://tinyurl.com/38psmn>); "Huckabee: U.S. gave up on religion" in the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette* (<http://tinyurl.com/yva3kc>); "A Tsar Is Born—Vladimir Putin: Person of the Year 2007" in *TIME Magazine* (<http://tinyurl.com/2uxnou>); "Basra's murderous militias tell Christian women to cover up or face death" in *The Times of London* (<http://tinyurl.com/3bw5py>) (Ironic quote from article: "The girls explained that they were Christians and that their faith did not call for headscarves."); "Bush took high road on stem cells" by Charles Krauthammer in *The Chicago Tribune* (<http://tinyurl.com/2a47e8>); "It's a Quagmire! . . . Media Reports 6 Bogus Stories in Six weeks!" by Gateway Pundit (<http://tinyurl.com/2e2cfw>).

Feedback: hansmast@hansmast.com

SERMON ON THE MOUNT . . . cont'd.

upon that house, and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:24-27).

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3).

"The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall" (Proverbs 10:8). ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Biblical Evangelist*, Nov.-Dec., 2007

SWORD AND TRUMPET

Dare We Discount the Sermon on the Mount?

by the late Dr. V. C. Oltrogge

A common method of evading the difficulties presented by our Lord in the discourse bearing the caption of this article is to postpone it to the future—to His millennial reign upon the earth. Thus it is set forth as the moral standard for the Jew during the Kingdom, while its claims upon us are supposedly nullified by the teaching that “we live under grace.”

Comparisons of the obligations set forth in Jesus’ discourse and those set forth in “the Pauline epistles” will provide an interesting study for future occasion, but for the present let us ask a question or two. Do moral or spiritual standards follow a program of retrogression? Is it to be imagined that our Lord ever has asked, or ever will ask more of others in any age than He asks of us now?

A characteristic of Christ’s Millennial Kingdom is to be righteousness, for He is to rule “with a rod of iron.” Today, it is said by some that there are “two kingdoms,” namely “the power of darkness” and “the kingdom of his dear Son” (Colossians 1:13). In the Millennial reign, however, there is to be but *one* kingdom, for then, it is insisted “the kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ” (Rev. 11:15).

If the Sermon on the Mount is to characterize the righteousness of the Millennial reign of Christ only, and has no imperative for the present dispensation whatsoever, then, in the light of certain definite inferences gleaned from its substance, the forthcoming Kingdom of Christ will have other characteristics not so righteous!

Let us observe a few at random:

(1) Strife will be obviously rife, for Kingdom residents are to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9).

(2) Evil will apparently run rampant, for the inhabitants of the Kingdom are told to hunger and thirst after righteousness

(Matthew 5:6).

(3) Moral darkness will evidently blanket society, for the subjects of the Kingdom are to be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14).

(4) The Lord is absent, for they are seen to be fasting (Matthew 6:16-18).

(5) The devil is free, for they are instructed to pray to be kept from falling under his power (Matthew 6:13).

(6) Christ is hated, for His followers are plainly told they will be persecuted for His sake (Matthew 5:11, 12).

Thus the entire Sermon could be broken down and the ridiculous untenability of the hyper-dispensational position exposed. But, some will say, this sermon is more for the Great Tribulation, the period following the Rapture of the Church and preceding the return of the Lord Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords.

If that be so, then a higher standard is set for faithful souls under greater stress than will ever attend the subjects of the Kingdom or than ever attends us now under the beneficences of grace!

What confusion attends this “Postponement theory!” Dear friend, the measure of our obedience to the words spoken on the Mount, is the measure of our faith in the One who spoke them!

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat

(continued on page 14)

Matthew—Man of Dramatic Decisions

by Sonia A. Randall

Matthew, the disciple who wrote the first Gospel, was a man who made two dramatic and life-changing decisions. The first was when he abandoned his Jewish heritage to become a tax collector for Herod Antipas and the Roman Empire. The Roman government was bitterly hated by the Jews and its tax collectors were hated even more. For a Jew to serve them willingly was tantamount to being a traitor to his family and his religious faith.

Matthew was a well-educated Jew and probably had some acquaintance with the Aramaic, Greek, and Latin languages to hold his position with the Romans. No doubt there would have been a good place for him in some Jewish organization as a scribe or record keeper. But when he rejected that possibility to serve the Romans, he would never again be trusted by the Jewish community. It was a life-changing decision from which there was no turning back.

But being a customs agent had its attraction. The Romans had an effective method for collecting taxes. Collectors received no salary. The government would tell the agent to gather a certain amount and anything he could extract above that amount was his to keep. The potential for corruption was inherent in this very efficient system but so was the possibility of great wealth. Was that what drew Matthew to such a career? Perhaps tax-collecting, though lucrative, turned out to be a less satisfying career than Matthew had anticipated. Even though he had rejected his Jewish background, he was well-versed in the Hebrew Scriptures and must have been quite curious about this Jesus whom people called the Messiah. At any rate, he didn't hesitate when Jesus called him but immediately "got up and followed him" (Matthew 9:9).

That very night Matthew gave a dinner

to celebrate his new life with Christ. He invited the only people who would willingly associate with him—his fellow tax collectors. This brought the condemnation of the Pharisees down on Jesus because He was associating with these disreputable people. But Christ wisely answered that it was only the sick who needed a physician, meaning that it was only sinners who needed the salvation He offered (Mark 2:14-17).

This dinner was a public affirmation of Matthew's second life-changing decision to renounce his former career and follow Christ. Once again it was a decision from which there was no turning back. The fishermen could go back to their fishing if they chose, but the Romans would never take Matthew back. Matthew's account of the teachings of Jesus was probably written 40 to 50 years after the Resurrection. The Good News about the Messiah was spread by word of mouth for many years as long as there were eyewitnesses still alive. But when years went by and many of the witnesses died, there was concern about writing down all these marvelous things for future generations. The Gospel of Mark is generally considered to be the first written record of Jesus' life and Matthew's Gospel contains nearly all of it. But Matthew records a great deal more, including the entire Sermon on the Mount. He also cites some 50 Old Testament prophecies to prove that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah who fulfilled these prophecies.

Interestingly enough, Matthew is the only Gospel writer to record the parable of the man who found a treasure hid in a field and sold all that he had to acquire it (Matt. 13:44). It is easy to believe that this parable had special significance for Matthew since he had done precisely that.

(continued on next page)

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SWORD AND TRUMPET



Counseling From the Word

Psalm 73: Medicine for Madness

by Richard Winter

For many generations, all of my family members in England have been Christians. Through hard work and business integrity they have enjoyed material prosperity and good relationships, and we always interpreted it as God's blessing. Little difficulty seemed to come my way until some years ago when a time of severe trouble and testing began.

