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THE SWORD AND TRUMPET 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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Book Review . . .

by Rosalind J. Byler

Feminine Appeal:  
Seven Virtues of a Godly Wife and Mother

Author: Carolyn Mahaney

Published by Good News Publishers, © 2004, 192 pages.

What constitutes Biblical femininity? How would you describe God's design for womanhood? Perhaps you grew up in a home where a truly virtuous woman practiced her calling well, and you assumed that being a godly wife and mother would come naturally after marriage. You were astonished and dismayed to find that, although you had observed godly womanhood in action, there were many practical aspects of it that had totally eluded you. You had an idea of how things were supposed to work, but no clear vision of the steps to get there.

Or maybe your home situation was far from ideal. Your parents' marriage was broken, or a living demonstration of marriage as it should not be. As you observed particularly your mother's interpretation of the roles of wife and mother, you wondered if there might not be a better way. How would you go about finding it? You weren't seeing it lived out in the homes of any women you knew.

Acknowledging that our sinfulness distorts our perspective and makes it impossible to instinctively choose the best way, we look for wise teaching. Who is to give the younger women a picture of godly womanhood lived out in ordinary home situations? According to Titus 2, the older women have this responsibility. When and how does this take place? Informal, practical instruction and loving advice (given in the context of Christian relationship) have always been the most effective means. However, who is to instruct the older women? We may have learned many things through experience, yet our own understanding is still in process. Carolyn Mahaney's book, *Feminine Appeal*, gives clear Scriptural direction and answers to many of the questions we encounter. (It might be worthy of mention that Mrs. Mahaney did not originally intend to write a book. She instructed her daughters, mentored young women of her acquaintance and in her church, and eventually was asked to speak on these subjects to a widening circle

of women. This book is merely her teaching in printed form.)

The book is subtitled "Seven Virtues of a Godly Wife and Mother," and after a brief story illustrating the confusion facing many young wives today, Mrs. Mahaney identifies Titus 2 as the source of the seven virtues to be taught. "The Delight of Loving My Husband" is presented in the first chapter. Using the all-too-common scenario of romantic courtships progressing to marriages that resemble amicable business partnerships, Mrs. Mahaney encourages women to love their husbands with a passionate, tender, affectionate love. She demonstrates some common hindrances to this type of love as well as ways to rebuild it.

The second chapter covers the teaching of loving our children, of which the author remarks that "No profession requires harder work or greater sacrifice than motherhood!" Selfishness, exhaustion, indulgence, and fear can turn our love into mere empty performance of duty. We are reminded that with great responsibility comes greater grace.

The virtue of self-control is shown as a safeguard or wall of defense against the enemies of our souls. While we are to work hard at disciplining ourselves, partnering with the Holy Spirit is our only means of succeeding. In the fourth chapter, Mrs. Mahaney focuses on self-control as it relates to our appetites, thoughts and feelings, and behavior.

"The Pleasure of Purity" enlarges upon the theme of God's intention for sexual expression in marriage: "tremendous joy and satisfaction." Mrs. Mahaney discusses the problems of lust, pollution of sexuality through sin, and recreational pursuits that may indulge sinful desires. She explains Biblical principles for cultivating true attractiveness, purity, and a passionate marriage.

How do we view the idea of being a "keeper at home"? In a chapter entitled "The Honor of Working at Home," we are encouraged to return to a Biblical perspective of

(continued on page 12)

# Person of the Month: *Sarah Pierrepont Edwards* (1710-1758)

Sarah Pierrepont was born January 9, 1710, into the parsonage home of James and Mary (Hooker) Pierrepont of New Haven, Connecticut. Sarah's father was the pastor of First Church in New Haven. It was a state church which was normative at that point in the history of the thirteen original colonies. This means that citizenship and church membership were synonymous. Pastor Pierrepont was one of the founders of Yale College and an influential churchman in New England.

At this time we were just a group of 13 lonely colonies full of British subjects surrounded by land belonging to Spain, France, and Frenchmen who wanted to befriend the Indians so they could have allies who would join them in their fight against the British. Sarah lived during this time of uncertainties and wars—not a picture-perfect calendar photo of New England in October.

Sarah's family was well-known in Connecticut. Her father died in 1714 when Sarah was 4 years old. She received the best education available for the time period. She was filled with love for the Lord and was considered lovely due to her beautiful spirit.

In 1725, at the age of 15, Sarah was engaged to Jonathan Edwards, the soon-to-become-renowned preacher and thinker of his time who is still hailed as such today. They were opposites in many ways but they were both lovers of music. They complemented each other well. They were married two years later on July 28, 1727, when Sarah was 17 and Jonathan was 24. Women of that day were often married by the time they were 16.

Sarah's husband became pastor of the church in Northampton, Massachusetts, five months prior to their wedding. She thus stepped immediately into the role of a pastor's wife—a role not unfamiliar to her, she having been raised a P. K. ("preacher's kid") herself. The scrutiny in that church, however, was such to have made a lesser woman lose heart. Sarah was a sociable, outgoing person whereas her husband Jonathan was a shy, retiring man except when it came to God's Word and its teachings. He knew what he believed and was not afraid to stand for the truth and proclaim it boldly. As a wife, Sarah did everything she could to make home a place where there would be peace and quiet so that her husband could study and fulfill his calling as a minister. In this way she served the Lord.

Thirteen months after her marriage Sarah began bearing their eleven children—each child about two years apart from the next oldest child. She is greatly credited with the good character, abilities, etc. of more than 1400 members of the Edwards family. The contribution of these family members to society and the nation is immense (I suggest you find a biography of Sarah's life to appreciate the magnitude of this accomplishment!). Jonathan and Sarah worked together in the loving, yet firm discipline of the children as well as spending time with each child and enjoying times of fun together as a family. In a day when there was a large infant mortality rate, the fact that all of Sarah's children lived at least until they were teens caused jealousy, envy, and criticism among members of the congregation.

If you have ever visited a re-created village of colonial times you may have noticed that the work of running a household was very labor intensive, but in addition to the cares of family and homemaking, Sarah was also a gracious hostess who often had guests in her home for months as young men studying for the ministry would come to learn under the tutelage of her husband Jonathan. She had a great influence and impact for good on the lives of these young men as well.

*(continued on page 18)*

# *An Appeal to American Anabaptists*

by Roger Hertzler

**S**oul winners in America today face a perplexing dilemma. “If someone comes to Christ as a result of my witnessing, where should I send them for fellowship? Is there any church where this new believer can go where he will receive Biblical discipleship?”

The sad condition in the modern church makes this question a difficult one to answer. Many groups today are naming the name of Christ, but not very many are departing from iniquity. Most churches who profess to be “going and teaching” all nations are neglecting to “teach them to obey all things” that Christ commanded. Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount are ignored as Christians everywhere swear oaths, fight in war, and divorce and remarry at the same rate as the unbelievers around them. False doctrine, worldliness, and broken homes have all but snuffed out the testimony of Christ in this country.

One comparatively bright spot in this dark religious landscape is the group of people called the conservative Anabaptists. While there are many New Testament teachings that are rejected by Christians in general, conservative Anabaptists have made a valiant attempt to retain these teachings. While American Christianity has said it is okay for Christians to swear oaths and go to war, Anabaptists have maintained that Christ was serious when He said “swear not at all” and “love your enemies.” While American Christianity has chosen to become like the world to win the world (or maybe just to make life easier), Anabaptists have insisted that God calls His people to some degree of separation from the world in their daily lives. While divorce ends nearly

half of the marriages in American Christianity, the divorce rate among conservative Anabaptists is close to zero.

Yet in spite of the strong points of the Anabaptist people, there are still some giant “bushel baskets” hiding the light of Christ, some major issues that are shrouding the “city set on a hill” in a cloak of murkiness. These issues are threatening to extinguish the light that does exist, and no doubt will do so if they are not addressed quickly and thoroughly.

My appeal to my Anabaptist brethren is that we would deal in a Biblical way with every weight that hinders and every sin that besets us. My appeal is that we would take the steps needed to permit God’s power to flow through us like it flowed through the Anabaptists of centuries past.

My appeal is for us to consider seven things I believe we must do thoroughly, honestly, and consistently to become the kind of vessels God can use in His kingdom.

## ***1. We must make Jesus Christ the center of our focus.***

For any group to validly call itself Christian, it must have the person of Jesus as the center of its focus. Every other issue, regardless of how significant it may be, must be peripheral to Christ and our relationship with Him.

The Bible was given to point us to Jesus. God the Father points us to His Son. The Holy Spirit points us to Christ. All of our teaching and practice is worthless unless it points in some way to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

If Christ is truly the center of our focus, He will also become our *passion*. Someone

has rightfully said, "A man can have many interests, but he can only have one passion." Far too many believers from other backgrounds are attracted to Anabaptist circles by our radical lifestyle; after joining us with high expectations, however, they become disillusioned when they discover that Christ is merely an interest rather than our passion. He is merely one of many Bible doctrines rather than *our life* as the Apostle Paul testified.

Jesus said we are to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. He said we are to seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness. If we are not passionate about Christ and His kingdom, our young people are likely to jump ship the first time they meet someone who is passionate about his beliefs. Perhaps they will be led away by a false teacher, college professor, or cult leader who is passionate about whatever cause or philosophy he happens to be promoting. Or maybe they will sense where our true passion lies—whether it be business, sports, or even some religious activity—and then will choose to adopt that passion themselves. Or perhaps they will decide to develop their own passion as they explore the vast array of pleasures this world has to offer.

How much better, though, if we could repent of our lukewarmness and take up the passion of Paul, whose heart cry was "that I may know Him." How much better if we could grasp the majesty of Christ's kingdom ourselves and then offer our children a real relationship with Him who is worthy to receive our praise, devotion, obedience, and love.

## **2. We must learn to humble ourselves.**

Of all the activities that a mortal man can do, there is probably none more important than humbling himself. To truly humble ourselves is an important ingredient in becoming born again (Matt. 18:3, 4). Humbling ourselves is the key to receiving the grace from God that we so desperately need (1 Peter 5:5). The spiritual success or failure of virtually every person mentioned in Scripture was determined by whether or not he consistently humbled himself.

We are all proud creatures naturally. We think our ways, opinions, abilities, and teachings are superior to those that belong to others. We resist anyone who tells us that something is wrong with us, or that we need to repent in an area of our life. Yet our spiritual victory and eternal destiny are often dependent upon whether or not we are willing to take heed to such concerns.

Humbling ourselves can take many different forms, such as confessing sin rather than hiding it, changing our opinions rather than clinging to them, and accepting personal pain rather than resisting it. It will always, however, involve some sort of denying of our own egotistical nature and submitting ourselves to the will of God.

If we do not learn to humble ourselves, our hearts will not be open when God Himself wants to speak to us. If we do not learn to humble ourselves, our graceless lives will quickly deteriorate into either dead formalism or else unchecked worldliness. If we do not learn to humble ourselves, our interpersonal conflicts will continue to mar the testimony of Christ on this earth. If we do not learn to humble ourselves, our pride will almost certainly alienate the very people we are supposed to be pointing to God.

If we do not learn to humble ourselves, we will not be able to effectively address the concerns listed in this paper, even if we know in our hearts they are true.

## **3. We must call sin what it is.**

Jesus came to save us from our sin, not from our weaknesses, slip-ups, or character flaws. When we try to use some less offensive word to describe sin, it is usually an indication of incomplete repentance, and it limits the cleansing work that God wants to do in our hearts.

Depending on our style of church structure and administration, our temptation is to focus on those things that violate the particular practice of our congregation, but then neglect to deal with the things that violate the Word of God. Unforgiveness, lust, pride, covetousness, gluttony, rebellion, anger, and a love of this world are all

real sins that separate us from God, and we must confess them as sin if we hope to receive the cleansing power of Christ's blood. If we try to deal with the symptoms of these sins without addressing the sin itself, then we will fail to find true freedom either for ourselves or for those to whom we minister.

#### **4. We must weed out witchcraft.**

The church in Thyatira had works, charity, service, faith, and patience. But they also made room for the wicked Jezebel to teach and seduce God's people. Many conservative Anabaptists have battled for generations against the threats of immodesty, war, and divorce, but then have blindly given way to the horrible, hellish sin of witchcraft.

Throughout the Old Testament God declares His fierce hatred against all forms of witchcraft. In the New Testament God says that sorcerers shall have their part in the lake of fire. Yet so often when someone expresses concern about water-witching or other forms of divination, or about the vast array of occultic health care practices, the response goes something like this: "Well, we just have different opinions about these things." Or "Just because we don't understand how something works does not necessarily mean that it's witchcraft."

