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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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with gratitude and amazement at God's mercy for them. Most importantly, they are filled with a new faith in the power of God to do the impossible.

Though Goliath was dead, the fighting continued for the Jews. The Philistines remained determined enemies of God's people. There were many battles ahead.

In like manner, many of the men who come through our Live-In Program find themselves fighting again within a short time of experiencing initial victory. Some wives question the claimed victory. "Why is my husband still dealing with this issue? Will I ever be able to let my guard down and trust my husband the way I want to?" Both can begin to doubt the God who delivered the victory.

The truth is, an enduring commitment to the fight is part of the process of gaining final, lasting victory.

When the Lord brings an initial, great victory over sexual sin, he does slay the giant. However, the once-addicted man still faces a formidable and determined enemy. The Lord expects us to fight the battles ahead in the manner Paul described to Timothy, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6:12).

Once the Lord grants a supernatural victory, He arms that man with His "weapons of warfare" for those inevitable battles. Paul admonishes us to fight against our spiritual enemies: "Put on the whole armour of God . . . having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace . . . taking the shield of faith . . . the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always" (Ephesians 6:11-18).

A man who was once "taken captive by the enemy to do his will" should never, ever think of going into another battle unarmed. If he does, he is an even greater "fool" than he was the first time, "as an ox

goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks" (Proverbs 7:22).

Is lasting victory over sexual sin possible for the man who was once enslaved to sexual sin? The answer is a resounding yes; but lasting victory requires much of that man. The process only starts with the initial, miraculous victory. Like all of God's miracles, that victory is intended to build the faith of the stricken soul and bring the Lord into His proper position in the man's heart. The process requires him to be armed and ready for battle every day. It requires a total reliance on the spiritual weapons given and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Both Saul and David experienced the freedom wrought by the Lord's victory over Goliath. Both men continued in battle for years thereafter. Both men suffered wounds. David and his mighty men were ultimately victorious each time against the Philistines.

Not so with Saul. First Samuel 14:45 reports, "Now there was sore war with the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any strong man or any valiant man, he took him unto him." Saul was always aware of this enemy but was too often satisfied with arming himself with the weapons of man. Saul ultimately perished at the hand of the Philistines.

David on the other hand always understood that it was the Lord's power that brought victory. Those who claim ultimate victory over sexual addiction do so because they develop a heart like David's, always willing to fight for righteousness in the power and promises of the Lord.

Lord, grant us the heart and will of David, "a mighty man of valor, a man of war," that we might "fight the good fight of faith," that we might experience a lasting and final victory through the power of the cross. "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37). Amen. ■

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# Person of the Month:

## Thomas O. Chisholm (1866-1960)



Thomas Obediah Chisholm was born into a poor family who lived in a log cabin in Franklin, Kentucky, on July 29, 1866.

In 1882, at the age of sixteen, Thomas Chisholm became the teacher in the same country elementary school where he had previously received his entire formal education.

In 1887, at the age of 21, Chisholm became the associate editor of *The Franklin Favorite*, his hometown newspaper.

Four years later, in 1891, Thomas experienced not only sadness, due to his mother's death, but he became painfully aware of the brevity of life and the fact that he was not ready to die. In 1893, at the age of 27, he attended a revival meeting in Franklin where Dr. Henry Clay Morrison was preaching. The Holy Spirit used God's Word to bring conviction and Thomas Chisholm became a child of God.

As a result of this introduction to Morrison, Brother Chisholm was invited to become office manager and business manager of the *Pentecostal Herald*, which was published by Dr. Morrison in Louisville.

At some point in time Thomas married, as there is a reference to a family and daughter.

In 1903, at the age of 37, Chisholm was ordained as a minister of a Methodist church in Scottsville, Kentucky. Unfortunately, due to poor health, he resigned after a year of service. His poor health would plague him for the rest of his life.

After the year 1909, at the age of 43, he moved his family to a farm near Winona Lake, Indiana, where he was employed selling life insurance.

In 1915, at the age of 49, Thomas was approached by Pastor Harold Lowden and asked to write better words for a hymn that Lowden had written. The music was good but the lyrics were weak. Lowden's suggestion for the title of the hymn was "Living for Jesus." Chisholm could write words but reading music was a different story! He contacted Lowden, telling him that he was not a musician and did not feel he could be of help to Brother Lowden, whereupon Lowden told Chisholm that he definitely believed Chisholm was the one that God wanted to write the words. With the help of his daughter, Thomas took on the project. His daughter would hum the tune over and over so that Brother Chisholm could come up with appropriate lyrics for the now well-loved hymn of surrender entitled "Living for Jesus."

One year later the family moved to Vineland, New Jersey, where Brother Chisholm again sold life insurance.

Thomas Chisholm wrote more than 1200 poems, 800 of which were published—some of them being printed in publications such as the old *Sunday School Times*, *Moody Monthly*, and the *Alliance Weekly*, etc. Two-hundred-twenty of his poems were used as lyrics for hymns such as his beloved and well-known "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," which was written in 1923, at the age of 57, after Thomas had studied Lamentations 3:22, 23. Brother Chisholm sent the words of several of his poems, including the one just mentioned, to Rev. W. M. Runyan, a musician and editor of Hope Publishing Company, who then put music to some of these. Runyan was associated with Moody Bible Institute where the new hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" became the favorite of the president of the school. As a result it also became the unofficial MBI hymn.

*(continued on page 7)*

# *Instruments in Worship?*

by Robert B. McCracken

The chimes were striking 11 o'clock and all the people were seated in their pews ready for the church service to begin. The organist began to play very softly, and a hush came over the whole assembly. It seemed to be the perfect atmosphere for worship. Then the organ became louder, and everyone stood and began to sing.

This worship scene is so common and emotionally satisfying that it may seem almost sacrilegious to raise a question about it. But it is wise to reexamine all our activities in the light of Scripture, and especially the area of worship, because worship is one of our most direct approaches to God—an area where He declares that He is rightly jealous.

The first and second commandments teach regarding worship that we are not to acknowledge other gods, or fashion images to our own liking, but rather are to follow carefully the guidelines and directions that God has given us in His Word. *The Westminster Catechism* declares: "The second commandment forbids the worshiping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in His Word." Only when we follow God's own directives will we be sure that we are truly pleasing Him in our worship, and are not simply catering to our own wishes.

Undoubtedly, musical instruments appeal to the ear and emotions of mankind. They are a rich and good gift of God for our enjoyment and pleasure, but what place, if any, do musical instruments have in the worship of God?

## **INTRODUCTION OF INSTRUMENTS Into the Worship of God**

The first place in which man gave praise to God was in the Garden of Eden. Adam, as he walked with God in the cool of the day, expressed to Him his adoration and praise. We can imagine no more wonderful experience than to be able to worship God in His

very presence. In the account of this supreme fellowship between God and man, we find no mention of the use of instruments to create the proper mood or to help express to the Creator the praise due His name. Adam's praise was the expression that God had given him.

No mention of instruments is made in the Scriptures until we come to one of Cain's descendants named Jubal. In Genesis 4:20, 21 we read, "And Adah bare Jubal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ."

This is the first mention of instruments in the Bible, and they are listed along with many of the other arts and crafts that the descendants of Cain developed. There is no indication here that they were used in any kind of worship ceremony.

From this point on, the references to the use of instruments became more prevalent. A reference in Genesis 31:27 shows that the art of instrumental music was carried on after the Flood, for in the time of Jacob, his father-in-law Laban said: "Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp?" Again, no reference to worship, but rather to a going-away party.

When we come to the time of Moses there is a change. Moses received many commands of God touching many areas of life, and these commands include a specific reference to instruments. Numbers 10:1, 2 says: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps." Here God not only commanded Moses to make these instruments, but He also told him the specific pur-

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pose they were to fulfill, namely for calling the assembly, and for use as signals on the battlefield (see v. 9).

But then God adds an additional use. Numbers 10:10 says: "Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God." Here is the first specific command of God regarding the appointment and use of instruments related to worship. Notice that they were directly associated with the ceremonial rituals, that is, the offerings and sacrifices.

In the time of David, we find the most significant stage in the development of instrumental music in the worship of God. David, in 1 Chronicles 15:16, "spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of music, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy." Here, David gives a directive that instruments are to be used by the Levites in their service to God. While in this specific passage we find no mention of a command of God to do this, elsewhere we do find proof that God gave the command. The passage is 2 Chronicles 29:25, which describes the days of King Hezekiah. "And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets."

It is important to note in this passage how the instruments were used. "And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel. And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished" (vv. 26-28).

As the record continues, notice the dis-

inction made between the offering of the sacrifices and the other part of their worship. "And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped. Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the LORD with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped" (2 Chron. 29:29, 30). In this second part of the worship, there is no indication that the instruments were used—rather, the text would lead us to believe that when the offerings were finished the use of instruments stopped.

This suggests a most significant point. Throughout the Old Testament, the use of instruments in the worship of God was related directly to the temple service. This temple ritual with all of its ceremonial requirements was typical and symbolic in nature, and pointed to the eventual coming of Christ, the Lamb of God, who would take away the sin of the world. W. D. Killen, in his *History, Doctrine, and Worship in the Ancient Church*, says, "As the sacrifices, offerings and other observances of the temple, as well as the priests, the vestments, and even the building itself, had an emblematic meaning; the singing, intermingled with the music of various instruments of sound, was also typical and ceremonial" (p. 213).

With the coming of Christ, the ceremonial system came to an end.

The passages cited thus far indicate these basic facts: the use of instruments was introduced into the worship of God first through Moses and then more elaborately by David; this was done by the direct command of God; and these instruments were directly related to the temple worship that was ceremonial in nature.

#### ***REMOVAL OF INSTRUMENTS From the Worship of God***

There is not a trace in the complete New Testament of the use of instruments in the church of Jesus Christ or in the worship of the apostles. This seems strange if God intended this practice to continue. The accounts of when Christ entered into worship

give no indication that instruments were used. References in the writings of Peter, John, Paul, and other New Testament authors to using instruments in worship are nonexistent. Rather we find such statements as “making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19) and “offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb. 13:15).

Further evidence of the removal of instruments from the worship of God after the Old Testament period is that in the early church (i.e., the period following the apostles) there were no instruments used in the churches. The early church fathers bear testimony *against* the use of instruments. Justin Martyr, who lived 150 years after Christ, has this to say: “Plain singing is not childish, but only the singing with lifeless organs, with dancing and cymbals. Whence the use of such instruments and other things fit for children are laid aside, and plain singing only retained.”

Another church father, Chrysostom, who lived 400 years after Christ, says, “Instrumental music was permitted to the Jews, as sacrifice was, for the heaviness and grossness of their souls. God condescended to their weakness, because they were lately drawn off to idols; but now instead of instruments we use our bodies to praise withal . . . Instruments appertain not to Christians.”

No evidence of instrumental music in the churches exists until the 7th century. In the year 666 A.D. one of the popes of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Vitalian, brought into his worship Latin singing to the accompaniment of the organ. This is the first time instruments were formally used in worship since the time of the Jewish ceremonial ritual.

The Roman church adopted this practice, and it continued until the time of the Reformers. Striving to return to the purity of worship and obedience to the law of God, many of the Reformers cast out the use of instruments in their worship services.

John Calvin declared: “Instrumental music is not fitter to be adopted into the public worship of the Christian Church than the incense, the candlestick, and the shadows of the Mosaic law—in popery, a

ridiculous and unsuitable imitation of the Jews, they employed organs and such other ludicrous things, by which the word and worship of God are exceedingly profaned.”

In summary, no mention is made of using instruments in worship in the New Testament. Neither Christ nor His apostles advocated it, nor was it a practice in the Church for nearly 700 years after Christ. Later, in the Reformation, in order to purify the worship, godly leaders cast out the instruments from their worship services.

#### ***WHY INSTRUMENTS WERE NOT CONTINUED IN THE NT CHURCH***

The primary reason for the removal of the instruments from worship is that the perfect sacrifice of Christ did away with all the ceremonial ritual (see Hebrews 9–10). The instruments, as has been shown, were directly connected with the sacrificial system; thus when Christ fulfilled and abolished the sacrifices the instruments went with them. There is no need to seek God through the Mosaic forms and symbols, because Christ has provided a new and living way to God. Thus the early Christians leaving the ceremonial rituals to follow the living Christ would naturally leave the instruments that belonged to them.

