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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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nothing because those persons who only see and hear without any real depth are probably insincere. Seeing and hearing are important because they are gates of learning. But they are not foolproof.

Knowing is rooted deeper than the senses. Although you can see and hear that does not guarantee you understand what is going on. So knowing is rooted deeper than the senses.

Attitude is very important. In fact, attitude is the key. Openness is very essential. The Prophet Isaiah spoke to the people of his day and Jesus made the direct application to the people of His day. He said they hear but they do not understand, they see and they do not perceive. So understanding springs from the heart, often rooted in attitude.

Isaiah described those people as having a heart that was gross. That means a fat, sluggish, inactive heart, one that could not really grasp the truth because it was not functioning properly, not working right. The heart is the source of the will and action. So Jesus talked by parables. His parables conceal realities.

And thirdly,

His Parables Convey Truth.

He was speaking directly to the disciples when He said, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." Their eyes were opened. Their ears were opened. They could see and hear with perception and understanding.

Disciples are believers, persons who have opened their hearts and minds to the teaching and words of Jesus. So Jesus' disciples were highly favored persons. He said many of the prophets and righteous men who came before them desired to see what they saw and could not see it. They desired to hear what they heard and could not hear it. The prophets spoke many times and spoke the truth, but they were not fully aware of what they said.

The righteous men desired to see what the disciples saw, but the time had not come. Jesus was pointing out to the disciples that they were in a very highly favored position. Conditions were being fulfilled so that they could learn and understand the truth. His parables convey truth, and that is important because we need to have an understanding of truth.

Therefore, our Lord taught in parables to show the mysteries that are in God's purpose. And mysteries, remember, are those truths of God that are being revealed, or have been revealed. Jesus taught in parables to conceal realities from the insincere, people whose minds were blocked, people whose eyes saw without seeing, and whose ears heard without hearing. To them the realities of truth were blocked out. Jesus taught in parables to convey truth to believers who follow Him. That fact even comes down to us today. These parables that Jesus told are very important for us. They convey the truth to us today.

So it is very important for us to examine ourselves so as to clear out any attitudes which might hinder or could hinder us from receiving the truth from Jesus. Once we have cleared out those attitudes which block the receiving of truth, then we will say "All Praise to Him."

"O Lord, our Heavenly Father, what a joy it is to know that the teachings of Jesus can come right down to us today and they can be just as effective in our lives as they were in the lives of the disciples when He taught them. So, Father, help us I pray, my friend and me, to open our hearts to the Lord and be ready to receive and accept the truth as it comes from Him. I pray in Jesus' precious Name, Amen."

Friend, surely we must give attention to the words of Jesus. Not only must we listen; we must also tell others about Him. That's what we are doing. ■

Person of the Month: *Clarence H. Benson* (1879-1954)



Clarence Herbert Benson was born to Aaron W. Benson and Elizabeth Davis Smith in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on August 13, 1879. Clarence had an older brother who died in childhood. At that point, Benson received the full attention of his parents. Both of Benson's parents were schoolteachers. His father was also a pastor. From his upbringing he learned how to work. He had a desire for learning many different and varied subjects and was not afraid to try new things. His mother taught him music and basic astronomy. He also had opportunity to learn from his father's young pastoral apprentices. The faith of his father and the heart for missions of his mother did much to influence his spiritual life as a young child, and so at the age of 8, he gave his heart to the Lord.

Early on he was involved with newspapers and journalism. In 1896, at the age of 17, Benson published articles on science and the Bible. His mother's teaching on astronomy had stayed with him.

For four generations the men of Clarence's family had been pastors. However, Clarence H. Benson would eventually have a very notable *ministry*—one of teaching.

By giving talks on astronomy, working part-time at journalism, and receiving grants, Benson was able to pay his way through college and graduate school. He studied at the University of Minnesota, Macalester College, and finally at Princeton Theological Seminary, although not receiving degrees from any of these. The Minneapolis Presbytery licensed him to preach in June of 1908, and later that same year he was ordained by the Dutch Reformed Church just like his father before him.

Before the year 1908 was finished, Clarence H. Benson met Rena Pearl Clark at a youth convention and subsequently married her. God eventually blessed them with the birth of two sons.

Now, at the age of 29, Brother Benson began pastoring two small churches in a rural area of New York State. He emphasized the teaching in Ephesians of equipping the members of his congregations so that they could do the work of the ministry. The churches flourished and he was called to pastor even larger churches in Pennsylvania, New York, and even Kobe, Japan. After finishing 14 years in the pastoral ministry, Benson's most notable *ministry* was about to begin.

Upon returning to the states from Japan in 1922, the Bensons spent the summer in Florida while Mrs. Benson recuperated from an illness. Before leaving the mission field Brother Benson had been writing some articles showing the truth of Scripture, as compared to modern scientific findings, partly in an attempt to combat evolution. These articles came to the attention of James M. Gray, who was at the time Dean of Moody Bible Institute and the publisher of MBI's *Monthly Journal*. The school to help combat growing theological liberalism in the mainline denominations, which was beginning to get a stranglehold on American churches, was using journal articles as well as "Moody Science." The fundamentalists, on the other hand, were working hard to combat this theological trend. In liberal circles, Sunday school was declining and not considered of much worth due to the inroads of evolution and colleges and seminaries who had adopted the liberal theological view of Christianity. *(continued on page 3)*

Pursuing a Pilgrimage

by Edwin R. Eby

Five pillars of Reformation era theology influenced our forefathers: 1) *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone), 2) *sola fide* (faith alone), 3) *sola gratia* (grace alone), 4) *solus Christus* (Christ alone), and 5) *sola Deo Gloria* (glory to God alone).

Between theology and action is a vast defining gulf. Luther, Zwingli, and their peers went partway to truth. They identified the doctrinal errors of their time, but stopped short of true cross bearing. They clung dearly to the safety of self-life. They did not take up and bear the cross of Jesus (Matthew 16:24). In not doing so, they returned to the same apostasy from which they sought to escape. This scenario repeats itself—even in 2009. Our Anabaptist forefathers did differently. They not only believed, but by voluntarily denying self, they took up the cross and followed Jesus. By such action they established a sixth pillar, 6) *sola crux* (cross alone). A few theologians today are even willing to notice the defining difference between these men who sought true faith.

Sola scriptura

Obedying the scriptures is never wrong. It is always right. Using Scripture solely for a guide will never fail. It guides into all truth. It prevents the deceptions that deny the power of God. It steers one away from professing godliness that lives in open disobedience to clear Bible commands. It shows when traditions are good and when they must be discarded for Biblical foundations. It shows when to take a stand for God and when to forsake those who are dear for the sake of one's Lord and Master (Luke 14:26).

Sola fide

By faith, a person makes the all-

important switch in perceiving reality. By faith, he finds what is real. He perceives the difference between the tangible and the intangible. He discovers that the intangible is the real and the tangible of this present world is the unreal. He then pursues eternal life and purifies the hope within himself. He looks beyond. He looks for buildings not made with hands. He moves at the warnings of his God. He trades the "treasure of Egypt" for the treasure of an unseen city not made with hands. He suffers without the gate. He stops defending the things of this world and defends the things of the world to which he really belongs. That which is unimportant to this world becomes the most important to his life. He is an ambassador (2 Corinthians 4:16-5:7, 21).

Sola gratia

Remembering that one is only a sinner saved by grace and that "except for the grace of God there go I" is the humble view which will save one from unholy, judgmental, holier than thou, Pharisaic belief systems so common to the nature of Christianity. He is "not willing to justify himself" but will both answer the question and do the command of Jesus his Master: "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:36, 37; 1 Corinthians 15:10; 1 Timothy 1:15).

Solus Christus

Many laws vie to replace the law of Christ written on the tables of the heart through the sacrificial gift of Jesus Christ

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who is the only begotten Son of the Father. They seek to cause one to leave his first love for dependence upon outward law. Dependence upon outward law deceives and offers a false hope. Only the law of Jesus Christ working by faith in the life of a believer can save him from eternal destruction. Only Christ who came and died for sin can save the soul of a man or woman (Romans 5:8; 8:1-4; 10:4; Colossians 2:17-23).

Sola Deo Gloria

Unrestrained, rampant humanism teaches that the end of all things is the happiness of man. But those around the throne in Heaven proclaim that the end of all things is the Glory of God. This present world with its accompanying religious society wallowing in humanism has adopted almost every conceivable form of this deception. Those who deny such heresy even in its simplest form and focus their attention on the glory of God will yet find grace in the eyes of the Lord (Revelation 4:11).

Sola crux

Cross bearing is not the normal sickness, normal difficulties, normal disappointments, and normal things which happen to all mankind. Cross bearing is taking a stand for truth against evil. Cross bearing conflicts with the world's frivolities, the world's treasures, the world's loves, and the world's interests. Jesus said, "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*" The cross is what a Christian willingly accepts in this life because he is finding favor with his God and not with men. He does not love the things of the world, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the prides of life. The world does not love him because he is not party with them. He clings to the love of God even when it brings him opposition. He accepts it patiently and bears his cross (Matthew 5:12; James 5:5-8; 1 Peter 2:20; 3:14, 17; 4:15, 16, 19; Revelation 2:10).

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." ■

—By permission from *The Pilgrim Witness*, Feb. 2009.

■ CLARENCE H. BENSON . . . cont'd from page 1 ■

People were becoming less and less knowledgeable biblically and the International Sunday School lessons were basically geared to adult students. The theological "landscape" was not a pretty picture. Moody Bible Institute was seeking to change its focus to make its school one where all believers could become highly trained in a biblical, practical way to do the work of the ministry. Benson had been doing the type of thing that Moody was proposing, and he already had fourteen years of experience at the task!

Clarence H. Benson was asked by MBI to join the faculty and also assume the position of journal editor. The Bensons moved to Chicago in the fall of 1922 to begin this new adventure. Clarence was now 43 years of age. In 1925 James M. Gray became president at MBI and more new faculty members were added. The goal was to develop a program of serious study to prepare students to direct the Christian education of their own local church. In addition to the immense task of training such a large group of students to accomplish Moody's goal, Brother Benson was busily writing sound theological books geared to Christian education, and "how-to" go about it, between the years of 1927-1950. One of his most well-known books in the field was *The Sunday School in Action*, written in 1932. Two of his books were translated into other languages and were used in foreign countries.

