

Founded in 1929 by Geo. R. Brunk I

Vol. LXXVII FEBRUARY 2009 No. 2

THE 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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IN THIS ISSUE

1. PERSON OF THE MONTH: Lemuel Haynes	1
2. Holy Men and a Holy Mount	2
3. FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK: The Erotic vs. the Spiritual	5
4. THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS	6
5. NEWSLINES	11
6. God's Promises Always Come True	15
7. SERMON OF THE MONTH: Listen Up!	16
8. A Call to Repentance, Renewal, and Revival	20
9. SONG OF THE MONTH: "Great God, How Infinite"	22
10. Lights and Sirens	23
11. Cell Phone Abuse and Its Effects	24
12. Thoughts on the Lord's Prayer (cont'd.)	25
13. A Community Call	27
14. COUNSELING FROM THE WORD: The Distinguishing Mark of Christianity	29
15. Good Works and the Justified	31
16. BEGINNING ISSUES: A Common Designer or Common Ancestry?	35
17. America's Softening of the Brain—John Dewey	36

THE SWORD AND TRUMPET (USPS 615-540) is published monthly by *The Sword and Trumpet, Inc.*, P. O. Box 575, Harrisonburg, Va. 22803-0575. Periodicals postage paid at Harrisonburg, Va. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: 1 year US \$15.00, 2 years US \$25.00. Bulk rates on the basis of US \$12.00 per year. Add US \$3.00 per year for countries outside USA and Canada. Telephone (540) 867-9419 or 867-9444. FAX (540) 867-9419. E-mail address: swandtrumpet@verizon.net.

It is not hard to see the effects of Dewey's ideas on American education and society. Over time, through the pressure of government bureaucracies enthralled by Dewey's theories, schools have become less institutions of learning and more laboratories of social engineering. Of course, lectures can be dull, and they are certainly not the only proper means of education. Of course, teaching should take into account student interests and abilities, and learning should include more than note-taking. Class projects and lab experiences are useful. But Dewey and his followers threw the baby out with the bathwater. By emphasizing group activity, they neglected personal receptivity. They honored inquiry while destroying the hope of lasting knowledge. They pressed for the transmission of civilization while ignoring the God whose sure precepts are the ground of civilization. Though his manner was gentlemanly, Dewey's legacy is then one of dismissive humanistic arrogance, in school and thus in society at large. ■

—Reprinted with permission from the *Kairos Journal*.

FOOTNOTES

1. See *Kairos Journal* article, "The 'Softening' of Public Education in America. What Went Wrong?"
2. Dave Breese, *Seven Men Who Rule the World From the Grave* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 156-159.
3. Pam Ecker, "John Dewey, 1859-1952," (Bowling Green University American Cultural Studies Department Website, 1997), <http://www.bgsu.edu/departments/acs/1890s/dewey/dewey.html> (accessed July 20, 2004).
4. Bertrand Russell, "Dewey's New Logic," *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (New York: Tudor, 1941), 144.
5. Russell, 156.
6. George R. Knight, *Philosophy and Education*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1989), 68-79.
7. John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology* (New York: Modern Library, 1930), 314-32, reprinted in *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, vol. 2, ed. John J. McDermott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 722.
8. *John Dewey, A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 59-87, reprinted in *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, vol. 2, ed. John J. McDermott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 703-704.
9. *Ibid.*, 712.
10. Breese, 170.
11. John Dewey, "My Pedagogic Creed," *School Journal* 59 (January, 1897): 77-80, reprinted in McDermott, 451.
12. *Ibid.*, 448.



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PAGE 37

Person of the Month:

Lemuel Haynes (1753-1833)



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Lemuel Haynes was born in West Hartford, Connecticut, to uncertain parentage. At five months of age his parents abandoned him, and although he was taken in by the Rose family of Middle Granville, Massachusetts, who raised him as an indentured servant, they treated him as a member of the family and gave him the same godly instruction as they did their own children.

As a grown man, having fulfilled his indentured servanthood, he exhibited a passion for theology and the ministry which was due in part to his spiritual training at the knee of Deacon Rose, but also to the influence of prominent preachers such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, who were associated with the Great Awakening in New England in the 1740s.

Before any formal training in theology, Lemuel Haynes taught himself the Scriptures, spending much time memorizing many passages of God's Word. He finally began formal studies of Greek and Latin under the tutelage of two Connecticut pastors—Daniel Farrand and William Bradford.

On November 29, 1780, at the age of 27, Brother Haynes was licensed to preach, at which time he became a supply pastor to the church in Middle Granville, Massachusetts, where he was a founding member.

In 1783, at the age of 30, Lemuel married Elizabeth Babbit, a white schoolteacher who was also a member of the Middle Granville congregation. In the course of time God blessed their family with ten children.

In 1785, five years after supplying the pulpit in Middle Granville, he had the honor of becoming the first African-American to be ordained by any religious body in America. The Association of Ministers in Litchfield County, Connecticut, ordained him while he was serving a church in Torrington, Connecticut. Although he was a good preacher the Torrington Church never called him to be their pastor due to racial prejudice and resentment among some of the other churches in the area.

On March 28, 1788, at the age of 34, Haynes accepted the call of the west parish in Rutland, Vermont, to be its pastor. During Brother Haynes' ministry the congregation grew from a membership of forty-two to three hundred fifty as a result of his devotion and faithfulness to his people. He served this all-white congregation for thirty years. He was always thinking of his congregation's welfare. His first concern for them was their salvation. The cross of Christ was a central theme in his sermons. Haynes' sermons were not only rich in theological instruction but also in practical application of God's Word for the life of the hearer. In addition to being a good pastor he also became a great defender of the faith. He tried to stop the encroachment of universalism—the belief in the "Fatherhood of God and the goodness of man"—and other such heresies that were spreading throughout New England at that time.

In 1804 he experienced another "first": that of being the first African-American to receive an honorary Master's degree, bestowed on him by Middlebury College. *(continued on page 4)*

Holy Men and a Holy Mount

by Dr. Charles J. Woodbridge

Evangelism is the heartthrob of the Christian enterprise, the proclamation of the changeless Gospel of Christ to the ends of the earth. To this task the church of the Son of God needs constantly and prayerfully to dedicate herself. She must “evangelize or fossilize.” She must press onward with the good news of salvation or slip backward into powerlessness and frustration. War or no war, the glad tidings of the grace of God must be sounded forth with clarion voice to a lost and dying world.

Before the Lord Jesus ascended to be with the Father, He stamped indelibly upon the wills of His apostles the supreme duty of preaching the Word relentlessly, continuously, uninterrupted, and fearlessly. He kindled their spiritual ardor with the fire of God; He sharpened their vision of the world’s need of a Saviour; He quickened the pulse of their determination; He steeled their souls against the hour of testing; He bequeathed to them their heritage of Spirit-driven evangelism.

The contagion of their testimony has carried through the years. Consecrated souls of the twentieth century are being caught by that contagion and swept onward to spread it among the children of men.

But before the first-century witnesses ventured forth upon their world-changing program, they had to have a message that was clear and compelling. Centuries of Greek philosophy and Roman institutionalism demanded that the new message be divinely accredited. The first-century atmosphere was surcharged with conflicting views and discordant voices. This fresh evangelism needed a firm, solid, and enduring basis.

The apostles were constantly warning of false teachers, unbelievers who would seek

to undermine the Christian faith. It was necessary for Paul to remind the Ephesian elders that after his departure “grievous wolves” would enter in among them, rending the flock with the cruel fangs of their infidelity (Acts 20:29). And even the beloved disciple John felt constrained to tell his “little children” to be on the alert against deniers of the faith (1 John 2:18, 19).

But if a solid basis for evangelism was needed in the first century, how much more is such a basis needed today when the tower of religious Babel has risen to spectacular heights and flaunts its confused pinnacles against the sky. Today as never before the two supreme facts of our faith are being questioned: the inspiration of the Scriptures and the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Today as never before we need a firm foundation for the superstructure of our witness.

Such a foundation the Holy Spirit has given us in the Word—an adequate, soul-satisfying foundation. This foundation is the grand and changeless reality which we might call “holy men” and a “holy mount.” We get these phrases from 2 Peter 1:18, 21. They are God’s answer to the cavilings of unbelief. The Apostle Peter wanted Christians to have a deathless assurance, for the whole structure of our message is founded on the truths of the inspiration of the Word and the deity of the Son.

Holy Men. Read verses 20 and 21 carefully. Rest in their reality. Thank God for their finality. Repose in their security. Then brandish them as the very sword of the Spirit in the battle for the truth.

“The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man.” The Bible is not a purely human document, full of myths and allegories

PAGE 2

SWORD AND TRUMPET

and shrewdly devised fables, to deceive even the elect. Man is a rational creature. He can produce amazing works of literary beauty and skill. His intellectual resources are enormous. He may even be used of God in the production of the Scriptures. But man's reason is powerless in the presence of the stupendous facts of the creation and the fall, of sin and salvation.

This Book we call the Bible is not an achievement of man's will alone; rather, it is God-breathed. As the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the deep when order was brought out of physical chaos, so He moved upon holy men, prepared men, separated men, chosen, taught, inspired men. And when He moved upon these men they spoke, and a golden chain of holy testimony was forged at the anvils of God. For it was the Holy Ghost who moved holy men to produce a holy book through which man could discover the pathway of holiness to the holy city, where down through the ages the blessed chorus will be heard in honor of the Trinity: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (Revelation 4:8).

The Scriptures are like a beautiful cathedral, every chapter and every verse a properly fitted element of the whole, lending to the structure their strength and beauty. And, if flying buttresses are needed, we have also a word of prophecy made "more sure" (2 Peter 1:19), established by the glorious reality of fulfillment. No other book ever written can make the stupendous claims in this regard that the Bible can make. Literally hundreds of predictions of Old Testament days were fulfilled in the days of the New Testament.

In a dark and dismal place these prophetic fulfillments shine with all the luster of a bright and radiant light. Into the dark and dreary shadows of skepticism and agnosticism, the "word of prophecy" sends its brightening rays of heavenly truth, piercing the gloom and banishing the blackness. And this light will continue to shed its effulgent beams "until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

The inspired writings of the holy men

will continue to satisfy and strengthen the hearts of believers until the "phosphorus" of God arise in our hearts. That is the meaning of "the day star"—phosphorus, which shines from within, with independent brightness. What is this phosphorus but a lovely picture of the One who is the eternal Light of light, who will appear in all His splendor as the bright and morning star, the Lord Jesus Christ. When He appears, all doubts and confusion will forever be dispelled. But until that blessed day, praise God for the testimony of the holy men—a sure and Spirit-sealed testimony, worthy of all confidence, the bulwark of our faith, the basis of our evangelism.

But the holy men wrote of One who is the center and object of all evangelism. The good news of redemption relates to the person and work of the Lord of glory, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. The Apostle Peter, prompted by the Holy Spirit, felt constrained to announce to all who would believe and propagate the Gospel that here, too, there was a solid and unshakable basis for evangelism.

Holy Mount. The holy men were paralleled by the holy mount. Simon Peter wanted to be perfectly sure that after his decease the people of God would be squarely established in their faith in Christ.

Again he starts off with a negative statement: Don't lose your grip, child of God! Don't be led astray by those who would question the incarnation of the Son of God. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:16). Let every skeptic take heed. Let every evangelist rejoice. Our faith is not a fable. Our Master is not a myth. The birth of Immanuel is not an allegory.

On the contrary, the apostles "were eyewitnesses of his majesty." This is a powerful statement. Here is reliable evidence. Here is credible testimony. Here is divine stability. Here is trustworthy truth.

Eyewitnesses—men who saw and heard and understood before they recorded the blessed news of a majestic Saviour. Law courts value such testimony. So should we.

Luke, the beloved physician, appreciated this fact. He wrote that the things “most surely believed among us” were transmitted by those “which from the beginning were eyewitnesses” (Luke 1:1, 2). John prefaced his first epistle with these words: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life . . . declare we unto you” (1 John 1:1, 3).

The disciples saw our Lord in the flesh. More precisely, they were physically present when He was revealed in all the sublimity of His glory, in that matchless preview of splendor which He vouchsafed to Peter and James and John at the commencement of the closing period of His earthly ministry.