These responses simply reveal the biggest problem in our attitude toward witchcraft. In answering the question about what is and what isn't witchcraft, the biggest problem is not that we don't *know*. The biggest problem is that we don't *care*. When we make statements like these, without taking the time to investigate the truth of the matter, we simply reveal that we don't have the same hatred for witchcraft that God has for it.

When we truly grasp the loathing our God has for the sin of witchcraft, we will leave no stone unturned in our search for truth if there is any possibility at all that something we practice could be witchcraft. Then, if we should discover that indeed we have been guilty of this heinous sin, we will repent of it

thoroughly and seek the freedom that can only come by the blood of Jesus.

#### **5. We must deal with materialism.**

As rich Americans, we ought to pay close attention to the realities Jesus told us about ourselves. He told us that He came to preach good news to the poor, but that the rich shall hardly enter the kingdom of God. He said "blessed are you who are poor" but "woe to you who are rich."

Jesus also told us how to respond to these realities by giving us two clear commands: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth" (Matt. 6:19) and "Sell that ye have, and give alms" (Luke 12:33). Perhaps we will disagree about how we ought to obey these commands, or exactly what Jesus meant when He gave them. But can we all agree, at a minimum, that He must have meant *something* by them?

Can any of us imagine the potential if God's people everywhere would give all their excess (laid-up) resources for the care of the needy and the spread of the Gospel around the world? Can any of us imagine the consequences if we don't?

#### **6. We must repent of our apathy about the lost.**

Christ's great commission in Matthew 28 consists of two components. The first is the command to "go." The second is the command to "teach obedience." If Satan cannot keep Christians from ignoring the entire great commission, he wants them at least to neglect one of these two fundamental parts of it.

Many Protestant groups have been diligent about obeying the command to "go." They have been sadly negligent, however, on the command to "teach obedience." Conservative Anabaptists, on the other hand, have typically put a lot more emphasis on the call to "teach obedience." But we have been greatly lacking in our response to "go" and to "preach the gospel to every creature."

We have been called to win those we can, for God is not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to repentance.

We have also been called to warn those who refuse to come to repentance, lest their blood be required at our hand.

Let us wake up to the entire call of Christ's great commission, both to the call to go and also to the call to teach obedience to Jesus. There waits for us a world to be won, a kingdom to be built, and a God to be glorified.

#### **7. We must give ourselves to prayer.**

This little paper, at its core, is about revival. If each of these issues would be addressed effectively, it would constitute the very essence of revival. And it is certainly my desire that such a revival will take place.

Yet throughout history, true revival has always been connected in a fundamental way to consistent, passionate prayer by God's people. Prayer, and especially prayer with fasting, is the key that God has given us to touch His heart and change the world. Abundant power in spiritual work is always the result of much time spent alone with God. Corporate revival goes hand in hand with groups of believers meeting often for prayer. When believing prayer from pure hearts ascends constantly toward God, righteousness grows and flourishes. But when

prayer becomes stagnant and less frequent, sin begins to abound and revival fires abate.

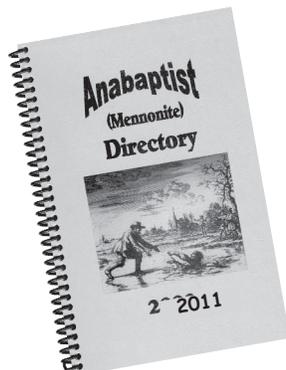
Jesus promised us that if we pray in secret, our Father who sees in secret will reward us openly. Let us pull out this key that God has given us and bravely go to war against Satan, allowing God to make us channels of His love and power.

\* \* \* \* \*

Oh, that God in these last days would raise up an army of true soldiers who will manifest His kingdom in all its beauty. Soldiers whose eyes are on their Saviour and whose hearts burn with a passionate love for Him. Soldiers who have learned that the truest sign of greatness is an ability to humble oneself in every circumstance. Soldiers who hate all forms of sin, including the devilish practice of witchcraft. Soldiers who have been set free from the love of money, and are obsessed instead with laying up treasures in Heaven. Soldiers who are ready and willing to take the Gospel of Jesus to every creature within their power. Soldiers whose source of strength comes from spending much time on their knees before God.

My belief is that God will do this with anyone who is willing. My prayer is that He will do it with us Anabaptist people. ■

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## From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

# The Bias of Nature

by Leonard Sankey

In a devotional reading there was a quote by A. W. Tozer that caught my attention: “The Bias of Nature is toward the wilderness, never toward a fruitful field.”

Tozer cites words by Dr. Harold C. Mason: “Man was made to dwell in a garden, but through sin he has been forced to dwell in a field, a field which he has wrested from his enemies by sweat and tears, and which he preserves only at the cost of constant watchfulness and endless toil. Let him but relax his efforts for a few years and the wilderness will claim his field again. The jungle and the forest will swallow his labors and all his loving care will have been in vain.”\*

In thinking about examples of the encroaching wilderness in my own experience, I thought of the following:

- Hurricane Fifi which wreaked devastation on the coast of Honduras. The torrential rains clawed trees and rocks off the sides of the mountains, leaving vast scars against what had been a thickly-forested hillside. A few years later, I looked at those hillsides and not a sign could be seen of the destruction. The wilderness had taken over its realm.
- A simple hilltop in southern Ohio. I have called it the “happiest place I had ever been.” It was where H. L. Fergeson had made a home for his wife and six children.

\**Kneeling We Triumph*, by Edwin and Lillian Harvey

There was nothing fancy here: an old farm house, a rough pig sty attached to a small barn, a rustic chicken coop, a strawberry patch scratched out of the field, a wee garden which had been developed.

The last I heard from someone who visited the hilltop: the house had burned down, and nature had taken over the ground from which a living once had been forced.

The real lesson here is far beyond fields and hills, farms and homesteads. The point is that there is a similar principle in the spiritual life as well. Notes Tozer: “What is true of the field is true of the soul, if we are but wise enough to see it.”

The bent of the fallen nature is not toward God and godliness, rather the natural bent of sinful men is away from that which is good, noble, and holy.

No matter the heights of grace to which we may attain, we are all subject to temptation, and what is temptation but the effort of the spiritual wilderness to reclaim the newly cleared and regenerated field of our heart?

What are the causes of the overgrown spiritual fields of so many people around us? Perhaps we should ask what are the reasons why your once clean and pure life has been overcome by weeds, vines, and the darkness of the old life? What has contributed to the

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sad spiritual state of so many?

The Bias of Nature: the old nature, never tamed and never cleansed, has an amazing resiliency to creep back in, typically through neglectfulness, forgetfulness, laziness, and for some, an outright abandonment of any pretensions of spiritual life.

Ah, my friend! Check your field. Is it as clean as it one time had been? Do you find creeping vines of worldliness wrapping around your soul? Are the devotional areas of your spiritual life lying fallow, and for too long, so that now wiry grasses and hardened sod have taken over while your Bible lies unused, your spirit lost its attraction to Heaven, and your life is a spiritual shamble?

Note that Dr. Mason comments about our spiritual ground: “. . . a field which he preserves only at the price of constant watchfulness and endless toil.” And while eternal vigilance may seem wearying to us at times, yet when we realize that it is the only way to preserve our spiritual freedom, and keep the encroaching wilderness at bay, it will be seen to be a very worthwhile price to pay.

May God help us in our spiritual lives to keep our fences mended, our buildings repaired, our sod broken up, and the homestead in good order. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Convention Herald*, Sept./Oct. 2010.

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*An excellent, perceptive, and courteous rebuke.* — S&T Editor

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## Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! I trust that the presence of our Lord and Saviour is your joy and peace today.

I was somewhat puzzled by the quote attributed to Seneca on the front cover of the November 2010 *Sword and Trumpet*: “If you would make a man happy, do not add to his possessions but subtract from the sum of his desire.” I don’t mind citing pagan philosophers when they echo Biblical truth, but that is hardly the case here. Seneca, whether he knew it or not, was stating a principle tenet of Buddhism, that is, that the problem with humanity is not sin, but desire. Buddhists consider Nirvana, or Paradise, to be the absence of desire. Nothing could be further from Christianity.

Christianity is about freedom from twisted desire; desire missing the mark. When Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden, they first and foremost were rebelling against the need for a relationship with God and the source of all our desires to be found in God. We crucify the flesh because it has desires apart from God. It goes without saying that possessions can stand in the place of God, but it does not follow then, Biblically, that desire is the problem.

To focus on desire as the problem is to go down the well-worn path of error in asceticism, Cristo-Platonism, and other platonic-derived heresies. The Apostle Paul is almost the picture in his epistles of unbalanced desire for Christ alone, counting all else rubbish. He is the very picture of godly ambition and desire. He warns the Colossians and the Galatians against the false idols of asceticism:

<sup>20</sup>Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—<sup>21</sup>“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,”<sup>22</sup>which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? <sup>23</sup>These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. Colossians 2:20-23 NKJV  
C. S. Lewis perhaps summed it up the best: “It would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased” (*Weight of Glory*).

Grace and peace,  
Stephen S. Weaver  
Strasburg, PA

# THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



## *A Devotional Commentary*



by David L. Burkholder

**FEBRUARY 6, 2011**

### *Thou Art the Christ*

Mark 8:27-9:1

The lessons for February are taken from the Gospel of Mark and focus on Jesus: His identity, His mission, and His return. It will enhance your study to read the entire Book of Mark. It will also be helpful to read parallel passages in the other Gospels. Allow these lessons to give you a fresh view of Jesus and what His life and ministry mean for you in terms of present life and future glory. A deeper appreciation for Jesus' life and ministry will challenge a life of more faithful service from His followers. I trust that will be your experience.

As opposition to Jesus grew and as He moved inexorably toward the culmination of His ministry and attendant death, He sought unfettered time alone with the twelve to instruct them more fully in the meaning of His ministry and kingdom. As events unfolded in this passage it is clear that they did not yet understand fully the concept of His Messiahship. So Jesus moved out of Galilee with His disciples into the area of Caesarea Philippi to be away from the crowds. As was typical of Jesus, He taught with questions.

To clarify the disciples' understanding of His true identity, Jesus asked what they had been hearing from the crowds. The crowds whom Jesus had taught and healed recognized Him only as a great prophet, the likes of John or Elijah. But then Jesus asked them of their opinion. Peter, ever the spokesman, replied with divinely inspired insight, "Thou art the Christ." Jesus then charged them to keep His true identity

quiet. The time had not yet come to declare Himself openly.

With that recognition, however, Jesus began to instruct them more fully regarding the true nature of His mission and that it would eventually result in His death, followed by His triumphant resurrection. This was more than Peter could take and he began to rebuke Jesus for such a suggestion. Jesus, recognizing in Peter's rebuke the temptation to avoid the cross, turned the rebuke back on him.

Jesus went on then to describe the terms upon which one could become His true follower. It was not in giving up things, but in giving up self, of committing oneself without reserve to following Jesus' way regardless of personal cost. The choice was put in stark terms: give up self and gain life, or keep life with its personal pleasures and lose life eternally.

Of what value is man's soul? Jesus asked. The gain of what the world has to offer with the loss of the soul is a poor exchange. The security of the soul cannot be bargained with material gain. While Jesus invites all men to come to Him, He nevertheless makes it abundantly clear that we must come on His terms, denying self to accept Him.

To maintain good standing with Jesus in sinful society, we must boldly and fearlessly proclaim His name and live obediently to His will. He will then claim His faithful ones at His coming. Some feel that 9:1 refers to His Second Coming, but more likely to Pentecost and the beginning of the church of which He had just spoken.

### **For thought and discussion**

1. Jesus healed the sick, opened blind eyes, raised the dead, cast out demons, forgave

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**SWORD AND TRUMPET**

Job #11573  
Signature

- sins. Why did not the people recognize Him as Messiah? Discuss.
2. Even Peter, who recognized Jesus as The Anointed One, could not grasp the full measure of Jesus' ministry. Why? Put yourself in his place as you attempt to answer this.
  3. Why do we so often attempt to appease Jesus by giving up "things"? Why doesn't it work? What does Jesus want? Does He have you?
  4. Some Christians believe wealth is a sign of God's favor or blessing. Is it? Can it be? How must the follower of Jesus view wealth? Discuss.
  5. "Ashamed of Jesus! Sooner far let evening blush to own a star." Allow verse 38 to challenge you to a more faithful and bold witness for Jesus and His marvelous saving grace.

*Lesson emphasis:* To acknowledge Jesus as Messiah and understand the terms of becoming His follower.

*Key verse:* 34

## **FEBRUARY 13, 2011**

### ***Jesus, Son of God***

Mark 9:2-13

Six days after Peter's great confession "Thou art the Christ" he, along with James and John, were privileged to witness a dramatic affirmation of that statement. Jesus had taken His "inner circle" disciples along to the mountain (likely Mt. Hermon) to pray, as Luke informs us. There He was transfigured before them, glowing with and radiating a divine light reminiscent of the Shekinah glory of God. There appeared with Jesus two men of bygone eras, Moses and Elijah, speaking with Him of His impending suffering and death (Luke).