Clarence H. Benson's greatest impact on the Sunday school, and hence, on the Church, was his Evangelical Teacher Training Association, which he founded along with Gray, Charles Trumbull, and others. Benson wrote the teacher training manuals, which contained Bible content, theology, child development, and church school management. Course certificates were given to Sunday school teachers who studied at participating Bible schools and colleges in the United States as well as Canada, Central America, Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico,

(continued on page 9)

From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

How I Ascertain the Will of God

by George Mueller

I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with the people is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what His will is.

Having done this, I do not leave the results to feeling or simple impression. If I do so I make myself liable to great delusions.

I seek the will of the Spirit of God through and in connection with the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy

Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures, and never contrary to them.

Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and Spirit.

I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me aright. Thus through prayer to God, the study of the Word, and to the best of my ability and knowledge, and if my mind is thus at peace, and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly.

In trivial matters, and in transactions involving most important issues, I have found this method always effective. ■

—Taken from *Convention Herald*, Jan/Feb, 2009.

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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

Introduction to Quarter's Lessons

The lessons for the June-August quarter focus on God's chosen people—the Israelites. We follow their history from the call of Moses in Exodus 3 to God's promise of blessing for their obedience in following His commandments in Deuteronomy 30.

Look at these lessons as a whole. A complete reading of the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy will help you see the larger picture of God's dealings with His people, Israel. And while you observe the historical aspects of these lessons, don't fail to see lessons for our own day and for your personal life. These are the two main purposes of the Sunday school: to learn what the Bible says, and to make application of Biblical principles to our own lives. Make the most of it.

Let God's dealings with Israel in its formative years as a nation challenge you to a greater trust and dependence on Him and stir you to a life of dedication and obedience to His will. May God bless your study.

Note: Teachers, you will find additional brief helps at the end of each lesson.

JUNE 7, 2009

God Calls Moses

Exodus 3:1-12

Our lessons for the quarter on God's dealings with His people Israel began with the call of their first leader, Moses. For the full scope of this lesson you should read the first three chapters of Exodus. They provide the setting for today's lesson and those that follow. Outside of Abraham, Moses was perhaps the most significant figure in Israel's history at this point in time. His call and life provide many lessons and challenges for us to ponder.

The last half of Exodus 2 explains why Moses was on "the backside of the desert." He had fled Egypt to escape Pharaoh's wrath and ended up tending sheep for his father-

in-law, Jethro. He had gone from the palace to the sheepfold. He had spent 40 years enjoying the privileges of Pharaoh's court (see Acts 7:20-30), and the next 40 herding sheep. Then when Moses was 80 years of age God appeared to him in the burning bush at Mount Horeb and called him to his most significant life's work—delivering the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.

It would appear that Moses had forgotten the travails of his kindred in Egypt. But God had not. He had a plan, and He needed a man. Moses was that man, and he was eminently prepared for this role as a former member of the royal household, schooled in the wisdom of Egypt and understanding of the workings of the Egyptian court. However, he needed some convincing before he was willing to assume the role God had in mind for him.

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God got Moses' attention by a burning bush. When Moses turned aside to see this phenomenon, God spoke and identified Himself. Because he was in the presence of the holy God, Moses was instructed to remove his shoes and to maintain a respectable distance from the symbol of God's presence. Moses was understandably fearful and covered his face from God's presence.

In verses 7-9 God explains to Moses that He had not forgotten the bondage and suffering of His people in Egypt; He has seen their affliction, He has heard their cry. Furthermore, He has now "come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." Certainly this was good news to Moses' ears. God was finally stepping in to relieve His people from their suffering and set them free in a bountiful land.

But then God dropped the bombshell: Moses, I want you to return to Egypt and lead My people out. Moses began immediately to make excuses: "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and . . . bring forth the children of Israel?" (Next Sunday's lesson continues Moses' argument against God's plan and his assumed unsuitability.)

God began immediately to squelch Moses' arguments. He assured him that He, the God of his forefathers (v. 6), would be with him. As a guarantee of His providence, God said that after their deliverance Moses and the people would worship Him at this very place.

God had His man. Moses yet needed some persuading, but eventually he accepted God's call to fit into His great plan.

For thought and discussion

1. Think about the significant ways Moses was prepared to be Israel's leader.
2. Have you ever thought you were too old or too ill-equipped to be of significant use in God's program? Think again. Look at Moses. Open yourself to God's will.
3. Have you ever argued with God over His call to service? Who won?

4. What impresses you most about Moses' life? Perhaps some class sharing would be beneficial.
5. Why did God wait 430 years to deliver His people from Egypt?

Help for teachers

Lesson emphasis: To be willing to accept God's call to service, trusting His presence and support.

Key verses: 7, 10

JUNE 14, 2009

Moses and Aaron Accept God's Call

Exodus 4:10-17, 27-31

This lesson follows hard on the heels of last Sunday's, taking up the narrative between Moses and God relative to God's call and Moses' reluctance. The section of Chapter 3 following last Sunday's text is taken up with further explanations and directions from God as to how things are to work out. In Chapter 4 the dialogue between Moses and God picks up again with Moses proclaiming his fears and God giving him two signs as convincing evidence of His presence and power.

As our text begins in verse 10, Moses continues making excuses as to his inability, with God countering each excuse with assurance of His presence and enabling power. Moses claimed he couldn't speak. God reminded him of who had made man's mouth and assured Moses that He would give him words to speak. Finally Moses told God in essence that he didn't want to go, that He should send someone else.

By this time God's anger was kindled against Moses and He finally agreed to send Aaron with him to be his spokesman. However, Moses was to be the channel for God's Word through Aaron, to the people. Somehow, in spite of God's assurances, Moses could not open himself fully to God's will. Was that due to his meekness, or was it simply fear? We don't know.

But God's plan was not to be frustrated. He had determined to free His people from bondage and He would move His plan forward even if it meant altering His original intentions. Note in verse 17 that God commanded Moses to take his rod along to Egypt. We note later (v. 20) that it became "the rod of God" in Moses' hand.

We note in verse 27 that God was also working on Aaron. He was instructed to "go into the wilderness to meet Moses." When they met, Moses rehearsed to Aaron "all the words of the LORD" and told him of the signs he had been instructed to use as evidence of God's power.

Moses and Aaron proceeded on to Egypt where they gathered together the elders of Israel to hear God's message. Aaron, now the spokesman, told them all that God had spoken to Moses and they performed the two signs God had given them as evidence of His power upon them. The elders accepted Aaron and Moses' words as the word of the Lord. They were gratified that He had looked upon their affliction and that He was initiating a plan to set them free. Then they worshiped—a fitting response to what they had just heard.

God does not desert His people, though at times, as with Israel, He seems slow to act. But God had His purposes and God had a plan. And now He had His leadership team in position and the cooperation of the leaders of the people. Things were set to move.

For thought and discussion

1. When we fail to cooperate fully with God's plans we miss His full blessing. Have you ever missed God's blessing by arguing against His will? What happened?
2. Has God ever asked you to do something you felt you were not capable of doing? Does God ever ask for a commitment without also supplying enabling grace? What is your testimony?
3. Explore the value of teamwork. List advantages. Any pitfalls?
4. Note how Moses and Aaron enlisted the cooperation of the elders of Israel. Discuss the value of such cooperation in

today's church life.

5. Note the response of the people when informed of God's intervention to relieve their suffering (v. 31). Do we respond to God as we should when He moves in our behalf?

Help for teachers

Lesson emphasis: The value of open communication and teamwork in work for the Lord.

Key verses: 29-31

JUNE 21, 2009

Moses and Aaron Confront Pharaoh

Exodus 5:1-9, 22-6:1

Our narrative continues with Moses and Aaron making their first visit to Pharaoh. From this point on Moses and Aaron identified themselves fully with the children of Israel and their plight. They also identified themselves to Pharaoh as spokesmen for the Lord God of Israel. They were coming in His name, not their own. Their demands were from God and backed by His power and authority. Pharaoh still had much to learn about this God of the Hebrews and His power.

Moses and Aaron presented God's request to Pharaoh (see 3:18) to allow the Israelites time off for a period of worship. God knew he would not allow it (3:19) so it was not a subtle ploy to get out of Egypt. There was a very practical reason for going out of Egypt to worship. It was fear of reprisal from the Egyptians (see 8:25, 26).

Pharaoh's response was harsh and defiant. He would not admit of a God above himself to whom the Israelites should show fealty. He saw this request not only as an excuse to get out of work, but as a direct challenge to his authority and status. His answer was firm and decisive: No! And get back to work.

Moses and Aaron again appealed on behalf of God. They were coming at the request of the God of the Hebrews. He was

asking something of His people. But Pharaoh remained adamant. He refused to acknowledge any authority over the Hebrews other than his own.

Pharaoh accused Moses and Aaron of detracting the people from their work, and the people of being lazy. To squelch any idea of relief from their workload he increased their burden by requiring the workmen to supply their own straw for the bricks, yet to maintain their daily quota. Pharaoh saw harshness as the only cure for their request and as a warning against listening to Moses and Aaron (see 9b).

The intervening verses (10-21) between our texts portray how this worked out and the negative response this caused, both to Pharaoh and to Moses and Aaron. Moses and Aaron were in danger of losing the respect, allegiance, and support of their people, the very ones they had come to deliver. They were strongly accused of causing additional grief to the already suffering laborers.

So Moses went back to God. Obviously things were not working out as he had envisioned. Instead of listening to their request, Pharaoh had become even more severe in the treatment of the people. Moses was on the verge of discouragement, wondering if indeed he hadn't been right in refusing God's initial request to deliver the Israelites.

But God's plan was just in the initial stages. He would yet show Pharaoh who this God of the Hebrews really was and whose authority would triumph in the end. God assured Moses that He would deliver on His promise to free Israel "with a strong hand." In fact, the day was coming when Pharaoh, utterly defeated, would drive the Israelites from his land. Moses and Aaron simply needed a dose of patience.

For thought and discussion

1. Note Moses and Aaron's respectful appeal to Pharaoh. To what authority did they appeal as the basis for their request?
2. How should we respond to those who challenge our God or our personal faith? Discuss with your class.
3. Perhaps this would be a good place to dis-

cuss the proper response to civil authorities when their edicts and demands run counter to God's expectations for His people.