They witnessed His majesty when they were with Him “in the holy mount” (2 Peter 1:18). They were actually present on this Mount of Transfiguration when He received from God the Father honor and glory. They heard the voice from the excellent glory, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” They beheld with the eyes of the flesh the face of Christ shining as the sun and His raiment white and glistening. On Mount Hermon’s rugged slopes they caught a vision of the ultimate finality and transcendent, cosmic meaning of the mission of the Lord to a benighted world. In all His purity and holiness, the Saviour stood

revealed to mortal eyes. His very presence transformed the hillside into a holy mount and transformed the eyewitnesses into flaming evangelists of the faith. Nevermore could they doubt that this Jesus was God incarnate. They had henceforth a reason for their hope. They had seen and heard. They could not but testify.

Upon the solid rock of the twin facts of holy men and a holy mount the church of Jesus Christ has arisen. The inspiration of the Word of God and the deity and saving grace of the Son of God have never changed. For nearly 2000 years the superstructure of a heavenly message has been erected upon this solid foundation. And today the call sounds forth for more and more consecrated believers who will count their lives as nothing that they might take the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

We have a sure testimony; let us spread it. We have a reliable Book; let us master its contents and share them. We have a glorious message; let us proclaim it. We have an adorable Saviour; let us make Him known. We have our gifts and talents, our energies and capacities, our time and money, our faith and vision; let us lay these in glad consecration upon the altar of a clear-sighted, eager evangelism—“until the day dawn, and the day star arise” in our hearts. ■

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■ LEMUEL HAYNES . . . cont’d from page 1 ■

In March of 1818 the congregation voted to not continue with Brother Haynes as their pastor. This was the result of a five-year-long dispute with a deacon, a growing alienation between Haynes and the members (some of whom were facing charges of church discipline), and the strong sin of racial prejudice.

Lemuel Haynes then went to pastor in Manchester, Vermont, from 1818-1822 and in Granville, New York, from 1822-1833. Brother Lemuel Haynes pastored for a total of forty years.

Brother Haynes knew that someday he would have to answer to his Lord concerning the souls of the flock under his care. He believed that ministers must be of a godly character if they were to be faithful and effective. He believed that he must love his people; be wise and prudent and understanding the spiritual task before him and the subtle tactics of the “enemy”; be patient; have courage and perseverance; and be always watchful and alert, paying close attention to the flock and its needs.

In May of 1833 Lemuel Haynes developed gangrene in one of his feet and had to resign from his pastorate due to his health. On September 28, 1833, he went home to be with his Lord at the age of 80.

—Gail L. Emerson

From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

The Erotic vs. the Spiritual

An Open Letter to the late A. W. Tozer

Dear Mr. Tozer,

You have been enjoying the lovely atmosphere of Heaven for over forty years now, of course. But I want to tell you that your writings still have the anointing to cut to the quick of people's hearts. I personally detest the flattery that gushes forth from so many insincere writers and preachers today who use their audiences to get something for Self. I appreciate the fact that you never flattered me; that I could count on you to give it to me straight. I look forward to the day I will be able to thank you personally.

The other day I was reading in your book *Born After Midnight*, when I came to the chapter entitled, "The Erotic vs. the Spiritual." Much to my surprise you said: "The period in which we now live may well go down in history as the Erotic Age. Sex love has been elevated into a cult. Eros has more worshipers among civilized men today than any other god. For millions the erotic has completely displaced the spiritual . . . "How long, O Lord, how long?"

Erotic Age? The 50s? You're kidding, right? I realize you witnessed the devilish writings of Alfred Kinsey and the birth and proliferation of Hefner's trashy magazine. But you have no idea how mild those things appear now. Looking back, do you think you were just being naive or were you so spiritually sensitized that you could predict the impending doom coming upon God's people?

I assume that you have not been allowed to lean over Heaven's banister to view what is going on down here on Earth. I tend to think that those who have arrived there since you did have been too overwhelmed with HIM to want to think much about what earth-life was like.

So I need to inform you that within five years of your departure the sexual revolution burst upon the American landscape in an intensity that you probably cannot imagine. Did you know that fornication would soon become the norm rather than the exception among teenagers; that theaters would sprout up across the land where you could view graphic movies of people having sex; that homosexuality would claim the souls of millions of hapless young people?

Did you know that the Church has been swept along in this torrent of ungodliness? Did you have any idea how involved in sexual activity "Christian" young people would become? Could you foresee the day that pornography addiction among "Christian" men would become so commonplace that it would hardly even be noticed? Did you know that in the past two decades at least a dozen nationally known ministers have been caught in illicit sexual activity?

I realize we are assured that God will wipe away all our tears when we arrive in the Celestial City, so I can't imagine you knowing these things. Surely if you did you would sit down on the nearest gold-plated street corner and weep uncontrollably.

Mr. Tozer, we could sure use your heart-piercing words right now. Do you think the Lord would allow you to return to tell the Christians of my generation how far we have drifted? No, I suppose the Lord would say something like, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead."

Well, should this letter somehow make it through to you, please know that you are missed down here. And could you also ask the Lord a question for me: "How long, O Lord, how long?"

*Sincerely,
Steve Gallagher*

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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

FEBRUARY 1, 2009

A Shunammite Woman Hosts Elisha

2 Kings 4:8-17

Our lessons for February complete our quarter's study of Bible characters. This month we look at the Shunammite woman who befriended Elisha; Nathan the prophet; Queen Esther; and the Prophet Isaiah. As usual, it will be helpful to read

background and context for these lessons. Our understanding is broadened when we have in mind a picture of the setting and circumstances in which these encounters took place. One major theme should come through in our study of these individuals and that is their commitment to God and His work. A subtitle for today's lesson could be "God Rewards Generosity."

Elisha the prophet lived a very colorful life, working miracles, ministering to people with various needs, and advising kings.

PAGE 6

SWORD AND TRUMPET

His life's work begins with his call by Elijah as recorded in 1 Kings 19:19-21, and ends with his death recorded in 2 Kings 13:14-21. His ministry in the Northern Kingdom of Israel covered a span of 60 years. He ministered in the reigns of Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Joash.

Shunem was a city of the tribe of Issachar. We note from verses 8 and 9 that Elisha passed that way often in the carrying out of his duties, advising kings, assisting the schools of the prophets, and ministering to individuals in need. (Read Chapters 2 through 13:21.) There was in Shunem a woman of means who ministered to Elisha when he passed through, providing meals to this man she recognized as "an holy man of God."

One day she proposed to her husband that they go beyond simply providing meals for this man of God and erect for him a "prophet's room" on the roof of their house, a place for him to stay on his travels. They did, and furnished it with the necessities to make it a comfortable stopping-off place for Elisha on his journeys.

Elisha was grateful for their hospitality and had his servant, Gehazi, inquire of the woman what he could do to recompense her for the care she had given them. He was willing to speak to the king on her behalf (see 2 Kings 8:1-6), or to the captain of the army to secure a favor. The woman's answer is significant and tells us much about her character. Basically she said, "I am content; I have no needs."

In her response this woman models for us the essence of a contented life. Her needs were met, she was satisfied with her lot in life, she had the means to assist others and found joy in doing so, and she had no desire for prominence. We should strive to emulate her attitude.

Barrenness for a Jewish woman, however, was looked upon as a curse. But even this she seemed to accept without remorse. But at the suggestion of Gehazi, Elisha called her again and promised her a son. The idea struck her as so absurd (see verse 14b), that she bid Elisha, being a man of

God, not to lie to her. However, Elisha's promise came true and she bore a son who was a support and companion after her husband's death.

She had shown loving hospitality without thought of recompense, but was rewarded beyond her fondest dreams. She showed the true nature of greatness.

For thought and discussion

1. How do you suppose the Shunnamite woman recognized Elisha as a man of God? What characteristics would have been prevalent? What lesson does that teach us?
2. One of the great blessings of the Christian faith is the gift of hospitality. Discuss the various avenues of blessing derived from showing hospitality.
3. Define the characteristics that made the Shunammite woman a great woman.
4. How can we develop and nurture the habit of contentment with our lot in life?
5. We note in this lesson the principle that helping others brings great rewards. Discuss this principle and its far-reaching results.

FEBRUARY 8, 2009

Nathan Confronts David

2 Samuel 11:26-12:14

The life of a prophet was not an easy one. As spokesmen for God they were required to speak harshly to men's sins, often putting their lives in danger for doing so (see 1 Kings 18:4; 2 Chronicles 36:16; Nehemiah 9:26, and etc.). But the thought of personal safety was only secondary to their obedience to God. They spoke His word regardless of the consequences. Today's lesson finds the Prophet Nathan in a very difficult spot, telling his friend, King David, that he had sinned and pronouncing God's judgment upon him for that sin.

For the complete story of David's sin with Bathsheba, read Chapters 11 through

12:25. David's sin was despicable, not only because he violated God's laws in committing adultery and murder, but also because he violated the trust of the people in failing to be an exemplary leader, someone they could look up to and respect. This double transgression put him at odds with God. The Lord sent Nathan to bring David's sin to his attention, though he certainly must have known in his heart that he had done wrong.

Instead of confronting David directly, Nathan told him a story of two men, a rich man and a poor man. The rich man had large flocks; the poor man had only one small lamb, a family pet. When a traveler came to the rich man's house he disdained to take a lamb from his own flock to feed him. Instead, he robbed the poor man of his only source of joy and fed the traveler with his lamb.

David was incensed at this callous act and immediately passed judgment upon the one who had so thoughtlessly defrauded his poorer neighbor. He judged the man worthy of death and demanded restitution according to the Mosaic Law (see Exodus 22:1). David, for the moment blind to his own implication, would also have been worthy of death under that same law.

Nathan then brought David up short with his statement: "Thou art the man." He went on to remind David how God had anointed him to be king, had delivered him from the hand of King Saul, given him the kingdom, and would have even given him more if these blessings had not been enough.

Nathan minced no words in condemning David for the death of Uriah, the taking of his wife and, above all, for "despising the commandment of the Lord." Implicit in this, too, is Nathan's rebuke for David's attempt to cover his sin, to hide it from man and from God (see verses 12 and 14).

God's immediate judgment for this breach of morality was that the child born of this unholy alliance would die. The long-range effect would be ongoing strife within David's own family. David would suffer for

his sin for the rest of his life. Such are the wages of sin—they keep on paying.

To David's credit, he accepted God's rebuke through Nathan and confessed his sin. God, in His mercy, accepted David's confession and restored their relationship. His confession spared his life, but his sin took the life of Bathsheba's child.

As a result of this experience David gave us that wonderful penitential Psalm 51 which has become the heart cry of many of God's children down through the ages.

For thought and discussion

1. Do you think Nathan's story was more effective than direct confrontation? Why?
2. Sin is deceitful. We sin and then try to hide it. But it doesn't work. Allow this lesson to be both a warning and an encouragement to live above sin. There is always a penalty.
3. It isn't easy to confront another about his sin. What lessons do we learn from this experience, and from life, that will help in this regard? Discuss.
4. When confronted with sin or wrongdoing, human nature tends to deny and become defensive. Look at David's response. Let that be your guide should you ever find yourself in such a situation.
5. Discuss the implications of sin. They are not always as severe as were David's, but there are always consequences.

FEBRUARY 15, 2009

Queen Esther Risks Her Life for Her People

Esther 4

God's people often find themselves in unusual circumstances and forced to make very difficult decisions. Esther was one such individual. The story of Esther is one of the most intriguing stories found in the Scriptures. (Read the entire book to get the perspective for today's lesson.) The way

Esther rose to the occasion when the situation demanded, with no thought for her personal safety, leaves a tremendous example for all time of selfless commitment.

Through the scheming of Haman all the Jews in the Medo-Persian Empire were scheduled to be destroyed. Haman hated Mordecai (see 3:1-6) and, not content to deal solely with Mordecai, sought widespread vengeance on Mordecai's people instead. When the king's edict for their destruction went out over his whole realm, the Jews instigated a collective time of fasting, mourning, and supplication. Mordecai also put on sackcloth and went about the city Shushan mourning.

When Esther's attendants in the palace informed her of Mordecai's condition, she sent clothing for him, but he refused to wear it because he was in deep mourning for his people. It isn't likely at this point that anyone knew of the connection between Mordecai and Queen Esther (see 2:10). But obviously there was communication between them as evidenced by verses 5 and following. When Mordecai refused the clothing sent from Esther, she sent a trusted servant to discover the cause of his sorrow.