The purpose of this transfiguration event was two-fold. First, it was to affirm to Jesus that He was in the will of God and on the path to accomplish that will. Secondly, it was to affirm to the disciples the truth of Peter's statement that this Jesus was

indeed God's Son, the promised Messiah. Moses and Elijah were there representing the Law and the Prophets, confirming what had been written and spoken centuries before concerning the coming Messiah.

Not only did this encounter encourage Jesus, it provided the foundation for the message of the apostle at Pentecost and beyond. That this experience had a profound impact on the disciples is evidenced by Peter's reference in his later writing (2 Peter 1) to being an eyewitness to Jesus' majesty and hearing the confirming voice of God from Heaven.

In Peter's fear and confusion he proposed establishing booths for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. But this was not intended to be a permanent situation. Immediately following God's voice from Heaven, affirming that Jesus, His Son, now superseded the Law and fulfilled the messages of the prophets, the cloud lifted and they were again alone with Jesus.

As they came down off the mountain, Jesus charged them to keep this experience to themselves, until "the Son of man had risen from the dead." The people were not ready to hear of this event. It would give a false urgency to their desire for a powerful political Messiah-leader. Later, after the death and resurrection of Jesus it would serve as confirmation of His claims and of the validity of the apostles' message. For the moment the disciples were perplexed about what "rising from the dead" should mean. It was beyond their comprehension.

Another thing that perplexed them was the statement of the scribes that Elijah would come before the appearance of Messiah. Here was Messiah; where was Elijah as predicted by the Prophet Malachi? Jesus then explained that "Elijah" had come in the person of John the Baptist (Matthew 17:10-13). John, in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:13-17) had prepared the way for Messiah by preaching repentance and re-direction of life.

However, Jesus said, the people did not all hear and respect John, and his ministry was brought to an untimely end because of

his forthright and outspoken preaching. Jesus said they would do the same to Him. Again, Jesus is preparing the disciples for the tragic events soon to unfold in the culmination of His life and earthly ministry. In the meantime they had much to think about.

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

1. Why did Jesus take only the three disciples along to witness this event? Do their subsequent roles in the life of the early church have bearing here? Discuss.
2. Why Moses and Elijah? How did their significance add to Jesus' understanding of His role in the overall scope of God's plan? Discuss.
3. Jesus was God's Son. He knew of God's plan to redeem man from the foundation of the world. Why did He need this experience and the affirmation it brought? Discuss.
4. Lest we be too quick to fault the disciples' lack of comprehension, remember that they were mere men, steeped in a religious philosophy vastly different from what Jesus was attempting to explain to them. They had a steep learning curve to overcome. Place yourself in their position.
5. Marvel again at the intricately detailed plan of God to bring salvation to mankind, and the role of the various players in the unfolding of that plan. Then thank God again for the privilege of being a recipient of that plan.

*Lesson emphasis:* To confirm our understanding of God's salvation plan, and the role of Jesus and the prophets in bringing that plan to fruition.

*Key verse:* 7

## **FEBRUARY 20, 2011**

### ***Jesus, the Servant***

Mark 10:35-45

"The lust for power is resident in every human heart." We see the truth of that maxim in today's text where James and

John request positions of prominence in Christ's kingdom. Little did they realize the implications of their request or the consequences that would fall to them by their answer of willingness to experience Jesus' "cup." The request of James and John is indicative of their gross misunderstanding of Jesus' mission. Twice in the previous few days Jesus had told His disciples of His coming suffering, death, and resurrection. But their eyes were holden. They were thinking on an entirely different plain.

Perhaps James and John felt they had some right to positions of honor in Jesus' kingdom since they were part of His "inner circle" of disciples. They may also have been cousins of Jesus which could have enhanced their standing with Him. And undoubtedly they were from a well-to-do family, having servants and a thriving fishing enterprise. However, as they were to learn, human achievements do not carry particular weight in Christ's kingdom. He was to turn their thinking on its head.

Jesus gave these two inquirers an out by asking them if they would be willing to share the experiences He was facing, the things of which He had just been instructing them. Their glib answer gave evidence of their failure to grasp what Jesus was talking about. With their positive response, Jesus assured them that they would indeed drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism. James, we know, was subsequently beheaded by Herod for his faith and John suffered banishment to the Isle of Patmos because of his involvement in the ministry of the church.

Regardless of their willingness to suffer for His cause, however, Jesus informed them that the positions of prominence in His kingdom were not His to give, but were at the disposal of His Father.

Understandably, the other ten disciples were indignant over James and John's request. Had they not also accompanied Jesus and been a vital part of His ministry? No doubt they each had their per-

sonal desires for prominence in Jesus' kingdom. As Erdman says: "We are commonly tempted to be most indignant at those faults in others of which we ourselves are guilty."

Jesus then gave the disciples a lesson in greatness, worldly greatness versus heavenly-kingdom greatness. The world, Jesus said, associates greatness with power—power over people, power to do one's bidding. Heavenly greatness, by contrast, is achieved through humbling oneself to serve others. "Service is the law of greatness in the Kingdom of Christ" (Erdman). "Do you want prominence?" Jesus asks. Then, become a servant to man.

Jesus ends His lesson on greatness by stating that even He, the Son of man, did not come to be ministered to, but to minister to others and in a supreme act of servanthood, give His life to ransom mankind from the slavery of sin. That indeed is true greatness, greatness achieved through giving of oneself for the good of others. Therein Jesus is our perfect model.

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

1. What does James and John's request show us about basic human nature?
2. What does Jesus' response tell us about His character?
3. In various New Testament Scriptures we are encouraged to consider carefully the cost of discipleship. Does that mean that at times we should not accept, or what? Why is counting the cost so important? Discuss.
4. This text provides a good lesson in human relationships. What is the Christian response to those who are given more prominent positions than we? What is the law of greatness in Christ's kingdom?
5. Something good to discuss: What do we lose by giving up selfish ambition to serve Christ? What do we gain?

*Lesson emphasis:* True greatness comes through humble service to others.

*Key verse:* 45

## **FEBRUARY 27, 2011**

### ***The Coming of the Son of Man***

Mark 13:14-27, 31

Commentators agree that the events described in this chapter refer to two distinct happenings, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Titus in AD 70, and the end of the age ushering in Jesus' return. Clearly the word pictures shift back and forth between the more immediate future event and the remote future event. The description of some events seems to have a dual fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem and Jesus' Second Coming. There is one overriding theme, however, which is not included in our text. That is the implication to be alert, be ready. We are long past the destruction of Jerusalem; the Parousia is imminent.

This Olivet Discourse (v. 3) took place in the last week of Jesus' life. He was moving determinedly toward the end of His ministry, with the cross staring Him in the face. And still He taught and instructed His disciples. We've seen in previous lessons that they were still largely uncomprehending of near-term events and the specter of death which hung over their Master. Jesus' concern at this point was more for them than for Himself.

Verse 14 most likely refers to some human desecration of the temple and destruction of the city, therefore the injunction to flee for safety to the mountains. They were to make haste, making no delays to retrieve clothing or other personal goods. This would be an especially difficult time for mothers with small children. This would be a time of unparalleled persecution of God's people. But He would protect His children from prolonged trouble.

Verses 21-23 reiterate the warnings in verses 5 and 6. The warning is to be alert in the midst of turmoil against false Christs, those claiming special powers and attempting to seduce the true Christ's followers. Deception will be part of the unrest of the times. There was deep need for the confidence and security found only in the true Christ. This admonition would seem to apply equally to the siege of Jerusalem as well as

the turmoil preceding Christ's return.

Verses 24-27 most assuredly refer to end-time events, disturbances in the heavens immediately preceding and perhaps accompanying Christ's return (see also 2 Peter 3:10). Christ will come with great power and glory. Then His name will be vindicated. Then He and His saints will exult in victory. Then will be fulfilled Jesus' own words and the words of the prophets concerning Him. It will be a great cataclysmic event, the one toward which all history has been moving.

That day will be a day of great separation. The angels of God will gather God's elect children from the four corners of the earth. Other Scriptures tell us the fate of those who despised and refused God's call to salvation.

The remainder of the chapter is a call still current to be alert, be prepared, be ready. No one knows the time, but it is certain and our responsibility is to be ready momentarily for that great event. Barclay says: "We live in the shadow of eternity. That is no reason for fearful and hysterical expectation. But it means that day by day our work must be completed. It means that we must so live that it does not

matter when he comes. It gives us the great task of making every day fit for him to see and being at any moment ready to meet him face to face."

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

1. Some understanding of the historical events mentioned here will give you a better understanding of Jesus' words of warning and instruction.
2. What danger do we still face in our day from false Christs? What are their ploys? How can we best be alert and fortified against them? Discuss.
3. Something to ponder: Why have God's people always been misunderstood and persecuted?
4. The last verse of our lesson text, verse 31, reminds us of the complete truthfulness of what God has revealed to us through His Son and through His Word. Take it seriously.
5. Jesus is coming again. Are you ready?

*Lesson emphasis:* The need for continual alertness and preparation for Christ's return.

*Key verse:* 31 ■

### **Book Review . . . cont'd. from page 37**

homemaking. (I would add here that although feminism may not have affected the Anabaptist world to quite the extent that we see in society around us, it has had an impact in ways that we may not realize. Mrs. Mahaney's exhortation to make the home a priority is not only correction for the straying but preventive medicine for those who are finding feminist ideas fitting into their mindset. We need to hear this.)

Kindness is the topic of the next chapter. Several hindrances to kindness, along with their Scriptural solutions, are discussed. Kindness/goodness is defined in practical ways which include prayer for our families, listening well, and being an encourager. We must be calculating, or intentional, in our pursuit of goodness, or it will not happen.

"The Beauty of Submission" explores the origin of this principle and God's intention for it. We are asked to take an honest look at excuses and "exceptions." The chapter is sprinkled with helpful illustrations from the Bible, history, modern times, and Mrs. Mahaney's own experience. She also gives suggestions for further research on the sub-

ject, and closes the book with the story of her mother—a contemporary illustration of the seven virtues presented.

I found this book encouraging, stimulating, and convicting. Mrs. Mahaney's interpretation and applications of Scriptural principles are practically helpful, sound, and defensible. There is one exception in a passing reference she makes to the "Biblical exceptions for divorce" in Matthew 5:22 and 19:9. Her understanding of these passages reflects the widespread belief that, under certain circumstances, divorce and even remarriage are permissible. This is not the Anabaptist position. However, I would reiterate that this concept is only briefly alluded to in a section of teaching that is otherwise sound. I do not feel that it compromises the integrity and value of the book, and I would highly recommend it for individual or group study. (At the end of the book are group study questions for each chapter. I was particularly impressed with the questions; instead of being mere mindless review of the material, they are thoughtfully put together in a way that will enhance understanding, retention, and group interaction.) ■

# 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

## Chile: Bible Study Underground

*Wikipedia* writes, “On 5 August 2010, a cave-in occurred at the San José copper-gold mine in the Atacama Desert near Copiapó, Chile. The accident left 33 men trapped 2,300 feet below ground. The miners survived underground for a record 69 days. All 33 were rescued and brought to the surface on 13 October 2010.”

*Joel News International* relates the story of a rescue worker who sent Bibles and audio players with Scripture and Christian music to the miners. *JNI* writes, “Three of the 33 trapped miners were evangelical Christians. One of them, José Henríquez, has been leading Bible studies each evening. As a fruit of that, two other miners made professions of faith.

“After reaching the surface, several miners knelt to pray and thank God for their rescue.”

—Excerpts from “2010 Copiapó mining accident” in *Wikipedia* and Vol. 749 from *Joel News International* ([JoelNews.org](http://JoelNews.org))

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## The IRS and Tax-Exempt Status

A hawkish Jewish group (Z Street) is being investigated by the IRS to determine whether they deserve their tax-exempt non-profit status. Since this group is supplying weapons to Israeli settlers, you won’t find me defending them; however, the basis that the IRS is using to try to decide their non-profit status is very worrisome and would instantly deny any Christian organization non-profit status.

*Politico* writes, “A Pennsylvania Jewish group, that has claimed the Internal Revenue Service is targeting pro-Israel groups, introduced in federal court today a letter from an IRS agent to another, unnamed organization that tax experts said was likely outside the usual or appropriate

scope of an IRS inquiry.

“‘Does your organization support the existence of the land of Israel?’ IRS agent Tracy Dornette wrote the organization . . . as part of its consideration of the organization’s application for tax-exempt status. ‘Describe your organization’s religious belief system toward the land of Israel.’