4. Have you ever been criticized by those whom you were attempting to serve within your understanding of God's will? How did you cope? (Remember what Moses did.)
5. God doesn't always deliver His people from difficult circumstances or even death. Why? What should be our response to such situations? Wherein lies our strength and hope in difficult times?

Help for teachers

Lesson emphasis: The need to lean heavily on God when faced with difficult tasks.

Key verses: 5:22-6:1

JUNE 28, 2009

God Delivers His People

Exodus 14:13-31

A lot has happened since our last lesson where Moses and Aaron made their first appearance before Pharaoh at God's behest to request release for His people. In response to Pharaoh's intransigence God unleashed a series of devastating plagues upon the land, in effect utterly destroying crops and cattle and bringing grief to the people. Pharaoh would seem to relent, yet when God stayed His hand he again hardened his heart and refused Moses' appeal.

Finally God showed His mighty hand by taking the life of all Egypt's firstborn. Only then did Pharaoh let the Israelites go. But after they had been gone only a little while did the full impact of their leaving strike Pharaoh and his servants, so he and his army set out in pursuit. They caught up with the Israelites camping by the Red Sea. When the Israelites saw they were trapped between Pharaoh's army and the sea, they panicked, they cried out to God, and they railed against Moses for getting them into this impossible situation.

Moses boldly took charge and told the

people: "Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." His confidence in God was firm. He knew that God had not brought His people out of Egypt only to suffer defeat before the completion of His plan (see 3:17).

God's command to Moses was to move the Israelites forward. He would take care of the Egyptians. One final time God would "get honor upon Pharaoh and all his host." They would trouble Israel no more. God's honor would be vindicated once and for all.

As protection for the Israelites, God's angel and the pillar of cloud went behind them to provide a shield from the advancing Egyptian army and light for their way. Moses, under God's command, stretched out his rod over the sea and God miraculously parted the waters by a strong wind and dried up the path through the sea. The Israelites marched through on dry ground, the water a wall on both sides.

The Egyptians, foolish in their madness, went in after them but soon discovered to their dismay that "the Lord fighteth for them." Their chariots became disabled and they were thrown into confusion. As they attempted to flee before God's power, He brought the sea in upon them and they were drowned—to a man. All the while, the Israelites proceeded to cross unharmed, on dry ground.

When daylight came, the Israelites saw the dead Egyptian soldiers washed up on the shore. Imagine their joy as they realized both their complete deliverance and the fact that their pursuers would never again be a threat. This strengthened their trust in the Lord. He had promised. He had performed. This experience also vindicated Moses in

their eyes. They now fully accepted him as God's man, chosen and empowered to be their leader. This bonding was necessary as they moved forward into the hazards of their journey. Unfortunately, there were later times when their respect for Moses wore thin and they complained against him.

But for now Israel was free. That realization was an overwhelming emotion as they pondered God's working on their behalf.

For thought and discussion

1. Down through the ages men have been slow to understand that it is futile to struggle against the Almighty God. (List other examples.) Why is this so? What motivates such men? Who is behind them? Why do they always fail?
2. Does God ever fail His people? Why do we so often panic when faced with a seemingly impossible situation? What is the solution?
3. Why did God use such drastic means to free His people? Discuss.
4. Does God still use miraculous means at times to protect His people? Do we sometimes fail to recognize His delivering hand in our troubles?
5. Look at Chapter 15. After their great deliverance Moses and the children of Israel sang praises to God. Isn't this a blessed and fitting response to God's work in our lives? Let's not fail to do it.

Help for teachers

Lesson emphasis: That trust and obedience are key ingredients in order for God to work on our behalf.

Key verses: 13, 14 ■

— CLARENCE H. BENSON . . . cont'd from page 3 —

etc. Clarence also teamed up with two of his gifted students to produce graded Sunday school curriculum composed of his teacher-training manuals and the new graded Sunday school material. Because no one would publish it, he, along with some other men, started Scripture Press Publications to do the job.

God used Clarence H. Benson at a critical time in the twentieth century to revitalize the Sunday school and thus, the Church as a whole.

On September 16, 1954, at the age of 75, Charles H. Benson went home to be with the Lord after suffering from an illness he had contracted while speaking in the West Indies.

—Gail L. Emerson

Newslines . . .

by Hans Mast

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

Women Talk Three Times as Much as Men

It is something one half of the population has long suspected—and the other half always vocally denied. Women really do talk more than men.

In fact, women talk almost three times as much as men, with the average woman chalking up 20,000 words in a day—13,000 more than the average man.

Women also speak more quickly, devote more brainpower to chit-chat—and actually get a buzz out of hearing their own voices, a new book suggests.

The book—written by a female psychiatrist—says that inherent differences between the male and female brain explain why women are naturally more talkative than men.

Dr. Brizendine, a self-proclaimed feminist, says the differences can be traced back to the womb, where the sex hormone testosterone molds the developing male brain.

The areas responsible for communication, emotion, and memory are all pared back [in] the unborn baby boy.

The result is that boys—and men—chat less than their female counterparts and struggle to express their emotions to the same extent.

“Women have an eight-lane super-highway for processing emotion, while men have a small country road,” said Dr.

Brizendine, who runs a female “mood and hormone” clinic in San Francisco.

There are, however, advantages to being the strong, silent type. Dr. Brizendine explains that testosterone also reduces the size of the section of the brain involved in hearing—allowing men to become “deaf” to the most logical of arguments put forward by their wives and girlfriends.

Dr. Brizendine, whose book is based on her own clinical work and analyses of more than 1,000 scientific studies, added: “There is no unisex brain.

“Girls arrive already wired as girls, and boys arrive already wired as boys. Their brains are different by the time they’re born, and their brains are what drive their impulses, values, and their very reality.

“I know it is not politically correct to say this but I’ve been torn for years between my politics and what science is telling us.

“I believe women actually perceive the world differently from men.

“If women attend to those differences they can make better decisions about how to manage their lives.”

—Excerpt from “Women talk three times as much as men, says study” (<http://cli.gs/51BT6J>) in the *U. K. Daily Mail*

* * * * *

The Coming Evangelical Collapse

“We are on the verge—within 10 years—of a major collapse of evangelical Christianity. This breakdown will follow the deterioration of the mainline Protestant world and it will fundamentally alter the religious and cultural environment in the West.

“Within two generations, evangelicalism will be a house deserted of half its occupants. (Between 25 and 35 percent of Americans today are Evangelicals.) In the “Protestant” 20th century, Evangelicals flourished. But they will soon be living in a very secular and religiously antagonistic 21st century.

“This collapse will herald the arrival of an anti-Christian chapter of the post-Christian West. Intolerance of Christianity will rise to levels many of us have not believed possible in our lifetimes, and public policy will become hostile toward evangelical Christianity, seeing it as the opponent of the common good.

“Millions of Evangelicals will quit. Thousands of ministries will end. Christian media will be reduced, if not eliminated. Many Christian schools will go into rapid decline. I’m convinced the grace and mission of God will reach to the ends of the earth. But the end of evangelicalism as we know it is close.

“Why is this going to happen?”

“1. Evangelicals have identified their movement with the culture war and with political conservatism. This will prove to be a very costly mistake. Evangelicals will increasingly be seen as a threat to cultural progress. Public leaders will consider us bad for America, bad for education, bad for children, and bad for society. The evangelical investment in moral, social, and political issues has depleted our resources and exposed our weaknesses. Being against gay marriage and being rhetorically pro-life will not make up for the fact that massive majorities of Evangelicals can’t articulate the Gospel with any coherence. We

fell for the trap of believing in a cause more than a faith.

“2. We Evangelicals have failed to pass on to our young people an orthodox form of faith that can take root and survive the secular onslaught. Ironically, the billions of dollars we’ve spent on youth ministers, Christian music, publishing, and media has produced a culture of young Christians who know next to nothing about their own faith except how they feel about it. Our young people have deep beliefs about the culture war, but do not know why they should obey scripture, the essentials of theology, or the experience of spiritual discipline and community. Coming generations of Christians are going to be monumentally ignorant and unprepared for culture-wide pressures.

“3. There are three kinds of evangelical churches today: consumer-driven megachurches, dying churches, and new churches whose future is fragile. Denominations will shrink, even vanish, while fewer and fewer evangelical churches will survive and thrive.

“4. Despite some very successful developments in the past 25 years, Christian education has not produced a product that can withstand the rising tide of secularism. Evangelicalism has used its educational system primarily to staff its own needs and talk to itself.

“5. The confrontation between cultural secularism and the faith at the core of evangelical efforts to “do good” is rapidly approaching. We will soon see that the good that Evangelicals want to do will be viewed as bad by so many, and much of that work will not be done. Look for ministries to take on a less and less distinctively Christian face in order to survive.

“6. Even in areas where Evangelicals imagine themselves strong (like the Bible Belt), we will find a great inability to pass on to our children a vital evangelical confidence in the Bible and the importance of the faith.

“7. The money will dry up.”

—Excerpt from “The coming evangelical collapse” (<http://cli.gs/WZLr2M>) by Michael Spencer in *The Christian Science Monitor*

Wow! Extremely interesting analysis! I can't say that I strongly agree or disagree, only that it's well-written food-for-thought with lots of truth contained therein. If this kind of thing interests you, you should definitely read the rest of the article which has much more in-depth analysis and predictions. For even more, read Michael Spencer's blog at *InternetMonk.com*. Michael Spencer describes himself as “a postevangelical reformation Christian in search of a Jesus-shaped spirituality.”

* * * * *

Judge Orders Homeschoolers to Public School

“A judge in Wake County (NC) said three Raleigh children need to switch from homeschool to public school. Judge Ned Mangum is presiding over divorce proceeding of the children's parents, Thomas and Venessa Mills.

“Venessa Mills was in the fourth year of homeschooling her children who are 10, 11, and 12 years old. They have tested two years above their grade levels, she said.

“‘We have math, reading; we have grammar, science, music,’ Venessa Mills said.

“Her lessons also have a religious slant, which the judge said was the root of the problem.

“‘My teaching is strictly out of the Bible, and it's very clear. It is very evident so I just choose to follow the Bible,’ Venessa Mills said.

“In an affidavit filed Friday in the divorce case, Thomas Mills stated that he ‘objected to the children being removed from public school.’ He said Venessa Mills decided to homeschool after getting involved with Sound Doctrine church ‘where all children are homeschooled.’