Mordecai explained it all to Hatach and gave him a copy of the king's edict. He also requested that Esther go in to the king and plead for deliverance for her people. As yet, her racial identity was unknown in the court of the king. This request put Esther into a confusing dilemma. One simply did not go in to the king uninvited. It could mean immediate death. There was an exception, but the risk was real and Esther was hesitant. She had not seen the king for thirty days and seemed a bit unsure of her current status with him.

In response to Esther's hesitancy, Mordecai applied more pressure. Plans were afoot to kill the Jews and he assured Esther that she would not escape destruction just because she was in the palace. He also expressed strong faith that deliverance could come from another quarter should she refuse to exert her influence to save her people. Mordecai then uttered that classic

phrase: "And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Mordecai sensed the overriding hand of God working behind the scenes in this very perilous situation.

Esther's response was one of total commitment and surrender to the will of God. She agreed to risk seeing the king and putting her life on the line for the sake of a greater cause than herself. "If I perish, I perish" was her humble response. However, she did not go unprepared. She and her maidens pledged themselves to fasting and she also instructed Mordecai to "gather the Jews in Shushan, and fast for me." They were committed to seeking God's will by putting themselves at His mercy.

We know the rest of the story. God moved the heart of the king to be favorably disposed toward Esther's requests. The Jews were spared and Mordecai was elevated to a position of honor and responsibility in the kingdom (see 9:4).

In God's plan it always pays to risk oneself for the higher cause.

For thought and discussion

1. This lesson includes another example of an attempt to destroy God's chosen people. Why do men keep trying? And why does it never succeed?
2. What was the purpose of fasting, and is it still a valid principle for God's children in our day?
3. Have you ever been asked to do something you felt put you at personal risk? What was your response? What were the results?
4. We may think at times that our decisions are of little consequence, but often they may have far-reaching implications, far beyond the situation at hand. Explore with your class.
5. Is your commitment to the Lord and His work such that you would be willing to give your life for the greater cause? Think about it.
6. I once heard a missionary say that it may be easier to die for one's faith than to live it. Explore.

FEBRUARY 22, 2009

Isaiah Answers God's Call

Isaiah 6:1-8

Isaiah was one of the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. He lived and served during a difficult time of deep spiritual and moral poverty in Judah. His ministry in the southern kingdom of Judah spanned approximately 60 years, during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. These four kings had a mixed record in terms of their faithfulness to God. However, Isaiah was faithful to his calling regardless of the political or spiritual condition of the nation. *Eerdman's Bible Handbook* says of Isaiah: "Throughout his life, he preached God's righteousness, warned of the judgment on sin, and comforted his people with the knowledge of God's love, His longing to forgive, and all the glories in store for those who remained faithful to Him."

Isaiah's vision came at a time of transition in Judah. He had already preached and warned against God's judgment upon evil and departure from His will (Chapters 1-5). However, at this crucial time God needed a bold and fearless spokesman to declare His message to kings and people alike. Isaiah was that man, empowered by the Sovereign God.

Isaiah's vision appeared the year of King Uzziah's death (740 B.C.) when the kingdom passed to his son Jotham. We don't know, but perhaps Isaiah had gone to the temple to pray or worship when God chose to give him a vision and a special call. Isaiah was struck by the awesome majesty of the Lord God seated on a lofty throne, surrounded by hovering seraphim.

These seraphs were creatures of fiery brilliance and purity. They were also humble, covering their face and feet in the presence of a holy God. As they flew they cried to one another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." His glory, they declared, filled the earth. At the voice of their praise the doorposts shook and the temple was filled with smoke—all speaking to the glory and power of the One seated upon the throne.

Isaiah was understandably moved by this

display of glory and power, and recognized that he was not worthy to stand in the presence of such holiness. Isaiah understood his condition and the condition of his people. They were sinners. They were unclean and undone in the presence of the Lord of hosts. Isaiah had seen the Lord of hosts, and he was afraid.

However, Isaiah's humble attitude put him in God's favor and in a position for blessing and usefulness. One of the seraphs temporarily left off ministering to the Lord and ministered to Isaiah by taking a live coal from the altar and touching his lips. That gesture signified cleansing from sin and purification for service for the holy Lord.

Only then did the Lord ask the question as to who "would be willing to bear the self-denial which the delivering of such an unwelcome message to the Jews would require of the messenger?" (JFB) (see following verses). Isaiah's response was immediate and absolute: "Here am I; send me." God had forgiven and cleansed Isaiah; he responded to God's call from a heart of gratitude.

Isaiah stands as an example for all times of willing response to God's call to service. We should remember that the cost of refusal is greater than the cost of acceptance.

For thought and discussion

1. Study the life and times of Isaiah to get a picture of the difficulty of his task. The rest of Chapter 6 will be helpful.
2. Isaiah's call was dramatic. So was Saul's. But not all are called alike. Does the nature of God's call have anything to do with the mission to which one is called? What do you think? How did God call you? What was your response?
3. Do we at times take too lightly the majesty and holiness of our great God? What is a proper view of Him? How should we approach Him?
4. Isaiah's experience should clarify for us the absolute necessity of spiritual cleansing as a prelude to usefulness and service for God. Are you in the position to be useful to Him?
5. Should our acceptance of God's call to service be based on the expected response of those we are called to serve? Discuss. ■

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

Riots, Crisis in Thailand

The closure of Bangkok's airport (BKK) stranded an Institute for Global Opportunities (of which I am an alumnus) team (based in Chiang Mai) in Bangkok, awaiting a flight to India. After a few days of waiting, they flew out of an air force base an hour outside of Bangkok that had been opened for commercial flights.

Here's the story of how the riots closed the airport: Thaksin Sinawatra founded the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) and became the Prime Minister of Thailand in a landslide election in 2001 that was hailed around the world as the most open, free, and fair elections the country had ever had. He was a very popular leader, under whom the Thai economy boomed, and was reelected several times in landslides.

Finally the main opposition party, People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), a party formed (for the sole purpose of removing Thaksin from power) by a rich mogul who is a disenchanted former Thaksin supporter, accused him of corruption and boycotted the 2006 elections. Through the intricacies of Thai election law, this meant certain elections had to be held over and over again to get a functioning parliament. Both the TRT and PAD parties were caught bribing small parties to contest or not contest elections in order to let TRT win or to prolong the stalemate producing a constitutional crisis (respectively).

In September of 2006, while Thaksin was in NYC at the UN, a bloodless military coup took over the country. The military junta imposed a ban on pro-TRT/Thaksin media

and banned Thaksin and many TRT members from politics. Subsequently, former TRT members joined the People's Power Party (PPP) in droves, causing the military junta to issue a classified order (leaked to the press) to suppress PPP political activities and frame the PPP with insulting the King (an action that is not only a crime, but also political suicide). The election commission dismissed the complaint because the military junta had written immunity for itself into the new constitution. An MP that switched parties from PAD to PPP was assassinated.

After about a year of the military junta ruling the country (in a way heavily slanted against Thaksin/TRT/PPP; this included the appointment of a new judiciary, which is important to remember in light of future events) and writing a new constitution, new elections were held in December of 2007 with the PPP winning and forming a government, with Thaksin's brother-in-law Somchai Wongsawat ending up as Prime Minister. PAD responded with protests, many of them violent. Between June and October 2008, PAD mobs besieged Government House (offices of PM and cabinet) and parliament, closing both at times and battling police on a regular basis.

In August, about 80 armed, masked PAD protesters broke into the National Broadcasting Service of Thailand, shutting down TV broadcasts temporarily until they were resumed from an Army base. The police expelled the protesters. Hundreds of PADers returned and regained control. Police expelled them again.

On the 25th of November, a convoy of hundreds of armed PAD protesters attacked Bangkok's main international airport (BKK), overpowering hundreds of riot police protecting it. They did so in an attempt to prevent PM Somchai's return from Peru. The PM's plane diverted to Bangkok's secondary airport (DMK) and then flew on to Chiang Mai, transferring government operations to the north, which has been a TRT/PPP stronghold. The government asked the Army to restore order at the airport, which the Army refused to do, suggesting instead that the government resign. In the meantime, PAD also stormed DMK. So the government turned to the police to restore order, asking the Navy to assist retaking BKK, and the Air Force to assist retaking DMK (which is also an Air Force base). One of the PAD leaders defiantly responded that "we are using our rights to demonstrate peacefully without causing damages to state properties or rioting." PAD leaders paid women and children to come to the airports to serve as human shields, each PAD leader being surrounded by 300-400 women. A PAD MP memorably remarked that the PAD "could seize the airport and doing so is not excessive. The entire world understands that this is a normal matter in the struggle of democratic countries." Needless to say, the rest of the world doesn't exactly understand it in those terms. The EU issued a statement saying, "While respecting the right of protesting and without interfering in any way with the internal political debate in Thailand, the EU considers that these actions are totally inappropriate."

On December 2nd, the Thai constitutional court handed down guilty verdicts of vote fraud against the PPP and ordered it disbanded and its leaders, including PM Somchai, banned from politics for five years. The PPP already has a shell party set up to which its MPs are expected to transfer.

An editorial in the Bangkok Post concludes, "It now seems that violence cannot be avoided. Some even predict what has

been unthinkable for 700 years: a civil war."

Pray for GTO and IGo staff and students in Chiang Mai, as well as the huge numbers of missionaries based in Chiang Mai. If Thailand destabilizes, it could have huge negative consequences for the spread of the gospel in southeast Asia, as most of southeast Asia's missionaries are headquartered there.

—Sources: *Wikipedia, Bangkok Post, Washington Post, MCOT, CNN, Reuters, The Hindu, Xinhua, The Wall Street Journal, The Times of London*

For more of the background story details, read the following Wikipedia articles: "2005-2006 Thai political crisis" (<http://cli.gs/5Q16BJ>), "2006 Thai coup d'état" (<http://cli.gs/bJs898>), "Thai general election, 2007" (<http://cli.gs/d3MNdd>), "2008 Thai Political Crisis" (<http://cli.gs/eHMD5a>), "People's Alliance for Democracy" (<http://cli.gs/nRBzap>), "Thaksin Sinawatra" (<http://cli.gs/6tznR1>)

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Terrorists Strike Mumbai

On the 26th of November, at least ten (and perhaps as many as twenty) terrorists from the Pakistani group Lashkar e-Taiba hijacked a fishing boat and beheaded the crew. When they were approached by the Coast Guard for questioning, they killed one officer and took the other one hostage, forcing him to pilot them to Mumbai, killing him when they were done.

The terrorists split up into small teams and headed for a number of different targets, including the Taj Mahal hotel, Oberoi Trident hotel, Nariman House (Jewish Center) and the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus train station. At the train station, a news photographer who snapped a now-infamous picture of the one captured terrorist, lamented that he wished he had a gun instead of a camera because even though there were 20-30 armed police in the cavernous terminal, they cowered instead of returning fire at the two terrorists. They also killed the anti-terrorist chief of the Indian state of Maharashtra, of which Mumbai is the capital.

The terrorists at the train station, hotels, and Jewish center rampaged through the crowds with AK-47s and grenades. In the hotels, they asked for Americans and

British and took many people hostage. They planted explosives intended to bring down the Taj Mahal, but underestimated the strength of the building, managing only to start a fire. Over the course of three days, incompetent Indian “commandos” stormed the buildings multiple times and were ambushed by the terrorists who knew the building layout better than they did. In the Taj at the time of the attack were four EU MPs, one of whose assistants was shot. Also at the scenes when attacked were the President of Madrid and an Indian MP.

When Indian security forces finally broke through at the Jewish center, all the hostages had been tortured and killed including a rabbi and his wife. Further incompetence was illustrated by one terrorist reportedly escaping the Taj while it was surrounded by police/army and by the government declaring the Taj secure, only to find that several terrorists were still alive and fighting. The Indian home minister resigned because of the failures.

The terrorists used cocaine and LSD to stay alert during the 60-hour attack.

In the end, nine terrorists were shot and one was captured. The captured one said that they had been trained in a Lashkar e-Taiba camp in Pakistan. 172 people were killed, including 141 Indians, 6 Americans, and 14 Europeans, Canadians, or Australians. 293 people were wounded.