I wish it could be said of me by family and friends, "That was Richard's finest hour!" but I fear the judgment may be closer to "That was his weakest and most foolish hour." Many difficult and dark things happened: my sister died in childbirth; my father-in-law died sud-

denly of heart disease; my wife was diagnosed with cancer; and my brother-in-law took his own life on the anniversary of my sister's death. In addition, we had someone living with us who had suffered ritual satanic abuse; there were difficulties in the leadership of our church and in relationships at work; and there were major life decisions to be made. I was run down, burned out, and exhausted, but life had to go on. Where was God? Why did He not seem to help much but instead just piled on the pressure?

I hear the Psalms as divine psychoanalysis. I imagine Asaph lying on his couch in his therapeutic hour every day, pouring out his heart before God. (Some say that if you have Freudian therapy, you begin to think and act like Freud; Jungian analysis makes you think like Jung. If true, Asaph was being changed to think and feel like his therapist—God.)

Look at verses 21-22 of Psalm 73: "*Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.*" It was certainly not Asaph's finest hour—or mine! I look back at my difficulties and echo his words.

As we consider the heart of the psalmist, we see some of the fundamental forces of human nature exposed; we see the psychological structure of fallen human beings laid bare. The "heart" in

MATTHEW . . . cont'd.

There is no historical record of what Matthew did during his years of ministry. Some legends seem to indicate that he traveled to Egypt, Ethiopia, Persia (present-day Iran) and possibly India to spread the Good News. But we today have his Gospel as a testimony to his lifelong love for his Saviour and his desire to share it with his fellow Jews and the world.

His first life-changing decision separated him from his Jewish community but his second decision brought him back to tell them how Jesus really was their Messiah and their Saviour.

Have you made a life-changing decision for Christ? ■

Hebrew is the center of one's being—which encompasses one's intellect, feelings, and personality. Conflict and crisis expose us as we try to hide behind the front that we put on to impress the world each day.

When we see someone struggling, we often say, "I'd love to know what he or she is really thinking; I'd love to get inside his or her mind." This psalm enables us to do that with Asaph.

Into the Psalmist's Heart

Asaph starts with the basic assumption of Jewish life: "*Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart*" (v. 1). The emphasis on "truly" communicates a doubt, a question, a sneaking suspicion beginning to take dangerous shape in his mind: "Maybe God is not as good as I thought. Perhaps—God forbid that I should think it—God Himself has betrayed me."

Asaph experiences a conflict between a treasured and trusted conviction and the reality of the world around him. This leads him into a state of **crisis**. "*But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped*" (v. 2). It was almost a disaster. I wonder if he has the image of walking on a narrow, precarious mountain path and coming close to falling into a ravine. Whatever happened almost caused him to lose his trust and belief in God.

What was the conflict? It was this: "Unbelievers seem to be doing better in life than I. I always believed that God blessed and prospered believers, but I see all these unbelievers doing much better."

There were seeds of doubt and discontent stirring in Asaph's soul which inevitably led to **coveting**. In verse 3, the psalmist describes his struggle: "*For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*" (He means arrogant/foolish/wicked in the sense of "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" [Psalm 14:1; 53:1].) He coveted

what these godless people had.

Jealousy powerfully focuses but horribly distorts one's thinking. The psalmist describes things in all-or-nothing terms. In verses 4 and 5 he says, "*For there are no bands in their death* [the Hebrew can also be understood as "struggles at their death"]: *but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.*" Asaph is saying that those who have no interest in God seem to die quick and easy deaths without long and painful illnesses, or they are fit and healthy, free from all the usual problems of life. The grass is always greener on the other side.

Then, in verses 6-11, he seems to come to his senses a little. He knows there are two sides to this. He is able to see the pride of those who disregard God. These people may be loaded with wealth and success, but they lack integrity and are prone to violence and all the external manifestations of hard hearts. They are evil and arrogant. Asaph says to himself, "I want what they have, but deep down I know there are problems. Their lives are not as good as they appear."

"*They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth*" (v. 9). Let's break down what this means. Consider the Humanist Manifesto II (published in a 1973 issue of *The Humanist* magazine): "We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural . . . no deity will save us; we must save ourselves." Basically those who declared this are saying, "We can build our own tower to heaven. Science will save us." (*Their tongues walketh through the earth.*) If it's not humanism and faith in science saving us, then it's the other popular alternative of New Age mysticism and Eastern philosophy, which—in its most refined form—says, "This world is already heaven if you could only see it!" People who operate this way believe we are already God and that our problems

arise because we cannot perceive our innate perfection and unity with all things. (*They set their mouth against the heavens.*)

“Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them” (v. 10). People love the idea of godless salvation. They would much rather hear this seemingly optimistic message about the nature of reality than news of sin and judgment. *“Waters of a full cup are wrung out”* could mean “drink their fill of sorrow” from these false views of reality.

And often such worldviews work—or seem to. Here Asaph loses perspective on reality again and returns to coveting what others have, seeing only the good things on the other side of the fence (v. 12). Asaph’s bitterness and cynicism overflow. *“Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning”* (vv. 13, 14). Modern expressions of this idea are: “What a waste of time to believe. I have spent all these years restraining my passions for nothing. Doing so only seems to bring more trouble and suffering. It seems like God is out to get me! Surely *they* should suffer, not me. This is not fair. Where is the justice in this? God, are you going to do anything about this?”

In the next verse, it’s as if Asaph clasps his hand over his mouth and thinks, “Stop! What am I saying? I’m going too far.” Notice how until now the focus has been on Asaph himself and what he is or is not getting out of his faith. At this point perspective seems to return, and he reins himself in from his wild gallop of negativity, self-pity, and cynicism. *“If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children”* (v. 15).

Asaph recognizes his responsibility to others and then expresses his **confu-**

sion. *“When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me”* (v. 16). *“Until . . .”* (v. 17). This is the turning point of the psalm, the fulcrum on which everything pivots. *“Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.”* Conflict, crisis, and confusion take Asaph to **communion** with God. What happened? A verse? A voice? A vision? A glimpse of the holiness and greatness of God?

Sanctuary speaks of the presence of God, the place where the book of the Law was kept. The sanctuary today is the place where the people of God meet to worship and to hear God’s Word, to share struggles, help each other understand things that perplex and confuse, and challenge each other to faith and trust in the dark moments of life. It is among the people of God that God dwells, not in a tabernacle, temple, or church building but in a living house—a community of believers.

“Then understood I their end” (v. 17b). By the end of the psalm we find that in the sanctuary Asaph comes to understand three things: First, he discovers the final destiny of unbelievers. Their future will unmake or undo everything they have ever lived for (vv. 18-20). Second, he sees his self-centeredness and stupidity (vv. 21, 22). And third, he recognizes God’s purposes for him (vv. 23, 24).

Notice that communion with God leads to Asaph’s amazingly honest and heartfelt **confession.** *“Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee”* (vv. 21, 22). It certainly was not his finest hour. In my case, a time of painful self-reflection and repentance arose when I saw that my perception of reality was twisted.

And now, having confessed and known grace and forgiveness, Asaph is able to accept correction. He increasingly sees things from God’s perspective. He is able

*“ . . . I am always
with you.”*

to dismiss the alluring alternative of giving up all he believes and lives for to pursue prosperity. *“Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image”* (vv. 18-20).