The experiences of the Old Testament believer were genuine, but they lacked something of the reality, completeness, and joy that was to be experienced later through Christ. Because of this, God enhanced their sense of involvement and joy through “sound effects”—trumpets, cymbals, and harps.

We know the value of sound effects. When watching a movie, the emotional involvement and sense of reality is enhanced by the music. In a similar way, in the Old Testament, when God was showing His people His great redemption through pictures and ceremonies, He used sound effects (i.e., instrumental accompaniment). On the other hand, our joy no longer needs to be expressed symbolically, because Christ said: “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11). Christ has promised to give us now the fullness of what the forms

of the Old Testament were only a symbol.

A second reason for discounting the use of instruments in worship is that the New Testament specifically tells us that this joy and praise that fills our hearts as Christians is to be expressed from the heart through our lips. Hebrews 13:15, which we mentioned before, states: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

Also, we are to make melody in our hearts (see Eph. 5:19). The Greek word for "make melody" is *psallo*, which means originally "to pluck the strings of an instrument." This gives a beautiful picture of what true and acceptable praise of God really is. Since the word *psallo* cannot be separated from the word *heart*, it literally means "plucking the strings of your heart to the Lord." When the music of the heart is expressed through lips that confess the Lord's name, there is no need for supporting instruments.

Another interesting reason why early Christians did not use instruments in their worship was that the New Testament church was patterned after the Jewish synagogue and not after the temple. One Jewish historian, after describing the temple ritual, has this to say: "The worship of the synagogue was more simple. Its officers did not intrude instrumental music into the congregational services. The early Christians followed the example of the synagogue; and when they celebrated the praise of God in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, their melody was the fruit of the lips."

Archaeologists have found no instruments of music among the furniture of the ancient synagogues. And even today in the Orthodox Jewish synagogue, no instruments are used (confirming the idea that instruments were tied to the ceremonial system and temple worship). The Christian Church in its original state was patterned after the synagogue, and therefore the instruments had no place in their worship.

We should note that this discussion speaks directly to the matter of Christian worship and not to the use of instruments in other settings. As we said earlier, the development of musical instruments and

the skill with which they are played is truly a gift of God and is to be enjoyed by God's people as a part of His wonderful grace to mankind. Surely much glory can be brought to God as each musician develops his or her skill for Christ's honor. However, in the area of worship, it is not for us to determine what is pleasing to God, but for Him alone. Our first concern is to discern His desire and to follow His revealed will, not to arrange a service that is most pleasing and satisfying to us.

#### **INSTRUMENTS TO AID THE MOOD OF WORSHIP**

Some Christians will say, "What difference does it make? The organ helps us to get into the mood of worship and the guitar or the orchestra adds a lot to the service." To them, that's enough to sanction the use of instruments in worship. But the same persons who use instruments as an aid to their worship may condemn a group that uses statues as aids to their worship. Is there any real difference? Both are aids to worship, and both are man's own innovations, unauthorized in the Holy Scriptures.

Jesus said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him" (John 4:23). Worship is a very significant and intimate encounter with God, and something that He desires from His people. When we engage in worship, we are able to give God pleasure if we come to Him with a right attitude, and if we approach Him in accordance with the truth He has revealed. Singing heartfelt praise, unaccompanied, which expresses the fullness of our joy in Christ, makes a melody well pleasing in God's sight.

Give consideration to your own practice of worship, and heed the challenge in Hebrews 13:15, 16: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." ■

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## From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

# To Whom Much Is Given

by Jeff Guernsey

Throughout Scripture, God encourages us to be prepared, work hard to be worthy of our hire, meet our financial obligations, and conduct our business with integrity. Money is not the problem, nor is it “the root of all evil” as is often misquoted. The verse actually says, “The *love* of money is the root of all evil” (1 Tim. 6:10). God does not condemn wealth, rather, He is concerned with how we live in relation to our money.

How does the Bible instruct us to think about wealth? A few thoughts and principles on that question:

***We are inclined, incorrectly, to view wealth as a spiritual reward and poverty as spiritual judgment.***

In the Old Testament, God promises the Israelites wealth, possessions, and material success as a result of their obedience (Deut. 28:1-14). He also warns that their disobedience would result in negative material consequences (Deut. 28:15-44). Our tendency, however, is to invert this relationship, looking at wealth first and then trying to work back to the blessing of God: “I am wealthy; therefore God must be blessing my good choices.” Or the converse: “I am not wealthy;

I must be doing something wrong.”

This reasoning does not hold up as Scripture reminds us that the wicked sometimes prosper (Job 12:5, 6; 21:7-16). Equally, we find many examples of people doing right, obeying the Lord, who nonetheless suffer—Joseph was thrown into prison, and Job lost everything he had. The Bible names wealthy individuals who served God—Abraham, Jacob, Boaz, Job, Joseph of Arimathea, to name a few—and many more faithful followers who lived with modest means. In his book *God Is at Work: Transforming People and Nations Through Business*, Ken Eldred writes, “Health and wealth is not the proof of obedience to God or sufficient faith in Him, and neither is sickness and poverty the proof of disobedience to God or lack of faith in Him.”

***We are stewards of God's wealth, not owners.***

Moses reminded the Israelites of this truth (Deut. 8:17, 18) and warned them against self-reliance. David also declared that riches and honor come from God (1 Chron. 29:12-16). He is the giver of good gifts (Matt. 7:11; James 1:17). We ought to

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love and worship the Giver rather than the gifts themselves.

God owns it all (Psalm 24:1). Any wealth or possessions we have simply pass through our hands in temporary custody or stewardship. Our role is to be faithful stewards with what is entrusted to us (1 Cor. 4:2). This involves much more than just the money we give but includes all of our resources—those we give and those we choose to retain.

***Material wealth comes with spiritual warnings.***

Possessions are temporary, ethereal, easily vanish, and are subject to decay (Matt. 6:19, 20). Riches are deceitful (Matt. 13:22), and wealth flies away (Prov. 23:4, 5). What the rich have will not last (James 1:11b; 5:2) and will be left to others (Psalms 39:6; 49:10, 11; Eccles. 2:18-21).

How we steward material goods has spiritual consequences. Paul warns that the desire to be rich can lead people away from faith into temptation, leading to destruction and ruin (1 Tim. 6:9, 10).

Anyone who lost a job, income, or retirement investment in the recent economic meltdown knows how quickly wealth can fade. Yet God is faithful and can be trusted above uncertain riches (1 Tim. 6:17). We have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Eph. 1:3).

***We should hold wealth in an open hand and use it to bless others.***

Jesus told a story about a rich man who harvested record crops (Luke 12:16-21). His barns could not hold the surplus. “What should I do?” he mused. He used his wealth to tear down his perfectly adequate barns to build bigger barns. His mantra: “Eat, drink, and be merry!”

When we are possessive of our goods, we are closed off to God as we cannot serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). Those who are rich ought to “do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute” (1 Timothy 6:18).

***Material moderation may itself be a gift.***

In Proverbs 30:8, 9, Agur requests, “Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.” Both riches and poverty have their own issues. Those in want may be tempted to steal (or covet) that which belongs to another; the wealthy may not sense a need for the Lord because of their material goods. The more possessions we have, the more there is to take care of—or the more there is to share with others. ■

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

■ **THOMAS O. CHISHOLM . . . cont'd from page 1** ■

In 1941, at the age of 75, Brother Chisholm wrote a letter in which he praised the Lord for His faithfulness over the years. Although his income was not large due to health issues, he gratefully credited the Lord for wonderfully providing his needs. Thomas recognized God’s involvement in his daily life. Chisholm affirmed that the Lord keeps His covenant with His people!

Thomas Chisholm was careful about his hymn titles and lyrics. He wanted them to be true to God’s Word rather than “light” or irreverent. Chisholm’s desire was to reach the hearts of people with the message of each song. Brother Chisholm’s hymns were not the result of special or dramatic events in his life but rather from his reflections upon the Word of God.

In 1953, at the age of 87, Thomas Chisholm retired and went to live at the Methodist Home for the Aged in Ocean Grove, New Jersey.

On February 29, 1960, at the Home in Ocean Grove, Brother Thomas O. Chisholm went home to be with his faithful Lord. He was 93 years old at the time of his death. He was buried at St. Thomas Whitemarsh Episcopal Church in Whitemarsh, Pennsylvania.

— *Gail L. Emerson*



# THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



## *A Devotional Commentary*



by David L. Burkholder

**JANUARY 2, 2011**

### *The Sovereign Lord*

Isaiah 44:21-28

The five lessons for January continue our study from the Book of Isaiah, encompassing Chapters 44–53. Here again we have prophetically predictive passages referring to events far into Israel's future. The destruction of Jerusalem and the taking of the captives to Babylon was more than 100 years in the future. The return of the captive's children and grandchildren to Jerusalem was yet another 70 years distant. In these passages Isaiah points out, both to his contemporaries and to subsequent generations, the power of God to predict events far beyond the knowledge of man. These passages are designed to give comfort and hope to Israel as these events unfold in their experiences in the future.

God is speaking through Isaiah in our passage for study today. In the first part of the chapter He points out the folly of worshipping man-made idols. Then in verse 21 He calls Israel to remembrance, both of what He has just said regarding the folly of idol worship, and of the things He is about to say in the subsequent verses regarding His power to predict future events and thus to establish His sovereignty over all gods.

God assures Israel that He will not forget them, they are His servant, called to perform His will among mankind. He assures them of His forgiveness, blotting out their transgressions and calling heaven and earth to rejoice over His acts of mercy toward them. He brought the nation to birth; He is the maker of all things. He is the one and only God.

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God's power and wisdom frustrate the works of human diviners, showing how foolish they are in their professed wisdom. By contrast, He confirms the words of His servants and fulfills the predictions of His messengers, the prophets. All of this proves His superiority over the so-called wisdom and pride of man. And also in His sovereignty, to affirm His ability to predict future events and then bring them to pass.

In the last several verses of the chapter Isaiah prophesies the restoration of the nation to Jerusalem, implying the destruction that will precede its restoration. And then, with prophetic voice Isaiah names the king who will cause this to happen. At least 150 years before the birth of Cyrus, Isaiah names him as the one by whose authority Jerusalem and the temple would be rebuilt. Can there be any doubt that the all-knowing God was putting words into Isaiah's mouth?

The reference in verse 27 to the drying up of the waters may refer to God's work at the Red Sea and the Jordan or, more likely perhaps, to the method by which Cyrus diverted the Euphrates River to conquer Babylon and thus become heir of the captive Jews. As such he became their shepherd, performing God's will on behalf of His people. See Ezra 1:1-4 for confirmation of Isaiah's prophecy.

### **For thought and discussion**

1. What are some aids to remembering the things important to our relationship with God? Discuss.
2. Through a prophetic utterance, verses 22 and 23 carry spiritual overtones for all believers. How can we best praise God for His redemption and forgiveness?

**SWORD AND TRUMPET**

3. Do we realize how insignificant our wisdom and knowledge really is when compared to God's? What is the source of true wisdom?
4. What should our understanding of prophecy and its fulfillment do for our view of the future?
5. What was the purpose of the Shema given to Israel in Deuteronomy 6:4, and how does that help us in an age when many are claiming allegiance to other gods or of many ways to God? How does our text for today lend stability to our belief in the One true God?

*Lesson emphasis:* To praise God for His redemptive act on behalf of man and trust Him for yet unfulfilled prophecies.

*Key verse:* 23

## **JANUARY 9, 2011**

### ***The Lord Our Saviour***

Isaiah 45:14-25

Here in Chapter 45 Isaiah continues to explain how God will use Cyrus to accomplish His purposes in regard to His people Israel. (Read verses 1-13.) This is all done to portray God's sovereignty over creation and over mankind. Though uttered several hundred years in advance of the events, these prophecies were to assure those who witnessed their fulfillment of the power and sovereignty of the God of Israel to direct and control the affairs of man. For us it is to affirm the supremacy of the God of heaven and earth.