ABC News writes, “U. S. intelligence agencies warned their Indian counterparts in mid-October of a potential attack ‘from the sea against hotels and business centers in Mumbai,’ a U. S. intelligence official tells *ABC-News.com*. A second government source says specific locations, including the Taj hotel, were listed in the U. S. warning. One month later, Nov. 18, Indian intelligence also intercepted a satellite phone call to a number in Pakistan known to be used by a leader of the terror group, Lashkar e-Taiba, believed responsible for the weekend attack, Indian intelligence officials say. The Indian intercept also revealed a possible sea-borne attack, the officials say. Since Friday, U. S. intelligence agencies have been tracking the phones and

SIM cards recovered by Indian authorities from the Mumbai terrorists leading to a “treasure trove” of leads in Pakistan and several possible connections to the United States, officials say. A U. S. counter-terrorism official says all leads continue to point to Lashkar e-Taiba, a Kashmir separatist group with strong ties to al Qaeda.”

Sources: *ABC News, The Times of London, Indian Express, The UK Daily Telegraph, Reuters, AP, Wikipedia, The Financial Times, The Wall Street Journal, The UK Guardian, The Belfast Telegraph, CNN, The Times of India*

Includes excerpt from “U. S. Warned India in October of Potential Terror Attack” (<http://cli.gs/Q3U1m7>) on *ABC News*

Suggested Further Reading: “Translation of Message from ‘Deccan Mujahideen’” (<http://cli.gs/Ra5nL5>) in *Wall Street Journal*

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Israelis Invent Laser Stitches

Israeli physicists at Tel Aviv University have perfected a new method that uses lasers to weld wounds shut instead of the thousand-year-old practice of sewing wounds shut.

—Source: *Jerusalem Post*

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How Obama Got Elected

The pollster Zogby did an exit poll of those that voted for Obama and found that ignorance ran deep in those that did. 57% could not correctly say which party controls Congress (Democrats) (50% chance by guessing); 72% could not correctly say Joe Biden quit a previous campaign because of plagiarism (25% chance of guessing); 83% could not correctly say that Barack Obama won his first election by getting opponents kicked off the ballot (25% chance by guessing); 88% could not correctly say that Obama said that his policies would likely bankrupt the coal industry and make energy rates skyrocket (25% chance by guessing); 56% could not correctly say Obama started his political career at the home of two former members of the terrorist Weather Underground organization (25% chance by guessing).

On the other hand, only 14% failed to identify Sarah Palin as the one on whom the GOP spent \$150,000 for clothes, only 6% failed to identify Palin as the one with a pregnant teenage daughter, and 87% thought that Palin said she could see Russia from her “house” even though it was liberal comedian Tina Fey that said that in an impersonation.

Only 2.4% of Obama voters got 11 of 12 of the multiple choice questions correct and only 0.5% got all of them correct.

—Source: *HowObamaGotElected.com*

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Pilot Blinded by Stroke Lands Safely

A British pilot flying solo in a small Cessna was blinded by a stroke mid-flight. He was guided to a safe landing by instructions via radio from a Royal Air Force training pilot flying alongside.

—Source: *AP*

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WalMart Employee Trampled, Killed on Black Friday

During the Black Friday (the day after Thanksgiving) shopping deals, thousands of shoppers waiting outside a Long Island, NY, WalMart broke the glass doors and trampled a WalMart worker to death. They expressed disappointment and anger when police closed the store.

—Source: *AP*

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Pirates Besiege Suez Corridor

Somali Pirates have been active in the Gulf of Aden that leads to the Suez Canal, the vital artery connecting the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean, making the long journey around Africa necessary. Somali Pirates have attacked 90 ships so far this year, hijacking 39 ships and taking 200 crew members hostage. They then demand a ransom for a fraction of the cargo’s value.

The pirates’ crowning achievement came on November 15th when they

seized a Saudi oil supertanker that is larger than an aircraft carrier and is worth \$250 million. They were asking for \$25 million ransom, since dropped to \$12 million.

Two other hijackings of note were:

1. The Ukrainian freighter seized with 33 T-72 tanks.
2. The chemical tanker that, when hijacked, had its three British guards jump into the sea to escape the pirates. A NATO warship’s helicopter responded to the hijacking distress call, but did nothing more than pluck the three sopping security guards from the sea when they saw the pirates already controlled the vessel.

There have been some successful enforcement actions against the pirates by the navies of the world powers: Recently the Indian Navy blew up a pirate ship (which turned out to be a hijacked Thai fishing trawler). In April, the French paid a ransom for one of their cruise ships, only to descend on the pirates’ village with helicopters and commandos to recover part of the ransom and capture six pirates. In September, French commandos stormed a hijacked ship, recovering all the crew safely. In April, the Army of Puntland (a small autonomous region in Somalia) boarded a hijacked Dubai ship (freeing it and the crew unharmed) killing one pirate, capturing eleven pirates, and sentencing them to life in prison.

—Sources: *Wikipedia, ABC News, RIA Novosti, UK Daily Telegraph, The Times of London*

Suggested Further Reading: “Mummy, can I phone the pirates?” (<http://cli.gs/D3prig>) on *BBC*

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Deer Wounds Hunter

A deer who was shot twice by a Sedalia, MO, hunter got up and attacked him when he got close. He received seven staples in his scalp and a concussion.

Source: *Rocky Mountain News*

Feedback: hansmast@hansmast.com

God's Promises Always Come True

by P. Daniel Stetler

It is easy to sing “Standing on the Promises” on a beautiful Sunday morning when your children are all healthy, your bank account is comfortable, and all is basically right with your world! But I want to ask you a serious, pointed question! Are there ever times when you struggle to believe? Have there ever been times when all was not right with your world and God’s promises seemed to mock you rather than bring encouragement? In those times, your confidence seems to have just oozed away, because your bank account is non-existent, your health has broken, and you didn’t know where your next house payment was coming from. In times like that, I frankly find it much easier to doubt God’s promises than to believe them.

Now before you throw me out for my struggles with faith, let me remind you that the Word of God is full of examples of people who had similar struggles—yet they ultimately found God’s promises to be absolutely true, and their testimonies provide a foundation for us to rest our faith upon.

You see, the problem is that God sees all things from the perspective of the eternal present because He operates outside of time. He identified himself to Moses as I AM! He operates outside of time, and therefore sees all of time as a great eternal present. We, on the other hand, are time-bound creatures. We find it impossible to see things that way. We can only operate in the past, present, and future. Therefore, from our perspective, there are often long lapses of time

between God’s initial promise and its fulfillment. With the Lord a “day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day.” With us, 70 years is a lifetime and a thousand years is an eternity.

Let me give you some examples of this problem from Scripture. God told Adam not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and if he did, he would surely die. Satan said he would not die, and after Adam had eaten of the fruit, he did not fall over dead immediately. In fact, he lived for 930 more years, but in that 930th year he died—because God’s promises always come true!

God saw the awful wickedness in Noah’s day and told him to build an Ark because he was going to send rain and destroy the world with a terrible flood. Noah believed God, and for the next 120 years he built a gigantic boat with no place to float it. It did not rain during those years; in fact, it had never rained before. People thought Noah was nuts and, even after the animals had come, and God had shut Noah and his family in the Ark, it still didn’t rain for seven more days. Those had to be seven of the longest days of Noah’s life, but after those days—it did rain and all life outside the Ark was destroyed by the flood because God’s promises always come true!

God told Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan to him and to his children. The problem was, Abraham was 75 years old and he still had no children. Abraham and Sarah believed God, but ten long years passed with absolutely no evidence that a son would be born.

(continued on page 19)



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.

Listen Up!

by Dr. Mark Bailey

There is a story that has been told of former president Franklin D. Roosevelt, who often endured long receiving lines at the White House and complained that no one really paid any attention to what anyone said. So during one particular reception, Roosevelt decided to try an experiment.

As each person passed down the line and shook the president's hand, he murmured in their ear that he had murdered his grandmother that morning. But the guests just responded with phrases like "Marvelous" and "Keep up the good work; we're proud of you." It was not until the end of the line, while Roosevelt was greeting the ambassador from Bolivia, that the president's statement was actually heard. The ambassador leaned over and whispered to Roosevelt, "I am sure she had it coming!"

A Failure to Communicate

If you took a speech class in school or studied the dynamics of communication in another course, you know that effective communication makes a demand on the hearer as well as the speaker. My opening story illustrates so well one of

the main problems in human communication, which is that what is *heard* is not always what was *said*. The result is a failure to communicate—and when it comes to God's Word, this failure has serious implications.

One of the most frustrating things for the pastor of a church is the failure of the Word of God to take root in the lives of those who listen week after week. Nothing is more disheartening than to watch the best of God's truth pass over the head of the intended receiver. It might be the right time and the truth may be relevant, but there may be no results.

It's important for us to be reminded that every time we listen to God's Word being taught and every time we open the Book ourselves to read or study, there are some resistant dynamics at work, both internal and external. Our challenge is to be aware of these dynamics and make sure that our ears are truly open to the Word and our hearts are fertile soils for its truths.

The Parable of the Soils

The imagery of seed and soils is one

Jesus used in a parable He taught that helps reveal the mysteries of the kingdom. This is the parable of the sower and the soils that is repeated in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8. For this message, I want to look at the parable as recorded in Mark 4:1-20, which I urge you to read for yourself.

By way of background, Mark 3:22-30 shows why Jesus changed His teaching method to parables. Israel's leaders accused Jesus of having a demon. Jesus responded that if He had a demon, they had committed the unpardonable sin, which is defined as ascribing to Satan the works of the Holy Spirit as performed by Christ in His earthly ministry. Jesus rejected this charge, of course, and began to speak to the people in biblical wisdom sayings such as the parable of the soils. Jesus' purposes for using parables were to reveal truth to those who had receptive hearts and to conceal truth from those who had rejected Him.

In Mark 4:3-8, Jesus told the parable of the four soils on which the seed fell, representing four kinds of human response to the Word of God. These are the soil beside the road, the rocky soil, the soil that was full of thorns, and finally the good soil that received the seed and produced a crop. Then He punctuated His message with this critical admonition: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (v. 9).

These soils describe three reasons why the Word of God doesn't take root and produce the desired fruit in some people and one reason why others are so fruitful.

Before we look at each part of the parable, notice the disciples' reaction when Jesus asked them, "Know ye not this parable?" (Mark 4:13). They did not, so Jesus went on, "How then will ye know all parables?"

Jesus' point is that what we hear will

determine what we understand, and how we understand will determine how we accept God's truth. Hearing, accepting, understanding, and then using God's Word will determine the fruitfulness that God will produce in our lives. It is a chain reaction, a chain effect.

• ***First Soil: Satanic Interruption***

The first impediment to the effective hearing of and fruitful obedience to God's Word is what we might call satanic interruption. This is pictured by the seed

that was sown along the path.

In the Middle East, the way-side soil was on paths around or even through a field. As they are trampled down, the soil becomes hard. Like seed falling on trampled ground and the birds eating it off the surface, when the Word of God is proclaimed, Satan comes and

snatches away the Word that has been sown in the "soil" of the listener's heart. We see an example of this in 2 Corinthians 4, where Paul writes, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (vv. 3, 4). Every time the Word of God is sown, there's an opportunity for the enemy to snatch away that message. Satan intends to destroy our witness and make our lives fruitless by keeping the Word from taking root within those who hear the gospel.

• ***Second Soil: External Opposition***

There's a second soil in Mark 4, illustrated by the rocky ground. Shallow topsoil on top of underlying layers of limestone produces an artificial greenhouse effect. But because there is little moisture in Israel's climate and a lot of heat, when a seed falls on this kind of soil there may be premature germination. What seems at first like a fast-growing

Hearing, accepting, understanding, and then using God's Word will determine the kind of fruitfulness that God will produce in our lives.

plant, sprouts and then withers and dies and does not last.

In a similar way, there are people on whose ears and hearts the seed of God's Word falls. When they hear the Word, as Jesus said, they receive it with joy at first, but they have no firm root and so the response is only temporary. When affliction arises because of the Word, immediately they fall away. This resistant dynamic is what we could identify as external opposition.