Now look at verse 23: *“Nevertheless I am continually with thee. . . .”* Asaph says this to God. He realizes that, thankfully, we cannot get away from God. He wrestles us to the ground and then lifts us up again. *“Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory”* (vv. 23b-24). After the correction comes this great statement of **confidence**. Commentator Derek Kidner summarizes the themes well: “We are grasped, guided, and glorified.”

Grasped (v. 23). We are held by God’s right hand and in His presence forever. Here is the wonder of God’s love and grace even when we question and doubt Him. He kept me from further folly. It’s as if God says, “I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and the schemer Jacob; of doubters Asaph and Richard, Debbie and Phil, Joanna and John. . . .”

Guided (v. 24). We can have confidence that God is shaping our lives toward His purposes. We can trust His sovereignty even in the very hard and painful things.

Glorified (v. 24). Our light and momentary troubles, says Paul, are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all (2 Cor. 4:17). We are being transformed from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18). One day the sanctifying work of the Spirit will be complete. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:18). We groan, and we wait eagerly and patiently for that day (Romans 8:19-27).

In verse 25 Asaph states the ultimate reality: *“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.”* Compared with his love for God, all other loves—even legitimate ones—fade into insignificance. Asaph’s focus is on God.

“My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (v. 26). Not even death will separate us from Him or His love. Even in times of illness and struggle I know that He is renewing my heart. Paul writes of us outwardly fading away but inwardly being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16). Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons . . . nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38, 39).

In this new confidence the psalmist renews his **commitment** to the Lord. *“But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD”* (v. 28a). In a troubled and broken world, Asaph puts his faith in Yahweh, his savior and protector.

He also makes a new commitment to speak out now to influence present and future generations for good. *“That I may declare all thy works”* (v. 28b). In verse 15 he imagined expressing his doubt and cynicism about God but thankfully realized how damaging that would be. Here he makes a new commitment to affect the next generation by telling of the goodness of God.

As you consider Asaph’s words, I hope that in times of difficulty you will speak not with corrosive cynicism and doubt but instead with renewed confidence in the goodness and faithfulness of God. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Covenant*, Winter 2007



Foundations of Moral Purity

by Stanley Wine

The Scriptures record the moral weaknesses, failures, and victories of various Bible characters. These accounts teach us that no one is exempt from moral temptation, and that the results of moral transgression are devastating to human relationships and to one's relationship to God. The Scriptures also provide clear direction and hope for everyone who is committed to a life of God-honoring holiness.

Holiness has always been a requirement for God's people. The command "Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy" was given to Israel in the context of specific warnings against moral defilement (Leviticus 19:2). New Testament Scriptures are also clear regarding God's hatred for uncleanness and His call to holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8). Moral purity is a basic aspect of Biblical holiness.

The moral pressures of our times are astounding! Even men of the world admit that a virtual cesspool of moral corruption is common fare today through television, videos, movies, pornography magazines, and the Internet. In our society today, these and other factors are contributing to a moral landslide that will bring the ungodly under the wrath of God, unless they repent.

We appreciate the practical safeguards provided by the church to help keep us free from these influences. Still, we live in a world that is increasingly affected by these things, and all this has a way of affecting us. How are we bearing up under these pressures? Is our conduct above reproach? Are we keeping our hands and hearts clean (Psalm 24:3, 4)?

To face current pressures victoriously, we must reaffirm the foundations of moral purity. We must consistently turn away from allurements, temptations, and deception and unhesitatingly obey the Scriptures.

Where we have failed, we must repent of moral sins and accept the blood of Christ for cleansing. We must be willing to take the narrow way of holiness, even if we are accused of being puritanical and self-righteous. Our spiritual life for today and for eternity is at stake.

Godly fear is a primary foundation of moral purity. This truth is illustrated in the Bible account of Joseph's temptations. He escaped the moral trap set for him by Potiphar's wife by holding to the conviction that adultery is a great wickedness, a sin against God. He believed that the guilty are accountable to God, who sees every action and knows every thought. He demonstrated his godly fear by steadfast resistance and by fleeing the setting of temptation. When a person arrives at the place where "there is no fear of God before [his] eyes," he is set for moral failure.

Believing and obeying the Word of God provides a foundation for moral purity. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10). We conclude that those who justify the adulterous relations of divorced and remarried persons neither fear God nor respect His Word. Neither do they honor God's Word who think that persons who have chosen an alternate lifestyle can also be Christians. One cannot deny God's Word and still fear the God of the Word.

To live a pure and upright life, we must have a cleansed heart and mind. The old nature always leans in favor of sinful thoughts and ways. When we die to self, Jesus takes control of our lives; He cleanses our hearts and minds; and the old nature is

crucified (Romans 6:11). Without this miracle of regeneration, we are not able to live in victory over the lusts of the flesh.

The Scriptures call us to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). The cleansed mind is necessary to control our thoughts. "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure" (Titus 1:15). There is no room in the cleansed mind for corrupt fantasizing or off-color jokes and stories with double meanings.

Pure and wholesome home life is foundational to preserving moral purity. Here marital fidelity is nurtured and safeguarded. Here innocent minds are protected from evil and guided in the paths of purity. Here, in a timely and holy manner, children are taught the things they need to know about life. Here direction is given for the forming of friendships, protecting the children and youth from unwholesome associations and sinful influences.

We do not know where Jacob was when his daughter Dinah "went out to see the daughters of the land" (Genesis 34:1), but we know that the outcome was shameful and heartrending. Some things cannot be reversed. The purity of children is a priceless possession, and parents are responsible to protect them and to instill within their minds conviction for Bible purity. Some basic efforts will include teaching children to respect others by knocking before entering closed doors, teaching girls to sit discreetly and to keep their limbs covered, teaching modesty for all members of the family at all times, teaching reserve in the presence of strangers, and guiding our youth in honorable courtship practices. If these things are missing from our homes, we are shortchanging our children.

The foundation of godly disciplines is essential to maintain moral purity. Apostle Paul instructed Timothy to "exercise thyself rather unto godliness" (1 Timothy 4:7). Another way of saying this might be, "Discipline yourself to be godly." Moral purity is not maintained by taking a haphazard

approach to life. We need to be severe with ourselves. We are engaged in a battle. Self-discipline may well mean the difference between success or failure.

We need the discipline of wholesome reserve between men and women. The mixing of men and women in the workplace has contributed to the moral breakdown of our times. We should avoid this as much as possible. Brethren whose trades take them into other homes need this discipline. Exchange should be kept on a business level. Reserve is important, even when visiting as families.

The discipline of selective reading and memorization helps us live in victory. This relates to the cleansed heart and mind. The godly man draws lines for himself regarding reading material. These lines may not be crossed. Our society is bombarded with graphic corruption known as pornography. Those who have fallen prey to this monster have testified to the near impossibility of ridding their minds of the filth. Only by disciplined reading of the Scriptures, meditation, and memorization of Scripture and Gospel songs have they been able to overcome this invasion of their minds. These same disciplines will help us find victory over temptations.