In verse 14 the Lord predicts through Isaiah that Cyrus as God's tool will hold sway over Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba. This was accomplished by Cyrus' son Cambyses in 525 B.C. Does verse 14 imply that these nations recognized the hand of God in these affairs? Verse 15 certainly implies that God was working behind the scenes, using whom He would to accomplish His purposes (see also 43:3, 4).

Verse 16 reiterates the message of the first part of Chapter 44 portraying the folly of worshiping idols. By contrast, Israel will be saved by the Lord with an everlasting salva-

tion. Of Him they will not be ashamed as will those who bow down to false gods. Again in verse 18 the Lord God affirms His sovereignty and power. There is none like Him. He speaks openly and in righteousness.

In verse 20 and following we see set forth the theme of universal salvation. Fugitives from all nations are invited to forsake graven images which have no power and come to the God who alone is able to save. Again He reiterates that He alone is the God above all gods, the one and only God who is just and has power to save. There is none other. The gods of men are nothing.

In verse 22 we have God's great invitation for all men of the earth. He invites all to come to Him for the salvation that only He can provide. He alone meets the inmost needs of man. He also affirms that one day in the future every knee will bow to Him, some in gratitude, some in unrepentant submission. This theme is reiterated by the Apostle Paul in Philippians 2:9-11.

Verses 24 and 25 show the contrast between those who willingly accept God's call and find in Him strength and righteousness, and those who reject Him and will be put to shame. But "in the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." And not only Israel, but those from every nation and tongue who confess Him as Lord—Lord of creation, God of the present and the future, the One who works all things by the counsel of His own will.

Through Israel worldwide salvation was predicted. And we have been the gracious recipients.

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

1. Why do you suppose God used Cyrus, a heathen king, as His accomplice? Does this passage give us any clues?
2. How is God using the nations of the world today to accomplish His purposes? Discuss.
3. How do we convince people today of the folly of their idols?
4. An underlying theme in this passage is the universal salvation provided by God. What part do His people have to play in His plan? How?

5. How have you seen God at work behind the scenes in your life?

*Lesson emphasis:* That there is but One true God and that He calls all men to Him for salvation.

*Key verse:* 22

## **JANUARY 16, 2011**

### ***God Our Redeemer***

Isaiah 48:12-22

In this passage God declares His sovereignty, His providence, His creative power, and His mercy toward His people Israel. He declares His uniqueness as the One and only God. He also continues to declare His providential care of His chosen nation and refers again to the One He will use to deliver them from bondage. Again, while this passage has historical significance, it also has spiritual implications, brought to fruition through the promised Messiah. Remember that both the historical and spiritual aspects are predicted future events.

If God's chosen people had been faithful to Him they would have lived in peace and safety and multiplied as the sand of the sea (vv. 18, 19). However, with God's farseeing eye He knew they would forsake His laws, live in disobedience, and consequently suffer His judgment in the form of captivity by the Babylonians. But in His mercy He would redeem them, bring them back to their homeland, and orchestrate events for the rebuilding of the temple and the city.

In the first part of today's text God establishes His credentials, calling attention to His creative acts and sustaining power. He also shows His superiority over the so-called gods of the heathen (v. 14a), and mentions again (vv. 14b, 15) the one (Cyrus) whom He has appointed to deliver His chosen ones from bondage. He calls His people to an awareness of His pronouncements regarding their future.

There is difference of opinion on the meaning of verse 16. Some think it refers to Isaiah's call and commission, some feel it

refers only to the coming Messiah (see Isaiah 6 and 61:1). However, it is clear who is speaking in the following verses. It is the Lord, the Holy One, Israel's Redeemer. He is the One who ultimately teaches and instructs them in the way they should live, indicating that if they had faithfully observed His commandments they would have lived and multiplied in peace and safety.

In verse 20 He admonishes them that when opportunity is given they should flee from Babylon. They were to go out with singing, praising God for their deliverance, and proclaiming to the ends of the earth God's greatness and beneficence. Verse 21 assures them of God's provision on their return to Jerusalem, comparing their deliverance from Babylon to their journey through the wilderness after being released from Egyptian bondage. God would provide for them as He did for their forefathers.

Then (v. 22) contrast the predicted peace of His people, settled again in their homeland, living in obedience to His commandments, with the wicked who know no peace. The unspoken message is clear: Choose God's way and His peace will be upon you.

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

1. Use this lesson to remind you once again of God's greatness, His power, His wisdom. He is Creator and Sustainer of all.
2. Our view of the future will be largely determined by how we view events of the past. Do we see God's hand in everything that happens?
3. Does God still use unbelievers to unwittingly help and fulfill His will for His children? Do you have an example? Class sharing.
4. Isaiah certainly didn't understand or live to see the events he prophetically proclaimed. Does God perhaps ask us at times to do things we don't understand or see of any value? What is our response? Do we take the short or the long view?
5. Israel was commanded to sing songs of redemption as they left Babylonian bondage. Do we adequately sing and proclaim our deliverance from spiritual bondage? Perhaps a song service on the theme of redemption would be in order.

*Lesson emphasis:* To reflect on God's power and wisdom in His provision for His people.

*Key verse:* 17

## **JANUARY 23, 2011**

### ***Messiah's Mission***

Isaiah 49:1-7

In this passage we have God's Servant, the Messiah, introduced. We see His call and the outline of His task. The twofold mission of Jesus was to bring God's chosen nation Israel to a full understanding of God's will and purpose for them and also to open the Gospel of salvation to the Gentile world. His mission, as portrayed in this passage, was to proclaim the universal scope of the Gospel of salvation.

That which seems so clear and logical to us was certainly a new concept to the Jews who thought of themselves as specially chosen above the rest of mankind. This was certainly true in the sense that through their nation would come the One who would become the Saviour of all mankind. This was the ongoing historical purpose for which God had chosen Israel and protected and guided them through many generations and many diverse circumstances. We have seen some of this in the past lessons in regard to Israel's prophesied captivity and subsequent release and restoration.

We note the broadening of Messiah's mission in verse 1 where He calls people from afar to listen to His message. Though His mission was established at the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), His mission was hidden until the fullness of God's timing (Galatians 4:4). In verse 3 Messiah is personified as Israel, the nation through which He came to earth.

In verse 4 we get a hint of Jesus' disappointment at the rejection by the very ones He came to save. However, He committed His work to the Father who had sent Him and oversaw His mission. He states that though Israel had not responded favorably to His mission, all was not lost. He would yet be glorified in the eyes of the Lord who would vindicate His mission in its expansion beyond Israel.

The Father's word is that it is too small a task to restrict salvation to the Jews only. Messiah is also sent to be a light to the Gentiles, to illuminate their darkness and show them the path to light and life. God's concern reached beyond His chosen nation to bring salvation to the ends of the earth (see also Isaiah 52:10; Luke 2:25-32).

However, during the days of Messiah's earthly ministry He was often despised and rejected by those He came to save (next Sunday's lesson). Not only was His message rejected, He Himself was subjected to ridicule by His own nation, and finally suffered the ultimate indignity of crucifixion. But that was not the end of His mission. God the Father, the all-powerful One, had chosen Him, sent Him into the world, sustained Him, and will ultimately glorify Him in the sight of all men.

The Holy One of Israel was and still is in charge of the affairs of mankind. He will ultimately triumph over sin and wickedness. Messiah will be exalted.

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

1. Perhaps before going any further in your study you should pause and thank God that the mission of Messiah was not restricted only to the Jews but reached to the ends of the earth, and thus provided salvation for you.
2. Sometimes it seems there is little or no response to our efforts to share the Gospel. Did Jesus give up? Dare we? Wherein lies our strength and motivation?
3. Be sure you understand the full plan of God for humankind, especially the work He began with the call of Abraham, and as it unfolds in these lessons from Isaiah.
4. Jesus accepted His assignment with full knowledge of its consequences. Do we need to know what lies ahead when we answer God's call for service? Why, or why not? Discuss.
5. What is our responsibility to the "ends of the earth"? What methods can we use to reach those beyond our borders?

*Lesson emphasis:* That the mission of Messiah was to all men and to rejoice that it has reached to me.

*Key verse:* 6

**JANUARY 30, 2011**

***The Suffering, Triumphant Saviour***

Isaiah 53:1-12

We have in this passage an accurate and comprehensive description of the promised Messiah and His work, written by Isaiah some 700 years before the advent. We see a description of His person (vv. 1-3), His sufferings (vv. 4-6), His humiliation (vv. 7-9), and the benefit of His death for mankind in verses 10-12. As Halley states it: "So vivid in detail that one would almost think of Isaiah as standing at the foot of the cross. So clear in his mind that he speaks of it in the past tense, as if it had already come to pass. Yet it was written seven centuries before Calvary."

Isaiah laments that those to whom the Lord wished to reveal His will refused to hear His messengers. The Messiah they proclaimed, an inauspicious, unglamorous individual, did not fit the Jewish conception of a delivering, kingly Messiah. Rather, when He did come, they despised and rejected Him. They turned from Him, spurning His person and His offer of salvation. This caused Messiah much grief and sorrow (see also Matthew 23:37).

Nevertheless, rejection by His own people did not stay Him from His mission. He came to redeem mankind and so willingly bore man's suffering and grief. He was bruised, He was pierced for the sins of man, and in that suffering procured peace for man. His torture, His punishment, provided healing for man from his sins. Though man wanders from God as sheep going astray, He has willingly accepted and paid for our iniquity by His death to provide man a way back to the fold of God.

He suffered in silence. Though He could have silenced His oppressors, He quietly endured the affliction, torment, and torture without lashing back at His tormentors. Judgment was denied Him. He was cut off at a young age, killed for the transgression of others. He who knew no sin bore man's sin in a horrible death so man need not die eternally. In His crucifixion He shared death with criminals, in His burial He shared with the

rich. He did it all for the sins of others. He was sinless and pure. What a Saviour!

He was subject to the Father's will and suffered willingly to complete the plan laid down from the foundation of the world. The Father accepted His death for the satisfaction of man's sin, recognizing and honoring the travail of His soul and knowing that many will be justified by an experiential knowledge of His Servant's death (see 1 Peter 2:21-25).

But the Servant's story isn't all humiliation and suffering. Because He suffered, because He accepted humiliation, He will also ultimately be exalted. As a reward for His sufferings He will one day be given dominion over all nations and peoples. All will acknowledge Him as King of kings and Lord of lords—forever (see Isaiah 52:13; Philippians 2:7-11).

This Servant is none other than Jesus the Son of God, our wonderful Saviour. Praise Him for His sacrificial life and death which secured for us eternal salvation.

**For thought and discussion**

1. The Jews of Jesus' day were not the only ones who rejected this Saviour and His work. What are present-day hindrances and excuses some give for rejecting Him? Discuss.
2. What factors should determine our acceptance of God's servants today? Popularity? Position? Eloquence? Good for discussion.
3. What responsibility do we as God's under-shepherds have to the scattered sheep in today's world?
4. Jesus accepted humiliation and torture, suffering unjustly. What should be our attitude and response when we are unjustly accused? What rights do we have?
5. Marvel again at the accuracy and fulfillment of prophesy. Look up New Testament Scriptures portraying fulfillment of issues spoken to in this passage.
6. This suffering Servant is your Saviour. Thank Him again for suffering humiliation and death to give you eternal life.

*Lesson emphasis:* To understand the tremendous physical, psychological, and social suffering Jesus endured for my salvation.

*Key verses:* 4 and 5

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**SWORD AND TRUMPET**

# 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

## Mosque Near Ground Zero

“Many New Yorkers were suspicious of the newcomers’ plans to build a house of worship in Manhattan. Some feared the project was being underwritten by foreigners. Others said the strangers’ beliefs were incompatible with democratic principles.

“Concerned residents staged demonstrations, some of which turned bitter.

“But cooler heads eventually prevailed; the project proceeded to completion. And this week, St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church in Lower Manhattan—the locus of all that controversy two centuries ago and now the oldest Catholic church in New York State—is celebrating the 225th anniversary of the laying of its cornerstone.

“The Rev. Kevin V. Madigan, who is the pastor of St. Peter’s, said that when he began reading about the history of his church early this year in preparation for the anniversary on Tuesday, he was . . . struck by the parallels between the opposition it had faced and what present-day Muslims have encountered in proposing a community center and mosque near ground zero.