Some of the reasons people fall away when their commitment to Christ is shallow are tribulations and afflictions. Tribulations are allowed by God and probably most often take the form of circumstances. Afflictions are advanced by one's enemies and, for most of us, probably involve more criticism than crushing blows. In some parts of our world, we know that opposition leads to physical affliction and maybe even death as well.

Let's add temptation to the list, which is being led away and enticed to not live life God's way. Perhaps you have taken a stand for Christ and received some flak for your faith. . . . When one takes a stand for Christ, then friends may say, "You really don't believe that, do you?"

In the face of persecution and affliction (whether it's verbal or physical), some people are going to want to relent and fall away like a shallow plant with no root. They may say yes to the Word of God, but when persecution comes, it turns out to be a temporary commitment with a temporary response, and fruitfulness is not found.

• ***Third Soil: Internal Distraction***

There's a third soil on which the seed of God's Word can fall, which illustrates the internal distractions of life that can choke off our response. This is represented by the seed that falls among the thorns. These are the people who have

heard the Word, but "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful" (Mark 4:19).

In the culture of Israel, as elsewhere, there are thorns you don't plant; they just grow naturally in an uncultivated field (and sometimes even in a cultivated field). At the root level the thistles wrap their roots around the good plant and choke out its life.

Notice the three "thorns" Jesus described. One is humanism, an overemphasis on self. The second is materialism, an overemphasis on security. And the third is hedonism, an overemphasis on satisfaction. These internal distractions can easily draw us away from the Word once it has been sown.

Jesus would say to us today, "Listen up! I know you can hear because you have ears.

But having ears, you need to hear what I am saying." One writer has said, "Christianity is fighting a losing battle today, not because God's people are bad, but because we are too busy with our briefcases full of second-rate stuff."

• ***Fourth Soil: Welcoming Reception***

Aren't you glad there is a fourth soil? The whole purpose of Jesus' parable is to drive us to this fourth soil, which I would describe as the welcoming reception for God's Word. There are resistant dynamics at work when the Word is shared, but thank God there can be receptive dynamics as well!

Jesus mentioned three levels of fruitfulness produced in the good soil. The good soil represents the heart that hears and heeds the Word as it is sown. These different levels remind us that although we are not all the same in our levels of maturity, abilities, or opportunities, we can all be fruitful for the Lord.

Jesus would say to us today, "Listen up! I know you can hear because you have ears. But having ears, you need to hear what I am saying."

So the point of Jesus' parable is the importance of having a heart that has been readied and cultivated to respond to the Word and the will of God—a heart that wants to hear God's Word, to understand it, and to do what He says.

Cultivating Your "Soil"

According to Jesus, no message is complete until we as hearers or readers respond to what has been learned. So let me give you three ways you can apply this message today, stated as principles with corresponding challenges.

First, Jesus laid the responsibility for productivity on the hearer (or the reader) of His truth. It's the same seed or message of the Word in each case. The different soil conditions represent different conditions of the heart. So my first challenge to you is to cultivate your heart. Keep it from being crusted over, packed down, hardened, or distracted by the enemy or by the circumstances of life. Stay ready and pliable to hear and accept the truths of God's Word.

My second challenge is to think about what God has called you to be and to do. How can you best prepare yourself for the reproductive ministries God wants you to do? The place to start is to bathe your heart and mind in His Word.

Third, as I previously noted, our fruitfulness may be abundant, but it will not necessarily be uniform. Even in the good soil, the plants in Jesus' parable grew and produced crops at different rates. Therefore, the challenge is to be patient with yourself and with others. If you really want to know God's Word and His will and you come with a good and honest heart, there will be understanding. Your life will be prepared to be used by God to produce the fruit of the Spirit and the fruit of reproductive ministries as others come to faith and grow to maturity. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Veritas*, October 2008.

GOD'S PROMISES . . . cont'd.

When Abraham was 86, they decided to help God out, but that was not God's plan. Fourteen more years passed, and when Abraham was 100 years old, God kept His promise because God's promises always come true!

Clear back in Genesis 3:15 God gave the first promise that He would one day send a Messiah who would conquer Satan, destroy sin, and bring salvation. Throughout the centuries of Old Testament history He renewed and enlarged upon that promise, but when the pages of the Old Testament closed almost 4000 years later, there was still no Messiah. What followed was 400 years of total silence—God wasn't saying anything to anyone. Then, when the fulness of time was come, a baby was born right where God said He would be, and God's promises became reality because God's promises always come true!

I don't know what you are facing. I don't know how long it has been! I cannot explain God's apparent delays! But I know God's promises always come true!

But wait! There's one more promise we dare not forget! Almost 2000 years ago, Jesus was talking with His confused, discouraged disciples and He said in John 14:1-3, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Yes, I know approximately 2000 years have passed. I know the world is in a mess! I know bright folks mock and say we shouldn't take things literally. But I want to remind you this has happened before! Time means nothing to God, and He will do what He promised because God's promises always come true! ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Torch*, Spring 2008.

A Call to Repentance, Renewal, and Revival

A Call to Prayer from Joel 2:15-17

by Mark D. Avery

Prayer is the most underestimated, underused force for good and righteousness in the world. The Old Testament prophet Joel challenged the people, “Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?” (2:17).

Ralph Earle in *Meet the Minor Prophets* imagines Joel standing outside his home on a hot summer afternoon. Everything was green at the time, but the prophet concerned himself that drought would soon begin. How long would these good days last?

Then he noticed a cloud on the horizon in the northeast. As it approached, Joel began hearing the faint sound of locusts. Then the sound “became a rumbling roar, like the sound of surf on a nearby beach. Quickly Joel turned and shouted the ominous news: ‘The locusts are coming.’”

Joel’s prophecy sounds like this: “That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten” (1:4).

Imagine the devastation as locusts swarm the countryside eating every

piece of vegetation in their path. *National Geographic* published an article, “Jerusalem’s Locust Plague,” in 1915. Pictures in the magazine showed a fig tree before and after a plague of locusts—first with leaves, then without.

Yet to understand Joel’s message, we have to recognize the spiritual urgency related here. God’s people had sinned; they had violated the terms of the covenant relationship. While not anxious to do so, God was allowing them to see the destruction that sin always brings.

Joel understood. He clearly heard God’s message. He knew that if the people would genuinely repent (turn from sin) and cry out to God, He would hear. The prophet’s message conveyed a sense of urgency.

Notice the verbs in our passage: *Blow* the trumpet; send out this attention-arresting signal. *Sanctify* or set apart a time for fasting, urgent, sacrificial seeking of God’s favor. *Call* means to accost, confront, interrupt, challenge life with its most compelling need—the spiritual needs. *Gather* means come together, summon the people, unite to seek God. *Sanctify* the congregation; set yourselves apart for the sacred purpose of finding or restoring God’s blessing. *Assemble* and *gather* suggest the importance of the Church gathering together. *Go forth* reminds us that life ought to be interrupted at every point; seeking God is the priority. *Weep* calls for urgent, collective,

PAGE 20

SWORD AND TRUMPET

impassioned seeking after God.

Notice the people in our passage: the congregation, the elders, the children (even babies), the bride and groom, the priests (spiritual leaders), ministers (those who follow the spiritual leaders). Interestingly, 2 Corinthians 3 and 4 use the words *ministers*, *ministration*, and *ministry* to translate the Greek word from which we get our English word *deacon*. The idea expressed by both Joel and Paul is that everyone is called to be part of the solution.

Notice the problem in our passage: The spiritual condition of the individuals, and the nation as a whole, was at a low. Lack of concern in times of low spiritual vitality is a common problem. Few sinners recognize their condition; that is why they continue sinning. Often in times of a national spiritual crisis, the Church also fails to recognize the depths of the need.

Here the prophet called the people to awaken from their sleep, to shake themselves from their casualness. No, crying is not the solution, but pouring out a heart that is broken for sin, sinfulness, and sinners always arrests the attention of the God who can and does make changes in people.

Notice the urgency: Sound the alarm (v. 15). The trumpet blast awakens, stirs, and challenges into action. Interrupt life (v. 16). Everyone, regardless of age or status was to respond to the trumpet blast. Every walk of life was interrupted by the locusts; now everyone, with no exceptions, was to join the prayer meeting, call out to God, and repent of their wrongs. Weep between the temple porch and the altar of burnt offering (v. 17).

Notice the burden: This was to be no shallow, formal prayer. Instead, the prophet called on the people to bemoan,

to make lamentation over, the condition of the nation. How easily people, who are judged wealthy by the standard of living of much of the world, get comfortable when they ought to practice urgent, importunate prayer.

The prescribed prayer is pointed: "Spare thy people." Compassionate upon the congregation. Cry out to God for mercy.

Part of the prophet's message is that God is merciful; He does respond to the cry of sincere seekers. The promise of Pentecost given later in this chapter is convincing evidence of that.

Yet the responsibility remains. We must approach God; we must seek His help; we must give ourselves to the pursuit of His blessing and favor.

"Give not thine heritage [people, Church] to reproach." Jesus still declares, "I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

And as we have learned, God still moves in response to the prayers of His people. His promised benefits include restoration (v. 25) and His presence (v. 27). The challenges of the day, the difficulties facing the Church, the lukewarm, casual attitudes can be changed. The prescription is urgent praying. The promise of God awaits fulfillment. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Church Herald & Holiness Banner*, April 2008.





Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

This column welcomes the submission of original hymns. Please send hymns, as well as applicable information about the author and/or composer to: Douglas A. Byler, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803.

Great God, How Infinite



by Watts/Tye

Lyrics: “Great God, How Infinite Art Thou” is a hymn of worship that draws attention to the greatness of God by contrasting it with our humanity. The theme of the hymn is introduced in the very first line, where God’s infiniteness is contrasted with our frailty.

Watts’ original phrase “What worthless worms are we” is much stronger and more poetic than its common replacement that is printed here, “How poor and weak are we.” The last half of the verse is the only logical response to such greatness: “Let the whole race of creatures bow, And pay their praise to Thee.”

The focus of the remainder of the verses is particularly on God’s eternal perspective on time. There are many other dimensions in which He knows no limits, but this hymn mainly discusses His lack of limitation to a specific piece of time, and the implications of this immortal vantage point. The second verse begins to speak specifically of God’s timelessness. Lamentations 5:19 says, “Thou, O LORD, remainest for ever; thy throne from generation to generation.” Watts mentions God’s eternal reign, and makes the obvious conclusion that it would continue even if “all the nations [were] dead.” Another biblical reference is found in the following stanza. The poet, after thinking about God’s infinite perspective, agrees with “The Preacher” that “there is no new thing under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

The most encouraging part of this hymn is in the next-to-last stanza. Watts notes

how “vexed” we humans can be with our “trifling cares,” while “Thine eternal thought moves on/Thine undisturbed affairs.” God has an overarching plan in which each individual only plays a small role. He is in control, and His side will win in the end. If we are submitting to His will and are willing to do what He asks of us, we can rest in the assurance that we are a part of God’s “eternal thought” that will not be interrupted by our “trifling cares.”

Music: Christopher Tye composed this tune in 1533, more than a hundred years before Isaac Watts was born,¹ but its pensive mood is still very appropriate for this thoughtful text. Any comparison of our poor humanity to the greatness of God should fill us with the sort of quiet awe and fear that this tune evokes.

One of the difficulties of singing short hymns with many (more than four) verses is keeping them from becoming monotonous. A very effective tool for any song leader to have in his belt is the practice of singing a verse or two in unison. This hymn seems particularly well-suited to unison singing, partly because of the contemplative mood, and partly because the melody is interesting enough on its own not to need the harmony *all* the time. One good way of incorporating the “unison tool” in this hymn would be to employ it for either the first, last, or first *and* last verses. ■

1. <http://www.hymnary.org/tune/windsor>

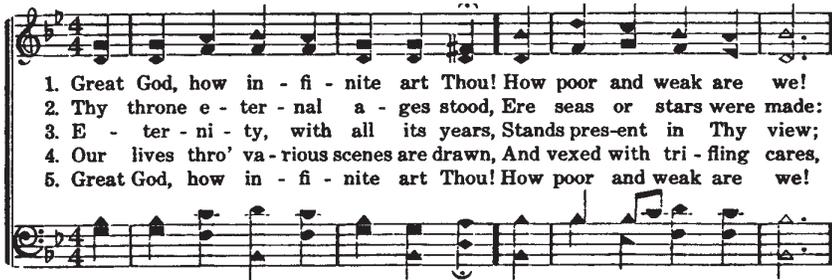
Great God, How Infinite

Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever. —Psalm 45:6

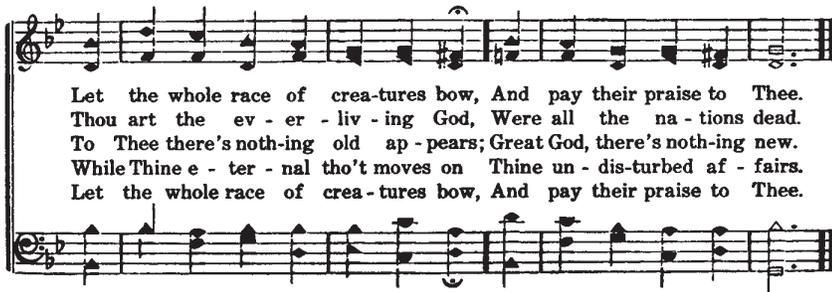
WINDSOR C.M.