“Z Street claims that an . . . IRS agent . . . said the agency is ‘carefully scrutinizing organizations that are in any way connected with Israel’ and that ‘a special unit’ is determining whether its activities ‘contradict the Administration’s public policies.’

“The IRS can deny tax-exempt status to groups that work against ‘established public policy,’ a precedent established in its denial of a tax exemption to Bob Jones University over racial discrimination, and Z Street is suggesting that the IRS has begun applying some such policy to pro-Israel groups.

So basically if a Christian organization engages in any activities that “contradict the [Obama] Administration’s public policies,” their tax-exempt status is in danger. This is worrisome because the Obama Administration’s policies are pro-abortion and pro-homosexual, a public policy that any Bible-believing, Bible-preaching church would contradict.

—Includes excerpts from “IRS to Jewish group: ‘Does your organization support the existence of the land of Israel?’” (<http://j.mp/IRS-501c>) in *Politico*

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## Wikileaks Releases Classified Diplomatic Cables

U. S. Army Pfc. Bradley Manning, a homosexual intelligence analyst who was stationed in Iraq, is preparing to stand court martial for leaking hundreds of thousands of classified documents to the website Wikileaks. Wikileaks (led by pale, eccentric,

Australian [but Swedish-based] hacker Julian Assange) is in the process of leaking hundreds of thousands of classified diplomatic cables sent between the U. S. State Department and embassies around the world. The Swedish government has posted a warrant for Julian Assange's arrest on rape charges and has issued an Interpol alert; he's been placed on Interpol's most-wanted list. Australia, where he holds a passport, is seeking a way to revoke his passport. The U. S. Justice Department is investigating what charges to bring. Here are a few of the important revelations learned through this leak:

The *New York Times* writes about Afghani corruption, "When Afghanistan's vice president visited the United Arab Emirates last year, local authorities working with the Drug Enforcement Administration discovered that he was carrying \$52 million in cash. With wry understatement, a cable from the American Embassy in Kabul called the money 'a significant amount' that the official, Ahmed Zia Massoud, 'was ultimately allowed to keep without revealing the money's origin or destination.' [...] [Another cable from Kabul writes,] 'While we must deal with [President Karzai] as the head of the Provincial Council, he is widely understood to be corrupt and a narcotics trafficker.' [...] Mr. Karzai 'demonstrated that he will dissemble when it suits his needs,' the cable said. 'He appears not to understand the level of our knowledge of his activities. We will need to monitor his activity closely, and deliver a recurring, transparent message to him' about the limits of American tolerance."

In other cables, German Chancellor Angela Merkel was described as risk-averse and uncreative. Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was described as "wreckless, vain, and ineffective as a modern leader."

—Sources: *New York Times*, *Wikipedia*

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### North Korea Attacks

While South Korea was performing military exercises on the South Korean side of the UN dividing line, North Korea launched a pre-meditated artillery strike on a South Korean island killing four (two Marines and

two civilians) and injuring nineteen. Kim Jong-Il, dictator of North Korea, along with his son who is in line to succeed him, visited the artillery installation shortly before the attack. It is believed he did this in order to bolster his son's prestige to secure his succession.

In related news, one of those leaked cables (mentioned in previous item) quotes a highly-ranked Chinese government official as telling a U.S. diplomat in confidence that North Korea is behaving like a "spoiled child" and that China is ready to accept Korean reunification under South Korean leadership.

—Sources: *Reuters*, *The Korea Herald*, *Wikipedia*

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### Drugs and Demons

I've been made aware recently of the possible strong links between drug use and demonic, anti-God influence. Mervin Wagler (new-order Amish), a former drug addict, spoke at our church recently and talked about how whenever he was high on drugs, he seemed to enter a palpable realm of evil and demons. Only a few weeks later, I read an article in *Scientific American* entitled "Hallucinogens as Medicine." It's written from a secular perspective (without even considering a religious audience) and is thus very frank because there is no agenda to hide or exaggerate negative spiritual implications.

The article is written in part by a researcher who is trying to garner acceptance for hallucinogenic drugs as a form of psychotherapy, on the basis of his study. The article begins by describing a fifty-year-old lady who takes part in the author's Johns Hopkins study: a test subject named Lundahl took two blue capsules which contain "psilocybin, the principal constituent of 'magic' mushrooms [an illegal drug], which, like LSD and mescaline, produces changes in mood and perception yet only very rarely actual hallucinations. At the end of the session, when the psilocybin effects had dissipated, Lundahl, who had never before taken a hallucinogen, completed more questionnaires. Her responses indicated . . . she had gone through a profound mystical-like experience similar to those reported by spiritual seekers in many cultures and across the ages—one characterized by a sense of interconnectedness with all people and things,

accompanied by the feeling of transcending time and space, and of sacredness and joy.

“At a follow-up visit more than a year later, she said she continued to think about the experience every day and—most remarkably—that she regarded it as the most personally meaningful and spiritually significant event of her life. She felt it had brought on positive changes in her moods, attitudes, and behaviors, as well as a noticeable increase in overall life satisfaction. ‘It seems like the experience triggered a quickening of my spiritual unfolding or development,’ she wrote. ‘Ripples of insight still occur. . . . More and more I’m able to perceive people as having the light of the divine flowing through them.’

Another participant wrote, “The sense that all is One, that I experienced the essence of the universe and the knowing that God asks nothing of us except to receive love.”

The article goes on to say, “. . . a third of the participants experienced some period of significant fear and about a fifth felt paranoia sometime during the session. But in the supportive, homelike setting provided by the research center and with the constant presence of trained guides, the Johns Hopkins participants encountered no lasting ill effects.”

User *Lotusface* commented on the online version of the article saying, “Being in a calm atmosphere such as where one would meditate facilitates a calm experience, and having an experienced person is of great importance as well to guide. I would say my few experiences have added a sense of being part of a larger spiritual whole, an amazement at creation and my part in all of it. I like that feeling, I could say that I have lost any need for an omnipotent ‘God’ in order to feel that connection to the universe.”

All of this sounds very pantheistic. We’ve all heard a lot about the health dangers and behavior dangers of illegal drugs, but this is the first time I’ve really considered the spiritual dangers.

—Excerpts from “Hallucinogens as Medicine” (<http://j.mp/HallucinogensMeds>) in *Scientific American*

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## News Snippets

San Francisco has banned giving out toys with unhealthy kids’ meals, targeting Happy Meals. —Reuters

Australian carrier Qantas grounded its Airbus A380 fleet after one of their engines exploded and burst into flames mid-air. Rolls-Royce, the maker of the engine, has identified the problem. —Bloomberg

Democratic strategists are advising the Obama White House to hire lots of lawyers in preparation for the many expected Congressional investigations by the new Republican-majority House of Representatives. —The Hill

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 20% of American adults had some form of mental illness in 2009 (4.8% had serious illness). 18- to 25-year-olds were at 30% and those over 50 were at 13.7%. —CNBC

Indians were amazed to see U. S. Army engineers erect (in one hour) a kilometer-long 12’ x 12’ blast-proof above-ground tunnel in Mumbai for President Obama’s motorcade to pass through a heavily populated area that the Secret Service judged difficult to secure. —DNA India

Taxpayers footed the bill for \$9 million worth of cosmetic surgeries in 2009 for Buffalo, NY teachers under their taxpayer-funded healthcare plan. —FOX New York

A Sri Lankan man was arrested after Indian police received a tip and they noticed his inability to sit comfortably. They discovered \$350-\$650K of diamonds in his stomach. He was paid \$221 for the job. Swallowing items to smuggle is an increasingly common practice. Couriers smuggling drugs often die when the plastic holding drugs bursts in their stomach, resulting in massive overdose. —Times of India

Private investigators do a brisk business for political candidates. Some of their business is investigating opponents to try to find damaging material, but a lot of it is candidates hiring PIs to investigate themselves to see how much of their past is able to be found. Often campaigns hire a law firm to hire a PI to make so mandatory public disclosures of spending does not reveal the hire. It also extends the legal confidentiality provisions of attorney-client privilege to the whole relationship. —AP

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# Still Don't Get It? Look Up!

by Dick York

Journalist Mark Halperin, writing in *Time* magazine February 8, 2010, suggests that “to get back on track Obama should borrow from the playbook of Ronald Reagan.” That statement indicates that Halperin believes that Obama’s objectives are somehow similar to Reagan’s. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. Reagan’s object was to preserve the constitutional republic and the conservative principles that contributed to the freedom and greatness of this nation. Obama’s is diametrically opposed.

There is every indication that what Reagan loved Obama hates. Obama favors the dismantling of America and the promotion of Marxist socialism for the globalization of a one-world economy. Unlike Marxism, however, Obama, according to his family history, will probably favor Islam over atheism.

It seems there are those who still “don’t get it.” They are under the illusion, along with Mark Halperin, that our president has the well-being of the American people uppermost on his agenda. They have not yet recognized that the philosophy against which America has contended since WWI has, through public education and other forms of propaganda, prevailed and the fox has been given charge of the henhouse. The agenda is obviously not to advance this nation as a republic in the tradition of its past, but rather to destroy that vision and subject it to the global agenda of the one-world government long prophesied in the Scriptures (Revelation 13:1-9).

None of this has transpired without the Lord’s knowledge or intervention. His objective is neither a republic nor a socialist state but a kingdom, over which Jesus Himself rules. But first, all that has been prophesied must be fulfilled.

Over the course of centuries, many leaders and prominent men have been identified as the antichrist, only to pass off the scene and sink into obscurity while the world seemingly recovered from their evil influence. But, in fact, the world did not totally recover. Each one has left an indelible impression, moving the U.S. ever nearer to its demise and the world closer to globalization. Throughout the centuries, many have been labeled “antichrist.” There have been the Caesars, the Napoleons, the popes, Hitler, Roosevelt, and many others who have raised the antenna of seemingly “paranoid” Christians, and usually with some good reason. It may have been their doctrine, their political ambition, their agenda, or perhaps their sudden and extraordinary rise to places of influence and the radical effect thereof, but each of them appeared at a time in history out of context with the circumstances that, prophetically, would accompany the rise of the man of sin. No doubt it is possible that this man also, regardless of the apparently conducive world conditions, will pass from the scene without fulfilling the role of the antichrist. Whether or not that proves to be true, the church—especially here in America—should be paying attention to the signs of the times.

It is abundantly clear that being on the right side politically, no matter how dedicated, sincere, and activated one might be, has little to do with keeping our country on track. When it is God’s time to judge a nation, He does so by allowing the basest of men to rule over it.

Although the Bible has much instruction about how the Christian life should be lived in this present world, its main theme is the unfolding of God’s eternal purpose. Starting out with Creation, it unfolds history

segment by segment, climaxing in the coming of the Lord Jesus to set up His kingdom, the end of the world, and finally the new heaven and earth.

Within the church today, we have a tendency to give lip service to such weighty and important matters as Heaven, the coming of the Lord Jesus, and things eternal, while majoring on the temporal things of this world, like political freedom, health, wealth, security, and success—all of which will soon be non-issues—as though the Gospel were designed to give us the good life here and now. It seems difficult for many of us to make the connection between what the Bible says will transpire with what is currently going on around us. If we do notice the similarity, we are inclined to think that we would be considered naive to suggest that what we are noticing is related to the fulfillment of prophesied events that most would think are still in the distant future (and according to some, may never happen at all). We would rather be unprepared when the time comes than be considered unsophisticated now. But perhaps we should be paying attention.

Jesus said, “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28). Besides “these things,” which include earthquakes, wars, and natural phenomena, which seem to be increasingly prevalent, of late we have seen tsunamis and earthquakes, hurricanes and tornadoes, floods, oil spills, and other disasters on an almost daily basis, and of increasing intensity. Is it mere coincidence that these multiplied natural phenomena are concurrent with an economic crunch that has brought the U.S. to its knees, reducing it from the greatest economic power to one of the most indebted nations in history? Is it furthermore coincidental that “The Great Satan,” as America is known to its Muslim

detractors, has begun to fall before the Jihadists who took down the World Trade Center and are now about to erect a mosque where the towers once stood? Is it possible that there is nothing of significance in that plan? That seems very unlikely. The fall of the towers was a microcosm of what they represented. When they were hit, they seemed for a short time to have absorbed the impact; but then the buildings began to crumble, one floor at a time, until they collapsed into a pile of rubble. Once they began to fall, they fell.

Not coincidentally, while all of this has been developing in the natural world and on the political stage, similar things have been threatening the health of the church. The attack has been subtle, sustained, and venomous, but should not be unexpected if one has been reading and believing what has long been a part of New Testament prophecy. Two things are to precede the coming of the Lord Jesus to gather the

saints to Himself: 1) There is to be a great falling away; and 2) The man of sin is to be revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4).