“Thomas Mills also said he was ‘concerned about the children's religious-based science curriculum’ and that he wants ‘the children to be exposed to mainstream science, even if they eventually choose to believe creationism over evolution.’

“In an oral ruling, Mangum said the children should go to public school.

“‘He was upfront and said that, ‘It's not about religion.’ But yet when it came down to his ruling and reasons why, he said this would be a good opportunity for the children to be tested in the beliefs that I have taught them,’ Venessa Mills said.”

—Excerpt from “Wake judge orders home schoolers into public classrooms” (<http://cli.gs/pgspBY>) on *WRAL*

This is definitely a concern that we as Christians who want to educate our children in Christian schools or at home need to keep a close eye upon. While this was a judicial decision, this new administration is eager to roll back rights such as these.

* * * * *

Progress of the Gospel in the 10/40 Window

“Less than 2% of all missions giving is directed toward the 10/40 Window. (This is the area of the world where the vast majority of unevangelized people reside.) Yet dollar for dollar and hour for hour, the harvest coming from the 10/40 Window nations outstrips that from the rest of the world 100 to 1. The top 10 countries with the largest ‘unevangelized population’ are located in the 10/40 Window. 85% of the world's poorest of the poor live in the 10/40 Window. 43 of the top 50 countries that persecute Christians are in the 10/40 Window.”

—Excerpt from “Progress of the Gospel in the 10/40 window” in *Joel News International*, 677

Feedback: hansmast@hansmast.com

The New Testament Day of Rest

by Jacob T. Brubaker

How do we know that God intends for us to worship Him on the first day of the week rather than on the seventh day? We may be tempted to dismiss this question as unimportant. Some even suggest that the day of the week on which we worship is not important, because the primary principle is one day of rest in seven. However, the question is an important one and deserves a Biblical answer.

The progress of Creation culminated with the seventh day, the day of rest (Genesis 1, 2). Since man was created on the sixth day, the seventh day of Creation was the first full day for Adam and Eve. What a blessing it must have been to worship God in this state of perfection!

However, that perfect and holy state was marred by the Fall of Man (Genesis 3). The purity, serenity, and fellowship were broken. Guilt and the fear of death replaced tranquility. The promised Redeemer was the only ray of hope in that account (Genesis 3:15). As God revealed truth throughout the Old Testament, the Scriptures increasingly pointed forward with anticipation to the “fulness of time” when that ray of hope would become the Light of the world. As Adam and Eve rested on succeeding Sabbath Days, they must have been keenly aware of the painful separation that occurred through the effects of the Fall.

The word *Sabbath* is first mentioned in Exodus 16:23, where the context clearly refers to the seventh day. But not all Old Testament references to sabbaths refer to the seventh day. The first day of the seventh month was to be observed as a sabbath, and so was the tenth day of the same month (Leviticus 23:24, 27-32). In Hebrew, *sabbath* means “intermission or rest.”

Many people misunderstand *sabbath* to mean seventh, and to the Old Testament saints, it was indeed the seventh day. But to a New Testament saint, the first day is the true sabbath of rest.

The Law foreshadowed the significance of the first day of the week. The Feast of Firstfruits was held on “the morrow after the sabbath” (Leviticus 23:10, 11). This pointed forward to the great event of the resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which occurred on the morrow after the Sabbath (Matthew 28:1)! “Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:20). The Feast of Pentecost was also observed on “the morrow after the seventh sabbath” (Leviticus 23:16). It was “when the day of Pentecost was fully come” that “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.”

Jesus came to fulfill the Law, including the Sabbath. “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Matthew 5:17). To fulfill is to bring to completion or full fruition. The glorious Old Testament was put away, and the more glorious New Testament replaced it. This putting away included the putting away of the Ten Commandments, the part of the Law “written and engraven in stones” (2 Corinthians 3:7). The New Testament institutes a higher standard than the Ten Commandments.

Because of Jesus’ power and authority, He could rightly make this claim: “For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day” (Matthew 12:8). Jesus *is* Lord, and, as Lord of the Sabbath, He was qualified to fulfill the Law and change the day of rest and worship to the first day of the week.

To worship on Sunday is a tribute to our risen Lord and His new creation in the saints, through redemption (2 Corinthians 5:17). The seventh day marked the completion of the Creation, upon which the curse from sin fell. But the first day marks the final accomplishment of redemption, God's new creation. Those who insist that seventh-day worship is a Creation principle that supersedes the Law de-emphasize the momentous provision for eternal redemption!

New Testament saints regularly gathered on the first day of the week in worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). For a Jew to worship regularly on the first day of the week was to clearly identify with Christ.

The Apostle John "was in the Spirit on

the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10). Critics contend that no one can prove that the Lord's Day was the first day of the week. But why would the seventh day be called the Lord's Day when Jesus was in the tomb on that day? We serve a risen, living, and interceding Lord!

In conclusion, promoting seventh-day worship minimizes the preeminent work of Christ. It also creates religious confusion that undermines regard for any established day of worship. Worshiping on the first day of the week gives Christ His rightful place and recognizes Him as the fulfillment of all that the Old Testament foreshadowed. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Eastern Mennonite Testimony*, March 2009.

A Critical Spirit

by Dale Eby

In the Book of Numbers we see Moses' brother and sister criticizing him. For the most part Aaron was a good supporter of the leadership Moses gave Israel and, until this account, we do not read anything negative about Miriam. But Numbers 12 says, "And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman." They questioned, "Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?"

What does Moses' marriage have to do with Aaron and Miriam's question about Moses' authority? A critical spirit had developed and the Lord did not like it. Verse 4 says, "The LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out." It was time for this family to talk.

"And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle. . . . And he said, Hear now. . . .

And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them . . . and, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow. . . . And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned" (vv. 5-11). The critical spirit Aaron and Miriam had toward Moses was sin. The Lord dramatically pointed that out to them.

A spirit that repeatedly criticizes others is one that reveals our pride and arrogance. A critical spirit may start, even in childhood, to grow upon us and to become a way of life. It does not matter if we have reached 85 years of age, we still need to fight off a critical spirit because of the destruction it brings to us and to others.

Another example of a critical spirit is the brother of the prodigal son in Luke 15. After the repentance of the prodigal son, their father killed the fatted calf, brought forth the best robe to dress him in, put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. The elder

brother criticized this vehemently. He was jealous and criticized brother and father alike. He justified himself and had no desire to rejoice with the others. He was really saying, "Look who I am; you know I have been faithful; I have served well; I have been a virtuous son." He lauds that he has been obedient all these years and has tenure with the father. Pride is the root of his spirit and arrogance reveals itself. Without pride one cannot have a critical spirit.

Being discerning about a situation does not automatically qualify one as having a critical spirit. Discernment is required in the Christian life. It is how one handles what is identified that reveals whether a critical spirit is present.

In church life the brotherhood needs to hear from each member's perspective in order to find God's direction, but it does not need a condescending and arrogant spirit to accompany it. We do well to put a check on how things are said in church life. The spirit in which someone says something makes all the difference. We are not going to be perfect in this, and we are going to need to repent and come back and work on it again, but the spirit of criticism dare not be cultivated.

When a spirit of criticism is felt, it tends toward destruction. Proverbs 17:20 tells us, "He that hath a froward heart **findeth no good**; and he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief." The idea is that faultfinding brings about a lot of evil. The loss of friends, respect, and even one's faith have been some of the personal losses of a critical spirit.

Others suffer from our criticism as well. David says in Psalm 41:5-9, "Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish? And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathered iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it. All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more. Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread,

hath lifted up his heel against me." The psalmist is distressed about the criticism he is receiving. I want to be thankful for and grow from criticism, but constant criticism takes a person to the place where David was, that of distress over weighty criticism. Verse 10 of the same passage asks for the Lord to be merciful to him.

On a scale of one to ten, with ten being the worst spirit, how critical do we get? We may put Miriam higher on the scale considering this was before God's people, and this was a public criticism of her brother and of God's chosen person. Would you put Miriam at a five or at an eight? I would put her at an eight. For Miriam, seven days outside the camp were days of pondering over her sin. Israel was delayed because she and Aaron had committed this sin. On a scale of one to ten, I wonder how serious she felt this critical attitude was.

We often cannot see where we are on the scale. It may take someone else to tell me where I am on that scale and to help reverse it. Our perception about a situation and our initial response may not change, but how we deal with that response needs to change.

The critical spirit is revealed mostly by what we say, yet we still need to deal with the spirit within us. If Job were a member of your church and his three friends were members of your church, would you have joined up with Job or with his three friends? Being critical is easy but sinful.

As children, youth, and adults, do we recognize what a critical spirit does in stifling our spiritual life and how it adds to misery? If we would write down the people of whom we are critical in a day, it could be revealing and helpful in addressing our problem. If we wrote down the positive things we said when we could have been critical, we will curb this spirit. Let's also recognize that where we are critical of others is where we tend to slip ourselves.

Though encouragement of others does not come naturally, the brotherhood functions differently when it is present. James

(continued on page 17)



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.

Lead Us, O Father



by Burleigh/Hopkins

Lyrics: “Lead Us, O Father” is a prayer for guidance that recognizes God’s ultimate wisdom. Since God is the One who created the world and everything in it, it is perfectly logical to assume that He is the one who knows best how it should function. When we ignore the instructions that He has laid out in His Word, life begins to fall apart. This hymn begs God to lead us in His ways, and recognizes some of the things that go awry when we do not live our lives in harmony with what is ultimately true.

The four verses of this hymn each develop a different aspect of God’s leadership in our lives. When God leads us in ways of peace, truth, and “right,” not only will we have hope of eternal life, but we will be equipped with the knowledge to live truly meaningful and productive lives while here on earth. We will not waste our time trying to prove that we got here by chance, and we will not usually suffer the consequences that commonly result from a “passion-stained” and “folly-dimmed” youth. Old age can be a wonderful time of blessing and encouraging the rising generation for people who have lived their lives in the paths of peace and truth. If we allow God to lead us through this life, we will eventually be led to the “heavenly rest” described in the final stanza. The awareness of this truth can give us a proper perspective on life even when the path is

rough and steep.