The discipline of avoiding temptation is a practical preserver of purity. Job understood temptation and took steps to avoid it. He said, "I made a covenant with mine eyes." Possibly Job had decided, like many others, not to take the second look. (We know that for the lustful, even the first look may be sin [Matthew 5:28].) Job recognized this possibility and went on to say, "Why then should I think upon a maid?"

Avoiding temptation may also prompt us to avoid unnecessarily driving through town in the summer months because of the increased immodesty. Our nonuse of the Internet also is directly related to our concerns about maintaining moral integrity.

As brethren we need the discipline of accountability. To disregard warnings and concerns shared with us by a Christian brother is to invite moral failure. This was a factor in David's downfall. Someone had

the courage to say to the king, "Is not this . . . the wife of Uriah?" But it seems that lust had already taken over in David's mind. If only David had listened! When the discipline of accountability helps us understand where we are and what we are about to do to ourselves and others who trust us and what the tremendous cost will be tomorrow, then we can benefit from this discipline.

The discipline of prayer is one we should be exercising every day, and in the midst of any trial. Prayer lays hold on a power greater than ourselves and our enemies. Prayer helps to cultivate an awareness of the presence of God, who sees our struggles and is able to meet our needs. Prayer places a hedge of protection around us when we

are weak and safeguards us even when we are unaware of danger. It is a discipline which must be exercised personally. We should also pray for others whom we know are facing temptation.

The psalmist asked, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3). It is true that we live in testing times, but we should not despair, because "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19). ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Eastern Mennonite Testimony*, October, 2003



Sermon of the Month



Each month we will feature a Biblical sermon in this column. We would like to emphasize expository preaching and ask our readers to submit good expository sermons for consideration. Please send typewritten copies by "snail mail" or email to: Editor, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803; swandtrump@verizon.net.

Here and Hereafter

by John Thomas

In the 16th chapter of Luke's Gospel, our Lord gives us a vivid picture of two characters. He describes their lives on earth, their deaths, and then draws back the curtain and reveals to us the life beyond the tomb.

The story is given unto us first to prove that the wicked and the righteous live after death. We do not die like dogs; death is a transition, not a terminal. Secondly, to prove that there is a place called hell where the impenitent souls spend their eternity.

No one would dare to say that Jesus was trifling, or for a moment suggest that the picture is untrue or overdrawn. Jesus is the

embodiment of truth. Notice this is not a parable, because if it were He would have said, "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto two men, one rich and one poor." Our Lord said, "There was a certain rich man."

Let us consider these two characters as given in this graphic picture by our Lord: 1. The life they lived, 2. The death they died, and 3. The eternity begun.

First, consider the life they lived. One man was rich. The majority of people want to be rich. They scheme, plan, and labor to accumulate riches. This man was clothed in

purple and fine linen. He wore the most expensive raiment and fared sumptuously, living in mirth and splendor every day. We are not told that he was a murderer, or an adulterer, or even that he was desperately wicked. He simply neglected God. His heart was set upon earthly things. The sin of Sodom was pride and fulness of bread. It is difficult for the idle rich to seek the Lord, because their time is taken up with the pleasures of this world.

The other man was the picture of abject misery. He was a beggar. This may not mean very much unless one has seen an Oriental beggar. His body was covered with sores. Probably he had been in that pitiful plight for years. His food consisted of the leavings and scraps that came from the rich man's house. His companions were some friendly dogs. But Lazarus had been in the habit of calling upon his God. There were nothing much for him in this world. He had heard of a better country, had made preparation, and was now looking forward to taking his flight to that land which is fairer than day. It is no sin to be poor but it is a grave sin to neglect the call to repentance and allow other things to crowd the love of God out of our lives.

Consider the death they died. Death is a visitor who comes when he is least expected. That awful monster will enter the home. No pleadings or entreaties will stop his coming. Suddenly the soul will be taken away and nothing left but the cold clay. Death is no respecter of persons. "It came to pass that the beggar died," and soon the news passed on that the poor fellow who sat at the gate had passed away. His body had to be taken care of by the authorities but his soul had a great home-going. The angels came for him and Lazarus was carried up to Heaven into Abraham's bosom. Only the redeemed saw that convoy.

The rich man also died and was buried. His wealth could not save him; the physicians could not heal him. A rich man's funeral is a spectacular and costly affair in the East. Hundreds of hired mourners are present. There is much weeping and wailing as the body is taken to the grave. The

pomp and display are measured by the amount of money expended.

Consider the eternity begun. The rich man went to hell where he was no longer rich. He lifted up his eyes. He was conscious. He could see. He was in torment. He could feel. He prayed but his prayer was too late. At last his true condition was realized. People pray in hell. "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." The answer to this prayer is final, "Son, remember." Memory will play an important part in the next world. Neglected opportunities will be remembered. The times when the soul said, No, to the Holy Ghost will be remembered. Besides, there is a great gulf fixed. Many false teachers with plausible words would fain tell us that the gulf has now been bridged over, but Jesus makes the case beyond controversy. Those in perdition cannot enter Heaven, and those in Heaven cannot enter hell. Destinies are settled here. "Where the tree falleth, there shall it be." We now see Dives in despair. He cries, "Send someone to my father's house, for I have five brethren. Testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment." The answer *then* is, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." The answer *today* would be, They have an open Bible, preachers, and evangelists. Is not that enough? There is one more appeal, "But if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." Now comes the final answer, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Poor Lazarus, where is he? Poor no longer, his sores and his sorrows all a thing of the past, he is now comforted and safe. He has reached the saints' everlasting rest. "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Evangelist of Truth*, September 2007

God's Answer

by Edwin R. Eby

What does God communicate through the Bible? Two major themes woven intrinsically throughout the Bible give a plausible answer:

One, the Bible attests to Jehovah's efforts to restore lost relationships with mankind. The story unravels, commencing with God's promise to bring hope, then swells in anticipation and expectancy. Story-by-story, character-by-character, prophecy-by-prophecy the account unfolds until in the fulness of time, it introduces Messiah as an innocent child ushering in the promised hope. The story presses forward with this innocent child becoming the first Man of history to live free from the curse of sin, then climaxes as He dies at the hand of the created, resurrects from the grave, and ascends into glory to salvage and free humanity from the grips of eternal damnation. The words of the poet reflect these sublime thoughts when he writes, *"Oh, the great love the Saviour has shown— To shamefully die on the tree— Leaving His scepter and beautiful throne— To rescue a sinner like me! . . . Oh, such wonderful, wonderful love . . ."*

Most of the Old Testament is God's story; about God's work; with an elected people as instruments in His Almighty hand. It is the story of everyday people through which the "seed that will bring hope" comes to the entire human family (see Romans 3:2). God working with individual Jewish heroes teaches lessons for the entire human family. The laws given at Mt. Sinai teach truth, which reveal His holy nature. Shadowing this plot are Jewish prophecies interjected at intervals throughout this story bearing the theme along in majestic splendor. The New Testament Gospels are an extension of God's revelation through Christ as a man. Men of God whose personal experience with

this revelation of God walking in human form, moved by the Holy Spirit, wrote the New Testament letters to show even more practical expressions of righteousness required by this Holy God (1 John 1:1-4).