“The angry eruptions at some of the demonstrations this summer against the Muslim center—with signs and slogans attacking Islam—were not as vehement as those staged against St. Peter’s,” Father Madigan said.

“On Christmas Eve 1806, two decades after the church was built, the building was surrounded by Protestants incensed at a celebration going on inside—a religious observance then viewed by some in the United States as an exercise in ‘popish superstition,’ more commonly referred to as Christmas. Protesters tried to disrupt the service. In the melee that ensued, dozens

were injured, and a policeman was killed.

“‘We were treated as second-class citizens; we were viewed with suspicion,’ Father Madigan wrote in his letter to parishioners, adding, ‘Many of the charges being leveled at Muslim-Americans today are the same as those once leveled at our forebears.’ There are a number of things to remember in this story. The first is to remember our own forebears’ experience of being persecuted and chased from Europe. Let’s make sure we’re not doing the same, if only verbally. The second thing is that it is insensitive on the Muslims’ part to build a mosque so close to ground zero—the equivalent would be building a church on the site of a Crusader massacre. However, as non-resistant followers of Jesus, their insensitivity doesn’t change our responsibilities.”

—Excerpt from “In Fierce Opposition to a Muslim Center, Echoes of an Old Fight” (<http://j.mp/MuslimNYC>) in *The New York Times*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Philly Cops Rob Drug Dealers

Two Philadelphia police officers have been charged with a number of different things in connection with robbing a person they thought to be a drug dealer of \$3000 in cash and \$24,000 worth of marijuana. The dealer turned out to be another undercover police officer. Five Philadelphia police officers have been accused or convicted of robbing drug dealers in the past year. They are the perfect target because the drug dealers can’t go to the police and it seems perfectly natural for police to be “arresting” drug dealers and “confiscating” their drugs and money. —Source: *NBC Philadelphia*

\* \* \* \* \*

### CA Welfare Spent Out of State

“More than \$69 million in California welfare money, meant to help the needy pay their rent and clothe their children, has been spent or withdrawn outside the state in recent years, including millions in Las Vegas, hundreds of thousands in Hawaii, and thousands on cruise ships sailing from Miami.

“State-issued aid cards have been used at hotels, shops, restaurants, ATMs and other places in 49 other states, the U. S. Virgin Islands and Guam, according to data obtained by *The Times* from the California Department of Social Services. Las Vegas drew \$11.8 million of the cash benefits, far more than any other destination.”

—Excerpt from “\$69 million in California welfare money drawn out of state” (<http://j.mp/WelfareVegas>) in the *Los Angeles Times*

\* \* \* \* \*

### Between the Boy and the Bridge— A Haunting Question

By all accounts Tyler Clementi was an 18-year-old young man who was excited to be a freshman in college, gifted as a violinist, and looking forward to the future. All that changed [at the end of September] when he walked out onto the massive George Washington Bridge that connects New York with New Jersey and jumped 200 feet to his death.

The last few days of Tyler Clementi’s life were a cauldron of confusions. Over the course of three days, he learned that his roommate at Rutgers University had surreptitiously turned a webcam toward his bed, filming him in a romantic encounter with another male student. The roommate employed social media to inform friends of the event, turning what Tyler assumed was a private moment into a devastating public disclosure.

It is now clear that Tyler was crushed, confused, and angry. He posted thoughts about how he might respond on the Web and finally wrote this on his Facebook page: “Jumping off gw bridge sorry.”

[The AP reports]:

“Clementi’s death was part of a string of suicides last month involving youngsters who were believed to have been victims of anti-gay bullying. Fifteen-year-old Billy Lucas hanged himself in a barn in Greensburg, Indiana. Asher Brown, 13, shot himself in the head in Houston. And 13-year-old Seth Walsh of Tehachapi, Calif. hanged himself from a tree in his backyard.”

Tyler joined Billy, Seth, and Asher as tragic evidence of the dangerous intersection of sexual confusion, hateful classmates, and the wide-open world of social media. These boys simply ran out of the emotional ability to face life, crushed by the burden of secrets and the bullying of their peers.

The homosexual community will argue that these boys were oppressed by the fact that so many believe that homosexuality is sinful. They respond with calls for the acceptance and normalization of homosexuality. Their logic is easy to understand. If the stigma attached to homosexuality were to disappear, persons who are convinced that they are homosexual in sexual orientation, along with those who are confused, would be free from bullying, the threat of exposure, and injury to their parents and loved ones.

Of course, Christians committed to biblical truth will recognize this as a demand to lie to sinners about their sin. The church cannot change its understanding of the sinfulness of homosexual acts unless it willfully disobeys the Scripture and rejects the authority of the Bible to reveal the truth about sin and sinfulness.

But this is not the end of the matter, and we know it. When gay activists accuse conservative Christians of homophobia, they are wrong. Our concern about the sinfulness of homosexuality is not rooted in fear, but in faithfulness to the Bible—and faithfulness means telling the truth.

Yet, when gay activists accuse conservative Christians of homophobia, they are also right. Much of our response to homosexuality is rooted in ignorance and fear.

We speak of homosexuals as a particular class of especially depraved sinners and we lie about how homosexuals experience their own struggle. Far too many evangelical pastors talk about sexual orientation with a crude dismissal or with glib assurances that gay persons simply choose to be gay. While most evangelicals know that the Bible condemns homosexuality, far too many find comfort in their own moralism, consigning homosexuals to a theological or moral category all their own. [I highly recommend you read a companion article by Albert Mohler entitled “Divorce—The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience” ([http://j.mp/Divorce\\_Mohler](http://j.mp/Divorce_Mohler)).]

What if Tyler Clementi had been in your church? Would he have heard biblical truth presented in a context of humble truth-telling and gospel urgency, or would he have heard irresponsible slander, sarcastic jabs, and moralistic self-congratulation? What about Asher and Billy and Seth?

The teenage years are hard enough to navigate. Most boys do not struggle with homosexuality, but there is not a teenage boy alive who does not struggle with sexual confusion. There is no deacon, preacher, or pew-sitter who went through male adolescence unscathed and without sin. There is not a human being who reaches school age who would not be humiliated by a well-placed webcam.

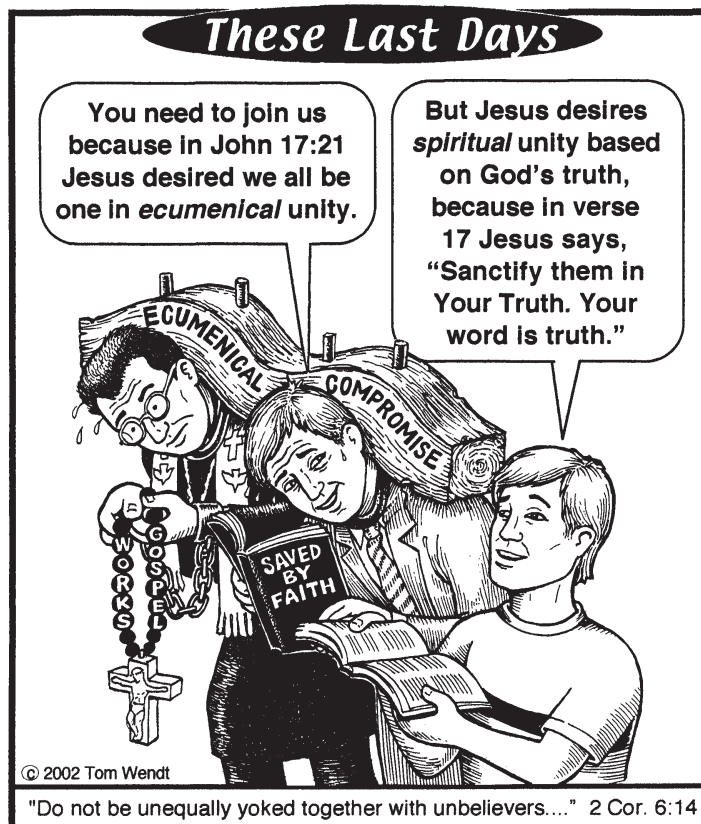
As Christians, we just have to wonder. *Was there no believer to befriend Tyler*

*and, without loving his homosexuality, love him?* The homosexual community insists that to love someone is to love their sexual orientation. We know this to be a lie. But no one who loves me should love nor rationalize my sin. The church must be the people who speak honestly about sin because we have first learned by God’s grace to speak honestly of our own.

I am haunted by the one question that seems so obvious and clear in the account of Tyler Clementi’s tragic death. In those days of crushing anguish, humiliation, and confusion, was there *no one* who could have stood between that boy and that bridge?

—Condensed version of “Between the Boy and the Bridge—A Haunting Question” ([http://j.mp/Homosexuality\\_Mohler](http://j.mp/Homosexuality_Mohler)) reprinted with permission from AlbertMohler.com. Written by Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr., the president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

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# Homosexuality: Genetic, Healthy, and Beneficial? Flaws in the Arguments

by Kiah Wenger

“It’s an abomination!”

• “You are a bigoted homophobe!”

These emotionally charged words are often exchanged in heated arguments over the issue of homosexuality. Many advocates of the homosexual way of life claim that homosexuality is genetic, healthy, and beneficial for society. On the other hand, those who oppose the practice of homosexuality state that homosexuality is not an unchangeable genetic trait, that it is often the result of unhealthy family structures, and that it is harmful for society.

However, is there valid evidence and scientific evidence to support these claims? Recent scientific evidence supports the notion that homosexuality is a changeable lifestyle, unhealthy for the individual, and harmful to society. There are *flaws* found in several claims about homosexuality—that homosexuality is genetic and not a matter of choice; that it is not harmful to one’s health; and that it is beneficial for society to embrace.

## ***1. The first claim is that homosexuality is genetic, an inherited trait that is unchangeable, and must be accepted as natural.***

Homosexuals have been compared to blacks during the Civil Rights era—discriminated against because of an unchangeable genetic trait (*Layman* 117-18). Supporters of homosexuality state that if it were a simple choice of preference, like choosing a food selection from a buffet—why would homosexuals endure the persecution and discrimination that sometimes occurs from choosing a gay lifestyle (*Layman* 115)? If this notion is true, that homosexuality is an unchangeable genetic trait,

any opposition to homosexuality seems to be reduced to prejudice and hateful slander.

There are several flaws, however, with this claim that homosexuality is an unchangeable genetic trait.

The first flaw is the idea that if homosexuality is inherited it must be acceptable. If someone claimed that his out-of-control anger was inherited genetically, society would understand that the person has an inclination to anger, but would not pardon the acts of uncontrolled anger (*Dr. Satinover*). Also if there was a “rape gene” that was inherited, society would understand that the people who inherited the “rape gene” were predisposed to rapist desires, but certainly would not allow people to act on these feelings (*Harub, Thompson, and Miller*).

The second flaw with the idea that homosexuality is an unalterable genetic trait, is that many men and women have *turned* from a homosexual lifestyle to a life of heterosexuality. One study found that seventy-five percent of men who think they are gay at age seventeen, “change” on their own, and by age twenty-five are not gay (*Dr. Satinover*).

Additional studies have shown that homosexual feelings can be removed. According to psychiatrist Dr. Jeffrey Satinover, multiple studies have shown those who undergo treatment of some kind for unwanted homosexual feelings have “success rates ranging from 30% to 70%.” If homosexuality were an unchangeable genetic trait, there should be virtually no record of anyone changing. The pro-homosexual Dr. Robert Spitzer, a high-ranking psychiatrist and researcher at Columbia University,

performed his own study about whether or not homosexuality was changeable, and concluded: "I'm convinced from the people I have interviewed—that for many of them, they have made substantial changes toward becoming heterosexual . . . I think that's news . . . I came to this study skeptical (of that possibility). I now claim that these changes can be sustained" (quoted in Dr. Satinover's testimony).