William H. Burleigh lived a varied and colorful life. Living in the nineteenth century (1812-1871) and being a reformer by nature, he “naturally identified himself with the radical abolitionists and prohibitionists.”¹ Burleigh began his working career as an apprentice in the printing trade, and eventually moved on to publishing his own periodical, the *Christian Witness and Temperance Banner*. Later, he became the editor for the *Christian Freeman*, an Abolitionist periodical. From 1849-1855, he was an agent for the New York State Temperance Society, after which he became the Harbor-Master of New York City. He lived in Brooklyn and held the position of Harbor-Master until a year before his death.²

Music: Edward Hopkins originally composed this music for a different text, “Saviour, Again to Thy Dear Name.” The tune name “Ellers” is a reference to the author of the original text, John Ellerton. This hymn is also commonly sung to the tunes “Longwood,” by Joseph Barnby, and “Morecambe” by Frederick Atkinson.³ ■

1. *The Hymns and Hymn Writers of the Church*, p. 396 Charles Nutter and Wilbur Tillet.
2. *Annotations Upon Popular Hymns*, p. 284 Charles Robinson
3. www.cyberhymnal.org

Lead Us, O Father, in the Paths of Peace

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. —Psalm 32:8

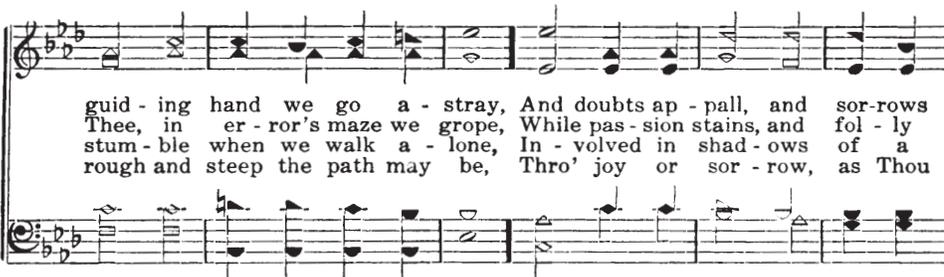
WILLIAM H. BURLEIGH

ELLERS 10.10.10. 10.

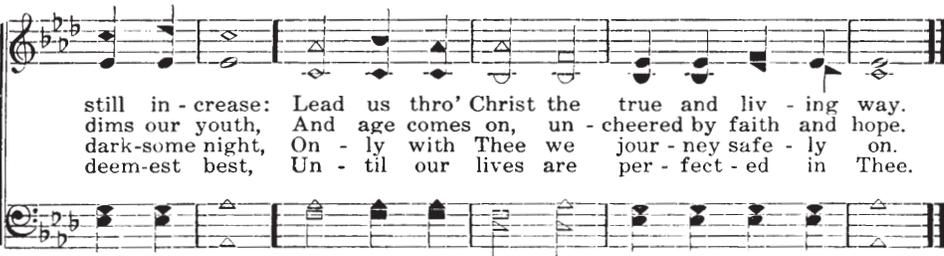
EDWARD J. HOPKINS, 1869



1. Lead us, O Fa - ther, in the paths of peace; With - out Thy
2. Lead us, O Fa - ther, in the paths of truth; Un - helped by
3. Lead us, O Fa - ther, in the paths of right; Blind - ly we
4. Lead us, O Fa - ther, to Thy heav'n-ly rest, How - ev - er



guid - ing hand we go a - stray, And doubts ap - pall, and sor - rows
Thee, in er - ror's maze we grope, While pas - sion stains, and fol - ly
stum - ble when we walk a - lone, In - volved in shad - ows of a
rough and steep the path may be, Thro' joy or sor - row, as Thou



still in - crease: Lead us thro' Christ the true and liv - ing way.
dims our youth, And age comes on, un - cheered by faith and hope.
dark - some night, On - ly with Thee we jour - ney safe - ly on.
deem - est best, Un - til our lives are per - fect - ed in Thee.

A Critical Spirit . . . cont'd from page 15

5 says, "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door." We know that we will weaken ourselves spiritually if we give in to a critical spirit. Parents, we have a responsibility to put in check our children's negative responses. Adults, we need to help each other grow in proper responses.

"Father, we seek your forgiveness for a critical spirit. Pride and arrogance have

been a part of our life. To some degree or another we have been a Miriam, an Aaron, or the prodigal son's brother. It is possible that because of us someone is despondent like Job after his three critical friends addressed him. We ask your forgiveness and pray for a new spirit within. May the devil not get a foothold in our lives and congregations through a critical spirit." ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Mid-Atlantic Informer*, March 2009.



Counseling From the Word

The Culture of Anger

by James Rudy Gray

There are several insightful verses about anger in Scripture. One of perhaps the most familiar ones is Ephesians 4:26, 27, “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil.”

We are never commanded in the Bible to be angry with a carnal rage. The Psalmist reminds us that we are “*fearfully and wonderfully made*,” and anger initially is a response of the autonomic nervous system—it’s part of how God created us. We often react with anger when we are threatened, injured, treated unjustly, or provoked. It is a reflex. The initial onset of anger is neither good nor bad. What happens next determines the morality of the experience.

We will experience anger. We do not have to act on it or even dwell on it. When we nurse that initial reaction of anger, we sin. When we think thoughts or take actions fueled by that anger, we sin. The Apostle Paul tells us in the passage referenced above that we can be angry but we must not allow this sin to give the devil an opportunity to hurt us, others, and (most importantly) our testimony.

When we feel that first sensation of anger, what can we do next? There are at least four possibilities:

We can **repress** it, but that often leads to depression. Clinical depression is often described as “anger turned inward.”

We can **express** it but instead of eliminating the emotion it actually aggravates it. Expressing anger can be like the person who said they are just like a shotgun being shot. Once it is fired, it is over and they feel better. But what if you’re standing in front of the shotgun? Acting out anger is sin.

We can **suppress** it by trying to ignore it, shut it off, or bury it deep inside us. However, anger is already a major energy burner and repressing it takes a lot of energy. It is not unusual for a person living with suppressed anger to be fatigued, tired, and weak.

We could **confess** it. We could identify the feeling, admit the reality of it, and then talk to God and if necessary talk to another person. It has been discovered that the more a person talks objectively about their anger the less angry they feel.

Chronically angry people are typically self-centered people. One professional has analyzed the sin of anger as follows: “I did not get my way. It is not good for me to not get my way. This (person or thing) prevented me from getting my way so that person or thing is bad. Bad things or people must be punished.”

You have to admit that is incredibly self-centered reasoning.

Proverbs 22:24 says, “*Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go.*” Proverbs 29:11 tells us that “*a fool uttereth all his*

mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards."

We know from experience that there are people who are more "high strung" than others, but as far as I know, there is no "temper" gene that has been discovered. According to Galatians 5, outbursts of anger are classified as deeds of the flesh. God has given us the cure for that: self-control. But how does a person develop self-control and thus be able to control his temper, etc.? Galatians 5 also says that self-control is part of the fruit of the Spirit—correctly managing our anger comes only from the inside-out process of regeneration that the Holy Spirit works in us as believers.

In the end, controlling and overcoming anger is a spiritual battle that requires spiritual resources. If we feed our minds on the offerings of our culture, we are

likely to be more given to anger than self-control. For instance, about 80% of television programming is aggressive. If we feed our minds on the truth of God, we are positioning ourselves to be in a much better stance for effectively being angry (the initial reaction) and yet not sinning.

We are not to let the sun go down on our anger. That means we must process the angry feelings. We must do something right and positive about those initial feelings before they grow quickly into something regrettable. If we have a strategy, we can better face the issue when it comes. We must learn to respond in ways that please God and not react in ways that please no one . . . except the devil. ■

—Reprinted from *Pulpit Helps*, published by AMG Publishers; Chattanooga, TN 37421.

Chosen by Grace and Called to Faith

by Paul Shirk

There are two predominant themes in the New Testament which relate to our salvation—the one is grace, and the other is faith. **Grace**, as it relates to our salvation, can be defined as the "*unmerited love, favor, and enabling power which God has chosen to extend to unworthy sinners through Jesus Christ.*"

Faith is spoken of in Scripture as "*man's personal decision to obey the call of God to trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.*" There are certainly other aspects of both grace and faith, but we will focus our thoughts in this study on these two

concepts. We will first consider the divine side of salvation (which pertains to grace), and the human response to grace (which is faith)—and then we will notice how they correlate.

1. God has graciously chosen us to salvation from eternity past.

God's plan of salvation, as portrayed in the Scriptures, originates in the grace of God from eternity—before the creation of this world. The grace of God in salvation is from eternity, yet it was revealed to us in time by the manifestation of

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

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)" (Ephesians 2:5). "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

If God had not chosen to extend His grace to us in salvation through the gift of His Son, we would not have a choice at all in the matter of salvation, for there would be nothing to choose. Therefore, God's choice to save us precedes our choice to be saved. Without God's grace there could be no faith, for we love Him because He first loved us.

2. Election and predestination are terms in Scripture which express God's gracious choice to save us.

There are many who shy away from these terms which are given in Scripture because of the way some people have cho-

sen to interpret them. Both terms are only used in the positive sense in the Bible. The purpose is to declare the security of the believer in Christ and to show God's eternal plan for their lives. The following Scriptures reveal this:

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied" (1 Peter 1:2). "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God" (1 Thessalonians 1:4). "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:29, 30). "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians 1:5).

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

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

I chose my wife potentially for marriage before she ever knew that I had any interest in her. Before I expressed my interest to her, she had no knowledge of my choice of her as a potential partner. When I expressed my desire to her, she had a choice to make, based upon the choice which I had already made. My choice of her did not take away her ability to choose, but rather enabled her to make a life-changing choice. If I had not

chosen her first, her choice of me would not have been effectual. By my choosing her first, she was empowered to make an effectual choice to be married. My choice of her is a picture of grace (though mine was not unmerited as God's is), but her choice of me was a response of faith—that I would be the type of husband she desired. When she accepted my choice, by choosing me, she became my chosen bride. She could not be my elect bride without choosing me (accepting my choice), though her election was initiated by my choice and not hers.

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

3. It is the will of God to save all men through Jesus Christ.

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

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

If the will of God is to save all men,

then that would suggest that He has given His grace to all, so that they can believe in the gift of His Son. The concept of God's saving grace being extended to all is expressed in the following passage: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11).

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

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

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

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

4. Faith is a gift of God's grace which makes us accountable to believe in Jesus Christ.

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

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

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

God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

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

5. Faith is the means through which we receive the grace to obey the commands of God.

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

The first error teaches that faith is nothing more than a mental persuasion to believe in Christ without any obligation to obey His commandments. James 2 unequivocally declares that a faith which has no works is dead, useless, and no greater than demonic faith.