The second key theme is God's sovereign intention to restore all creation to the blessed state before man yielded to Satan's suggestions, bringing the earth under a curse (Romans 8:18-25). This plot, too, develops by stealthy hints, here some and there some, until the full picture is illuminated, bursting forth in fullness in Revelation 20—that which was lost in Eden brought to fruition with Jesus as King in Jerusalem.

These two themes embedded throughout the inspired Word of God is what the Bible communicates. Understanding them by faith are keys to unlocking the unanswered mysteries of man's vacuum outside of righteousness through faith in Christ Jesus. Many humans struggle with this mystery *"and few . . . find it."* Many professing Christians are finding nothing more than mundane life. Days merely come one upon the next and end in eloped fulfillment, pacified frustration, pleasure chasing for peace, yet void of understanding purpose for existence. Only lingering senses "that there must be something more" remain within their breast to face the next day.

By understanding the broader picture of time as communicated by the Bible, one finds life as a parenthesis of eternity. One finds foundations for the real purpose of existence. It is the Bible which communicates this broad scope of God's plan for mankind.

Life need not be lived in obscurity, neither need we be left "in the dark" even while "we look through a glass darkly." The law of life, faith, and righteousness

in Christ Jesus, governs the emotions, and brings rest to the flesh of the soul. It dispels fear and fosters vigor in a battle for eternal life.

Dear soldiers of the cross, when victory seems to elude you, remember the answers written in God's story with men. Through faith and acceptance of His only begotten Son, by His love shed abroad in our hearts, by repentance and return into His holy favor, and a commitment to

understanding God's communication through the Word—there are answers to life's clouded mystery. By this, the veil of unbelief and fear is removed (2 Corinthians 3:14-18). Faith for tomorrow replaces all human logic (Matthew 6:34) and the arguing spirit of fear (cf. 2 Timothy 1:7) is exchanged for power (Romans 11:33-36). ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Pilgrim Witness*, December 2007

"From Pearl Harbor to Calvary"

***He was born in obscurity for a day
that would live in infamy.***

by E. Michael and Sharon Rusten

December 3, 1902, marked the birth in Nagao, Japan, of Mitsuo Fuchida. His story, told in his own words, reveals the mark he left on history—and the mark God left on him.

I must admit I was more excited than usual as I awoke that morning at 3:00 a.m. Hawaii time . . . As General Commander of the Air Squadron, I made last minute checks on the intelligence information reports in the Operations Room before going to warm up my single-engine three-seater plane.

The sunrise in the east was magnificent above the white clouds as I led 360 planes towards Hawaii. I knew my objective: to surprise and cripple the American naval force in the Pacific . . .

Like a hurricane out of nowhere, my torpedo planes, dive-bombers, and fighters struck suddenly with indescribable fury. . . . It was the most thrilling exploit of my career . . .

With the end of the war my military career was over. . . . I became more and

more unhappy, especially when the war crime trials opened in Tokyo. Though I was never accused, General Douglas MacArthur summoned me to testify on several occasions.

As I got off the train one day in Tokyo's Shibuya Station, I saw an American distributing literature. He handed me a pamphlet entitled, "I Was a Prisoner of Japan."

What I read . . . eventually changed my life. On that Sunday while I was in the air over Pearl Harbor, an American soldier named Jacob DeShazer had been on K.P. duty in an army camp in California. When the radio announced the sneak demolishing of Pearl Harbor, he shouted, "Jap, just wait and see what we'll do to you!"

One month later he volunteered for a secret mission with the Jimmy Doolittle Squadron—a surprise raid on Tokyo. . . . After the bombing raid, they flew on towards China but ran out of fuel and were forced to parachute into Japanese-

held territory. . . . During the next 40 long months in confinement, DeShazer was cruelly treated . . . but after 25 months the U.S. prisoners were given a Bible to read. . . . There in a Japanese P.O.W. camp, he read and read—and eventually came to understand that the book was more than a historical classic.

After DeShazer was released, he returned to Japan as a missionary and in God's providence gave Fuchida the tract he had written. Fuchida continues:

The peaceful motivation I had read about was exactly what I was seeking. Since the American had found it in the Bible, I decided to purchase one myself, despite my traditional Buddhist heritage.

In the ensuing weeks I read this book eagerly. I came to the climactic drama—the Crucifixion. I read in Luke 23:34 the prayer of Jesus Christ at His death: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." I was impressed that I was certainly one of those for whom He had prayed. The many men I had killed had been slaughtered in the name of patriotism, for I did not understand the love that Christ wishes to implant within every heart.

Right at that moment I seemed to meet Jesus for the first time. I understood the meaning of His death as a substitute for my wickedness and so in prayer, I requested Him to forgive my sins and change me from a bitter, disillusioned ex-pilot into a well-balanced Christian with purpose in living. . . .

I believe with all my heart that those who will direct Japan—and all other nations—in the decades to come must not ignore the message of Christ. . . . He is the only hope for this troubled world.

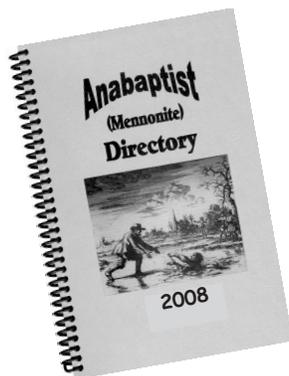
Reflection

Mitsuo Fuchida came to know God personally through reading and studying the Bible, God's message to humanity. Do you regularly read and study the Bible? It has the power to change your life just as dramatically as it did Mitsuo Fuchida's.

"Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way" (Psalm 119:37). ■

—From *One Year Book of Christian History*
By E. Michael and Sharon Rusten ©2003
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Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

The primary purpose of this column is to give congregations fresh music to add to their worship, and/or insights into the origin and meaning of old hymns that have been around for centuries. It will (hopefully) focus primarily on original Mennonite hymns, although other hymns will be incorporated from time to time as well. We request your input for this column, particularly in the form of lyrics to be set to music and used for the column; but also if you know of a hymn that you would like to see published here with an explanation of its background. We specifically ask that if you know of composers who are qualified and willing to compose for this column, let us know about them. Please send your submissions to: Douglas A. Byler, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803.

Ah, How Shall Fallen Man



by Watts/Byler

Lyrics: Most church-going, hymn-singing Christians will have no difficulty recognizing the name Isaac Watts, but this particular hymn may be a new one to many. It is found primarily in older hymnbooks from the more liturgical denominations, and has not done very well at finding its way into evangelical circles. Perhaps one reason that it is not more popular is that it presents the unpleasant truth about our human condition before God.