The great falling away is obviously in progress, but to many, ironically, it may seem like the end-time revival that many Christians have been taught to expect. Certain mega-churches are burgeoning with new adherents and growing in popularity; new movements are “breathing fresh life” into churches by adapting their message to the perceived needs of the community in which they locate. By changing their appearance and their vocabulary, they are making themselves more acceptable to the nonreligious world that they are trying to reach and to which they are trying to conform, all of which may seem reasonable, logical, and effective until one weighs it against Scripture and inspects the fruit of it all.

The Gospel is not primarily a remedy for social ills or a conservative response to political travesty. It is a message of redemp-

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The Gospel is not primarily a remedy for social ills or a conservative response to political travesty; it is a message of redemption—a message rejected by the world, as was the Christ who commissioned it, and embraced only those who have seen themselves as the offenders of a holy and righteous Creator.

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tion—a message rejected by the world, as was the Christ who commissioned it, and embraced only by those who have seen themselves as the offenders of a holy and righteous Creator. The Gospel has nothing to do with entertaining the flesh or relieving the sinner of circumstances that his sin has induced. It has everything to do with declaring the holiness of God, the depravity of the human condition, and of the awful price that Jesus paid to reconcile fallen sinners to an impeccable God. It is a message to sober the frivolous, to humble the proud, to awaken the indifferent and careless ones; a message to break the blasphemer, silence the scoffer, and to cause the sinner to repent. It is a message to prepare new creatures for Heaven, not to rehabilitate sinners to live more comfortably on the earth or more prosperously in this world. The people of God are not to be circumstantially motivated or opportunistically directed or purpose driven—they are to be Spirit led.

It is for this reason that God gave us the timepiece of Biblical prophecy: so that we would know where we are in history. Do we, then, have a crystal ball by which we can prognosticate? No. What we do have is a reliable indicator reminding us that time is short. Satan knows it, and, if we are paying attention, we should know it also. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because they could read the signs of the sky and forecast the weather, but they could not see the signs of the times. Let us not be deserving of the same rebuke.

Look at the unfolding history. Look at the earthly phenomena. Look at the condition of the church: at the commentary of Scripture: then look up, because your redemption draws nigh! We are not looking for a restoration of our republic—that would be nice, but it would be temporary—we are looking for a greater hope than that, as were our fathers in the faith (Hebrews 11:13-16):

*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had*

*been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*

Let us also see the promises, now no longer afar off and much brighter by far than any hope we may have thought we have here. Let us be persuaded of them, and embrace them, and confess daily that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and let us declare plainly that we seek a country, and we look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

We are not trusting any man's agenda to be "on track." We are trusting the sure promises of an almighty God who cannot lie to fulfill His prophecies as well as His promises. *The kingdom of God is at hand!* ■

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#### SARAH EDWARDS . . . cont'd. from p. 1

In 1741, when Sarah was 31, the family went through a stressful time due to the fact that Jonathan was involved in the Great Awakening, a spiritual revival in the colonies, which caused him to be away some due to traveling and preaching. Secondly, it was also a time of financial stress as money was tight. Thirdly, Sarah was also experiencing stresses of her own. The next year, 1742, Sarah experienced a two-week time of soul searching where God revealed to her some of the things that were in her heart and made His grace more real than ever before. She was an even more godly person afterward.

The later years of Sarah's life were filled with trials, challenges, and tragedies but because of God's grace in her life she took them all in stride.

Sadly, Sarah Edwards was overtaken by dysentery and died at the age of 49 on October 2, 1758. Sarah's closing remarks revealed her desire that God would also receive the glory through her death as she had desired He would through her life.

—Gail L. Emerson



## 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 E-mail to: Editor, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803; [swandtrump@verizon.net](mailto:swandtrump@verizon.net).

### “The Indestructible Church”

by Dr. William R. Rice (1920-2010)

“Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” – Matthew 16:18

Some things are truly indestructible; some are not. For example:

#### **A. This World Is Not Indestructible!**

*Nations* are not indestructible. Our own times have revealed as well as any in history how unstable nations can be. As a result of two great world wars, we have witnessed nearly a complete revamping of the nations of the European continent. In our generation, we have seen the fall of the once mighty British Empire and the new nation of Israel carved out of the Arabian world. We have seen other nations, large and small, disintegrate in a matter of days.

*Governments* are not indestructible. There was a time when the average national leader could anticipate at least a short rule. Today, governments emerge and fall in hours. National leaders are afraid to venture outside their countries for fear of being deposed. When heads of government take trips abroad they publicize the supposed stability of that nation.

*Homes* are not indestructible. This generation has seen the destruction of the American home. Our fathers were aghast at divorce. Children shunned broken homes as the plague. Today, we don’t lift an eyebrow when some family breaks up. “Two

wives”—or “ten wives”—our attitude evokes a “So what?”

*Lives* are not indestructible. Suicides are on the increase. It is part of the American scene. Four thousand and seventy-eight men and women age 65 and over; 14,674 aged 25 to 64; 1,084 of college age; 652 of high school age; 92 aged 14 and under committed suicide in 1964, the last year for which detailed statistics are complete. [*This was written in 1967, but we doubt any improvement has been made.* –Editor.] Yet it is generally believed that only half are reported. In addition, it is estimated that suicide attempts may be one hundred times these figures! Think of it—the estimates on attempted suicides given by some authorities are 200,000 college-age young people, 130,000 high schoolers and 18,000 under 14 in one year in this country (*Saturday Evening Post*, June 17, 1967).

What is indestructible? Certainly nothing in this life on a political, social, or personal plane.

#### **B. The Believer Has Found the Invincible!**

The believer, alone, has discovered the indestructible.

God is indestructible. God is unchange-

able. He is the “same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). He is infinite and complete. He is unfailingly available to every man or woman who will put his or her trust in Him.

*The Word* is indestructible. All sorts of fantastic attacks have been mounted against God’s Word. It has been condemned, derided, burned. The prophecy for centuries has been that it will not outlive another generation, yet it is the most sought-after book in the world. Its sales for years have exceeded those of any other piece of literature. It is God’s infallible Word!

*The Church* is indestructible. The church is God’s plan for this age. He has revealed the creation of that church as His principal task until Jesus returns. “I will build my church” is His promise, “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” The true church IS indestructible.

#### I. BY SELECTION: “I will . . .”

The indestructible God has brought this church into existence. He will have His way in it.

##### A. Grace

1. He determined, “I will build my church . . .” This includes predestination, foreordination, and election. That God determined to bring into existence His church is a demonstration of His marvelous grace. Paul described the condition of all men in their natural state as being “dead in trespasses and sins,” “without hope,” “without God,” “afar off.” In that state, they “walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air . . .” (Ephesians 2:2). Only God knows the full implication of these statements.

That He planned to coin out of such rubble and refuse a bride for Himself is the most marvelous evidence of that grace. In all the centuries, He could find nothing in man that would make Him lift a finger to save one soul and create such a church.

Man has always had an evil heart, thought evil thoughts, and been guilty of evil deeds (Romans 3:9-19). Only one man ever walked this earth faithful to God. This

man was Jesus Christ, God’s own Son. How could He determine to build such a church? Pure, unadulterated grace alone could do it. “I will . . .,” He said.

Whatever He plans for that church will be carried out. The world will not deter it: Communism cannot frustrate it; the organized church cannot defeat it; liberalism cannot prevent it; the demons cannot deter it. He determined in His grace, “I will build my church . . .” *And He will!*

2. He provides.

a. The Necessary. Divine selection required that He provide for that church. It has been His habit to provide for His creation. In grace, He provided an ark for Noah, the promised land for the people of Israel, Abraham for Lot, and Isaac for Abraham. In grace, He provided all the things necessary for the church. He arranged the means whereby it could be a church. Through the centuries, He has been calling men that He might insert them into His church. He said, “I will.” *He does!* His people may depend on that grace to carry them through every necessary step of life.

b. The Best. He provides the very best. Holiness, love, joy, peace are not achieved by ingenuity or struggle. The nature of God conveyed to His people through the activity of the Holy Spirit in our lives meets every need from salvation to the grave. God is able (cf. Ephesians 3:16-20). In order that His people might have the best, He has provided His Spirit and the Word of God as well as all the complex experiences of life. How else could Paul say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3)?

Having designed the church by grace, the Master Architect then arranged what was necessary and best for that church through grace. However, this could only be achieved through His government of the creature of His grace.

##### B. Domination

“I will build. . . .” emphasizes that He would control that which He brought into existence by His grace and for which He pro-

vides in grace. It has always been the plan of God to control that which He has created.

1. His Intention. Originally, He created the world. That perfect creation should have assured God's continual rule. Incredibly, man permitted a foreign spirit to be injected into that perfection. Another king managed to insert his rebellious rule into the perfect kingdom. God's reaction was to curse all He had created—the face of the earth, the plants, the fish and the animals. How could man ever question the importance of God's holy dominion again? The curse upon all things should have restored him to the control of God and insured His eternal loyalty.

But wicked man has never permitted God to have His way. He has continually insisted on directing his own affairs. Is it any surprise to discover the mess he has made out of his history?

In pursuing his independence, he has substituted human government for God's government. He has experimented with every conceivable form of government. None has endured; none has fitted his need; none has fulfilled his dreams.

2. His Rule. There are no perfect forms of human government. The only right form of government is a THEOCRACY, the rule of God. Because the world will not recognize this, its problems are unsolved. Even peace is denied the world during this age. Until Jesus comes and forcibly establishes His rule during the Millennium, there will be no peace.

Peace is promised—but not until Jesus returns. It will be the certain issue of His reign. He, alone, can correct the world's problems. He will change its people by restoring the world to its rightful ruler.

3. His Lordship. The plan of God is for Jesus Christ to be Lord of the church. When that plan is neglected, frustrated, denied, He is limited by human hands. *"I will build my church."* But to do it effectively, it is necessary that the church accept His control.

What are the problems in the church of Jesus Christ? There are pastor problems, congregational problems, board problems, and Sunday school problems. There are Bible problems and prayer problems. There are

witnessing problems and work problems. *What is the answer?* It is not in new buildings, in organizations, or preaching. The answer is single—the Lordship of Christ.

What preacher has not observed in his ministry the astounding change in lives where Jesus Christ becomes absolute Lord? What church has not experienced refreshing from Heaven when Jesus' Lordship became the obsession of that church? Who can conceive of the potential inherent in the true church, even in these last days, if it would but bow the knee to the absolute authority of the Son of God?

Admit the Lordship of Christ and live! Deny it and die! *Solve our problems?* Only if He dominates us! *Retain our unity?* Only if He dominates us! *Reach the world in our generation?* Only if He dominates us! *Stand before Him with clean hands?* Only if He dominates us! *Stand before Him with pure hearts?* Only if He dominates us!

*"I will build . . ."* But how can He until we permit Him?

If God selected the church by grace and provided for it in grace, it cannot fail. If He controls that which He created, why faint? Its success is as sure as the God who made it and the Christ who died for it. It is the indestructible church. *"I will build . . ."*

## II. BY CONSTRUCTION: "Build"

Many things can be said about this age in which we live. It has been called a "speed age," a "space age," a "literate age," an "age of the people." But possibly that on which we pride ourselves most is that this is "the age of building." We build empires, governments, military powers, financial institutions, educational complexes, airways, communication systems, space capsules, satellites, and a "great society." My, we are proud of our achievements!

But the Master Builder is God Himself. He is building the ultimate—the church.

### A. Foundation

Consider its construction.

1. Its Purchase. Its foundation was provided at terrible cost. We are in the process

of building a high school building. The first step we have taken has been to raise the necessary funds. No money, no building! With all the power of the Master Builder, nothing could be done about the foundation of the church until an adequate price was paid. An infinite sum was required. Only then could a foundation be provided.

There was one price for each and every soul within that church. Only one person has been able to pay it. That person was the Son of God. When He paid for it, it was paid in full. His was the full and final means whereby arrangements were made for the building of the church (Ephesians 2:14-18).

2. Its Person. The foundation of the church is a Person. That person is Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11). He is the only adequate and lasting foundation. When Jesus said, "I will build my church . . .," He meant He would build it upon Himself and no other.

The church is not a computer, an organization, or a system. It is built of "living stones" upon the solid rock, the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What supreme provision God made when He arranged for that church! The very heart and soul of that building proved to be Jesus.

### ***B. Superstructure (Ephesians 2:21)***

1. Materials. God describes the church as a building that "fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:21). Each child of God becomes, through faith in Christ, a part of that building. He is built into that structure through Jesus Christ Himself.

a. Different Members. Within that structure God has placed many kinds of materials (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). He has fitted each of us with our own personalities—and large and small talents—to carry out our part in the building.