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

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

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

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

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

6. Concluding Thoughts

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

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

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

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

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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.

The Beauties of the Law

by Jerram Barrs

Recently a colleague said, “At this time in our culture, apologetics is ethics.” I agree thoroughly with this statement, for we live in a culture that has lost its moral compass. In such a time as this, God’s moral commandments are one of His most comforting and challenging gifts to us as believers. They are also one of the most significant ways by which we can introduce unbelievers to the good news that comes to us from the Lord. In this time of moral uncertainty and confusion, we can be glad that the Lord has given us a sure moral word for every generation and for every time.

The First Beauty: God’s Law Reveals His Character

Scripture teaches us that God’s glory is revealed in His goodness. See, for example, Exodus 33:18, 19. In this passage Moses asks the Lord to reveal His glory to him. The Lord replies: “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee.” God’s character is the basis for affirming that this is a moral universe—a universe in which there is at the back of all things a final distinction between good and evil, kindness and cruelty, justice and injustice, mercy and oppression, graciousness and

indifference. Such knowledge is a great blessing, for where human religion denies the existence of the personal and infinite God, as, for example, in Hindu pantheism, then it is acknowledged that there is no foundation for any ultimate distinction between light and darkness, good and evil, kindness and cruelty, justice and injustice. In professor and mythologist Joseph Campbell’s interviews with broadcast journalist Bill Moyers (published as *Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth*), Campbell declared:

Heraclitus said that for God all things are good and right and just, but for man some things are right and others are not. When you are a man, you are in the field of time and decisions. One of the problems of life is to live with the realization of both terms, to say, “I know the center, and I know that good and evil are simply temporal aberrations and that, in God’s view, there is no difference. . . .”

Since in Hindu thinking everything in the universe is a manifestation of divinity itself, how should we say no to anything in the world? How should we say no to brutality, to stupidity, to vulgarity, to thoughtlessness? . . . For you and for me—the way is to say yes.

Western secularism also has no foundation for making clear and permanent dis-

tinctions between good and evil. Therefore, we are left with four alternatives:

- the personal preferences of individuals seeking their own happiness
- the will of the majority deciding what is right and wrong
- the imposition of the views of some powerful elite (whether the elite are politicians with power, philosophers claiming superior knowledge, business interests with money and access to government, or scientific interests that impose their wishes on the people)
- an ideology such as Marxism or radical Islam insisting that it knows what will bring about an ideal society

In contrast to these options, the whole of Scripture affirms that the law is the expression of God's righteous, just, kind, and loving nature. The law therefore is not arbitrary; rather, these decrees are righteous and wise because God has issued them (Deut. 4:5-8; see also Lev. 19:2, where God introduces His commandments by declaring: "Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy." Then, after each commandment he adds, "I am the LORD your God.")

The Second Beauty: God's Commandments Set the Definition for Our Lives

We are made in the image of God and are to walk in His ways. As human persons this is what we were created to do—to live as the one who made us lives. Leviticus 19 teaches us that we are created to live in imitation of God. We are to be holy, just, and merciful because this is who God is. Psalm 25:4-14 teaches that we are to walk in God's ways, following the pattern of life set by the covenant-giving and covenant-keeping God. This psalm declares: "Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way" (v. 8; see also Deut. 10:12, 13: "What doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to

walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?"). Influential sixteenth-century theologian John Calvin refers to what is commonly called the "third use of the law" as the principle and proper use of the law—it defines true humanness for us.

The Third Beauty: Even the Law's Exposure of Our Sin Is a Loving Work

Our teaching of the law must not begin with the law as the enemy that exposes sin, for this gives us a negative view of the law. In contrast, the Apostle Paul declares that the law is "holy and righteous and good"; it is indeed "spiritual" and perfect (Rom. 7:12, 14). It is because the law is beautiful that it reveals the ugliness of my sin. Even this use of the law—what is often called the "first use of the law"—is actually a gracious work of the law; my sin needs to be exposed and deserves to be revealed for what it is—the enemy of my life and eternal well-being. So the law is a gracious tutor leading me to Christ, the place I most need to go to find mercy and forgiveness.

The Fourth Beauty: The Law Calls Us to Show Grace, Love, and Mercy to Others

This calling is at the heart of the Sabbath laws; the laws about forgiving debts at sabbatical years; the laws about liberty from bond service in the jubilee years; the laws about rulers imitating God by being advocates for the poor, the needy, the widow, the orphan, the alien; the laws about agricultural and business practices that demand mercy and generosity to those in need. All these—and many more—mirror the goodness and kindness of God to Israel. The law teaches us to reveal the mercy, love, and grace of God in all our relationships with other people.

The gleaning laws give us an example here: “And when you reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 19:9, 10).

Such case laws (and many others) give us the “floor” (a term used by Old Testament scholar Gordon Wenham) of what God desires. The spiritual person who loves the law recognizes this and desires to fill up the room of the law rather than find satisfaction in obeying the mere letter. The story of Boaz’s kindness to Ruth (Ruth 2) is a wonderful example of this. Boaz understands that the intent of the gleaning laws is that he be generous like God, but he goes way beyond the letter of the law and fulfills the spirit of the law. His righteousness is consequently beautiful and inspiring.

Some of the laws express the principles, intent, and spirit at the heart of the law rather than the “floor.” This is true of Jesus’ saying that the law is about justice, mercy, and faithfulness. In similar fashion, Jesus teaches us that the whole law is about loving God and loving our neighbors; Paul tells us that every law has to do with loving our neighbors as ourselves (see Romans 13:8-10).

The Fifth Beauty: We Are to Treasure the Law as a Source of Wisdom

The law brings life, blessing, and freedom to us (see Romans 7; Psalm 1; 19; 119; James 1:25). Our culture teaches us that freedom is found in doing whatever I think will bring me vivid personal feelings and personal success (sociologist Robert Bellah’s summary of what Americans hunger for in this moment of our history). But the Christian understands that true freedom is found not in doing what I choose for myself but in walking in obedience to God’s commandments.

The Sixth Beauty: The Law Provides a Treasure Trove of Material With Which to Serve Our Societies

As we urge those among whom we live to value human life, or to delight in chastity and fidelity, or to fight with passion for the protection of those who are most vulnerable, the law is a rich resource. This is traditionally termed the “second use of the law.”

Reflecting on these six beauties of the law helps us to see that the exposition of the law is one of the most powerful apologetic weapons given to us by the Lord. This is to be true in our teaching: we should be giving sermons on work, sexuality, money, mercy, justice, kindness, deliverance from oppression, love for the alien, and every other aspect of the wisdom of God’s law. We do this not to attack people and make them feel worthless but to attract them with God’s vision for the well-being of human life. Above all, this beauty of the law is to be demonstrated in our lives, for, as the late theologian and pastor Francis Schaeffer used to say, “Our lives are our final apologetic.” The truth is that righteousness is inspiring and welcoming. This is so when we see the loveliness of the life of Jesus (sinners delighted in His company), and it is so when we read about the mercy of Boaz. This is why we love the parables of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), the Prodigal Son (Luke 15), and the Good Shepherd (John 10). It was the kind and gracious heart and the warm hospitality of one of my fellow students at college that the Lord used to open my heart to the gospel. Paul challenges us to make the gospel of God our Saviour attractive by our lives (Titus 2:10), and Peter urges us to live in such a manner that unbelievers will see our good deeds and glorify God (1 Peter 2:12). ■

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Is Life Spinning Out of Control?

by Andrew Gehman

Some time ago I purchased a wood lathe. One day as I worked with my lathe I was struck with the similarity between what I was doing, and what Jeremiah observed in the potter's house from Jeremiah 18. I was acquainted with the story for some time; however, because of my hobby, I understood the point of the story in a new way. Since that day, I have thought often of that passage. I have watched while what used to be a piece of firewood, or just an ordinary block of wood turns into many different things. As my experience with my lathe has grown, I learned that the speed must be right, the tools must be sharp, and the piece of wood must be cooperative in order for the project to turn out right.

When a woodworker first starts turning a block of wood, he must start slowly because the wood is not round and will create a lot of vibration. As the piece of wood gets round, he will increase the speed as needed until when he applies the finish to the project it is turning several thousand rpms. So often my life feels exactly like that; seemingly spinning out of control, and getting faster every day. However, just as there is a woodworker who desires his project to turn out well, there is a God in Heaven who is lovingly watching over us, and has a master plan for our lives. God Himself is at the controls of our circumstances, and the world around us. Nothing ever happens that He does not allow.

A wood lathe is used to rotate a block of wood; however, the woodworker uses what is called a chisel to form the wood into the shape he desires. The chisels are sharp, and

are used by gently pressing them against the wood as it rotates, causing shavings to go flying. I have found God often does the very same thing to us; He uses circumstances and people to cut deep into our lives and remove the attitudes, habits, and desires that are holding us back from being more like Him. Just like a woodworker, God has an image of you in His mind and He does whatever is necessary to form you into that image, even if it means heartache.

The woodworker chooses his block of wood carefully, thinking about the wood's grain, color, type, and characteristics. Some wood is stringy, open grain, hard, or soft.

All this the woodworker considers, along

with his purpose for this block of wood. The fact is some wood is

more difficult to work with than others. The same is true with people. Most of us do not want to change; we see ourselves as pretty good compared to others, but God sees deep into our hearts. I cannot help wondering what God sees as He looks at

you and me. Does God see a heart that is easy to work with—open to His will and plan—or one that is full of knots and cracks? Is God's heart broken when He thinks of you?

Our lives often appear to be spinning out of control, and the circumstances of life feel like they are tearing us apart. We react by questioning God, feeling resentful toward others, or both. As I have thought on the story of the potter, I realized that unlike the woodworker, who uses tools to form the wood, the potter uses his very own hands. It is amazing to think that the great and

The circumstances in our lives are not the product of chance, but behind them is the very hand of God working in our hearts and lives.

awesome God we serve is willing to put His hands in and on us to apply the correct amount of pressure at just the right spot in our lives to produce what He wants in us. The circumstances in our lives are not the product of chance, but behind them is the very hand of God working in our hearts and lives.