Although most Christians do not attempt to dispute the fact that man is completely hopeless without God, the depravity of man is an idea that does not often receive as much attention as it could. We often sing of how Christ redeemed us by His blood and saved us from sin, but not many hymns deal with the hopelessness of man without God. The more we realize the extent of our lostness, the more we will appreciate the salvation that Jesus has brought to us. "Redeemed—How I Love to Proclaim It" will mean much more if it is sung as a follow-up to "Ah, How Shall Fallen Man."

The depravity of man appears to be the main thrust of this hymn, but a closer look reveals that it is also (perhaps primarily) a song of worship. Few hymns portray the "fear of God" as well as this one does. It is, of course, true that God is loving and merciful, but if we realize the extent of the power and holiness that this hymn describes, it will inspire a great deal of fear. This is not to be

the kind of fear that is suspicious and distrustful, but the kind of terror that Abraham felt in the presence of God in Genesis 15.

The fear of God's judgment builds through the entire hymn, especially when Watts tells in verse four of how even the mountains and the "rooted pillars" of the earth cannot stand before God's wrath. Notice how the climax of the hymn is made even more powerful by the fact that the poet waits until the very last line to mention the possibility of escape, "through the Saviour's blood." The fact that it is only mentioned once (instead of at the end of every verse) lends itself to the idea that there is only *one* way to find salvation.

Music: There is nothing especially profound about this musical setting that needs to be pointed out, except the obvious fact that it is in a minor key, which tends to give it a gloomy atmosphere. This is an appropriate mood for this text, with the exception of the last line. Musically speaking, it is more correct to sing the last verse the same way as all the others, with the minor chord on the end. However, given the context, I feel that making the last chord major instead of minor may help the impact of the idea being expressed. The only change necessary would be to raise the tenor note one-half step, to a B-natural instead of B-flat. This suggestion has not been notated in the music, and song leaders may feel free to take it or leave it, as they see fit. ■

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

Ah, How Shall Fallen Man

ISAAC WATTS

DOUGLAS A. BYLER, 2005

1. Ah! how shall fall - en man
2. If He our ways - should mark
3. All see - ing pow'r - ful God,
4. The moun - tains, in Thy wrath,
5. Ah! how shall guil - ty man

4
Be just be - fore his God?
With strict in - quir - ing eyes,
Who can with Thee con - tend?
Their an - cient seats for sake;
Con - tend with such a God?

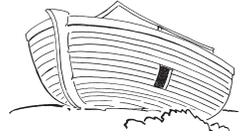
7
If Could He con - tend with righ - teous - ness,
Or who we for one of thou - sand faults,
The trem - bling that tries th'un - e - qual strife,
None, none - bling can earth de - sert her place,
meet Him and can cape,

10
We fall be - neath His rod,
A just ex - cuse de - vise?
Shall pros - per in the end?
Her root - ed pil - lars shake.
But through the Sav - iour's blood.

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Beginning Issues



Who Was Cain's Wife?

by John Mullett

At first blush this question may seem rather insignificant in the scope of world-views and science, but it has indeed become a key question and largely so because it is a question the Church could not answer. It was a question William Jennings Bryan failed to answer at the famous and historic Scopes Trial in Tennessee in 1925 and it has been raised by skeptics on many occasions. The Scopes Trial proved to be a landmark in evolution's invasion of the educational system and while Bryan's legal team "won" that trial, Christianity was greatly damaged. In essence, Christianity and the biblical record were on trial in a high profile public forum covered by the world's media, and the message the world got was the Biblical record could not be defended.¹

So where exactly did Cain get his wife? The answer, which may seem somewhat obvious, is he most likely married his sister. (A niece would be another possibility, but regardless, initially, a brother and sister would have had to marry.) While Genesis only names three of Adam and Eve's children (Cain, Abel, and Seth), verse 1 of Chapter 5 tells us they had sons and daughters so we know Cain did have sisters. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote, ". . . as says the old tradition, was thirty-three sons and twenty-three daughters."²

There are those who claim that Cain went to the Land of Nod to find his wife,

but the text does not imply that in any way. Genesis 4:16, 17 says he dwelled in the Land of Nod and that he *knew* his wife, there referring to having physical intimacy with her, but the passage never indicates he found his wife there. In fact the Hebrew word for *wife* used in Genesis 4:17 indicates she was a descendant of Adam.³

Some will protest that Cain couldn't have married his sister (or niece) because they would have been too closely related and wouldn't that have been considered incest? First, let me point out, the law in regard to incest wasn't given until the time of Moses some 2500 years later.⁴ Even Abraham was married to his half sister. That raises the question why was it okay to marry a close relative for a period of time and now it's not. I believe if we take a look at genetics through our Biblical glasses we will understand God was giving us that law for our protection. At the fall we (man) began to "die" as God said we would and our bodies began to accumulate genetic mutations (alterations in our genes from causes such as copying mistakes). Good genes tend to override or cover bad genes, so the mutations generally don't surface as long as we marry someone whose "mistakes" are different than our own. If two people with the same genetic mutations get married it may surface in their children in deformities or other abnormalities.

Since these mutations are mostly inherited we are most likely to have the same defective genes as those closely related to us. If we accept the Bible, and in this case especially Genesis, as literal history, and believe God when He says all was perfect in the beginning, then we can understand that Adam and Eve and their children would have had few (if any) genetic mutations. Marrying a close relative in the beginning did not include the risk that it does now. As always, God's laws are for our good and His Word is true. The question is: Am I willing to trust Him?

If we refuse to compromise, and take God at His Word (in Genesis) when He tells us who we are and where we (and this entire universe) came from, then we can answer questions like the Cain's wife question.

1. K. Ham, *The New Answers Book*, Master Books, 2006, p. 65.
2. F. Josephus, *The Complete Works of Josephus*, translated by W. Whiston, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981, p. 27.
3. K. Ham, *The New Answers Book*, Master Books, 2006, p. 70.
4. Leviticus 18.

In the Lap of Delilah

by Steve Gallagher

The Angel of the Lord appeared to a childless Jewish couple, announcing that they were to have a son. Samson would be his name and he was to be a Nazarite, "one separated unto God." Two of the components of his special vow of consecration required him to abstain from drinking wine and cutting his hair. However, these were mere outward signs of the sanctified inward life he was to maintain with God. This special child, if he were to fulfill his calling as Jehovah's champion, must keep himself pure before the Lord.

Unfortunately, Samson treated his special call with disdain. While faithfully maintaining the outward requirements of the Nazarite vow, his inner being was wildly out of control. Though specially called of God, Samson's life bore little resemblance to the lives of other Old Testament "heroes of the faith," such as Moses, Joshua, Joseph, or Daniel. Rather than displaying a zeal for the house of God, he allowed his sensual passions to run riot. Instead of leading Israel to mighty victories against the Lord's ene-

mies, he continually acted in his own self-interests. Lacking the holy fervor that inflamed the righteous indignation of all true men of God, his exploits were always motivated by vengeance and pride. In short, Samson's life was one long story of self-indulgence. With only a superficial devotion to the Lord and a merely outward consecration, Samson eventually became easy prey for the enemy.