ISAAC WATTS, 1707

Melody arr. from CHRISTOPHER TYE, 1533



1. Great God, how in - fi - nite art Thou! How poor and weak are we!
2. Thy throne e - ter - nal a - ges stood, Ere seas or stars were made:
3. E - ter - ni - ty, with all its years, Stands pres - ent in Thy view;
4. Our lives thro' va - rious scenes are drawn, And vexed with tri - fling cares,
5. Great God, how in - fi - nite art Thou! How poor and weak are we!



Let the whole race of crea - tures bow, And pay their praise to Thee.
Thou art the ev - er - liv - ing God, Were all the na - tions dead.
To Thee there's noth - ing old ap - pears; Great God, there's noth - ing new.
While Thine e - ter - nal tho't moves on Thine un - dis - turbed af - fairs.
Let the whole race of crea - tures bow, And pay their praise to Thee.



Lights and Sirens



by Roger Swihart



Recently as I was walking through my yard I witnessed a vehicle accident. A neighbor lady apparently had a seizure, shot through an intersection into a neighbor's yard, and rolled her pickup. We hurried to the scene, found the pickup on its top, called 9-1-1, and tried to console the lady hanging upside down in her smashed pickup. We waited and waited and waited. We knew that help would soon arrive but seconds seemed like minutes and minutes became agonizing.

What a relief to see a little green pickup turn onto Long Street and head my direction. No sirens, no flashing lights, no high speed, but I recognized the pickup. A calm, cool, collected first responder. A trained pro-

fessional was entering the arena to take command of a potentially life-threatening situation. Soon the sirens, flashing lights, and high speed were involved. Six or seven emergency vehicles and fourteen or fifteen trained-in-their-field emergency technicians were on the scene. (Yes, right here in the rural western Kansas town of Quinter!) About thirty minutes later the lady was on her way to the hospital. All was well?? Should we say under control? Much damage was done. Much repair and recuperation would follow. Without the immediate and proper response, the outcome could have been a lot worse.

Does the church have a 9-1-1? Should the church have a 9-1-1? Does the church have

first responders? When we witness a spiritual wreck or attack, how do we react? Do we shake our head and start the gossip chain moving or do we get on our knees? Do we tell the world or do we contact a few concerned prayer warriors? Do we let the target know that help is on the way, then follow through with support, guidance, and hands-on relief? Would it be possible for our church to have a few first responders, familiar with spiritual warfare, to move to the aid of those in need? This would be a response that would compare to the lights and sirens that respond to physical accidents. We do not need the gloss and

flare of lights and sirens, but it would be a relief for the hurting to know that help and support is on the way. To realize that the help is sincere and genuine should not only be a relief, but stir the soul to its core. So many times the hurting seem to hurt alone or the hurt is intensified by negligent, uncaring, or negative responses.

Wrecks will happen! Attacks will come! Are we capable of responding in a Christ-like, Spirit-filled manner with or without the lights and sirens? ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Bible Monitor*, November 2008.



Cell Phone Abuse and Its Effects

by Diane Truitt

Cell phones are very nice to have, but is it really necessary to give one to every child in the home? In the past Christian parents wouldn't think of putting a private line into their teenager's bedroom, because there were principles and future problems to be considered. Now there are many parents who give all their teenagers a cell phone with 24-7 calling privileges, no restrictions, no time limits, and no restraints on who they are talking to and what they are talking about. Many teens talk out of earshot for this reason.

Some teens bring their cell phone to church, feel the vibration, check who's calling, and then send a text message. The minute church is out, they run outside to call back. Praying at the altar with seekers takes second place to cell phone friends.

What is wrong with living as we did in the past? Why now all of a sudden is it necessary for young people to have a cell phone? What is the urgency? And what is

the sole purpose of a young person having a cell phone?

Cell phones are becoming so addictive they are causing quite a stir in some colleges, to the point of causing some to have a spiritual downfall. Some colleges have had to require them to be handed in before lights out to help the students obey rules. It is not uncommon for students to disregard rules and stay up till 1:00 or 2:00 a.m. talking on cell phones to their boyfriend or girlfriend.

Cell phones can also encourage anti-social behavior. A person in a group of friends who is constantly talking on the phone isolates himself from the immediate social fellowship of the group. This is rude to the other members of the group.

Cell phones open new areas of freedom children and teens are not ready for. It throws them into temptations they are not strong enough to withstand. Let's give the teens a chance to get established.

Cell phones encourage disrespect in church, and foster irreverence and giddy

behavior during services. They certainly don't help them spiritually.

Cell phones create a non-true-to-life way of living. It is not normal to have 24-7 access to friends. Friends call each other while in the bathrooms, at the dinner table, in church, and at school. They call and receive calls all day long. Why do young people have to stay unnaturally attached in this way? They become dependent in an odd way.

Cell phones can give your teen access to someone you would not approve of them talking to—girls talking to boys and vice versa. Young people can get their emotions wrapped up in each other simply by spending too much time on the phone.

Cell phones create talk-aholics. It used to be one could hear preaching on spending too much time on the phone. There were many reasons for this caution. One, the teen needs to be productive and responsible. Talking on the phone with

no schedules, in the wee hours, and shrugging duties, does not promote good character.

Unrestricted access to the cell phone encourages gossip, which in the end causes problems among people, even in the Church. That is one of the reasons preachers urged people to use land-line phones with caution. Too much time on the phone always leads to gossip and problems.

Parents need all the help they can get. Cell phones get in the way of spiritual progress and character training. Just because other parents give their children cell phones does not mean it is right and normal. The parent who does not give their children cell phones is wise to go against the tide. Take a look around at what the cell is doing to teenagers today. What kind of character do you desire for your young person? ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Evangelist of Truth*, September 2006.

Thoughts on the Lord's Prayer (cont'd.)

by Harold S. Martin

(2) *Our mental needs.*

The words *debt* and *debtor* are practically synonymous with *sin* and *sinner*. In fact Luke records this phrase, "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." Just as we are taught to pray for daily *bread*, so we should pray for daily *forgiveness*. But our forgiveness is conditioned upon our forgiving others. We need to extend to our brothers and sisters the same kind of full and complete forgiveness that God has extended to every one of us.

There are many whose lives are spiritually barren because there has been a refusal to completely make up with someone with

whom they have been quarreling. Nothing is as exhausting to mental health as the habit of holding grudges and the failure to forgive. It racks the nervous system; it hurts the digestive processes; it sours the disposition; it harms the faculties of the mind. That is one of the reasons Paul told the Christians at Ephesus, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Paul was saying that we should always practice forgiveness, and we should do it "before sundown." He says, "Unloose your collar and cool off; you'll sleep better if you are at peace with everybody." All kinds of pills are taken to induce sleep, but Paul says, "How is a man

going to sleep when his mind is pursuing an enemy?" Therefore practice forgiveness before sundown! We can never be at peace with God until we have done our part to be at peace with others.

(3) *Our spiritual needs.*

We *do not mean* by the expression, "And lead us not into temptation," that God is the author of evil or that He tempts humans to sin. The phrase is used here in the sense of "permitting." Do not "suffer us" or "permit us" to be tempted above what we can bear. This implies that God our Father has control over the devil and that He can save us from the snares of the wicked one—for no temptation or trial will be allowed to touch the life of God's child without God's permission.

It is only mockery to pray "Lead us not into temptation," and then rush into it daily, of our own accord. Too often we want to put our head into the lion's mouth and tickle his throat in order to see if he will bite. Too often we are willing to play with fire in order to see if we will get burned. We cannot invite temptation, and pray against it at the same time. We cannot chase sin, and still pray to be delivered from it. The Bible says we should "Abhor [shrink away from] that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Romans 12:9). One preacher often said, "Son, when you are enticed to go into questionable places—stop where you are and say, 'Lord Jesus, here I am; You lead me in.'" We can be sure that the Lord Jesus will turn us around and send us away. He will never direct us into the way of temptation—if we ask Him for guidance.

But we also pray, "Deliver us from evil." The word translated "evil" might well have been rendered "the evil one." The same Greek word is used in Matthew 13 when Jesus interpreted the Parable of the Sower. Jesus says, "Then cometh the wicked one." The devil is powerful and clever. He knows his business. He has been dealing with human beings for six thousand years now, and we can be sure that he has our name on his list. Therefore we need often to pray, "Deliver us from the evil one."

4. THE GOALS OF THE FAMILY ARE ADDED

The prayer that Jesus taught His followers to pray ends just as it begins, ascribing all praise and honor and glory to the Heavenly Father: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever." Too often we praise men, and too seldom do we praise God. We conclude with the words about God's power and God's glory when we pray the Lord's Prayer, and thus God is once again exalted as we conclude the prayer.

It is true that we show concern for our brothers and sisters in Christ when we pray the Lord's Prayer. The word "I" is not mentioned even one time throughout the entire prayer. It is always "we" and "us" and "our." We cannot pray the Prayer alone. There is no room for selfishness in the Lord's Prayer. The blessings we crave are not for ourselves alone, but for all the others in the family of God as well. When we say "Our Father," we include a great company beyond imagination—the whole born-again family of God. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we say *not* "me" and "mine," *but* we use the pronouns "us" and "our." We include *all* of God's children. Yet, while we *show concern* for our brothers and sisters in Christ, we ascribe all *glory* and ultimate honor to God.

The words of the Prayer have probably passed over our lips many times, and there are some questions which deserve serious consideration. Do we really care for the sanctity of God's name? Do we really wish the kingdom of God to come? Are we ready to pull up stakes here, and go along with our Lord into the eternal world? Do we feel our need of daily pardon for sin? Do we dread the evil one above all things? Happy is the person who can call *God* his Father, and can say a heartfelt "Amen" to all that the Lord's Prayer contains. May the Spirit of God help us pray the Lord's Prayer with more thought and with a more clear understanding of what we are asking. ■

—Reprinted with permission from the *BRF Witness*, a publication of the Brethren Revival Fellowship.

A Community Call

by Michael G. Loftis

How many times have you heard the statement, “Every Christian is called to be a missionary”? If this were true, however, wouldn’t we also say that every Christian is a pastor, a teacher, an evangelist, an apostle, or a prophet? The Bible is clear that certain roles were distributed among the early Church as God gifted and called each person. The missionary roles of Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and others were no exception. I do not want to underemphasize the importance of personal evangelism—every believer should be an obedient Christian. It is important to note, however, that not every obedient Christian will be a missionary.

The Call to Missions

The missionary call, however, is more about community than it is about mystery or geography. Through the years, the decision process of those considering entering missions has focused on the mystery of the call. Questions arise that only God can answer: “Why me? Why now? Where will this lead?”

We tend to focus on the supernatural circumstances—found throughout the Bible—that surround God’s call to certain individuals. An angel appears out of nowhere. A bush in the desert bursts into flame but isn’t consumed. The manner in which God calls these individuals is always unpredictable and unique. Every year, we listen to unique personal testimonies of God’s call in people’s lives. Supernatural occurrences, however, seem to be a rare exception since the Church’s establishment, as recorded in the Book of Acts.

Those of us living in North America have perhaps been influenced more than we realize by our cultural heritage, which admires the rugged individual and the self-sufficient pioneer/entrepreneur. Most of the world, however, understands that the greatest and most enduring changes are usually enacted by a community carrying out a shared task. We also forget that in God’s kingdom, we are not supposed to operate as isolated individuals, but rather as part of an interdependent body of believers that is always connected in order to serve the body’s best interest as a whole.