As God works on hearts, sometimes events occur that hurt us and as a reaction we harden our hearts. We feel like we have been treated unfairly, so we respond by going our own way. Maybe we foster wrong attitudes in our hearts toward God and others, or we simply do not spend as much time with God, or in His work. This is a natural and human reaction to difficult times; however, it inhibits God's work in

our hearts. Attitudes like that are akin to wood being tricky to work with, or clay that has dried out a little. We make it tough for God to get through to us and teach us what He wants us to learn. I wonder how our lives would be different if we would deliberately allow our hearts to be soft and malleable before God—to purposely allow God to accomplish His will in us instead of making our hearts hard; going along in obedience with His plan instead of fighting against Him. This is my longing, to allow my heart to be soft in God's hands, to give Him free reign in all my life so He can accomplish His purposes in and through me. ■

—Reprinted with permission from the *KMF Messenger*, March/April 2009.

Do We Need a New New Deal?

by Burton W. Folsom, Jr.

The New Deal has probably been the greatest political force in America during the last 100 years, and Franklin D. Roosevelt has probably been the most influential president during this time. In our current economic crisis—which some have compared with the Great Depression—many critics are calling for more federal programs and a “New New Deal.” There are three reasons we do not need a New New Deal from President Obama in 2009.

First, the federal programs in FDR's New Deal did not lower unemployment. Sure, the Works Progress Administration built roads, the Tennessee Valley Authority built dams, and the Civilian Conservation Corps planted trees. But every dollar that went to creating a federal job had to come from taxpayers, who, by sending their cash to Washington, lost the chance to buy hamburgers, movie tickets, or clothes, and create new jobs for restaurants, theaters, and tailors.

What's worse, some New Deal programs had terrible unintended consequences. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration, for example, overhauled agriculture by paying farmers not to produce on part of their land. After farmers took the federal dollars, the U.S. developed shortages of the very crops taxpayers were paying farmers not to produce. By 1935, for example, the U.S. was importing almost 35 million bushels of corn, 13 million bushels of wheat, and 36 million pounds of cotton. Simultaneously, we had an army of bureaucrats in the Department of Agriculture to inspect farms (and even to do aerial photography) to ensure farmers were not growing the crops we were importing into the country.

Second, the taxes to pay for the New Deal became astronomical. In 1935, Roosevelt decided to raise the marginal tax rate on top incomes to 79 percent. Later he raised it to 90 percent. These confiscatory rates

discouraged entrepreneurs from investing, which prolonged the Great Depression.

Henry Morgenthau, FDR's loyal Secretary of the Treasury, was frustrated at the persistence of double-digit unemployment throughout the 1930s. In May 1939, with unemployment at 20 percent, he exploded at the failed New Deal programs. "We have tried spending money," Morgenthau noted. "We are spending more than we have ever spent before and it does not work. . . . We have never made good on our promises. . . . I say after eight years of this Administration we have just as much unemployment as when we started. . . . And an enormous debt to boot!"

Third, the New Deal divided and politicized the country in tragic ways. Those who lobbied most effectively won subsidies and bailouts even if their cause was weak. Others, who had greater needs, received nothing. Walter Waters, who led a march of veterans on Washington, lobbied successfully for a special bonus for veterans, whether they had been in battle or not. When asked why veterans—instead of longshoremen or teachers—should receive a special bonus of taxpayer dollars, he said, "I noticed, too, that the highly organized lobbies in Washington for special industries were producing results: loans were being granted to their special interests. . . . Personal lobbying paid, regardless of the justice or injustice of their demand."

Thus, as money became available, those with effective political lobbies won the subsidies, and others, who sometimes had more just causes and greater need, received little or nothing. In the case of the veterans, in 1936 they won a \$2 billion federal bonus—a sum exceeding six percent of the entire national debt at the time. Teachers, by contrast, were less effective lobbyists and won almost no federal subsidies. Silver miners, led by Senator Key Pittman of Nevada, won a silver subsidy that paid almost \$300,000 a day each day for 14 years, but coal miners were left out.

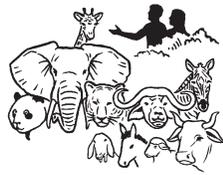
In another example, under Presidents Hoover and Roosevelt, Illinois lobbied effectively and won \$55,443,721 under the first

federal welfare grant while Massachusetts received zero federal dollars. Without federal money for welfare needs, Massachusetts valiantly raised its own funds to secure what Illinois extracted from Washington. The Boston Civic Symphony repeatedly gave concerts to benefit the jobless. City officials and teachers raised money and took pay cuts. Massachusetts Governor Joseph Ely believed that no state should receive federal aid and that private charity was the best charity; that federal relief ruined both taxpayers and those in need. "Whatever the justification for relief," Ely said, "the fact remains that the way in which it has been used makes it the greatest political asset on the practical side of party politics ever held by an administration." Ely added that "millions of men and women . . . have come to believe almost that there is no hope for them except upon a government payroll."

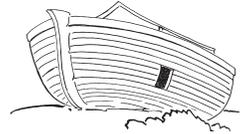
Federal dollars always become political dollars, and the Democrats moved to use federal money to gain votes at election time. In Pennsylvania, Joseph Guffey, the successful Democratic candidate for U. S. Senate in 1934, ran a campaign ad that said, "Compare this \$297,942,173 contributed by Pennsylvania to the U. S. Treasury with the cash and credit of \$678,074,195 contributed to Pennsylvania by the Roosevelt Democratic administration." Vote Democrat, Guffey and others proclaimed, and the federal faucet will keep running. James Doherty, a New Hampshire Democrat, said, "It is my personal belief that to the victor belong the spoils and that Democrats should be holding most of these [WPA] positions so that we might strengthen our fences for the 1940 election." One WPA director in New Jersey—a corrupt but candid man—answered his office phone, "Democratic Headquarters."

If history is a guide, we have every reason to believe that if President Obama institutes a New New Deal, then universal health care, federal bailouts, and jobs stimulus programs will be costly, will be politicized, and will fail. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Imprimis*, Jan. 2009.



Beginning Issues



Can God Be a Loving God in a World of Suffering? Part 3

by John Mullett

Ramifications of Compromise

In the last article I ended with two quotes of men (Carl Sagan and Ted Turner) who had rejected the possibility for the existence of God as an omnipotent and loving being in reaction to the suffering they had either experienced in their lives or observed in our world. They had beliefs of what the world should look like if God was indeed omnipotent and loving and those conditions were not met. A key in this type of disillusionment is their rejection of Genesis as literal history.

The implications of compromise are enormous. We cannot compromise by accepting any view of history that includes death before sin and still maintain a biblical position that is logical. If indeed God would have used death, disease, and struggle in an evolutionary process to “create” the world, then Sagan’s words accusing God of being a “sloppy manufacturer”¹ would ring true. What would using such a method say about God’s character? Without the history of Genesis the existence of a loving God doesn’t make sense. If there is no

such thing as original/literal sin and no literal Garden of Eden; if death and suffering are not the consequences of sin, but natural processes that have been around for millions of years, then what is sin and what are the consequences of sin? If death is not a result of sin then why did Jesus come to earth and die on the cross?

If Genesis is true and the presence of evil (in this world) and consequently death and suffering are a result of our sin marring what had been a perfect world, it becomes clear the responsibility lies with us. If Genesis is true we should expect tragedies and bad things to happen. Having the correct worldview changes our perspective drastically. Instead of being ungrateful and becoming bitter over painful events in our lives due to wrong expectations, suddenly we will find ourselves grateful that God has maintained enough of His sustaining power in this world to enable us to live remarkably normal lives. Recognizing and accepting responsibility for the condition of the world brings humility, and

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

while humility never comes easy for man, it comes much easier with proper perspective.

With the proper foundation and perspective, instead of raising a fist to God in anger and defiance over the tragedies in our lives, we will cry out in humility the words of the Apostle Paul, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). I believe we will also be more likely to accept the responsibility of man in a broader sense, such as for our nation or even the whole of man, as godly men like the Prophet Daniel have before us (see Daniel 9:2-6).

Why do we question the accuracy of the Scriptures at all? It's not because

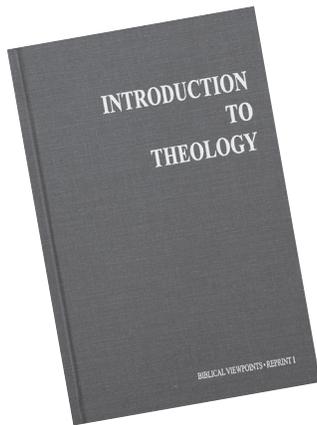
they have been shown to be lacking, not even by science. When we take the ideas and understanding of fallen sinful man to the Bible, which is the Word of the infallible and perfect God of the universe, and then have the arrogance to tell Him what He meant; what He should have meant; or what He could not have meant, we are giving more credence to the words of men than we are to the Word of God. To compromise is nothing short of idolatry in its purest form, man putting himself on the throne. When man is on the throne he is destined for an inglorious end to be sure.

1. Sagan, C., Contact, Pocket Books (Simon & Schuster, Inc.), New York, 1985.

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"REVEAL" Is Revealing

by J. Mark Horst

In late 2007, Willow Creek Community Church released its findings from a multiple-year qualitative study of its ministry. They wanted to know what programs and activities of the church were actually helping people mature spiritually and which were not. The result? "Reveal: Where Are You?," co-authored by Greg Hawkins, executive pastor of Willow Creek.

Hawkins states: "*Participation is a big deal. We believe the more people participating in these sets of activities, with higher levels of frequency, will produce disciples of Christ.*" This has been Willow's philosophy of ministry. The church creates programs/activities. People participate in these activities. The outcome is spiritual maturity. In a moment of stinging honesty Hawkins says, "*I know it might sound crazy but that's how we do it in churches. We measure levels of participation.*"

However, the Reveal study discovered, according to Hawkins, "***Increasing levels of participation in these sets of activities does NOT predict whether someone's becoming more of a disciple of Christ. It does NOT predict whether they love God more or they love people more.***" Having spent 30 years creating and promoting a multi-million-dollar organization driven by programs and measuring participation, and convincing other church leaders to do the same, you can see why Pastor Bill Hybels called the findings "earth shaking, ground breaking, and mind blowing."

Further, Hybels confesses: "We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and

became Christians, we should have started telling people and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become 'self feeders.' We should have gotten people, taught people, how to read their Bible between services, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own. That sounds like what pastors and churches taught before buying into the marketing strategies of the corporate world."