Another aspect of whether or not homosexuals can change is the question: Are attempts to change *unhealthy* for the homosexual? Contrary to claims that going against homosexual attraction will harm the individual, studies have shown that there is no indication that those who undergo change from homosexuality suffer psychological harm. A researcher in a study conducted on this topic, Stanton L. Jones (a provost and professor at Wheaton College), stated that throughout the study the subjects were psychologically assessed and Jones noted that there was no change in their distress level (*Williams*). In addition to studies showing people can choose to depart from a homosexual lifestyle, other studies have shown that sexual activities can change the structure of one's brain. According to Mark Breedlove, a researcher at the University of California at Berkeley, the sexual actions taken by, or impressed upon, an individual can alter their brain structure (*Harrub, Thompson, and Miller*). This shows that one's upbringing greatly affects their perceptions and inclinations.

The notion that homosexuality is not an *unchangeable genetic trait* is further backed by studies involving identical twins where one twin grows up to be homosexual. If homosexuality is an unchangeable genetic trait then identical twins with matching sets of chromosomes would both grow up to be homosexual. One study conducted by Michael Bailey and Richard Pillard (researchers at Northwestern University and the Boston University School of Medicine), showed however, there is only a 50% chance that identical twins will *both* grow up to be homosexual. The results of the study further dispelled the genetic link by showing that subjects who were adopted

siblings had a greater chance of being homosexual than non-twin biological siblings (*Harrub, Thompson, and Miller*).

These flaws in the genetic theory of homosexuality do not mean that homosexual feelings are not real or are easy to control. Those who have turned from a homosexual lifestyle attest to the difficulty of the lifestyle change (*Williams*). It simply shows that though the change is difficult, it is not impossible like many advocates of homosexuality assert. The claim that homosexuality is an unchangeable genetic trait has major flaws, mainly the idea that something inherited is not necessarily good, the fact that many people change from a homosexual lifestyle, and the scientific evidence that shows a disconnect between genetics and homosexual behavior.

**2. A second claim of those who promote homosexuality is that homosexuality is a normal and healthy aspect of human behavior.**

Advocates of homosexuality declare it is healthy for homosexual individuals to embrace their orientation as reality, and to live courageously a lifestyle that reflects their feelings (*Layman* 115, 116). Several flaws exist with this claim that homosexuality is a natural and healthy human behavior.

The main flaw with the claim that homosexuality is a natural and healthy human behavior is homosexuals are at higher risk to various diseases and psychological disorders. According to multiple studies referenced by psychiatrist Dr. Jeffrey Satinover, who testified before the Massachusetts Senate Judicial Committee on the issue of homosexuality, twenty-year-old homosexual males were found to have a thirty percent or greater chance to be HIV positive, or to suffer death from AIDS by age thirty. Another study referenced by PROBE author Sue Bohlin, found that homosexual behavior renders the individual at greater risk for "alcoholism and drug abuse; depression; emotionally exhausting relationships; and a shortened life span." Homosexual activists counter these studies by attributing the shorter life spans of homosexuals to the stress induced by alleged prejudice and

discrimination against homosexuals. However, this is an invalid argument due to the fact that studies have yielded similar results in countries that are extremely pro-homosexual. According to a study conducted in the pro-homosexual countries of Denmark and the Netherlands, heterosexual couples outlive gay and lesbian couples by more than 20 years on average (Cameron).

**3. A third claim of pro-homosexuals is that if it were embraced and accepted it would improve the society of the United States.**

Advocates of homosexuality staunchly insist that it is crucial for society to accept homosexuality as a symbol of human diversity.

The first flaw is demonstrated by the disintegration of marriages and the family structure in nations that have adopted homosexuality. Even though some proponents of homosexuality proclaim that homosexuals desire a permanent lover, Scandinavia is a modern example of the corroding effect that embracing homosexuality has on a nation. Analyzing trends of decline in marriages and increase in children born outside of marriage in Scandinavian countries that legalized gay marriage, author Stanley Kurtz stated, "Marriage is slowly dying in Scandinavia" (quoted in *Anderson*).

A second flaw with the assertion that embracing homosexuality is beneficial for society is the likely possibility that it will not only *destroy* marriage, but also *open* the door to the acceptance of many other kinds of unnatural human relationships. When deviances from heterosexual marriages, such as the homosexual preference, are accepted as mere "aspects of behavioral diversity," what is to stand against preference such as polygamy or bestiality other than the time needed by advocates to desensitize society (*Anderson*)? Accepting homosexuality will destroy marriage and dissolve the structure of the family unit, which is crucial for any society to survive.

Homosexuality is a changeable lifestyle, is unhealthy for individuals, and is harmful to society. As responsible citizens, we must look not only how a behavior affects us, but also how the behavior affects society. It is

clear that the traditional heterosexual family structure is the very foundation of a society, and when that institution fails—then society is weakened. It is crucial therefore, that each individual firmly oppose the acceptance of homosexuality, for it harms not only the individual but also the society as a whole. It is equally crucial that the opposition is aimed exclusively at the practice of homosexuality and not the homosexual person, for each life is to be respected and treated with dignity. ■

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# Deadly Exposure

by Jeff Colón

**I**n the early morning hours of April 26, 1986, a testing error caused an explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear power station in northern Ukraine. A radioactive fire ensued and burned for 10 days, expelling 190 tons of toxic materials into the atmosphere. The explosion released 100 times the amount of radiation unleashed on Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined.

Over 7 million people were exposed to the deadly radioactive materials, which in the course of time has revealed a staggering array of health concerns. The list includes thyroid cancer, leukemia, nervous system disorders, bone and muscle disorders, diabetes, birth defects, genetic mutations, cardiac abnormalities, and a variety of other and new forms of cancer. Also, a large percent of the environment in which Chernobyl residents continue to live (i.e., the air, ground water, soil, and food) is still contaminated—over twenty years later.

A common misconception is that only a few people died as a result of the Chernobyl disaster, yet the facts show differently. Those who experienced acute exposure (which is a high dose of radiation over a short period of time) saw quicker results. Approximately 134 power station workers were exposed to extremely high doses of radiation directly after the accident. About 31 of these people died within three months. Another 25,000 “liquidators” (i.e., the soldiers and firefighters who were involved in cleanup operations) have died since the disaster from diseases such as lung cancer, leukemia, and cardiovascular disease. In the case of the millions of others who were and still are exposed to lower doses of radiation, the ramifications will be felt for decades to come.

I recently read the story of a firefighter who was part of the cleanup describing what it was like at the time and how his life has been affected by it. “There was

graphite lying all over,” Zakharov said. “Several tons of uranium lying around. There was fear inside us all as we knew we were dying there. I had a metal taste in my mouth, and it felt like someone was touching my body all over from inside, muscles, bones, everything.”

Today Zakharov has terrible scars on his leg due to radiation burns and recently had a cancerous tumor removed from his knee. He spends up to a month in the hospital every year getting blood transfusions and bone marrow transplants. “Just before my friends died, they all said the same thing: their bones hurt and it hurt just to move,” he said. “That’s how I feel now.”

As tragic as that may seem, it pales in comparison to the enormity of another silent killer called sin, whose toxic cloud has overshadowed the whole of humanity in its hideous, cold, and chilling death grip.

Sin is a poison that affects the whole human race. It is like a great fire that begins with a spark, and if left unchecked, devours everything in its path. It destroys the soul and burns to the lowest hell. The person who thinks he can live and continue to expose himself to sin’s toxic fumes and remain unaffected is sorely deceived and doesn’t realize that this inconspicuous killer is already at work, deep within his soul. The man who continues to expose himself to any kind of sin is basically throwing himself into a consuming fire that won’t relent until his whole body and soul are utterly destroyed. The wise man rightly asked, “Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?” (Proverbs 6:27).

The Bible clearly states that sin can manifest itself in the lives of people in many forms. Most assuredly, unless a man is released from sin’s deadly exposure, the end result is not only a physical death, but everlasting ruin, where fallout will be felt throughout all eternity. The penalty of sin

is as certain as the laws of nature, and far more terrible and destructive in its power.

For any man who has a sight of the reality of sin and where it leads to, it would be absolutely insane to even consider exposing himself to it again and again. It would be like asking someone to go and stand inside of the now sealed Chernobyl nuclear reactor, which is as hot as ever inside. We know because of science that would prove fatal. How much more should we reverence and obey the Word of God, which warns us that “the wages of sin is DEATH” (Romans 6:23).

We were born in sin, and therefore, it affects every aspect of our lives. Millions die an eternal death every year due to sin’s toxic fumes. People basically go about life unaware of what is taking place deep down in their souls—even those who sit smugly in church pews week after week who’ve never truly repented of sin.

The psalmist describes sin’s effect on the human soul when he says, “When I kept silence [before I confessed], my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long” (Psalm 32:3). That is the reality of what is taking place in a man’s soul when he doesn’t confess and forsake his sin but rather continues to live in it.

Those dealing with the aftermath of the nuclear accident at Chernobyl are at the mercy of scientists and doctors who are grappling with all the problems related to their exposure to radioactive material. Yet with the most advanced technology and human ingenuity, these men have no solutions to mankind’s fallen nature. Unrepentant sinners must face the consequence of eternal death.

Thankfully, what man could not do, God had done through His only begotten Son Jesus Christ, who took away the curse and penalty of sin. He has given us a living hope through the blood of Christ. Praise the Lord for His divine healing power for the soul!

Confession and repentance pave the way to the cure for sin. The light of God is like a divine X-ray of the soul that reveals how and where we are exposing our soul to sin’s deadly influence. When that light comes—whether through His Word, by His Spirit, or through one of His saints—the first

thing we must do is acknowledge our sin and confess it before God and man.

The tremendous hope we have is that we can turn from sin to God at any time. We don’t have to succumb to the deadly influence of sin. Confession opens the door to life, and the fear and worship of God is what enables us to walk in “newness of life.” A lifestyle centered on loving God and being a doer of His Word will expose us to His divine presence, which in turn will shelter us from sin’s lethal exposure.

God is always calling sinners to repentance. He can see the danger we are in every minute we allow ourselves to continue in sin. We can’t afford to live one more moment under its influence. It’s a matter of life or death! “Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts!” God desires that all would come to repentance. He doesn’t delight in the death of one sinner. ■

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**REALITY OF GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY . . . cont’d.** really can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

Faith is a powerful force. Biblical faith in the living God is a means of grace God chooses to lead and bless His people. Whatever happens to me or in this world, God is the same God. He does not change. He does love His people, and if we go through times of testing, temptation, hurt, loss, etc., it is not without His knowledge and His care. God has a plan, and His plan will come to pass.

He has told us that we can know that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. That verse (Romans 8:28) could not be true if God were not sovereign. Since He is sovereign, we can be sure God is working out His plan through all different kinds of puzzling and even evil circumstances.

God is sovereign. We are not. Trust Him. He knows what He’s doing, even if there are times we don’t understand what is going on. ■

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## Counseling From the Word

# The Reality of God's Sovereignty

by James Rudy Gray

God is sovereign. That clear Biblical teaching can be a tremendous reality when we try to help hurting people. We must pay attention to whatever problem they present, but we must also encourage them to see the truth about God. His sovereignty is so basic and so empowering.

Because God is sovereign, we can find peace and assurance in the midst of circumstances, hurts, injustices, and crises that otherwise would not seem to make sense to us. To say that God is sovereign means that God is in control. He rules and reigns. Dr. R. C. Sproul has pointed out that there is not one maverick molecule in all the universe!

Even sin falls under His sovereignty. He does not tempt people but He does allow the devil to tempt people. He does not cause sin because He is holy, but He allows people to sin. Everything that happens in life may not be good, but it is real, and accepting reality is a huge step in having good mental and emotional health.

Sometimes our clients may seem overwhelmed with the massive power of Satan. They may become so focused on the idea of evil and the person of Satan that they overlook the obvious: Satan is, in a real sense, God's devil! He can do no more than the sovereign God allows. Whatever happens to us, whether it is good or bad, God is still the same God. He never loses control. He is always ruling over people, nations, climates, etc. He is never surprised by anything that

happens on this earth. He is not only aware of what is going on but He is involved in what is going on—by using His intervening power or by allowing things to happen. Either way, it is God who is over it all.

God's great purpose on this earth is for His own glory. His people are called to glorify His name. Nature reflects the greatness of His glory. When we recognize we are not sovereign and God is, we can rest in Him and His Word. We are inspired and strengthened to seek first His kingdom. We desire to worship Him. We commit ourselves to serving Him, not because we want to get something, but because we already have something: an eternal relationship with God through the new life in Jesus Christ.