Samson craved the forbidden fruit of heathen women. In a bizarre way, his hatred and fear of the Philistines only served to fuel his lust for their women. Driven by his insatiable sexual cravings, he indulged himself more and more. Eventually, through a series of poor choices, he found himself inexorably enslaved to his passions. As is always the case with sexual addicts, he would do well for a period of time, but eventually, the delicious enticements of Gaza would overwhelm his best intentions. Before he knew it, he would find himself back on the road to Philistia. It was inevitable that he would one day end up "in the lap of Delilah."

Given the tremendous power on Samson's body that could spoil the enemy at will, the Philistine commanders were obviously desperate to find a way to destroy him. It's very likely that Delilah was the most beautiful seductress in their country. They made sure the mighty man from Israel met her.

Delilah, masterful in the art of seduction, knew the secret of keeping a man in a constant state of desire for her. Coolly and deliberately, she toyed with Samson's emotions and passions, never allowing him to feel as though he was in control—yet always leaving him yearning for more. Once irreversibly under her licentious spell, he was powerless to resist. In a matter of days, he became like putty in her hands. The Black Widow's prey was helplessly dangling in her enticing web.

With a soothing voice, Delilah began to ask Samson about the mysterious source of his great strength. On three different occasions, he lied to her about how to dry up the source of his power. Each time she did what he said, she found out he had deceived her. Finally, she exclaimed, "How can you say, 'I love you,' when your heart is not with me?" Every day, she "pressed him" and "urged him" to disclose his secret. She played on his emotions, pleaded with him, threatened him; all the while keeping him in a heightened state of sexual desire.

Three times her treachery had been exposed: there was no mistaking her intentions. But the lap of Delilah is very intoxicating. "Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned?" (Proverbs 6:27). He finally relented and "told her all that was in his heart."

"A razor has never come on my head, for I have been a Nazarite to God from my mother's womb," he gushed. "If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me and I will become weak and be like any other man" (Judges 16:17).

The power that had been on the body of Samson came from the keeping of his

vow to God, his long hair merely being an outward sign of his separation unto Jehovah. As he lay in a semiconscious trance of bliss—with his head in her lap—the crude scissors snipped away all that remained of his weak devotion to God.

Like a pack of wild jackals, the Philistines swarmed into her bedroom. Samson's bald head betrayed his enfeebled condition. They quickly seized him, dragging him into the city square. There, in front of a jeering mob, his eyes were mercilessly gouged out of their sockets. He must have screamed in pain before passing out. The great champion of Israel was thrown bleeding and whimpering into a foul prison cell.

In the months that followed, the blinded judge was forced to push a huge grinding stone. One can only imagine how the thoughts of his foolishness must have plagued him day after day during his endless trips around the same tedious circles. Over and over again he replayed the events leading up to his capture. "How could I have been so stupid?" he would demand of himself.

Samson discovered that once "the pleasures of sin" have had their season, they must give way to "the wages of sin." Not only did he suffer physically, but it seems that the Philistines also routinely brought him out of the prison to play the part of a fool during their frequent parties. He was probably forced to dance and act like a buffoon before the jeering mob.

But in his sufferings, something stirred within his heart. Alexander MacLaren wrote: "Pitiable as the loss was, Samson was better blind than seeing. The lust of the eye had led him astray, and the loss of his sight showed him his sin. His hair grew, together with his repentance, and his strength with his hair. The cruelties of the Philistines were better for him than their kindness. It is penitence which pleads, 'Remember me, O Lord God!' He knows that his sin has broken the flow of loving divine thought to him, but he asks that the broken

current may be renewed. Many a silent tear had fallen from Samson's blind eyes, before that prayer could have come to his lips, as he leaned on the great pillars." Samson's heart began to awaken unto the God whose loving call he had treated with such disdain.

For years, he had lived in a selfish lack of concern toward the plight of his own people, squandering the sacred duty that had been entrusted to him. His indulgence eventually brought him to a Gazan prison. But where there is true repentance, there is always hope. Samson's greatest victory was yet to come.

A great celebration in honor of the Philistine god, Dagon, quickly deteriorated into a drunken orgy. It wasn't long before the inevitable calls began for the Israelite champion to be brought forth. Mercilessly, the jailers came for the blind man. Standing there in their midst, listening to the blasphemous praises to their demon-god, power once again flowed through Samson's arms as he

braced himself against the building's supporting pillars. In one moment, enlivened by a forgiven soul and a regenerated heart, the disgraced Nazarite did his greatest work for the people of Israel.

Beloved of God, do not let your soul be turned away from Jehovah to lust after the forbidden manna of this world. You may have already spent years in servitude to the inexhaustible cravings of your own flesh. You may even have experienced a Samson-esque fall from grace, your faith shipwrecked on the shores of unfulfilling pleasures and enslaving passions. However, it is not too late! The call of God is always before you: "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin" (Ezekiel 18:30). Flee the soothing, treacherous voice of the enemy and run into the arms of God, for He alone can satisfy your every need. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Unchained*, Spring 2007

Excuses and Poverty

by Daniel E. Miller

"No one has an excuse for being poor in America," he told me. I pondered the statement, vacillating between argument and agreement. I have pondered it since then, and when I do, images of a few acquaintances enter my mind.

I think of a custodian who works where I do. Widowed at an early age after caring for a husband dying with kidney failure, she now works two jobs to support herself and her handicapped son. Both are low-paying jobs, however, and when the weather is cold she worries about the increase in her heating bill.

I remember the single mother of one of my former students. Five years ago, she was involved in a serious car accident. She survived, but the extent of her brain injury and partial paralysis have left her unable to work. Somehow she and her three children manage to survive.

These scenarios lead me to say that yes, there is an excuse for being poor in America. But then I think of other situations. There are the families I know who live in substandard housing, yet own expensive vehicles. I think about a man

who frequently wants to borrow money from me, and yet somehow he seems to find money for vodka. There seems to be no excuse for this poverty.

As Christians, we have been told that *“he that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD”* (Proverbs 19:17). “Just what type of poor person did the writer have in mind?” we wonder. Was he talking only about the people who meet our standards of valid reasons for poverty?

It is easy for me to rationalize my reluctance to respond to poverty. I can do so in a variety of ways. *People need to learn how to manage their money; they aren’t helped when they are just given things. People need to learn that there is a law of sowing and reaping; if they make bad decisions, let them suffer the consequences. If people would accept the conditions of joining our church, then we would help them, but if they’re not willing to do that, then what obligation do we have?*

While there are elements of truth in these thoughts, they are not listed as conditions in Jesus’ command that *“when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind”* (Luke 14:13). Neither do we see any of these qualifications given in Jesus’ statement to the rich young ruler: *“If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven”* (Matthew 19:21). Rather, the Bible teaches that poverty is at times caused by God: *“The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up”* (1 Samuel 2:7).

In fact, more is said in the Scripture regarding what our giving reveals about us than about whom we are to judge as worthy recipients of our giving. It becomes clear that our giving is an indicator of our spiritual condition.

Recently Ezekiel 16:49 jolted me when I read, *“Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her*

and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.” Those aren’t the sins we usually attribute to Sodom.

