

## Can You Hear His Voice?

The people of the earth are beginning to experience what Jesus said the beginning of sorrows would look like. Almost every day there is some form of calamity taking place. Nature appears out of control. Earth's weather is being characterized as unusual and weird with statements like: "This has never been recorded before," or "the weather conditions are of biblical proportions. But people don't seem to be paying attention, or hearing what is going on. Everything continues as usual. Man continues to refuse His voice and time for mankind is nearing the crossroads of eternity.



Our world is in a period of time not much different than Noah's time before the flood. He tried to warn the people that God was displeased with their conduct, and they would soon face God's judgment. They still refused to listen and thought Noah mad.

Can our own time be in the same situation now? Can the people today hear Noah's voice about God's displeasure? Can we expect a flood of evil to come upon us, just like the flood during Noah's day? Can the Earth hear His voice of warning? Do you believe your faith is enough, or is what we see and hear just plain crazy?

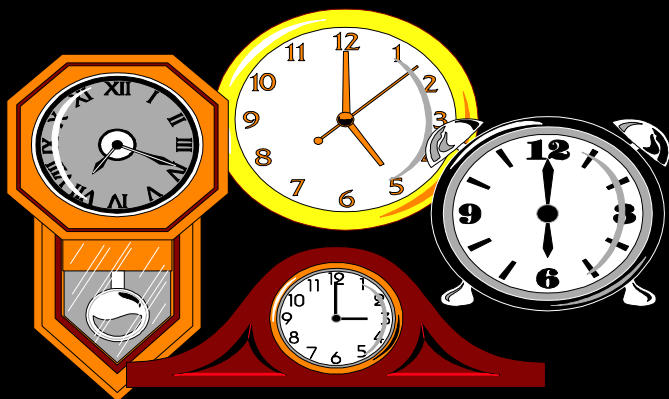
Nature will go wild  
From the 1974 Book  
by David Wilkerson  
The Vision

Nature will unleash its fury with increasing intensity over the next decade. There will be short periods of relief, but almost every day mankind will witness the wrath of nature somewhere in the world. These record-breaking changes will be above and beyond anything experienced in the past.

Floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes will destroy crops, animals, and much wildlife, driving prices even higher and causing some experts to suggest that nature is losing balance.

Weather will become increasingly difficult to forecast. Sudden storms will appear without warning. Southernmost regions will be gripped by record cold waves and northern areas will experience record heat waves.

Time is running out for this world who's ears are closed to His voice. Man continues to search for a person who can fix world societies. With itching ears they turn to familiar voices, voices who speak of their wishes and promise their desires.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ALL ABOUT FAITH.....</b>	<b>2</b>
WE ARE CONTINUALLY BEING EXHORTED TO VENTURE OUT IN FAITH.....	4
THAT IS THE REASON FOR THE TRIALS OF FAITH, THE ANSWER TO WHY FAITH SUFFERS. ....	5
<i>Prayer</i> .....	6
<b>THE CALL OF GOD.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>THE SPIRIT OF DIVISION.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Racial Separation</i> .....	7
<i>Lights of the World?</i> .....	7
<i>What does all this mean?</i> .....	7
<b>A HEART OF CONSIDERATION.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>BIRTHDATE OF JESUS.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>THE SEPARATION.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>GOD’S JUDGMENT, THE ENVIRONMENT AND OUR PRIORITIES.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>THE KINGDOM SHALL BE GIVEN TO ANOTHER.....</b>	<b>13</b>
LESSONS FROM KING SAUL.....	13
<i>Warning for the Church</i> .....	14
<b>KINGDOM SERVICE IV.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>FRAUDULENT FAITH.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>THE TRAINING OF CHILDREN.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<i>Introduction:</i> .....	22
<i>Teaching Ourselves:</i> .....	22
<i>We Are To Live In Love and Obedience:</i> .....	22
<i>The Children's Responsibility:</i> .....	22
<i>The Work of the Holy Spirit:</i> .....	23
<i>Children Must Be Taught To Do What Is Right:</i> .....	23
<i>We Must Teach About Salvation And The     Christian Life:</i> .....	23
<i>We Must Teach At All Times, Under All     Circumstances:</i> .....	23
<i>We Must Discipline Our Children:</i> .....	23
<i>Discipline and Love Must Go Together:</i> .....	23
<i>Stressing Discipline/Neglecting Love:</i> .....	24
<i>Stressing Love/Neglecting Discipline:</i> .....	24
<i>Final Comments:</i> .....	24
<b>SPIRITUALITY VS. RELIGION.....</b>	<b>24</b>