How can that help a hurting person? Once we have helped them identify their thoughts or interpretations about their life and situation, then we can direct them into the great truth that God is sovereign. It is important to emphasize that it is not the sovereignty of God that should be the focus but the God who is sovereign. It is a relational way of knowing better the awesome God of creation and redemption.

If a person can believe that God is sovereign, it is enough to know that He knows. Nothing passes into our lives that has not first been sent or allowed by Him. Our hope is not in a sophisticated understanding of evil but in a clear faith in Christ Jesus. We

*(continued on previous page)*

# The Last Meridian

by Michael G. Loftis

*Across the earth's surface run a series of imaginary arcs. Called meridians, these arcs run from the North Pole to the South Pole and connect all the locations along them with a corresponding longitude.*

If you begin on a globe at the Prime Meridian and spin the globe eastward, you will come to a longitude of 147° 8' 90". If you follow that line south from the North Pole it will trace across Siberia, run just east of Tokyo, and on south to Sydney, Australia. Between Tokyo and Sydney, if you stop precisely south of the equator at latitude -9° 27' 59" you will be standing in the center of Port Moresby, the capital city of Papua New Guinea—an island slightly larger than the state of California.

From the capital you can take a small plane to a number of locations up in the highlands where you will find ABWE missionaries serving their Master, Jesus Christ.

Why are they here? They are seeking to obey their Lord.

Jesus taught his men to "go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19). This word *nations* was simply the Greek word *ethne*, meaning the peoples of the world. Jesus' command to His followers is that we find every people group and make disciples among them. Just before His ascension into Heaven, Jesus provided another reference point in His command: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In order to be obedient to His command, Jesus' followers were to find every people in every place on earth to bring them the news of

salvation through faith in Christ.

According to Peoplegroups.org, the island nation of Papua New Guinea, with a population of approximately 5.5 million, is home to 841 people groups of various ethnic origins. Only the nation of India encompasses more people groups. In stark contrast to Papua New Guinea, however, India has more than one billion people. One of the reasons there are so many people groups in the small nation of Papua New Guinea is that they are separated by both difficult terrain and a multiplicity of languages.

Missionaries must be willing to cross both kinds of barriers to reach these people. They take with them many different kinds of tools—medicine, education, agriculture, building skills, family and community involvement, children's work, Bible teaching, and the development of new local churches.

The Gospel seed that these missionaries sow is taking root and bearing fruit—though not without difficulty and opposition. These missionaries need us to understand their stories and undergird them with our prayers, our finances, and even our personal involvement. Perhaps one day soon, the last missionary will cross the last meridian with the Gospel to the last unreached people group. Until then, of the approximately 11,583 people groups in the world, we still have to reach 6,661 before arriving at the last meridian. ■

—From *ABWE Message*, 2010. Used with permission.



## 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).

### “Thou Shalt Not Muzzle the Ox”

by Bruce A. Stauffer

“Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope” (1 Corinthians 9:9, 10).

The time of harvest is here. Those who worked hard to plow and plant are now privileged to reap the rewards of their labors. This is just and right. God revealed through Paul that this principle applies to spiritual workers as well. It is right that those who labor in kingdom work would be financially supported. “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:14).

Church leaders feel conspicuous in teaching this truth because they, like Paul, find fulfillment in spreading “the gospel of Christ without charge.” “Neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me” (1 Corinthians 9:15). We enjoy a heritage of spiritual fathers who have kept the Gospel free by avoiding a salaried ministry. Ministry labor without a salary “lest [they] should hinder the gospel of Christ” and so that they “abuse not [their] power in the gospel.” This

Scriptural concept is also important so that leaders might “gain the more” and “have a reward.”

However, those who benefit from the labors of God’s faithful servants feel an obligation to share with them. Paul reminded the Corinthians that it was just and right for laborers in “spiritual things” to be reimbursed with “carnal things.” Our *Rules and Discipline* states that “the brotherhood should consider it a responsibility and a privilege to share their material blessings with the faithful ministry.” God has blessings in store for those who heed this Scriptural command.

*Sharing provides a living for dedicated Christian workers.* “Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple” (1 Corinthians 9:13)? Full financial support is a Scriptural answer for missionaries and others who cannot provide for their own living.

*Sharing lifts the burden of workers who carry a heavy load.* Service in the church requires much time that some can hardly afford to give. The young minister, the school principal, or your busy bishop faces an extra challenge to make ends meet. We should be alert to support anyone who is carrying more than a normal share of



kingdom work. If “you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” (James 2:16).

*Sharing expresses thanks for the debt we owe to God’s servants.* Just as a child can never repay his parents for all that they have done, so we can never repay our spiritual fathers. Their prayers for our souls, their tears for our wanderings, and their pain in our discipline are all intangible values that we can never repay. We should say thank you! And we can lighten their care where we see that it is heavy.

*Sharing cultivates a sense of brotherhood.* The joy of giving and the gratitude of receiving knits believers together into a fabric of glory to God. Our native independence is curbed by a spirit of thankfulness for the contribution others make to our lives. On the other hand, it is a tonic to our humility to accept assistance with gratitude. Could it be that the favorable economic climate has lessened our dependence on one another? Leaders must cultivate a sense of dependence on the brotherhood in their calling to lead the flock.

*Sharing challenges workers to be diligent in their calling.* A gift is a reminder of the confidence others have in our sacrifice. Are we worthy? Are we as ministers sacrificing the time that we should to prepare inspiring messages, visit the sick and wayward, or comfort the widows? Is the work of the kingdom suffering because we, like the disciples, have gone fishing? The free meal that Christ prepared on the shore may have been a small rebuke for the disciples’ detour from their calling. A “meal” provided by Christ through a brother may be Christ’s call to “feed my lambs.”

*Sharing brings joy and reward to the givers.* “Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account” (Philippians 4:17). By faith we understand that every sacrifice will be rewarded with multiplied blessings. We give according to the extent of our faith in the blessing.

As we gather in the fruits of the earth, we should remember those who have spent time in kingdom work and share God’s good gifts with them. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Eastern Mennonite Testimony*, October 2010.

## Walking With God

by Brian G. Toews

One of the most common words in any language is the word *walk*. In the languages that I have studied this was usually one of the first words a student learned because of its frequency. This may be due to the fact that most of human daily activity involves walking. It is also noteworthy that for most of human history people walked from place to place and from town to town, usually on well-worn paths. We can see this when there are unfortunate events causing masses of peo-

ple to flee their homes as refugees on foot. It is no wonder then that the Bible adopts the word *walk* as a common metaphor for our daily behavior and as a general summation of our whole life. The metaphor is one that a reader from any culture or time can easily grasp. It is a basic fact of the reality God has created, and we find it at the beginning of Scripture.

In the Garden of Eden the Lord laid out a path for the man and the woman to walk on as He walked in the midst of the Gar-

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SWORD AND TRUMPET

den with them. One of the first pictures of our relationship with God is that we walk together with Him (Genesis 3:8). Even after the fall and their exile from the Garden, the righteous could still walk with God. Enoch and Noah walked with God which, in their case, was a general description of their life lived before God (Genesis 5:22; 6:9). Other Scriptures point out that in our walk with God, He is present as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:4). He is our shepherd who provides for us on the way (Psalm 23:1), and He is our power in our trials and struggles (ex., Israel's walk through the Red Sea and around the walls of Jericho). To abandon Him is to become a beggar and wanderer on the earth like Cain (Genesis 4:14).

Not only do the righteous walk with God, but they are instructed to walk in His ways, in contrast to ways that are opposed to His will. Israel was to walk in the Lord's statutes, not the statutes of the nations (Leviticus 18:2-5); they were to walk after the Lord, not after foreign gods. The kings of Judah were to follow after David, not after Jeroboam of Israel, because David was a man who walked after the Lord's heart. The Book of Proverbs describes the two paths a person can walk in—a path of wisdom and a path of folly. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks about the wide road that leads to destruction and the narrow road that leads to life, and then concludes His sermon by essentially calling Himself the narrow way (Matthew 7:13, 14). In John's gospel and letters, he speaks of walking in the light as opposed to darkness. Paul speaks of walking in the Spirit and not the flesh (Galatians 5:16-18). To walk with God in His way is the road less traveled; it is a different path.

#### ***What are some implications for our journey with God?***

First, we believe that the Word of God is the center of all life and learning. It is not just for our worship on Sundays, for our times of meditation and prayer, or for

Bible classes. The whole of life is centered on the Word in Scripture and the Word incarnate, whatever we do, even eating and drinking (1 Corinthians 10:31). Each step of our way with God is paved with the Scriptures and so we are careful how we walk (Ephesians 5:15).

Second, a Biblical anthropology should shape how we view our walk with God on earth. The scene in the Garden of Eden is an excellent portrait of the Christian family, church, or school. It is a special place set apart for humans to live together, learn, and explore the world God made, while walking with Him in His commandments. Our beliefs and practices concerning this journey with God need to seriously consider the positive significance of the body and the importance of place. Our Western tradition is detrimental to our understanding of this significance. Plato has left us with the notion that the body is a hindrance in the pursuit of truth. Descartes' notion that a person is merely a thinking thing diminishes the Biblical idea of human beings made in the image of God embodied and embedded together. Paul tells us that we will receive our due for the things done in the body, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10). We tend not to take into consideration that our faithful service to the Lord is accomplished in our bodies. The only way we walk on earth with God is in a body. It is a good gift and with it acceptable service to Him is performed (Romans 12:1).

Third, the idea of a different path should encourage us to think creatively and not to fear asking new questions or seeking new solutions. All we have to do is review how Jesus handled the questions and issues of His day with people marveling because His teaching was so revolutionary. More precisely, Jesus' words and works were not revolutionary; He was walking with God in His ways. Just as we have received the Lord Jesus, let us then walk in Him (Col. 2:6). ■

—Reprinted with permission from *PBU Today*, Fall 2010.



# Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

“... singing with understanding!”

## “Teach Me the Measure of My Days”



by Watts/Redhead

**Lyrics:** Isaac Watts is primarily remembered for his work in promoting the use of new hymns in worship. In his day, the accepted texts for use in worship were limited to the psalms, although it was permissible to adapt them to verse form to allow for congregational singing. This practice was initiated by John Calvin, whose teachings were the ones referred to by the proponents of the “psalm-only” school of thought.<sup>1</sup>

Although he wrote many new hymns, Watts also honored the traditions of his day by writing many verse adaptations of the Psalms. However, he took a slightly more liberal view of this practice than did many of his predecessors and contemporaries. Music scholar Stephen Marini describes Watts’ perspective on the Psalms:

While he granted that David . . . was unquestionably a chosen instrument of God, Watts claimed that his religious understanding could not have fully apprehended the truths later revealed through Jesus Christ. The Psalms should therefore be “renovated” as if David had been a Christian, or as Watts put it in the title of his 1719 metrical psalter, they should be “imitated in the language of the New Testament.”<sup>2</sup>

“Teach Me the Measure of My Days” is one such Psalm (39) that was versified by Watts. In the first part of the psalm, David sets the context for this hymn by making an effort to restrain his tongue from speaking anything

evil. In order to do so, he refrained from speaking at all . . . even good things! While he doesn’t specifically comment on what made him sorrowful, we do know from other passages in Scripture that it is impossible in one’s own strength to keep from speaking evil. It could be that a feeling of helplessness overwhelmed David at the realization of his own sinfulness, and inspired him to pen the words that resulted in this hymn. He ends the psalm on a very dejected note.

Watts, from his New Testament perspective, takes David’s lament and puts a slightly more positive spin on it. Instead of ending with a desperate plea for help, as David does, he recognizes that the solution to our vanity is found in giving up ourselves, and making “my God my all.”

**Music:** The outstanding characteristics of this hymn tune are its simplicity and versatility. The pitches of the melody stay within a very small range, and the motion is mostly step-wise, with only one jump of more than the interval of a third. The tune originates from the 1562 *English Psalter*, and was one of the tunes that was sung with many different texts. Even today, this text is by no means the only one that is sung with this particular little tune. ■

1. [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org).