The moral depravity typically associated with Sodom was rooted in a depraved spiritual condition. According to Ezekiel, that condition emerged as arrogant, overfed people with too much time on their hands spent what they had on themselves and neglected the needy in their midst.

That sobered me because we, American Christians, are among the richest people in the world. We have more than enough to eat, and plenty of free time to pursue our interests. And I wonder, in our eagerness to condemn the poor for their “self-imposed” poverty, whether we are guilty of the pride of Sodom as well. Many of us forget that, by no merit of our own, we were born into a heritage of industriousness and a supportive network of church and family. We cannot imagine what it would be like to face a series of financial disasters and have no place to turn.

So do I advocate handing cash to begging drug addicts? Am I suggesting that we naively give to the transients who come to church to milk the congregation with a sob story? Should we shower the family of the alcoholic with regular support?

Clearly, such circumstances require sensitivity to God’s will. As stewards of the gifts of God, we must be discerning as we distribute what is rightfully His. Yet we are called to remember that God names our failure to help the poor and needy an “iniquity,” a sin. We must be careful, lest under the guise of stewardship, we completely excuse ourselves from helping the poor. No one has an excuse to do that. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *LifeLines*, May-June, 2007



Then They Came for Me

by Elwood McQuaid

The headline read, “New Jersey School Stages Practice Hostage Drill—Portrays Killers as Christians.” This was not something out of a Michael Moore movie. It was, according to news reports, a realtime drill staged to prepare local agencies to handle another Columbine. That, you will remember, is when two students shot up their local high school outside Denver, Colorado, in 1999, killing 13 people and wounding 24 others.

Burlington School Superintendent Chris Manno praised the New Jersey drill saying, “You perform as you practice. We need to practice under conditions as real as possible in order to evaluate our procedures and plans so that they’re as effective as possible.”

However, this drill should have sent a chilling message to conservative Christians because the hostage-taking attackers were depicted as “members of a right-wing fundamentalist group called the ‘New Crusaders.’” According to an article by David Levinsky in the March 23 *Burlington (NJ) County Times*, the “Christian gunmen” were “seeking justice because the daughter of one had been expelled for praying before class.”

In response to the “disaster,” faculty, local emergency personnel, and county officers were dispatched to rescue the “hostages” and evacuate the building.

While county officials praised the exercise as the first live test of their ability to respond to extremist attacks, they ignored the fact that praying before class is not only lawful but the right of every student regardless of religion. Bob Pawson, national coordinator of the Scriptures in Schools Project, contested the claim that the drill anticipated a possible reality when in essence it was nothing of the sort. Pawson, a New Jersey public schoolteacher,

called the drill an excuse to denigrate Christians with “a grotesque scenario saturated with Christian-bashing prejudice and bigotry; a scenario which could never possibly occur.”

The incident, thoroughly unsophisticated in its bigotry, was hatched from a secularist culture of hatred for Christians, which allows such vicious episodes to be considered acceptable in some circles. After all, evangelicals are regularly savaged and ridiculed without consequences. So it is no surprise that the national news media takes little note of such incidents.

Silence from the left-leaning Fourth Estate has prevailed for so long that few are surprised or outraged at the lack of balanced reporting when such events transpire. It’s simply the same story one more time. Why, however, are more evangelicals not sounding an alarm over where this phenomenon is taking us? Have we become self-inflicted victims of tunnel vision? Or are most evangelicals so uninformed that they are ignorant of the serious problems looming over the horizon? Perhaps the average Christian in Western society is so comfortable that indifference has become a state of life and people say to themselves, *Well, as long as it doesn’t affect me or mine.*

A Lack of Context

A problem we must address is what one might call a lack of historical and cultural context. For example, the Apostle Paul in his epistles repeatedly referred to the suffering of fellow believers: “For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Phil. 1:29).

The apostle was speaking to people who lived every day with severe persecution and suffering for their faith in Christ. Theirs was a world dominated by pagan

forces dedicated to wiping them out by every means possible. In the West, our situation is different. So far, we are safe, are comfortable, and live in relatively stable conditions. Thus we tend to relate passages concerning biblical suffering to our existing circumstances, which are trivial by comparison. The persecution experienced by the early church cannot be reduced to merely sniping criticism or social shunning at the hands of those who found faith in Christ distasteful.

Also, we seem inclined to internalize the concept of suffering and relate it to a transient, personal state of mind that, while unpleasant, cannot compare with the biblical situation. Perhaps this is why many Western Christians have developed the tunnel vision that extremely limits their perception of what it means to taste the type of suffering that occurs outside the reality of their own experiences.

But there is a world of suffering out there where believers know precisely what Paul was talking about. They experience it every day. There is Darfur, Southern Sudan, Indonesia, Nigeria, Eritrea, India, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Iraq, China, Vietnam, Somalia—and a list too long to register—where death, starvation, unspeakable atrocities, and rotting jail cells are the cost of being a Christian.

Yet there is a virtual pale of silence on the subject among evangelicals. Why? Have we chosen to live in a state of denial? Is there no spirit of caring for those who exist outside our little circles of life? Do we choose to live in blissful ignorance instead of living with the truth of what our world is coming to? As painful as it may be, we will all one day be forced to face our obligations. Like it or not, the tide is running toward us; and there is no way to escape it.

When the Moral Compass Is Broken

In America, we have lately become fragmented by arguments over what constitutes acceptable conduct and conversation and which elements in the culture are granted a pass on reprehensible, offensive

behavior. And while journalists huff and puff over solutions to our problems to suit all parties, it is safe to say the problems will not likely be corrected because there is now no moral compass by which to set a corrective course. Morally and functionally, it is every man for himself; and everything goes, as long as it makes a profit.

In the Western world, standards of proper conduct were established and maintained on a Judeo-Christian foundation. That foundation has been the cornerstone of success for the democratic process. The radical Cultural Revolution, however, has jackhammered away much of that foundation. To the purveyors of indecency and social and moral degradation, the only standards and rules that apply are those that they fashion themselves. There are no prescribed standards and absolutes. Thus, with a considerable assist from liberal theologians, the proverbial applecart has been overturned; and the so-called bigots and intolerant pockets of resistance are now identified as those of us who fear God and don't fit the mold of politically correct conformity.

Therefore, it is perfectly acceptable to create a fantasy of fundamental, right-wing, wild-eyed Christian hostage-takers and call it an "as real as possible" example of a situation that would require SWAT teams to subdue. Say the same about any other group or minority on the planet, and you'd spend the rest of your life in court or hiding out to escape lifetime social detention.

A Lesson From History

On April 15, 2007, Israelis and Jewish people the world over paused to observe Holocaust Remembrance Day. Thousands gathered at the memorial to the Holocaust at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem for the commemoration. As always, the theme was quite properly "Never Again."

Ironically, at the same time, there was a move in some schools in Great Britain to expunge the Holocaust from school history lessons. Prof. Barry Rubin, an expert on Middle East affairs, commented:

And here's the really scary sentence in