The world's progress is measured these days in terms of "whiz kids." Russia and the United States vied for German scientists at the end of World War II. The reason was obvious. The future was geared to "brains."

National catastrophe is often prophesied

when there is a "brain drain." National leaders are widely exhorted by press and people: "*stop the brain drain or we perish!*"

God is not dependent on such human idiosyncrasies. All He needs is people. He will do the rest.

Some Christians find themselves deeply concerned about their lack of talent. "What good am I?" they ask. God has need of us the way we are. One of the giant errors we make—preachers and lay people—is trying to copy someone else. God wants you as you are. If He didn't, He would have made you like your friend or like the person you admire. God likes your looks the way you are. You are His special creation. What problems would He have solved, what peace would come if we accepted that in all of its beautiful simplicity.

There are many areas of service God's people cannot fill. But there are others only they can. There are yet other points of service for all. For example, all of us can be used with our varied talents in the major fields of witnessing.

The very people whom it seems fit to use in the most important field of witnessing often appear inadequate. I remember a family telling me of a couple who visited their home. They expressed appreciation that they came to church that past Sunday and then seemed unable to talk further. As they put it, they simply "sat" for twenty minutes and then got up and invited them to church the next Sunday.

The next visitation night this couple came again and went through the same formula. The following week they did it again. This time they said, "We will have to go to church this Sunday to keep that couple away."

They came. The whole family got saved! Later they testified they could have rejected any approach but that of this particular family. Don't you think God knew what He was doing when He created us?

A body has many members. There is the foot, the hand, the eye, and the nose.

b. Different Function. Each has an entirely different function or task. The foot moves us about. The hand grasps, holds,

and helps us attain our objectives. The eye is to see. The nose is to breathe and smell. Each part of the body has a completely different function: such as moving, grasping, holding, seeing, and smelling.

Imagine the hand trying to hear, or the eye to smell, the foot trying to breathe, or the nose to see! They are invaluable to us only as they perform their God-given task (1 Corinthians 12:18a). Evidently God wants us to understand that within the body He has created different types of persons to carry out the tasks which He has assigned and without which the body could not perform its God-given function.

Certainly, there is room for diversity in the cause of the Lord. Elijah and Elisha are excellent examples of this. Elisha was the protege of Elijah. But how different those two men! Elijah was a “loner” who lived in the hills, the caves, rested beside the brook, or sat under the Juniper tree all alone. When men looked for him, they combed the mountains. When he had some task to perform, he came down from the “top of the mountain.” When God gave him a job to do, he would come out of those hills like a storm, pass judgment on some king, perform some highly sensational miracle, and go back to his beloved hills to live alone.

When soldiers came to get him from the top of the mountain, they said, “Come down, man of God.” His reaction was, “If I am a man of God I will kill you.” When he sought to prove to the nation of Israel that God was the true and living God, he called the priests of Baal together, set up an altar and challenged them to have the sacrifice on the altar miraculously consumed. When they cried unto their gods all day long, he made fun of them, asked if their god was asleep, out of town, had turned off his hearing aid, or was on a hunt. Their reaction was complete frustration—cutting themselves until the blood flowed freely. Then he prayed to the Living God and God consumed the sacrifice, the altar, the ground about, and the very rocks. He was a fierce, lonely, powerful prophet of God. In death, he was a sensation. Chariot and horses of

fire descending from Heaven; he was caught up in a whirlwind.

Elisha was a different man. He was gregarious—a man who liked to be with people. One did not find him in the hills. He lived in a prophet’s chamber in a friend’s house. He was a teacher in a school of prophets. He was a healer of men’s bodies who performed miracles involving the simplest things in life—purifying water, providing water and food. He was gentle and kind. Both men were men of God. They illustrate the different personalities in the body.

Then there were Paul and Peter. Where will you find two more different men? Paul had been called to preach to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews. As such, they carried out the tasks which God had assigned (cf. Ephesians 4:11-14).

Within the body of Christ are all kinds of personalities who are given various jobs fitting their personalities and abilities. Some of these services are the same. We are all to preach the Gospel. We are all to help other Christians. There is none of this business of “some can talk about Christ and some can’t.” *It is for all of us!* The way in which we carry it out may not be the way others perform it. But make no mistake about it—we *are* to carry it out.

There are a multitude of other tasks which we, as different personalities and possessors of different abilities, are to perform. We approach them differently, perform them differently, but they all bear upon the most important of all tasks—the preaching of the Gospel and the exaltation of Christ in our lives.

*“The eye cannot say to the hand . . .”* (1 Cor. 12:21). Every member of that body is vitally needed; God says *you* are! Some Christians ask the question, “Can I be used? Will the Lord commend my service?” Take heart, my friend, here is the answer.

Let us go one step further. From this passage, it is evident that less attractive members are necessary (v. 22). It is plainly stated they are less attractive. But we have discovered that sometimes the least attractive

are the most important. For instance, in the human body there are vital organs. These are not attractive. Verse 24 states, “*but God hath tempered the body together.*” Verse 25 declares that we should have “*the same care one for another.*” I cannot tell you how this is possible, but don’t discount what you may do for God. Just get about His service.

All are joined together with Christ, our Head. Because of our integral relationship to Christ, every believer is united with every other believer. We are “*fitly joined together.*” Jesus Christ constructs that perfect building. It is indestructible.

2. Methods. God uses a great host of methods to “join” this body together in a building “fit for His habitation.”

There are *ordinary* things. God uses every experience from the moment we trust Christ until we are home with Him to make us into the likeness of Christ. Even the commonplace develops us, making us moldable and useable.

There are *unusual* things. God uses these to make us function as a part of the whole. They may differ from day to day. They may involve the unexpected. They may demand an acceptance of His will in totally different ways.

There are *emergencies*. These emergencies are not to be treated as though they were “luck,” or “chance,” or “part of living.” In the hand of an infinite God they are molded for our particular needs and miraculously create what He wishes.

There are *impossible* things. These impossible things make it necessary for God to perform a host of miracles, some of which we may be conscious, and some of which we may not. They may be mental, emotional, or physical. They may have to do with ourselves. They may have to do with Him. He is prepared, in any event, to meet the need of the hour.

Whether for foundation or superstructure, God is prepared to “build” His church. He has selected us by His grace. He dominates us in grace and now He would provide for us until we stand in His presence. The church is indestructible!

### III. BY DIRECTION: “My Church”

“*I will not leave you comfortless*”; “*I will not leave you nor forsake you.*” The Bible is full of such assurances. God’s attitude is more than that of a companion. He comes with fullest help. This help involves specific direction for every detail of our lives and assures us of our indestructibility.

In this manner, Jesus alone was able to say, “I will build my church.”

#### A. His (Ephesians 2:18)

“Through him we have access.” We are the “household of God” (v. 22). Jesus said, “I will build my church.” It is *His* church. He arranged for it, brought it into existence, provided for it. To attempt to take it out of His hands is to dismantle it. How can we lay claim to that which is His?

His church can know the meaning of existence only when it is conscious of its Master. There is no other way to enjoy the program of God for this age. For personal enjoyment and life meaning, there must be an awareness of the rights of Christ.

#### B. His and Ours

The wonder of the arrangements Christ has made for our lives is that He has permitted us intimate association and boldest privileges. He is our Head, but we are His body.

I have a house. It is my house. The deed is in my name and yet this house is not really mine. It belongs to the mortgage company. I am simply involved in making that house mine. This will take me a hundred years or more. It is nice to know that it is mine, but I realize that it belongs to someone else. God has made me part of His house. It is His, and the great joy of my life is to recognize that it is His.

This “flesh and blood” organism is also mine. I participate in its life; I am involved in its activities. In His grace, He has seen fit to give me a share in that which is His and mine.

There are definite responsibilities for that building. He has given these responsibilities to me. They are varied in number and nature, but they are my responsibilities

*(continued on page 30)*

# Christ's Answers for Affluence

by Arlin Weaver

We live in a gilded, gluttoned age, and in a society that attempts to cover its own spiritual bankruptcy and famine with—if you please—mere stuff.

With the Laodiceans, we easily say, “*I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.*” Christ’s analysis, however, is much more piercing: we are, in reality, “*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*”

In a culture where capitalism and consumerism run amok and only the dollar is worshiped, it becomes very difficult for Christ’s followers to keep right perspective on matters of wealth and possessions. Four simple principles follow, and each can, at the very least, assist us in our struggle toward Christlikeness amid affluence.

1. *Give, don’t accumulate.* Wealth, in the New Testament perspective, is never something that comes to me for my pleasure; instead, God shares with us so that we can share with others. In a world of selfishness, as believers, we must commit to a lifestyle where material blessings flow through our hands to bless others. Anything less—anything that makes mere personal accumulation or profit its objective—is stamped by selfishness.

2. *Community matters.* Capitalistic societies have cultured us into thinking in terms of individual ownership, and our language is that of personal possessiveness. Among believers, the exclusive claim to “my money” or “my business” can violate the New Testament spirit of community, mutual accountability; and

equality: “*Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own*” (Acts 4:32).

3. *Honor the poor.* Our culture idealizes the rich. Christ, if anything, idealized the poor. “*Blessed are ye poor,*” He said, and honored the poor by becoming one of them. “*To the poor the gospel is preached.*” On the other hand, “*Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you*” (James 5:1).

4. *Practice practical self-denial.* If we are to live out Christ’s answers to affluence, it is imperative that we are willing to make very practical, deliberate choices to sacrifice and simply “do without.” The ability to afford something never gives us right to possess it. And in an age where one generation’s luxuries become the next generation’s necessities, we need to teach our children and youth to do without as well. After all, what relevance does self-denial have if it is meaningless in the matter of possessions?

Ultimately, to the believer living within the kingdom of Christ—where love is the only currency—possessions and wealth have little intrinsic value, and affluence is largely an illusion. Christ’s answers to affluence become personal, and as we follow Him, we seek to live lives of sacrifice, sharing, service, and self-denial as He did.

And in living this way, we discover the ultimate answer to affluence: “*treasure in the heavens that faileth not.*” ■

—Reprinted with permission from the *Ontario Informer*, Sept. 2010.

# Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

“... singing with understanding!”

## “Muse, O My Soul, Set Thy Heart”



by Martin/Martin

As a fourteen-year-old boy, Geoffrey Elsworth Martin wrote the tune and harmony for this song. At the time, he offered to help friends who had written lyrics to be sung at a wedding but could not come up with any suitable music. Geoffrey composed this musical setting for their wedding lyrics.

On March 17, 2007 (St. Patrick's Day), 18-year-old Geoffrey died in an automobile accident. Only two weeks before his death, he had challenged his church with a devotional meditation on the subject of “Time.” A sister in the congregation had taken detailed notes of his thoughts and the Scriptures he used. After Geoffrey's death, his father reconstructed the concepts he had expressed in his meditation and crafted them into the lyrics of this song.

The song throbs with the passion Geoffrey poured into all his pursuits. He loved singing and constantly composed tunes and arrangements that were never transcribed. This song demonstrates his preference for unique harmonies and a very high tenor.

Despite Geoffrey's youthful struggles and failures, he inspired his friends to serve the kingdom of God with boldness and enthusiasm. Stanza 1 reflects his comments on Romans 13:11-14, and Stanza 2 bears his message from Ephesians 5:15-19.

Geoffrey's thoughts expressed in Stanza 3 were to prove astonishingly relevant for him. Commenting on Psalm 89:47, 48, he challenged his hearers to act in the present. He urged them to reject the delusion



that they would have plenty of time in the future. As Geoffrey insisted, only what is done for the kingdom of God will be spared from destruction in the end.

During Geoffrey's narrow span of time, he wrote the music for two hymns and inspired the lyrics for this one of the two. His other song, “My Children, Now Attend,” was sung at his funeral by the three remaining boys of his quartet, which he originated at the age of 14. We trust that Geoffrey's two songs will fulfill his passion to leave an eternal legacy. Both songs will appear in *Hymns of the Church*, a forthcoming hymnal.

— John D. Martin, Geoffrey's father

# Muse, O My Soul, Set My Heart

TIME 11. 6. 11. 6. 10. 8. 10. 8.