2. Marini, Stephen A. (2003) *Sacred Song in America: Religion, Music, and Public Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press (as quoted in *Wikipedia*).

# Teach Me the Measure of My Days

Based on Psalm 39  
ISAAC WATTS, 1719

ST. FLAVIAN C.M.

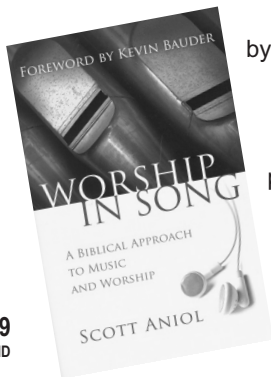
English Psalter, 1562  
Arranged by RICHARD REDHEAD, 1853

1 Teach me the meas - ure of my days, Thou Mak - er of my frame;  
2 A span is all that we can boast, An inch or two of time;  
3 See the vain race of mor - tals move Like shad - ows o'er the plain,  
4 What should I wish or wait for then From crea - tures, earth, and dust?  
5 Now I for - bid my car - nal hope, My fond de - sires re - call;

I would sur - vey life's nar - row space, And learn how frail I am.  
Man is but van - i - ty and dust In all his flower and prime.  
They rage and strive, de - sire and love, But all the noise is vain.  
They make our ex - pec - ta - tions vain, And dis - ap - point our trust.  
I give my mor - tal in - terest up, And make my God my all. A - men.

## Worship in Song

*A Biblical Approach to Music  
and Worship*



by Scott  
Aniol

281  
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While not from an Anabaptist perspective, this book is an excellent doctrinal and practical exposition of the Biblical principles of both personal and corporate worship, together with an in-depth examination of present-day music issues. Michael Harding gives the following review:

*Worship in Song is one of the most insightful explanations of Biblical worship that I have ever read. Pastor Scott Aniol harmonizes the concepts of God's beauty, aesthetics, affection for God, accurate theology, and musical expertise unlike any other book on this subject. I enthusiastically recommend *Worship in Song* as a must read for pastors, church music directors, and all Christian musicians who sincerely desire to lead their congregations to worship God in spirit and in truth.*

Available from: *Sword & Trumpet* • P.O. Box 575 • Harrisonburg, VA 22801 • 540-867-9419

# Wondering . . .

## What if Job Had Been an American?

by Max Zook

**T**he Book of Job is the timeless story of suffering and a man's struggle to understand it. Scholars suggest that the story is likely one of the oldest in the Bible, possibly happening even before the lifetime of Abraham, based on geographical locations and Job's longevity. But the struggle of one man to deal with huge personal loss and to figure out why it occurred repeats itself continually throughout history.

Except in America.

In America, Job's suffering would be practically eliminated. His 100% financial loss in the first chapter would certainly have been insured. Besides that, he would only have to wait until the governor declared the entire area of Uz a federal disaster area because of a tornado, severe lightning strikes, and an attack by foreigners. Job would have received instant FEMA dollars. Obviously the wait for insurance settlements, including substantial life insurance policies on each of his ten children, would have been quite stressful, but hardly worth the agony of thirty chapters of debate about the meaning of suffering.

Job's second wave of suffering consisting of a painful plague of boils would have bothered him only until he reached the emergency department of his local hospital. There his universal health care would have paid for all the pain-killing medications and anti-bacterial soaps and creams he needed to stop his discomfort. He wouldn't even have to bother his three friends with the news of his illness. They certainly wouldn't have to waste their valuable time by sitting speechless in Job's presence for seven whole days. If they did find out about his overnight in the hospital, his text message

on the way home would have assured them that all was well again.

And his wife's accusation clearly would not be necessary in modern America. Anti-depressants and counseling to help her manage her stress levels would make her a much more pleasant wife.

All of Job's questions and complaints are unnecessary in the American version of Job. With an assurance of his right to freedom of speech, Job wouldn't need to wonder if he had the right to complain. Under the Bill of Rights, Job would know exactly why he was being accused and he would have access to a speedy and public trial by an impartial jury, eliminating his need to plead for God to hear his case, reveal his sin, and bring him justice. And even if he did have to wait a few months for trial, under his Miranda Rights, he would have an attorney to speak in his defense, counteracting any accusations put forth by long-winded former friends.

In a country where personal comfort is the ultimate right of every citizen, not only is suffering eliminated, but the resulting spiritual struggle with the meaning of suffering is displaced with exciting entertainment, even in the church. No one should have to agonize about the absence of God when he can claim the promises, listen to praise music, and follow advice such as, "Don't worry, be happy."

The American book of Job is a short but glamorous story of the triumph of democratic rights, the wonders of federal emergency management policies, the benefits of insurance, and the glories of modern advances in medical and psychiatric sciences. The agonizing chapters of debate are eliminated. Instead of the painful chapters of

ancient Job, we now have a little happy story sandwiched between Esther and the Psalms, which we all like much better anyway.

Unfortunately this approach also eliminates the last five chapters of Job in the condensed and revised version. We likely wouldn't glimpse the fresh vision of the sovereign, omnipotent Creator of the universe, the designer of dinosaurs and dragons (Job 40, 41). We would conveniently avoid Job's embarrassing repentance for

speaking rashly and impetuously (Job 40:3-5), thus keeping our own hearts sheltered from our need to do the same.

So in the American book of Job, the main character would seem to have had a much better life, but he would not have had an encounter with the living God. And apart from suffering and struggle, neither will we. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *Brotherhood Beacon*, October 2010.

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#### NOTE FROM EDITOR:

*We recently came across the book reviewed below and felt it an extremely important volume in view of the present musical climate within conservative Anabaptism. Consequently, we assigned one of our staff writers to review it. The results follow. The book is written by a conservative evangelical and thus it does not teach our particular Biblical distinctives. However, it is a worthwhile contribution to the current discussion and highly recommended. This book is available through *Sword and Trumpet*. See page 27.*

#### **Book Review . . .**

by Rosalind J. Byler

## Worship in Song

Author: Scott Aniol

Published by BMH Books, Winona Lake, IN. 2009. 281 pp.

Music and worship have become the subjects of heated controversy in recent years. Disturbed by the music of our popular culture, many Christian parents and church leaders have attempted to provide teaching on how to distinguish music that is God-honoring from that which is not, and acceptable worship from the unacceptable. We feel certain that such categories exist, but we find it difficult to qualify them. The situation is complicated by the emotional factors inherent in both worship and the enjoyment of music. While we would like to formulate a philosophy of music that is biblical, too often we rely on our own emotional responses to music we like or dislike.

Feeling frustrated by our lack of musical knowledge, historical precedent, and explicit Scriptural teaching on music, we surrender the discussion to the increasingly numerous advocates of contemporary Christian music.

*Worship in Song* by Scott Aniol provides a refreshingly practical resource to help us understand the dynamics of both worship and music. The author examines Scriptural principles, historical practice, and musical technique in a way that is well-researched and challenging, yet accessible. Arguing that our confusion over music is rooted in our theology, Aniol begins by defining Biblical authority. The first chapter examines the doctrine of Sola Scriptura, or the principle that Scripture is sufficient as the ultimate authority for the Christian in all

matters of faith and practice.

The first section of the book goes on to explore the question of worship: its essence, its practice in the Old Testament and the New, and its implications for life responses. The doctrine of sanctification is defined as actively pursuing righteousness and godly characteristics. Aniol suggests that the missing link between right doctrine and right living is affection, which he defines as “volitional response to acknowledged truth. While true religion begins with certain affirmations and is proven by certain actions,” he says, “true religion flows from certain affections.” Affections, as he proceeds to demonstrate, are not immediate, but developed; therefore, we must be very careful what we allow to shape our affections.

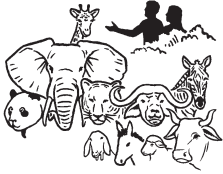
Music is obviously a shaper and developer of affections; how has the church historically dealt with it? Aniol presents a study of how the church has interacted with culture and music, beginning with the theocracy of Israel and continuing through early church practices, the Middle Ages and the Reformation, all the way up to Modernism and Postmodernism. Significant shaping influences along the way, such as pietism, the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and even American democracy affected the interaction of culture and religion. A fundamental shift occurred in the 18th century with the Enlightenment: religion was no longer an important influence over culture, leading to the birth of a secular culture developed by “the will of the masses.”

The second section of the book deals with the question of music in everyday life (apart from public worship). Does music carry meaning that can influence morality? Four general categories can be helpful in the evaluation of meaning: text, poetic form, and associative and intrinsic meanings. Musical elements also play a part. Their expression of emotion may be time-related, pitch-related, or texture-related, resulting in music that suggests or implies a mood or feeling.

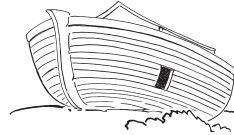
Glory and beauty are defined and connected with God as the Supreme Source, leading to the idea that “earthly beauty can reveal to men something of the nature of God.” Can beauty be dangerous? Can beauty and music sanctify the emotions? How should we make musical choices? These questions are explored, using the Scriptures and principles articulated by theologians from various ages of the church. Quotes from secular artists regarding the message and purpose of their music are also presented as an aid in recognizing unwholesome music.

“Music in Assembled Worship” is the title of the third section of the book, and congregational worship becomes the focus. Aniol suggests that the aim of congregational worship music must be to achieve corporate response. In answering the question, “Why do we have music in church?” he briefly outlines the purpose of the church (to establish mature followers of Christ; to declare God’s excellencies in corporate worship). This leads to an outline of criteria for congregational worship music. It must be God-oriented (expressing truth about God and directed toward Him); doctrine-oriented (filled with sound doctrinal truth); affection-oriented (textual depth supported by appropriate musical style); and congregation-oriented (texts and music that are corporate in nature rather than emphasizing individual personal worship).

How should music be chosen for congregational worship? The final chapters cover practical ways of analyzing and evaluating sacred music. The importance of preparation and participation by the congregation are emphasized, along with a discussion of such topics as “special music” and order of service. A formal “Conclusion” presents a thoughtful look at why God is worthy of our worship. Several helpful appendices provide lists of classic hymns categorized by doctrine, a guide to building a library of classical and sacred music, and a rationale for teaching hymns to young children. ■



## Beginning Issues



# Scientific Fact or Hype?

by John Mullett

A recent article published by *Reuters* (UK-based news service) had a headline that declared, “*Just-right planet that can support life detected.*”<sup>1</sup> Of course it immediately caught my eye, so I paused to read the article to see what great discovery had been made that enabled so bold a declaration.

A team of scientists (members of Lick-Carnegie Exoplanet Survey) recently reported their finding of a new exoplanet named Gliese 581g that supposedly orbits around its star in the “habitable zone”—the distance which would allow for temperatures in which water could remain liquid. So confident is Steven Vogt, professor of astronomy and astrophysics at the University of California, Santa Cruz, that he stated, “*Personally, given the ubiquity and propensity of life to flourish wherever it can, I would say, my own personal feeling is that the chances of life on this planet are 100 percent; I have almost no doubt about it.*” His colleague and also a member of the discovering team, Paul Butler was not so bold in his estimates of finding life, but admitted he was “optimistic.”

Let’s look briefly at what the researchers studied that led to their findings.

With support from the National Science Foundation and NASA, the scientists—members of the Lick-Carnegie Exoplanet Survey—collected 11 years

of radial velocity data on the star. This method looks at a star’s tiny movements due to the gravitational tug from orbiting bodies.

The subtle tugs let researchers estimate the planet’s mass and orbital period, how long it takes to circle its star.

Gliese 581g has a mass three to four times Earth’s, the researchers estimated. From the mass and estimated size, they said the world is probably a rocky planet with enough gravity to hold onto an atmosphere.<sup>2</sup>

Notice the language used in discussing the exoplanet; words like “estimate” and “probably” are frequently used in articles such as this one.

So where does Mr. Vogt find his great confidence to make some of the statements he has made and where does the media find its confidence to post so bold a headline? If the findings of the discovering team are accurate—which is no sure thing as I’ll discuss in a moment—then the truth will be that they have found an exoplanet in the “habitable zone” and that’s it! Essentially, we would know nothing **for sure** more than that. Yet we see wild statements and bold headlines. This confidence can only come from their belief that given the right environment life arises on its own accord.