Biblical Misinterpretation

We can easily misinterpret biblical phrases such as the following verse found in 1 Corinthians 1:1: “*Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, . . .*” Taken as an isolated text, this may seem like an individualized call. However, if we go back to Acts 13, we find a very different story.

“Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus” (Acts 13:1-4).

Note the following questions this passage raises:

- If the purpose of God's call to Barnabas or Saul was to go out only as isolated missionaries, then why did the Spirit also involve the other Church leaders in their call?
- Why did the missionary call come as they were worshiping and ministering together?
- Were the prophets and leaders who stayed behind just as much in God's will as the appointed missionary team that sailed away?
- Why does the Bible record that the call was confirmed through a deliberate process of fasting, praying, and laying on of hands?
- What other benefits to the community of believers occurred because the entire church was a part of the process? (Acts 14:26-28)

Leaders Involved

Clearly, a group of leaders in the New Testament were involved in the calling process of Barnabas and Paul. Yet, you would be amazed at the number of people who have applied to become missionaries purely on the basis of an individual experience, with no input from their pastor or church leaders. Unfortunately, we have heard repeatedly from resigning missionaries, "I thought I was pursuing God's will, but perhaps I was wrong." I might suggest that involving church leaders early in the calling process would reduce the number of such sad statements. Further, as you read the remainder of the New Testament, both Paul and Barnabas were involved with selecting and calling other missionaries such as John Mark, Timothy, Titus, and others. These men were then instructed to continue that process of choosing other faithful men to repeat the process.

I say again, the missionary call is more about community than it is about mystery or geography. The mystery only

reveals God's hand in the calling process, and the geography is not the end of the call but merely a means to locate the people God desires to reach with His Son's gospel. God's purpose is always about reaching and transforming people and drawing them into loving, obedient communities of faith. God has clearly chosen to use the Church to confirm and support His call for missionaries.

Several years ago, a young seminary professor ministered in communist Romania and returned home with a lump in his throat and a burden for the people. Uncertain whether God was calling him, he returned for a second visit. Upon his arrival, he was stunned to hear the following statement from a persecuted pastor: "We are glad to see that you are also listening to the same Holy Spirit. We have been fasting and praying for you to return to us and serve God here with us." The vague notion of a burden to serve in missions had now become crystal clear. This is the power of a community call.

Mission agencies participate in this call by working with numerous churches and missionaries who are seeking to find the right people group, the right team or international partner, or the right project. By the "right team" we mean the best fit for optimum effectiveness in life and ministry. This process is anything but an isolated, individual decision. It is nothing less than a community process that includes scores of people around the world. I believe that when we look back on life's journey, the important thing will not be where the road went but the lives that were touched along the way.

The next time you hear someone talking about a missionary call, ask yourself, "I wonder just how many others were involved in that call?" The answer may surprise you. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *ABWE Message*, Fall 2008.



Counseling From the Word

The Distinguishing Mark of Christianity

by John MacArthur

Jesus is Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3) is the distinguishing article of Christianity and marks the essential confession of faith (Romans 10:9). Jesus proclaimed it to His disciples, His enemies, and His casual inquirers alike—refusing to tone down its implications.

The expression “Lord” (*kurios*) speaks of ownership, while “Master/Lord” (*despotes*) denotes an unquestionable right to command (John 13:13; Jude 4). Both words describe a master with absolute dominion over someone else. That explains Jesus’ incredulity at the practice of those who paid homage to Him with their lips but not with their lives: “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

Doulos frequently describes what it means to be a true Christian: “He who was called while free, is Christ’s slave [*doulos*]. You were bought with a price” (1 Cor. 7:22, 23). It describes the lowest abject bond slave; his service is not a matter of choice.

A Misleading Translation

Unfortunately, readers of the English Bible have long been shielded from the full force of *doulos* because of an ages-old tendency to translate it as “servant” or “bond-servant.” This tendency is regrettable, since service and slavery are not the same thing. “No one can be a slave to two masters” (Matthew 6:24) makes better sense than

“No man can serve two masters.” An employee with two jobs could indeed serve two masters—but not a slave. Scripture repeatedly calls Christians “slaves” (1 Cor. 6:19, 20), purchased for God (Rev. 5:9). This is the very essence of what it means to be a Christian (Rom. 14:7-9).

A Revolting Concept

Not only is *slave* a word loaded with negative connotations, but our generation is also fixated on the concepts of freedom, fulfillment, and autonomy. Saving faith and Christian discipleship have been reduced to the cliché “a personal relationship with Jesus.” It’s hard to imagine a more disastrous twisting of what it means to be a Christian. Many people (including Judas and Satan) had some kind of “personal relationship” with Jesus during His earthly ministry without submitting to Him as Lord. But His only true friends were those who did what He said (John 15:14).

A Difficult Truth

Slavery to Christ is not a minor or secondary feature of true discipleship. It is exactly how Jesus Himself defined the “personal relationship” He must have with every true follower (John 12:26; 15:20). In fact, the fundamental aspects of slavery are the very features of redemption. We are chosen (Eph. 1:4, 5; 1 Peter 1:2; 2:9);

bought (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23); owned (Rom. 14:7-9; 1 Cor. 6:19); subject to His will and control (Acts 5:29; Phil. 2:5-8); called to account (Rom. 14:12); evaluated (2 Cor. 5:10); and either chastened or rewarded by Him (Heb. 12:5-11; 1 Cor. 3:14). Those are all essential components of slavery.

A Divine Introduction

Jesus introduced the New Testament slave metaphor. He frequently drew a direct connection between slavery and discipleship (Matt. 10:24, 25). His words reflect what every true disciple should hope to hear at the end of his life: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. 25:21).

Jesus always described true discipleship in such terms, with no effort to adjust the message to make it sound appealing to worldly-minded sinners. He never muted what it would cost to follow Him. Would-be disciples who tried to dictate different terms were always turned away (Luke 9:59-62).

Slaves Who Are Friends

Perhaps the key passage on Jesus’ demand for implicit obedience is one we have already alluded to briefly—John 15:14, 15: “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants [slaves]; for the servant [slave] knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”

The fundamental principle here is obedience. Jesus was not suggesting that His favor could be earned through service. Rather, He was saying that obedience is a singular proof that someone is His friend. Implicit obedience to His commandments is the natural fruit of genuine love for Him—the telltale mark of authentic saving faith.

Why, then, does He say, “Henceforth I call you not servants [slaves]; . . . I have called you friends” (v. 15)? Is He expressly telling them their relationship with Him

was now a familiar personal camaraderie between colleagues, rather than a master-slave relationship governed by authority and submission?

Not at all. They are still His slaves, because that’s precisely what they were. He was simply saying they were His friends as well as His slaves. “The slave,” He explains, “does not know what his master is doing.” A slave isn’t owed any explanation or rationale. But Jesus had kept nothing secret from His disciples: “All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (v. 15). They were therefore much more than mere slaves to Him. They were His friends as well, privy to His thoughts and purposes (cf. 1 Cor. 2:16).

Slavery and True Liberty

So understood correctly, the gospel is an invitation to slavery. On the one hand, the gospel is a proclamation of freedom to sin’s captives and liberty to people who are broken by the bondage of sin’s power over them. On the other hand, it is a summons to a whole different kind of slavery: “Being then made free from sin, we became the servants [slaves] of righteousness” (Rom. 6:18; cf. 1 Peter 2:16).

Both sides of the equation are vital. There is a glorious freedom in being the slaves of Christ (John 8:36), but it means the end of human autonomy for the true follower of Christ. In other words, everyone serves some master. We are all enslaved in one way or the other (Romans 6:16-21).

There is no legitimate way to adjust the message in order to make it sound appealing to people who admire Jesus but aren’t prepared to serve Him. Jesus didn’t seek admirers; He was calling followers—not casual followers, but slaves. Remove that spirit of submission, and the most profound kind of “admiration” for Christ is a spiritual fraud and not true faith at all. ■

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Good Works and the Justified

by Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

*“Now to him that worketh is the reward
not reckoned of grace, but of debt” (Romans 4:4).*

Does [Paul] by this speech make light of good works? Does he encourage an unholy walk? Does he use a rash word, which had better been left unspoken? No, truly, *he is laying the foundation of good works*. He is removing the great obstacle to a holy life, viz.,¹ the bondage of an unfor-given state. He is speaking, by the power of the Holy Ghost, the words of truth and soberness. The difference between working and believing is that which God would have us to learn, lest we confound these two things and so destroy them both. The order and relation of these two things are here very explicitly laid down, so as to anticipate the error of many who mix up working and believing together, or who make believing the result of working, instead of working the result of believing. We carefully distinguish, yet we as carefully connect the two. We do not put asunder what God has joined together; yet we would not reverse the divine order, nor disturb the divine relation, nor place that last which God has set first.

It was not to depreciate or discourage good works that the Apostle spoke of not working, but believing; or of a man being “justified by faith without the deeds of the law”; or of God imputing “righteousness without works” (Rom. 3:28; 4:6). It was to distinguish things that differ. It was to show the true use of faith in connecting us for justification with what another has done. It was to stay us from doing anything in order to be justified. In this view, then, faith is truly a ceasing from work and not a working. It is not the doing of anything in order to

be justified, but the simple reception of the justifying work of Him Who finished transgression and made an end of sin (Dan. 9:24). For *the one justifying work* was completed eighteen hundred years ago, and any attempt on our part to repeat or imitate this is vain. The one cross suffices.

Nor was it to undervalue good works that our Lord gave, what many may deem such a singular answer to the question of the Jews, “What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? . . . This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:28, 29). They wanted to work their way into the favor of God. The Lord tells them that they may have that favor without waiting or working by accepting at once His testimony to His only-begotten Son. Until then, they were not in a condition for working. They were as trees without a root, as stars whose motions, however regular, would be useless, if they themselves were unlighted.

To say to a groping, troubled spirit, “You must first believe before you can work,” is no more to encourage ungodliness or laxity of walk, than to say to an imprisoned soldier, “You must first get out of your dungeon before you can fight”; or to a swimmer, “You must throw off that millstone before you can attempt to swim”; or to a racer, “You must get quit of these fetters before you can run the race.” Yet these expressions of the Apostle have often been shrunk from, dreaded as dangerous, quoted with a guarding clause, or rather cited as seldom as possible, under the secret feeling that unless greatly diluted or properly qualified, they had better not be cited at all. But why

1. viz. – that is.

are these bold utterances there, if they are perilous, if they are not meant to be as fearlessly proclaimed now as they were fearlessly written eighteen centuries ago? What did the Holy Spirit mean by promulgation² of such “unguarded” statements, as some seem disposed to reckon them? It was not for nothing that they were so boldly spoken. Timid words would not have served the purpose. The glorious Gospel needed statements such as these to disentangle the great question of acceptance, to relieve troubled consciences and purge them from dead works, yet at the same time to give to works their proper place. . . .

In another’s righteousness we stand, and by another’s righteousness are we justified. All accusations against us, founded upon our unrighteousness, we answer by pointing to the perfection of the righteousness that covers us from head to foot. . . .

Protected by this perfection, we have no fear of wrath, either now or hereafter. It is a buckler to us; and we cry, “Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed” (Psalm 84:9), as if to say, “Look not on me, but on my Substitute. Deal not with me for sin, but with my Sin-bearer. Challenge not me for my guilt, but challenge Him; He will answer for me.” Thus, we are safe beneath the shield of His righteousness. No arrow, either from the enemy or from conscience, can reach us there.

Covered by this perfection, we are at peace. The enemy cannot invade us; or if he try to do so, we can triumphantly repel him. It is a refuge from the storm, a covert from the tempest, a river of water in a dry place, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. The work of righteousness is peace; and in the Lord we have righteousness and strength.

Beautiful with this perfection, which is the perfection of God, we find favor in His sight. His eye rests on the comeliness³ that He has put upon us; and as He did at viewing the first creation, so now, in looking at us as clothed with this divine excellency, He

pronounces it “very good.” He sees no iniquity in Jacob and no transgression in Israel (Num. 23:21). “The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found” (Jer. 50:20). This righteousness suffices to cover, to comfort, and to beautify.