So we ask, "How well have these lessons been learned?" Unfortunately, the response is somewhat ambiguous. "*Our dream is that we fundamentally change the way we do church. That we take out a clean sheet of paper and we rethink all of our old assumptions. Replace it with new insights—insights that are informed by research and rooted in Scripture. Our dream is really to discover what God is doing and how He's asking us to transform this planet.*" Notice the emphasis on "our," "we," and "us" in this answer!

It is my personal belief that **we need to get back to basics: inductive Bible study, expository preaching, well-designed Sunday school curriculum, and the personal application of Scripture to EVERY area of life!** These will build a biblically literate, well-grounded, Christ-centered church, and motivate believers to share their faith with others. Both time and eternity will REVEAL whether our "house" is built on the solid rock of God's Word, or on the shifting sand of human philosophy. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Hope Horizons*.

Virus Protection

by David Ravenhill

Everyone who owns a computer knows the importance of having some type of virus protection. Every day it seems there is a new virus released by some computer geek who thinks his calling is to make others miserable by infecting their computer with his latest debilitating viral concoction. Thankfully, for \$40 or so you can protect yourself from one of these viral “meltdowns.” The secret to this protection is to scan your files on a regular basis with an anti-virus or spyware removal program. The more frequently you download the latest files the safer your computer’s “health.”

Perhaps you can tell by my use of terms that I’m not the most competent computer kid on the block. However, I have learned a thing or two over the years about keeping oneself free from the deadly virus of sin. The greatest tool that God has given us for this protection is His Word.

David offers this timeless word: “Where-withal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.” Elsewhere he writes: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:9, 105). In other words, the Bible serves to expose the potential virus of sin that the enemy is continually sending our way. Our archenemy, the devil, is forever seeking to cause us to suffer a spiritual meltdown. He knows that if he can ambush us with sin, he will render us ineffective and fruitless.

The upshot of this is that Satan does everything possible to attack the validity and credibility of the Word of God. He did this a century ago through the arguments of “higher criticism”; an arrogant mindset by so-called scholars who sought to discredit the Bible by disputing the validity of its supernatural claims. In the ’60s the sufficiency of Scripture was challenged through the pseudo-science of psychotherapy which

claimed to know better than the Bible how to help man overcome his problems with sin and its consequences.

The latest assault upon the Word of God has come from the “emergent church movement” whose leaders are attempting to reinterpret Scripture in light of today’s culture.

In his wonderful book *Revival*, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones states: “What is our final authority in all these matters? What do I know about God, and the possibility of blessing, apart from what I have in the Bible? And do I claim that my mind and reason can select what is right in it and what is wrong, and that I need only to hold on to what I happen to agree with? That makes me the authority, not the book. That makes my reason the standard, not God’s revelation. . . . They have denied the authority of the Scriptures, they have set up their own opinions, philosophy, science, learning—all these things. The supernatural element is discounted, miracles are disbelieved. . . . Any direct activity on the part of God is suspect because it does not fit into the system of the philosophers.”

If Jesus addressed the “emergent church philosophers” of today He would tell them exactly what He told the Sadducees of old: “You do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.”

God has made clear that His Word contains “everything that pertains to life and godliness.” God and His Word are inseparable, irrevocable, and eternal. Heaven and earth will pass away but His Word abides forever. God’s holy Word remains the only effective anti-sin protection there is. Download it daily and let it scan your life thoroughly. It’s guaranteed to work or your money back. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Unchained!*, Winter 2009. www.purelife-ministries.org

Anabaptism 101: Walking in the Ordinary Way of Peace

by James Toews

In 1569, Dirk Willems was fleeing for his life across a frozen pond. Imprisoned for his faith, he had escaped custody, but a “thief-catcher” was hard on his heels. Dirk made it safely across the thin ice but his larger pursuer fell through. Rather than taking this opportunity to secure his freedom, Dirk turned back and rescued his enemy. Nevertheless, Dirk was burned at the stake for his faith a few months later.

In the chaotic period between the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the establishment of the rule of law in the new Soviet Union, blood-thirsty brigands roamed the farming lands of the Mennonites in the Ukraine. With no stable army or police force to defend them, the Mennonites gathered to wrestle with the application of their peace position in a lawless society. Should they form self-defense militias? Many resolved to not take up arms, choosing to be victims of, rather than participants in, violence. And many were.

Heroic stories such as these make up a large piece of the mosaic of our reputation as an historic peace church. It seems reasonable that a people whose commitment to the way of peace is symbolized by such poignant stories should have something to say to a world craving peace.

But there are problems associated with these stories. First, they’re extraordinary. Second, being extraordinary, they’re inappropriate examples of our peace witness.

As Anabaptists, our ethic doesn’t rise out of a grand societal vision. Instead, it’s built on the mundane relationships of the home and workplace. The Sermon on the Mount sets the context: “That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matthew 5:22).

We’re a peace church because we believe what our Teacher told us: in our most ordinary relationships we’re to be people who walk the way of peace. As such, our archetypal response to assault is to “turn the other cheek” (Matthew 5:39 and Luke 6:29).

Holding to such a command has implications for how we live.

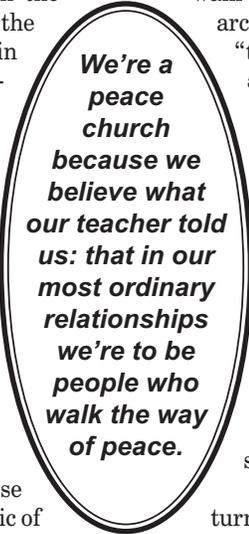
It tells us that, as fathers, we’re not to exasperate our child (Ephesians 6:4). It tells us that, as servants/employees, we’re to honor our masters/bosses (1 Peter 2:18). It tells us that, as spouses, we’re to submit to one another (Eph. 5:21).

There was a time when it was popular to expound on the hard sayings of Jesus.

It’s certainly hard to imagine turning the other cheek if our adversary should be a malicious antagonist. What would I do in place of Dirk Willems or the Mennonites in post-revolution Russia?

But when it comes to being “struck on the cheek” by a brother or a sister, by a friend or a co-worker, by a child or a parent, we don’t need to imagine how we would act; we simply need to look back and remember what we have done.

When I was a young employee feeling



***We're a
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because we
believe what
our teacher told
us: that in our
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people who
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of peace.***

exploited and unappreciated, the way of peace was not my lens. With the luxury of being able to look back on raising teenagers, I can safely recall that the way of peace did not rule in my heart during difficult seasons. Life as a spouse is even more private, complex, and multi-dimensional, but Jesus didn't put marriage beyond the ethics of the Kingdom. The way of peace, if it means anything, applies in marriage just as it does in the workplace, school ground, and public square.

But did we "turn the other cheek"? The honest answer is "seldom." We may have been beaten down, we may have become passive, or we may have struck back in anger or with a deep sense of righteousness, but when, out of love, did we "turn the other cheek"—that is, be deliberately peaceful when offended and wounded? Bringing His command into the household

and workplace is what makes Jesus' saying really hard.

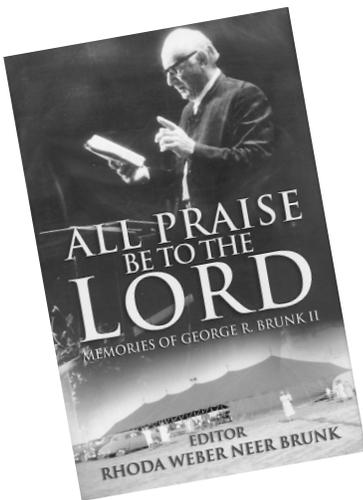
But it does more than make Jesus' teaching hard. It also brings our peace witness into the place where it's desperately needed. Broken marriages, wounded children, mistreated employees, and frustrated employers don't make headlines, but they are the ingredients of our disintegrating culture.

It is to this world that Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (John 14:27). That is very good news.

We're known as a peace church. It's a title worthy of those who serve the Prince of Peace. But we need to remember what it actually means. ■

—Article first appeared in the March 2009 issue of *Mennonite Brethren Herald*. Reprinted with permission.

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The Purpose of Parables

by J. Otis Yoder

Stories do capture our interest, especially those character-building stories full of human interest. Jesus was a great storyteller. His stories are called parables. So let's open the Bible to Matthew 13:10-17 for my message, "The Purpose of Parables."

There are many ways of teaching. I learned that when I was in school and when I taught. You can teach by lecturing. You can teach by the question-and-answer method. You can teach by introducing a project to carry out. And you can teach by assigning a research paper. Or you can teach by parables. Jesus was a master of all methods of teaching. But one of His most effective methods was to teach by parables. I will explain what a parable is later.

I wish you would listen as I read now from Matthew 13:10-17.

From these verses I aim to show the REASONS why Jesus taught by parables.

First,

His Parables Contain Mysteries.

A parable is a comparison. It uses an example from everyday life and makes a direct comparison to the spiritual side of life. For example, Jesus told one parable of a sower who went out to sow seed. It was a very common experience in those days for a man to walk through the field and broadcast the seed on the soil by hand.

Then Jesus made a comparison of that. It's a common idea laid along side of a spiritual truth. It makes a comparison. Jesus often introduced His parables by

saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like . . ."

Now I said Jesus' parables contain mysteries. We must, therefore, explain what a mystery is. A mystery in the Bible is a truth about to be revealed. God chose to disclose truth by stages in the Bible. Revelation is entwined in history. That is the way God the Almighty chose to reveal truth. There were the prophets in those days, many years before Christ. Then there was Jesus, and then there were the apostles. Bible mystery is not something we cannot understand. A Bible mystery is a truth that is revealed. So it is not beyond our understanding. We may not fully comprehend it but we can in a measure understand it.

And Jesus went on to say that it was given to the disciples to understand those mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven. Then He said the person who understands will have and to him shall be given more so that he will have abundance. There is the principle of addition. What we have will be added to. So it depends upon us. He taught in parables and His parables contain mysteries.

Second,

His Parables Contain Realities.

I was quite impressed as I read. He said He was speaking to the people in parables because even though they could see, they couldn't see. And even though they could hear, they couldn't hear. So seeing and hearing are no surety at all. They are only surface. Seeing and hearing can be merely on the surface which assures nothing. It assures absolutely