*(continued on page 33)*



# Our Great Need

by Pastor Richard M. Jones

In a shocking new survey, George Barna is reporting that less than 1% of all Americans between the ages of 18 and 23 have a Biblical worldview. I'm hoping that something is really wrong with the methodology of his survey, but even if his margin of error is +/- 10% (an extremely unlikely possibility for such a reputable pollster), it is alarming evidence that the youngest adults in America are rejecting Biblical Christianity.

Furthermore, 61% of today's young adults who were church-ed as teens are now disengaged from the church (they do not actively attend church, read the Bible, or pray). Only 20% of the twenty somethings have maintained a level of spiritual activity that is consistent with their high school experiences.

We who contend for Scriptural holiness may be quick to criticize churches that are failing to win their young people, but we too have witnessed our own "falling away."

During the 19th century, Methodist circuit riders, camp meeting evangelists, and holiness writers were the predominant religious force in our nation. Today, many of our congregations are struggling, several of our schools are finding it increasingly difficult to attract students, and the message of holiness has been relegated to a historical footnote.

Why? One thoughtful observer concludes: "We Evangelicals have failed to pass on to our young people an orthodox form of faith that can take root and survive the secular onslaught. Ironically, the billions of dollars we've spent on youth ministers, Christian music, publishing, and media has produced a culture of young Christians who know next to nothing about their own faith except how they feel about it. Our young people have deep beliefs about the culture war but do not know why they should obey Scripture, the essentials of theology, or the experience of spiritual discipline and community. Coming generations of Christians

are going to be monumentally ignorant and unprepared for culture-wide pressures."

Michael Spencer's diagnosis of our plight is right, but it is also incomplete.

We believe with John Wesley that, "A man may be orthodox in every point, he may not only espouse right opinions, but zealously defend them . . . and yet it is possible that he may have no religion at all. He may be almost as orthodox as the devil, and may be a great stranger to the religion of the heart!" (52 Standard Sermons, Number 7: The Way to the Kingdom).

We need more than enlightened minds. Our greatest need is for the heart-purifying, life-changing, mighty baptism with the Holy Ghost and fire (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16). We need flaming hearts.

The inspired Apostle Paul tells us, "*God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind [or self-discipline]*" (2 Timothy 1:7). Indeed it is this power, this love, and this self-discipline, that is our most pressing need.

Without a personal Pentecost and the frequent fresh outpourings of God's Holy Spirit into our lives—our Christ will not be exalted, the cause of Holiness will not be advanced, and our churches will never be that winsome force God intended for us to be.

We need apologists who will defend our faith against the onslaught of heresy . . . but we need more. We need leaders who will strategize and organize God's people . . . but we need more. We need pastors and teachers who will minister and teach . . . but we need more.

We need writers, composers, and musicians who will communicate the Gospel to the masses . . . but we need more.

We need workers and supporters who will man their posts and finance the work . . . but we need more.

More than anything else, we need Chris-

tians who are so “filled with all the fulness of God” (Ephesians 3:19) that the fruit of the Spirit (“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance” Galatians 5:22ff) is existent in their hearts and evident in their lives.


We need Christians who “are Christ’s.” We need Christians who “have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” and who are “quickened by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18), “filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18), “sanctified by the Spirit” (1 Corinthians

6:11), “walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25), and are “led by the Spirit” (Romans 8:14).

It is our conviction that Spirit-filled men of God are the only ones who will “earnestly contend for the faith” with the kind of power that can triumph over the onslaught of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Enlightened minds and inflamed hearts will not dilute, nor deny the faith. They will deliver the faith! ■

—Reprinted by permission from *Faith in the Future*, June 2010.



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### SCIENTIFIC FACT OR HYPE? ... cont'd from page 31

I don't think the evidence could be interpreted the way they interpreted it without a bias of evolutionary naturalism.

As I said I would discuss the fact that this “discovery” is no sure thing just yet. A team of Swiss astronomers affiliated with the Observatory of Geneva could not find this same planet in their observation of the same planetary system. If they are accurate then what becomes of all the hype? Usually it just quietly fades away with little or no acknowledgement to the public; certainly not of equal fanfare to the original hype.

I wonder how we are supposed to get excited the next time the headlines scream? I'll let you decide. ■

1. *Just-right planet that can support life detected*, Reported by Maggie Fox, Edited by Paul Simao, Posted September 29, 2010 on News Daily, <http://www.newsdaily.com/stories/tre68s5xb-us-space-planet/>.
2. *Odds of Life on Newfound Earth-Size Planet “100 Percent,” Astronomer Says*, By Jeanna Bryner, LiveScience Managing Editor, Posted on Space.com September 29, 2010 <http://www.space.com/scienceastronomy/earth-like-exoplanet-possibly-habitable-100929.html>.

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# Developing a Spiritual Appetite in Our Children

by Luke Bennetch

Children grow up developing various interests and appetites in life. Not all appetites are good appetites. Every Christian parent is concerned that his children will develop spiritual appetites as they grow older. Sad it is when as parents we become aware of a lack of spiritual appetite in our youth. Many times by this point it is too late to begin to inspire this interest. How can we develop a wholesome spiritual appetite in our children as they grow up?

First of all, let's consider what a spiritual appetite looks like and what it does for us. Spiritual appetite prompts children to read their own Bible as they get older. They find meaning and blessing from the Word. Children with a good spiritual appetite participate in Sunday school. They fill out their blanks, and they learn the memory verse. They venture answers in class even if they are unsure if they are correct.

Spiritual appetite moves youth to seek Bible answers for the tough questions of life. *Why no insurance? What does nonresistance involve? Euthanasia? The Lord's return? Separation—why and how?* Youth with a spiritual appetite look forward to Bible school and take in more than one term if at all possible. They participate in discussions and do their homework. They have more than just a social interest in attending Bible school. These same youth make good teachers and Christian workers. They enjoy sharing Truth with others. They are not ashamed of being part of a church with sound applications of Bible principles. They form biblical convictions for themselves and stand true to

them under pressure.

These ideals for youth may seem too high at first glance. Influences around us would tempt us to think that this is too idealistic and something much less than this is fine for youth. After all, they say, young people are only young once and they must have some space to enjoy life.

Let us think soberly about this subject. Many a young person who developed a wrong appetite has left the church and has been swallowed up by the world and its pleasures. Can we afford to allow a weak spiritual vision for our children to develop and make it easy for them to slip away into the world? We must put our best effort into helping our children develop a spiritual appetite that will carry them through this life onward to the shores of Glory!

Spiritual vision and appetite must first be present in our lives as parents. It is nearly impossible to inspire our children to embrace something we don't hold dear. Our desire for God and His Word must be strong. We must be an example of personally loving God and reading the Bible. Consistent family worship will convey how much we love the Truth. Our zeal for church services will also speak volumes. Children should see their parents enjoying the Christian life.

The development of spiritual appetite must start very young. Reading Bible stories to small children sparks interest in God and His Word. Small children can learn some simple memory verses. Sunday school and Bible school classes are part of this early learning experience that builds spiritual knowledge and interest.

Children should listen to their parents' spiritual conversations. Eating a meal around the table or riding together to church are good opportunities for spiritual discussions. These kinds of conversations should be somewhat normal for children to hear. It should not just be the preachers who talk about God and His Truth. Sad is the home where Dad can talk a tin ear on all his friends about hunting, cars, work, etc., but falls asleep while others discuss spiritual things!

The church and school atmosphere must be conducive to developing spiritual appetite as well. The love of learning and good study habits will help children learn spiritually as well. Good reading comprehension skills will help with understanding Truth. Children should learn to use Bible study helps and concordances. Schools where God is honored and respect for authority is maintained will keep spiritual interest alive in children. We must keep our children from developing the "hang out behind the church" mentality. They should be enjoying Sunday school and church services. They should be able to visit with others after church close by the adults.

Our churches should give opportunity for our youth to share in teaching and devotions. Our leaders should be an inspiring example of the freshness and joy of studying and understanding God's Word. Church services should be alive with zeal and interest in Truth. Christian service opportunities will help inspire more spiritual interest and deepen our youths' vision for the lost. Choruses and street meetings should be a regular part of our youth activities.

We also will need to guard our children's reading materials if we want them to have good spiritual appetites. The romance novels, Western books, etc., will not lead a heart toward God! The characters in our books should represent the values we want to instill in our children. We must be aware of other appetite killers as well. Sports, fancy clothes, electronics,

powerful engines, four-wheelers, etc., will steal the interest and affection of our children. Youth activities should involve more than just play. Getting together for a Bible study in one of the homes or to sing should be normal. After church when youth gather at a home for a snack, there should be some spiritual discussions. Youth also should learn that working and earning money is not the ultimate achievement in life.

Church attendance and participation will build spiritual interest. When our church has services we should not be asking, "Are we going?" We should always plan to be there unless there is sickness or other reasons to stay home. Homes that honor the church standards at all times will also build spiritual interest in their children. When as parents we make church standards "our" standards, we give our children a great example to follow.

Another way to build spiritual appetite is to have our travel and vacations involve God's people and their church services. When children see us loving to worship with God's people in other parts of the country it helps them appreciate the church. This will broaden our friendships and bring many blessings to us. Let's be careful that "vacation" is not an excuse for letting down the bar of spiritual life and indulging in worldly pleasures that war against the soul.

Finally, it must be our desire that each of our children find Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour. They must experience firsthand the cleansing of His blood and the peace that follows. There is no substitute for this! All of our teaching and influence must be channeled toward this one and ultimate goal.

God help us to be faithful parents who are instilling a love for God in each of our children. May the lives of our children be a blessing to the church of today and tomorrow as long as the Lord tarries His coming. ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Pilgrim Witness*, May 2010.

# Is Lasting Victory Possible?

by Tom Blangiardo

What a day that must have been. King Saul and the Israeli army stood in battle array on one mountaintop and the Philistines stood on the other, with a valley between them. Twice a day for forty days, Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, had come out between the lines and defied God's people to send out a champion of their own to decide the outcome. "I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man that we may fight together!" shouted the foreboding giant.

At the Israeli front emerged an unknown Jewish shepherd boy named David who declared, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." As Saul questioned David and heard him testify of the Lord's victories in his young life, Saul had plenty of reservations but soon relented. Rest assured, however, Saul allowed David to go out against Goliath not because he gave him much of a chance, but rather because he had nothing else to offer against the giant.

Goliath defied the young David as he approached, "Am I a dog that you come to me with sticks? Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!"

"This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you," proclaimed David in response.

The Lord of hosts provided a mighty victory for His people that day. David struck the giant with a single shot from his sling in the only place he was vulnerable, and used Goliath's own sword to behead him.

Seven years ago, I found myself face-to-face with a giant; enormous and more powerful than anything I had ever come against. For years, I had been feeding this

very enemy that I was warring against In *At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry*, Steve Gallagher describes the last level in the Spiral of Degradation, "Left to himself, the sinner hurls himself into darkness. Burning with an intense flame of lust, he finds himself no longer able to restrain himself. . . . Sin has been given complete reign over the man's mind."

I was powerless to overcome or escape him. Every halfhearted attempt I made seemed to make me weaker and him mightier. For a lot longer than 40 days, the giant continued to deride me, "Am I a dog that you come to me with sticks? Why fight? You can't win; you'll never change; surrender and be done with it."

Like most men who enter the Pure Life Ministries Live-In Program, I did not come here because I saw lasting victory as possible but rather because I, like Saul, had nothing else to offer against the giant.

It was here that I cried out for the first time, "Lord, help me!" And it was here that the Lord met me. He called me to fight and promised me victory through His Word.

The battle went on for some time. Then suddenly one day, I noticed that my mind, which had become a cesspool of impure thoughts and plottings of sin, was suddenly clean. I am not sure how it happened . . . there was no slingshot or sword or bloodshed I could see . . . but the giant was gone, slain by the Lord of hosts. It was quiet. The taunting was over. The victory was given.

Over and over again, our counselors witness the Lord granting miraculous victories over the giants of sexual addiction. As each of our graduates departs the Pure Life Ministries Live-In Program, they testify to this victory. They are overflowing