But there is more than this: we are justified that we may be holy. The possession of this legal righteousness is the beginning of a holy life. *We do not live a holy life in order to be justified; but we are justified that we may live a holy life.* That which man calls holiness may be found in almost any circumstances of dread, or darkness, or bondage, or self-righteous toil and suffering; but that which God calls holiness can only be developed under conditions of liberty and light, and pardon and peace with God. Forgiveness is the mainspring of holiness. Love, as a motive, is far stronger than law, far more influential than fear of wrath or peril of hell. Terror may make a man crouch like a slave and obey a hard master, lest a worse thing come upon him; but only a sense of forgiving love can bring either heart or conscience into that state in which obedience is either pleasant to the soul or acceptable to God.

False ideas of holiness are common, not only among those who profess false religions, but among those who profess the true. For holiness is a thing of which man by nature has no more idea than a blind man has of the beauty of a flower or the light of the sun. All false religions have had their “holy men,” whose holiness often consisted merely in the amount of pain they could inflict upon their bodies, or of food which they could abstain from, or of hard labor which they could undergo. But with God, a saint or holy man is a very different being. It is in filial,⁴ full-hearted love to God that much of true holiness consists. And this cannot even begin to be until the sinner has found forgiveness and tasted liberty and has confidence towards God. The spirit of holiness is incompatible with

2. **promulgation** – publishing; making known by open declaration.

3. **comeliness** – pleasing appearance; gracefulness or beauty of form.

4. **filial** – having or assuming the relationship of child or offspring to parent.

the spirit of bondage. There must be the spirit of liberty, the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). When the fountain of holiness begins to well up in the human heart and to fill the whole being with its transforming, purifying power, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us" (1 John 4:16). This is the first note of the holy song that commenced on earth and [is] perpetuated through eternity.

We are bought with a price that we may be new creatures in Christ Jesus. We are forgiven that we may be like Him, Who forgives us. We are set at liberty and brought out of prison that we may be holy. The free, boundless love of God, pouring itself into us, expands and elevates our whole being; and we serve Him, not in order to win His favor, but because we have already won it in simply believing His record concerning His Son. If the root is holy, so are the branches. We have become connected with the holy root and by the necessity of this connection are made holy too.

Forgiveness relaxes no law nor interferes with the highest justice. Human pardons may often do so: God's pardons never. *Forgiveness* doubles all our bonds to a holy life, only they are no longer bonds of iron, but of gold. It takes off the heavy yoke in order to give us the easy and light. *Love is stronger than law.* Whatever connects our obedience with love must be far more influential than what connects us with law.

The love of God to us and our love to God work together for producing holiness in us. Terror accomplishes no real obedience. Suspense brings forth no fruit unto holiness. Only the certainty of love, forgiving love, can do this. It is this certainty that melts the heart, dissolves our chains, disburdens our shoulders so that we stand erect, and makes us to run in the way of the divine commandments.

Condemnation is that which binds sin and us together. Forgiveness looses this fearful tie and separates us from sin. The power of condemnation which the Law possesses is that which makes it so strong and terrible. Can-

cel this power, and the liberated spirit rises into the region of love, and in that region finds both will and strength for the keeping of the Law, a law which is at once old and new: *old* as to substance—"Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart" (Deut. 6:5)—*new* as to mode and motive—"for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2); that is, the law of the life-giving Spirit, which we have in Christ Jesus, has severed the condemning connection of that Law which leads only to sin and death. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh [*i.e., unable to carry out its commandments in our old nature*], God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3, 4).

The removal of condemnation is the dissolution of legal bondage and of that awful pressure upon the conscience that at once enslaved and irritated; disabling as well as disinclining us from all obedience; making holiness both distasteful and dreadful, to be submitted to only through fear of future woe . . . But the message, "God is love," is like the sun bursting through the clouds of a long tempest. The good news, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38), is like the opening of the prisoner's dungeon gate. Bondage departs, and liberty comes. Suspicion is gone, and the heart is won. Perfect love has cast out fear (1 John 4:18). We hasten to the embrace of Him Who loved us; we hate that which has estranged us; we put away all that caused the distance between us and Him; we long to be like one so perfect and to partake of His holiness. To be "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), once so distasteful, is henceforth most grateful and pleasant; and nothing seems now so desirable as to escape the corruptions that are in the world through lust.

We undergo many false changes, which look like holiness, but which are not really so . . . Time changes us, yet does not make us holy. The decays of age

change us, but do not break the power of evil. One lust expels another; frailty succeeds to frailty; error drives out error; one vanity pales, another comes freshly in its room; one evil habit is exchanged for a second, but our [flesh] remains the same. The cross has not touched us with its regenerating power; the Holy Spirit has not purified the inner sources of our being and life.

Fashion changes us; the example of friends changes us; society changes us; excitement changes us; business changes us; affection changes us; sorrow changes us; dread of coming evil changes us; yet the heart is just what it was. Of the numerous changes in our character or deportment, how many are deceitful, how few are real and deep! Only that which can go down into the very depths of our spiritual being can produce any change that is worthy of the name.

The one spell⁵ that can really transform us is THE CROSS. The one potent watchword is, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:32). “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:19). Christ presents Himself as the Holy One, Consecrated One, to God that His people may partake of His sanctification and be like Himself—saints, consecrated ones, men set apart for God by the sprinkling of the blood. Through the truth, they are sanctified by the power of the Holy Ghost. “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14); so that the perfection of His saints, both as to the conscience and as to personal holiness, is connected with the one offering and springs out of the one work finished upon Calvary. “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10). Here again the sanctification is connected with the offering of the body of Christ. Whatever place “the power of His resurrection” may hold in our spiritual history, it is the cross that is the source of all that varied fullness by which we are justi-

5. **spell** – subject of discourse or discussion.

6. **not . . . want** – unaware that something was missing.

fied and purified. The secret of a believer’s holy walk is *his continual recurrence to the blood of the Surety and his daily intercourse with a crucified and risen Lord . . .*

Want of sensitiveness to the difference between truth and error is one of the evil features of modern Protestantism. Sounding words, well-executed pictures, [and] pretentious logic carry away multitudes. The distinction between Gospel and no Gospel is very decided and very momentous; yet many will come away from a sermon in which the free Gospel has been overlaid, not sensible of the want,⁶ and praising the preacher. The conversions of recent years have not the depth of other days. Consciences are half-awakened and half-pacified; the wound is slightly laid open and slightly healed. Hence, the want of spiritual discernment as to truth and error. The conscience is not sensitive, else it would at once refuse and resent any statement, however well argued or painted, which encroached in the slightest degree upon the free Gospel of God’s love in Christ; which interposed any obstacle between the sinner and the cross; or which merely declaimed about the cross, without telling us especially how it saves and how it purifies. ■

—Reprinted from *Free Grace Broadcaster*, Spring 2007.

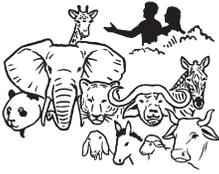
A COMMON DESIGNER . . .

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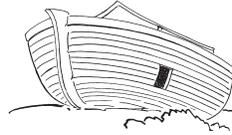
We live in a fallen world so we observe and experience the effects of that in many different ways, including things like disease and deformities because of genetic flaws such as mutations (copying mistakes). If God would have settled for using a less than optimum system of storing and transmitting genetic information, the prevalence of things such as disease, deformities, and other genetic disorders would be higher than they are. I’m awfully glad He stuck with the best. ■

1. Sarfati, Jonathan, *DNA: marvelous messages or mostly mess?* <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v25/i2/dna.asp#f2>

2. Ibid.



Beginning Issues



A Common Designer or Common Ancestry?

by John Mullett

One of the main arguments for evolution is—similarities indicate common ancestry. Thus the more similarities between species, then the closer they must be related. Ultimately all life-forms are believed to have one common ancestor. Certainly similarities do at times indicate or coincide with relatedness. We would expect a greater chance for brothers and sisters to more closely resemble each other than someone they are not as closely related to, but the question I want to raise is, Do similarities have to indicate common ancestry? The short answer is they don't. Let me explain.

There is a problem with the logic that assumes similarities always indicate relatedness. For example, if an engineer were to develop a design for bridges that he considered the best design for that purpose would he not be likely to use the same design again? He may change some of the features or cosmetics of the design, but rather than try to come up with a completely new design for every single bridge he would continue to use the design that has already been proven to be successful. I certainly would not want him to change just for the sake of change, but to stick with what he believed to be the best.

Another example we could use is the auto industry. While the automakers may have numerous models that have significant differences, such as the size or color

of the vehicle, there are many similarities, such as the controls found on the dash in each of them that can indicate which automaker the vehicle was designed by. Does similarity indicate relatedness in the form of common ancestry in bridges or vehicles? Obviously not; the similarities come from having a common designer. It is a logical fallacy to assume that since similarities sometimes indicate common ancestry that they must always indicate that. It would be just as logical to assume that since similarities sometimes aren't an indication of common ancestry then they must never be an indication.

If God was the creator and designer of the entire universe, would we not expect to see similarities in the different created kinds? One such common characteristic found in all living things is DNA. DNA is the most compact and efficient storage system of information we know of. Its accuracy in copying is an astounding one mistake in every ten billion copying cycles¹ and its storage capacity is just as amazing. Richard Dawkins, one of the leading atheistic evolutionists of our day, has acknowledged, one human cell can contain three or four times the information in the entire (thirty volumes) *Encyclopedia Britannica*.²

If DNA is the best storage system, why would we not expect God as the designer to use it throughout His whole creation?

(continued on page 34)

America's Softening of the Brain— John Dewey, 1859-1952

Sometime in the mid-1900s, American Education changed. For centuries before, the teacher's task had been to impart a body of concrete mathematic, linguistic, historical, and scientific knowledge to the students. Adults spoke; children listened and learned. That theory, however, eventually gave way to a new one. Children began to be considered not as learners, but as *experimenters*. Teachers became *facilitators* instead of instructors. Scorning the idea that any truth was there to be imparted, educators made it their goal rather to help children "actualize" themselves, to define and clarify their own values, and at the same time to appreciate the values—choices of others. The result? American schools began churning out a generation full of "feelers" and "appreciators," but empty of the hard knowledge required to produce historians, doctors, and engineers. And much of the problem could be traced to one man, John Dewey.¹

As the nineteenth century rolled into the twentieth, the Western world was gripped by euphoric optimism. Ironically, much of the cheeriness was born of Darwin's theory of evolution, which taught the nonsurvival of the unfit. Given enough time, thought the Darwinists, humanity could only improve; all society needed was to train up the next generation to be more tolerant, more progressive, more enlightened.

In some circles, John Dewey is still known as "the Great Educator" and "America's foremost philosopher"; in his own life he was the most respected teacher in the world. Born in 1859 in Vermont, he spent his career moving from school to school: first the University of Vermont,

then a Pennsylvania high school, then the universities of Johns Hopkins, Michigan, Chicago, and finally Columbia.² He didn't engage in popular debates, and never got into personal trouble. He simply wrote . . . and wrote: 40 books in all, along with thousands of articles and lectures published in journals all over the world.³ By his death in 1952, Dewey's pervasive ideas had reinvented America's public education system.

A quick look at Dewey's intellectual commitments tells the tale. First, as philosophical critic Bertrand Russell observed, "Truth' is not an important concept in Dr. Dewey's logic."⁴ His brand of pragmatism substituted the endless quest of inquiry for the achievement of genuine knowledge.⁵ The teacher was then the students' fellow-experiencer in a puzzling world.⁶ Second, he was essentially an atheist. As he put it, "Religion has lost itself in cults, dogmas, and myths"⁷—for example, the doctrine of original sin⁸ and the story of creation. Human civilization was the thing.⁹ Some idea of God, he thought, might be all right, but only as a nameless unifying force for the "interests and energies now dispersed" throughout society.¹⁰

Third, he made the child's interests, rather than the academic discipline, the measure of proper education. He bemoaned the situation in which, "[t]he child is thrown into a passive, receptive, or absorbing attitude. The conditions are such that he is not permitted to follow the law of his nature; the result is friction and waste."¹¹ Accordingly, "[T]he true center of correlation on the school subjects is not science, nor literature, nor history, nor geography, but the child's own social activities."¹²