*"Now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."* -Romans 13:11

JOHN D. MARTIN, 2007

GEOFFREY E. MARTIN, 2003

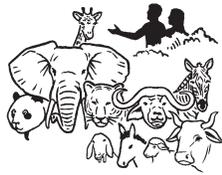
1. Muse, O my soul, set thy heart now to pon-der Thy nar-rowspan of time;  
2. See then, my soul, that ye walk cir-cum-spect-ly, Let not the fool hold sway;  
3. Time will not lin-ger, re-fuse all de-lu-sion, Few are thy days at best;

Look to thy end, let e-ter-ni-ty yon-der Speak to thee in thy prime.  
Buy up the time, judge the mo-ment cor-rect-ly, Shun well the e-vil day.  
Act lest thy aims all be brought to con-fu-sion, Quick-ly pur-sue thy quest;

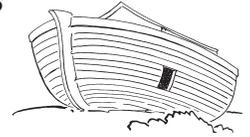
Wake from thy sleep, lo far spent is the night, Tru-ly the day is now at hand;  
Be not un-wise, know the will of the Lord, Filled with the Spir-it cease-less-ly,  
God thy de-vo-tion a-lone doth de-serve, Yield to His King-dom all thy days;

Cast off the dark-ness, be ar-mored with light, Give all thy heart to un-der-stand.  
Speak forth in song all the in-dwell-ing Word, And in thy heart make mel-o-dy.  
He from de-struc-tion thy works will pre-serve, And crown with glo-ry all thy ways.

Words and music ©2010 by Benchmark Press. This song expresses the devotional message entitled "Time" that eighteen-year-old Geoffrey gave at Shippensburg Christian Fellowship two weeks before his death. He based his comments on Psalm 89:47, 48; Romans 13:11-14; Ephesians 5:15-17.



## Beginning Issues



# DNA: A Designer's Marvel!

by John Mullett

**I**n recent years we've become much more familiar with the term DNA, because of significant advances in science. These advances have allowed us to use DNA to aid in law enforcement, increase our understanding of living things including the human body and opened a world of new possibilities. As DNA is "unlocked" and our understanding grows, the possibilities only continue to increase; some very exciting while others are downright terrifying. This creates scenarios (cloning, stem cell research, etc.) in which a number of moral issues arise and need to be addressed. However moral issues aside (for this article) I'd like to look at DNA itself and its marvelous design.

DNA is like a language and is found in every living thing. "Using different combinations of four basic units, called nucleotides, DNA molecules can store all sorts of information, just like the dots and dashes of Morse code, or the binary numbers in computers. The four nucleotides are combined into codes for twenty chemicals known as amino acids. By rearranging these twenty 'letters of the genetic alphabet,' God designed the language so that it could produce all the proteins that living things need—humans alone have over 100,000 proteins."<sup>1</sup>

One of the things I've marveled at in the advances of the world of technology is efficiency in data storage. With each advance we are able to store greater amounts of data

on same-size or even increasingly smaller mediums. However, our data storage capabilities and efficiencies pale in comparison to that of DNA and that is an incredibly strong understatement! *When it comes to storing massive amounts of information, nothing comes close to the efficiency of DNA. A single strand of DNA is thousands of times thinner than a strand of human hair. One pinhead of DNA could hold enough information to fill a stack of books stretching from the earth to the moon 500 times. Although DNA is wound into tight coils, your cells can quickly access, copy, and translate the information stored in DNA. DNA even has a built-in proofreader and spell-checker that ensure precise copying. Only about one mistake slips through for every 10 billion nucleotides that are copied. If only our word processors were that good!*<sup>2</sup>

To appreciate this amazing efficiency—just a little bit more (It's nearly inconceivable!)—let's look at another example. If we had a small, almost square rectangle that measured 33 mm x 32 mm (1.2992 in x 1.2598 in—That's just slightly more than 1.25" square) and it contained the entire Bible printed on its surface, that would be amazing, but the DNA molecule storage density is 7.7 million times that of the small rectangle I just described for you. To achieve the same density we would have to take the same rectangle and divide it into 2.77 million rows and 2.77 million columns with the

entire Bible represented in each little square created by the rows and columns!<sup>3</sup> *DNA molecules contain the highest known packing density of information. This exceedingly brilliant storage method reaches the limit of the physically possible, namely down to the level of single molecules.*<sup>4</sup>

Such incredible design creates a major problem for any naturalistic and “gradual processes” view of creation—atheistic or otherwise. As mentioned earlier, DNA is a language found in every living thing, a language left by God to reveal His awesome power and concern for even the smallest details! God created a perfect world full of

amazing complexity and design just as the Bible tells us in Genesis chapters one and two. Are we not being arrogant and making fools of ourselves if we try to convince ourselves of anything else in the face of such marvels of design? ■

1. *DNA: The Language of Life*, Answers In Genesis, June 11, 2008 <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/am/v3/n3/dna>.
2. Ibid.
3. Gitt, Dr. Werner, *In the Beginning Was Information*, Appendix 1, June 18, 2009 <http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/itbwi/statistical-view-of-information>.
4. Ibid.

## Relating to Neighbors

by Eugene Nolt

As the earth’s population increases, we will likely have more and closer neighbors. Interpersonal relationships become more challenging as neighbors become closer. Our historic, rural lifestyle has aided us in much the same way as Abraham’s dwelling in tents helped him avoid many of the problems his city-dwelling nephew Lot experienced. Various Old Testament laws addressed neighborhood challenges and how to avoid problems.

Jesus taught that our neighbor is anyone to whom we have an opportunity to do good. Our neighbors as used in this article are those living close to our house, whether it is within a stone’s throw or at the end of our five-mile road.

We cannot avoid relating to neighbors. How we relate is largely determined by our attitude toward them. To be Christian, our attitude must be shaped more by God’s love in our heart than by how our neighbors treat or mistreat us. May God’s Spirit help us both to think right and to relate right to our neighbors so that His Name is magnified.

The second greatest commandment is, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”

(Matthew 22:39). This attitude is the foundation of all human relationships. The first step in loving our neighbor is to properly view ourselves. While there are vast differences in people’s wealth, position, and talent, in God’s eyes people are all equal. Men tend to focus on the tangible, but God sees man’s soul. If we view ourselves as superior to our neighbors, we will probably make negative comments about them. Those attitudes and comments will be difficult, if not impossible, to hide from them. On the other hand, feeling intimidated may keep us from assisting our neighbors in natural needs, and make us unwilling to witness to them in spiritual matters. An appropriate attitude is to remember that everyone has the same basic spiritual needs, and desire to esteem others better than ourselves.

Another foundational principle is the worth of a soul and God’s desire that all men would be saved. God has given us the word of reconciliation, which makes us accountable to share the Gospel message. The wisdom of God is needed to know how best to share the salvation message with our neighbors. “Wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16) should govern our neigh-

borhood relations. We live on a mission field no matter what our address is.

We should look for areas of need in our neighbors as a way to point them to Jesus. Cottage meetings are a good way of meeting the social needs of older and sick folks while sharing Christ at the same time. Often local prisons, rest homes, and hospitals are open doors. Through these contacts we learn to know our neighbors and their areas of need both physically and spiritually. Times of calamity, such as fire, accident, or natural disaster are an excellent mission field as well. The rich man in Hell was reminded that he failed to meet the needs of his neighbor Lazarus.

The most frequent opportunities to help and witness to our neighbors are usually the most overlooked ones. We could help round up our neighbor's cows that broke through the fence, even if they are not grazing in our soybeans. We could return our neighbor's stray cat or dog even though it may be the fifth time. We could help him repair his broken lawn mower even if we have other things to do. We could remove the snow from their driveway and share occasional food with them from our garden and pantry. If we overlook or avoid this kind of opportunity, the effectiveness of our witness will be greatly diminished.

Effective witness for the Lord is a mixture of words and actions. The importance of consistency in our lives cannot be overemphasized.

In the Old Testament, God was very concerned that His children not adopt the habits and practices of their heathen neighbors. We are wise when we acknowledge the conditioning effects of those that we relate to socially. We are rightly jealous that our children are shielded from evil influences.

The Bereans were noble because they searched the Scriptures to be sure that what they heard was according to truth. Sometimes our neighbors do things and make statements that need to be tested against truth. Occasionally this may be done in their presence. Always it must be done for our children's sake and for our-

selves. Whether we confront our neighbor's error in his presence or absence, we must always do it in the spirit of meekness. We grow in conviction for truth when we compare what we hear and see with what the Bible says. We must exercise special care in relating to neighbors who profess to be Christians but deny Christ in works.

Let us faithfully reflect Christ to all we meet, especially our neighbors. We need to remember we may be the only Christian our neighbor knows. "The world of sinners knows not God nor read His gospel true; / They care not for His holy Word; but they are reading you."

"Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself" (Romans 15:2, 3). ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Home Horizons*.

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### "THE INDESTRUCTIBLE CHURCH" . . . cont'd from page 24

to carry out during my lifetime.

His great task is taking out of the world "a people for his name." My responsibility as a member of His body is to participate. For this task He gives me the Word. He provides me with the Spirit; He enables me to perform my duties and privileges. I must be active about my responsibilities if I am to carry out my God-given task.

"*I will build my church . . .*" He has selected this church in His grace, dominating it with His perfect authority. He has provided for its needs by preparing the proper foundation and arrangement for all of its building. It is His, but is also ours.

"*The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" There is no enemy effective in its destruction; there is no force that can cause it to totter and fall. He will complete it when we stand in His presence. We can trust Him until He is finished adding the last member to that church.

The church of Jesus Christ is indestructible. "*I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Biblical Evangelist*, Sept./Oct. 2010.

# Free-Market Generosity

by Bert Wheeler

*Capitalism relies on God-given ingenuity to create wealth  
and on God-ordained generosity to give it away.*

Just as God demonstrates compassion to us, Christians should be moved by compassion to help people who do not have adequate food, shelter, clean water, or clothing—basic economic needs. From an economic perspective, poverty exists because we lack resources to meet our needs. Often resources that could help alleviate poverty are at hand, but they exist in a less refined state. Capitalism, as an economic system, relies on human ingenuity to refine the resources we have to create more—more efficiency, more goods, more wealth.

Given the millions of people worldwide living in poverty, it is clear there is a global lack of refined resources to meet needs on such a large scale. But our good intentions to provide resources must be wedded with sound methods for sharing God's gifts with those who are less fortunate.

## *An Economy Fueled by Creativity*

The root of poverty goes back to Genesis 3. When Adam and Eve chose to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, one of the primary effects of their broken relationship with God was evident in the economic arena. Not only was mankind severed from fellowship with God, we were cut off from His direct provision for our material needs. Even the ground was cursed because of sin, and mankind was left to “struggle to scratch a living” from the earth (Gen. 3:17).

But God did not leave us helpless. We are created in God's image (Gen. 1:27), imbued with creativity. Our ability to take resources we have and fashion them into something more valuable is foundational to our created

identity. Wealth creation occurs best in a free-market economy fueled by ingenuity.

The economic history of the world is filled with pain and struggle. Most of recorded economic history is a story of bare subsistence and failure. We find brief glimpses of substantial wealth, although it was concentrated in the hands of the powerful. Evidence of trade and markets dates to several thousand years B.C.; however, it was not until market economies fully developed on the European continent in the last millennium that large segments of people were consistently able to enjoy the fruits and responsibilities of relative economic success.

Capitalism has become a politically charged concept with friends and foes choosing sides based on an extreme point of view. It is often oversimplified as a “pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps” philosophy that leaves impoverished people to fend for themselves. Capitalism is more accurately understood as an economic system where people are free to make choices that affect their economic well-being.

## *An Opportunity to Create Wealth*

Economists study and work to develop the most effective and efficient means to create wealth, which is necessary to reduce poverty. We have discovered that wealth is effectively and efficiently created when people are empowered to pursue what they think is best for themselves.

Suppose a woman starts a business as a personal organizer, helping people to operate more efficiently and simplify their lives. Through her network of friends and family, she builds her client base and expands her

business with smart advertising and referrals. What began as a hobby has become a way to earn a profit that she can use however she chooses. She could spend her profit for personal gain, like a nicer apartment or a more reliable car. She could reinvest her profit in her business and hire an assistant, enabling her to take on more clients. She could give away her profit to a charity she believes in or donate free services as a ministry. In every scenario, what began as an exchange of a service for payment created something more: a more comfortable living, an opportunity for business growth, a charitable gift, or a meaningful personal connection. Because she took the risk in starting the business, she reaped the rewards and was free to choose how to use the surplus her investment provided.

Not only does capitalism create wealth, which Christians and others may share with people in need, but perhaps more importantly, a market-based economy provides the vehicle for economic growth. By embracing capitalism, currently impoverished cultures could rise above simply meeting their economic needs to becoming net providers of wealth. Even Karl Marx, certainly no friend of capitalism, acknowledged in his 1848 Manifesto of the Communist Party that economic organization according to free markets produces more wealth than any other system humanity has been able to devise.

Let me be clear—no economic system is perfect. As Christians, our support for any worldview, philosophy, or political viewpoint should be tempered with Biblically informed reason. Capitalism has its shortcomings, but it is the best system we have to exercise personal freedom to create wealth. It is also the system that best supports Biblical philanthropy.

#### ***A Surplus to Be Shared***

There's no question that a freer society with greater choice is preferable to a less free society with limited choice. Free will is an essential aspect of our creation as God's image bearers. A free-market econ-

omy allows us the greatest latitude to choose how, when, and where to help those less fortunate than ourselves.

This past January, a high school student in our small town passed away. Members of the community reached out to the family in their time of grief with tangible expressions of love and support. The churches in town mobilized volunteers to prepare meals and help with chores and errands. The community reached out with the love of Christ to help this family get back on its feet. Most of the gestures of generosity were not financial, but they were heartfelt and motivated by compassion.

On a broader scale, there are hundreds of reputable charitable organizations maximizing resources to help the poor. When people choose to volunteer or give a financial contribution, they choose what charity they will support, the amount of their contribution, and often how they wish to designate their gift. In return, a reputable charity will provide a gift acknowledgement and a transparent report to donors about how gifts were used. A free market determines whether a charity will be successful based on how many people choose to direct gifts to that cause as well as how effectively the charity uses its resources to accomplish its mission. If donors become dissatisfied with the charity's use of their gifts, they can choose to direct their gifts elsewhere. Satisfied donors may choose to increase their giving and become more involved in the charity's work.

When we surrender the privilege of choice to another entity, like the government, we are robbed of the responsibility, accountability, and joy of giving. The taxes we pay are not voluntary, and the government's stewardship of our resources is anything but transparent. Moreover, we assign undue responsibility to the government to make moral decisions about who deserves assistance and how much. A gift that is coerced, no matter how deserving the recipient, is not generosity. Genuine care and compassion for the poor glows from a sincere heart. *(continued on page 35)*



## Counseling From the Word

# Affirmations and Denials: A Proposed Definition of Biblical Counseling

by David Powlison

### ***I. True knowledge about people and counseling practice***

*We affirm* that the Bible is God's self-revelation in relation to His creatures, and, as such, truly explains people and situations.

*We deny* that any other source of knowledge is authoritative for explaining people and situations.

*We affirm* that the Bible, as the revelation of Jesus Christ's redemptive activity, intends to specifically guide and inform counseling ministry.

*We deny* that any other source of knowledge is authoritative to equip us for the task of counseling people.

*We affirm* that wise counseling requires ongoing practical theological labor in order to understand Scripture, people, and situations. We must continually develop our personal character, case-wise understanding of persons, pastoral skills, and institutional structures.

*We deny* that the Bible intends to serve as an encyclopedia of proof texts containing all facts about people and the diversity of problems in living.

*We affirm* that the ideas, goals, and practices of counseling must cohere explicitly with the historic creeds, confessions, hymns, and other wise writings that express the faith and practice of the church of Jesus Christ.

*We deny* that the wisdom of the past sufficiently defines the issues of counseling

ministry for today, as if the requisite wisdom were simply a matter of recovering past achievements.

*We affirm* that the Scripture defines and speaks to the gamut of problems in living for all people in all situations.

### ***II. The givens of the human condition and the scope of Biblical truth***

*We affirm* that human beings are created fundamentally dependent on and responsible to God. People can only be understood when these realities control the counselor's gaze.

*We deny* that any form of autonomy severs people from dependency on God.

*We deny* that any form of determinism neuters moral accountability to God.

*We affirm* that the ideal for human functioning is faith working through love. Such love for God and neighbor is the standard against which to specifically understand what is wrong with people. It is the goal to which counseling must specifically aspire.

*We deny* that any other standard or goal is true.

*We affirm* that evil, done by us and happening to us, is the fundamental and pervasive problem in living. Our own sin, in all its facets and dimensions, is primary and self-generating. The circumstances that happen to us provide both provocative context ("trials and temptations") and just consequences ("reap what you sow") for our moral response, but *do not* determine the

quality of our moral response.

*We deny* that any other diagnostic system is valid, universal, or penetrating.

*We deny* that nature and/or nurture determine the quality of our moral response.

*We affirm* that the Scripture defines and speaks to the gamut of problems in living for all people in all situations.

*We deny* that Biblical truth is limited to a narrow sphere of “religious” or “spiritual” beliefs, activities, persons, emotions, and institutions, separated from the other spheres of daily life.

*We deny* that any particular realm of human life can be sectored off as the unique province of the theories, practices, and professions of the modern psychologies.

### ***III. The solution to the sin and misery of the human condition***

*We affirm* that the Bible teaches, invites, warns, commands, sings, and tells the solution for what troubles humankind. In the Good News of Jesus Christ, God acts personally. In word and deed, He redeems us from sin and misery through the various operations of His past, present, and future grace. God uses many means of grace, including the face-to-face conversations of wise counseling.

*We deny* that any other solution or therapy actually cures souls, and can change us from unholy to holy, from sinners to righteous, from insanity to sanity, from blindness to sightedness, from self-absorption to faith-working-through-love.

*We affirm* that God’s providential common grace brings many goods to people, both as individual kindnesses and as social blessings: e.g. medical treatment, economic help, political justice, protection for the weak, educational opportunity. Wise counseling will participate in and encourage mercy ministries as part of the call to love.

*We deny* that such goods can cure the soul’s evils. When they claim to cure the human condition, they are false and misleading, competing with Christ.

*We deny* that Christless counseling—whether psychotherapeutic, philosophical, quasi-religious, or overtly religious—

is either true or good. Their messages are essentially false and misleading, competing with Christ.

### ***IV. The nature and means of change***

*We affirm* that the growth process for which counseling must aim is conversion followed by lifelong progressive sanctification within every circumstance of life. Our motives, thought processes, actions, words, emotions, attitudes, values—heart, soul, mind, and might—increasingly resemble Jesus Christ in conscious and evident love for God and other people.

*We deny* that there is any method for instantaneous or complete perfection into the image of Jesus Christ. The change process continues until we see Him face-to-face.

*We deny* that the processes and goals labeled self-actualization, self-fulfillment, healing of memories, meeting of psychological needs, social adaptation, building self-esteem, recovery, individuation, etc., describe valid aims of counseling, though they may evidence analogies to elements of Biblical wisdom.

*We affirm* that the Bible explicitly teaches the fundamentals of counseling method by precept and example. Through speaking the truth in love, we act as tangible instruments of God’s grace in the lives of others.

*We deny* that the modern psychotherapies rightly understand or practice wise counseling methodology, though they may evidence analogies to elements of Biblical wisdom.

### ***V. The social context and scope of counseling ministry***

*We affirm* that the Spirit and the Word create the church of Jesus Christ, and that the people of God should provide the personal, social, and institutional loci for speaking the truth in love.

*We deny* that the mental health professions and their institutions have the right to claim any sector of problems in living as their particular prerogative. Even those who suffer mentally disabling medical problems need godly counseling.

*We affirm* that the aims, content, and means of counseling ministry are of a

piece with public ministry, the spiritual disciplines, and mercy ministry. These are different aspects of the one redemptive ministry of Christ.

*We deny* that the persons and problems addressed by the activity termed “psychotherapy” fall outside the intended scope of the ministry of Christ in word and deed.

*We affirm* that the primary and fullest expression of counseling ministry occurs in local church communities where pastors effectively shepherd souls while equipping and overseeing diverse forms of every-member ministry.

*We deny* that the institutional forms and professional roles of the mental health system provide a normative and desirable framework for counseling ministry.

*We deny* that current forms of church life and conceptions of the pastoral role are necessarily adequate and normative as vehicles to train, deliver, and oversee effective counseling ministry. The body of Christ needs institutional reformation, development, and innovation.

*We deny* that parachurch and other cooperative forms of counseling ministry in the body of Christ are inherently wrong.

#### ***VI. God’s providence and the interplay between His common grace and the intellectual-practical effects of sin***

*We affirm* that numerous disciplines and professions can contribute to an increase in our knowledge of people and how to help them. Scripture teaches a standpoint and gaze by which believers can learn many things from those who do not believe.

*We deny* that any of these disciplines and professions can align and constitute a system of faith and practice for wise counseling.

*We affirm* that a commitment to secularity distorts disciplines and professions fundamentally and pervasively. People who do not think and practice in submission to the moral and aesthetic effects on sin. The operations of God’s common grace can cause unbelievers to be relatively observant, caring, stimulating, and informative.

*We affirm* that the personality theories are essentially false theologies, and the psy-

chotherapies are essentially false forms of the cure of souls. Even the more descriptive and empirical psychologies are significantly skewed by secular presuppositions, and their findings need to be reinterpreted by the Biblical worldview.

*We deny* that psychological research, personality theories, and psychotherapies should be viewed as “objective science,” as that term is usually understood. Neither should they be seen as extensions of medicine and medical practice.

#### ***VII. Good news for psychologized people in a psychologized society.***

*We affirm* that mature, presuppositionally, consistent, loving, and efficacious Biblical counseling will be a powerful evangelistic and apologetic force in the modern world.

*We deny* that the most important part of the church’s interaction with the modern psychologies is to discover what can be learned from them. ■

—Reprinted with permission from the pamphlet *Counseling and the Authority of Christ . . .* by Russell D. Moore.

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#### **FREE-MARKET GENEROSITY . . .**

cont’d from page 32

##### ***A Generous Example to Follow***

Generosity toward impoverished people should be part of a Christian’s DNA. The Apostle John wrote, “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17). When we extend ourselves for others, we reflect Christ, whose generosity flows from His character. He has “lavished us with the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7, 8) because He loves to give, and He wants us to follow His example.

Only market economies have sustained economic development to lift the poor out of poverty. And it is only when we have the freedom to choose how to give our surplus that we reflect God’s glory as cheerful givers, helping those who do not have their basic economic needs met. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *TORCH*, Fall/Winter, 2010.

# Humility

by Mark D. Avery

Some lessons are hard to learn, not just because the subject matter is hard but also because the lesson is hard to apply to life. Take humility, for example. We admire the millionaire who still drives his old truck, the dignitary who still performs physical labor. We admire these people because they have not forgotten how they arrived at where they are. They remain connected to those who some treat as “little people.”

We struggle to understand or define humility. Sometimes we say, “Humility is a balanced estimate of one’s own strengths and weaknesses.” An old dictionary (1828) suggests this description of humility: “In theology, humility consists in lowliness of mind; a deep sense of one’s own unworthiness in the sight of God, self-abasement, penitence for sin, and submission to the divine will.”

Any attempt to understand humility from a Biblical perspective requires an understanding of our own unworthiness in the sight of God. No one could ever deserve what He has done. Even decades of committed, effective service to the kingdom of God cannot make us worthy of His love and forgiveness.

In fact, effective Christians continue to sense their unworthiness before God. Aware that they deserve not even the least of His favor, they rejoice in the favor God grants them through the day by day and moment by moment grace He bestows. The result is what we might call a productive humility. Most people like to talk about the honors they have received. And such is the case with those who receive grace. Grace has to be understood in the context of undeserved favor. Nothing we could ever do would enable us to deserve it. Those who boast in grace, boast not of themselves, but of God’s power at work in their lives.

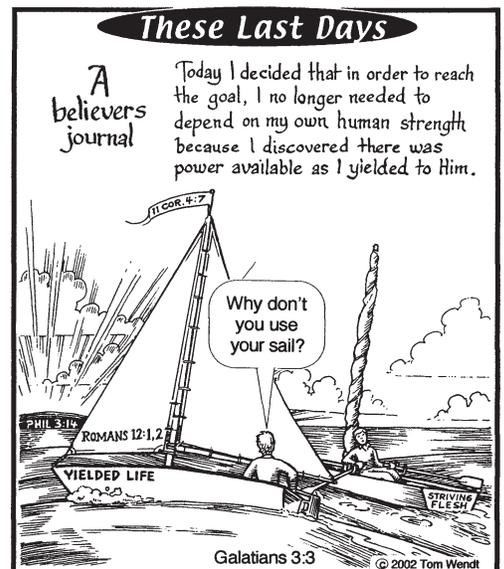
The Bible also talks about a “voluntary humility” (Col. 2:18). Wesley called this a pretended humility. The context indicates that people were worshiping angels because

of an artificial humility that taught they were unworthy to go directly to God. True, we do not deserve access to God’s presence, but Christ’s blood bought us that privilege.

Acts suggests a motivated humility: “Serving the Lord with all humility of mind” (20:19). *Serving* is an active word. The New Testament standard of service was reaching out to others with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Genuine humility motivates believers to share the Gospel through words, actions, and attitudes.

Humility is a challenging subject. It is the absence of pride in our activities, position, or accomplishment. Yet rather than a negative, defeated characteristic, it produces a positive, victorious attitude and lifestyle despite the trials and temptations that come. It includes the balanced estimate of our own strengths and weaknesses, but it also serves as an impulse that pushes us to serve our Saviour. ■

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