<i>RELIGION VERSUS SPIRITUALITY</i> .....	25
<b>THE GAME .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<i>One final note</i> .....	28
<b>THE RECYCLING OF SIN.....</b>	<b>28</b>
A MAJOR LIFE TRAUMA?.....	28
<b>DIS-EASE.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>THE COMING DAY.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>A BIT OF NEWS FROM BREAK POINT.....</b>	<b>41</b>
THE TRUTH.....	41
<b>BELIEVING THE TRUTH.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<i>HOW TO GET MORE FAITH</i> . . . . .	42
<i>NEW-AGE FAITH</i> .....	42
<i>THE WAY OF FAITH FOR THOMAS . . . AND US</i> .....	43
<i>BELIEVING THE GOSPEL TRUTH</i> .....	43
<i>ABRAHAM AS A CLEAR ILLUSTRATION OF     FAITH</i> .....	44
<i>FAITH TO CRUCIFY THE FLESH</i> .....	44
<i>A LIFE OF FAITH</i> .....	45
<b>THE END OF THE AGE.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<i>READY OR NOT</i> . . . . .	45
<i>THE OLIVETTE DISCOURSE: Interwoven from     Matthew, Mark, and Luke</i> .....	46
<i>JOEL, THEN PAUL ON THE NATURE OF THE     END</i> .....	47
<i>AN EPISTLE OF CORRECTION TO SET RIGHT     A COUNTERFEIT LETTER</i> .....	47
<i>BODY BUILDING</i> .....	48
<i>WHY DOESN'T GOD JUST SHOW UP NOW?</i> .....	49

## ALL ABOUT FAITH

by

Ray C. Stedman

Back in the “golden days” of radio on the Amos and Andy show, Amos once asked Andy, “Why do you have those stamps pasted to your chest?” Andy replied, “Well, those are tuberculosis stamps.” Amos asked, “What do you mean?” Andy replied, “Every year when they offer the tuberculosis stamps. I go down to the post office and buy some and paste them on my chest. And I have never gotten tuberculosis yet!”

That is an example of what many people think faith is. It is a form of faith, but it is faith on a completely unreliable, unauthorized basis. Yet the common conception of faith which prevails today is that it is a confidence in some kind of magical potion or power, and that if we could work up enough of this remarkable substance, or feeling, or whatever it is, we could do anything. Unfortunately, this widespread misconception prevails not only among non-Christians but among Christians as well.

“Faith” is a very important word in the Christian life—as is evident to anyone who reads the Bible at all. The word is found on almost every page of scripture from Genesis to Revelation, because faith is the means by which man receives anything at all from God. Without faith, as the book of Hebrews tells us, it is simply impossible to please God. It is not difficult—it is impossible! It can’t be done. Without faith we can receive nothing from God. Without faith all the mighty promises of the Scriptures are absolutely invalid so far as we are concerned. So faith becomes a tremendous power and force to reckon with and to count upon as we consider the teachings of the Scriptures.

In this series of studies, we have been looking at the way the New Testament helps us to realize the Person of Jesus Christ—who he is and what he does. We saw in the Gospels and the book of Acts a presentation of Christ. The epistles—the letters which follow—are the explanation of Jesus Christ. These fall into three major groups. The first, introduced by the book of Romans, sets forth “Christ in you, the hope of

glory”—the lost secret of humanity, the way by which God intends to fulfill human life and make us able to realize all the dreams and ideals we have for ourselves as to our character, our being; all those hidden longings and thirsts of the soul, written inescapably in letters of flesh in every one of our hearts. But all this is possible only as man discovers Christ in him, the hope of glory. The second group, introduced by the letter to the Ephesians, sets forth the wider truth of “you in Christ”—every one of us in the body of Christ sharing together the same life. Here, of course, we have set forth for us the great truth of the Church.

But none of this is of any possible help to us without our personal exercise of faith. So the last group of the New Testament epistles sets forth what faith is, how faith works, what faith does, why it suffers, and what it faces—all about faith—that is where we get the title for this message. I want to introduce this subject by sharing a written comment a person handed to me recently. It reflects clearly many of the questions which have been raised on the subject of faith: How can people really believe that God cares about them as individuals? The fundamental tenets of the Christian faith seemingly are founded upon flimsy speculations, not facts. I wish that I could believe the bases were facts; yet I find that even Christians are as torn by confusion, harassed by doubt, and pounded by conflict as the world is. In the very inner sanctuary of my own being, I long to believe.

But to long to is to long in vain. The fundamental simplicity of the New Testament delights me, but it gives me no hope, no stronghold, and no joy. You announced a wonderful principle, but who among us is able to make it workable? Not I. How much can we really believe about this elusive power of love? This is the paramount problem. I am not capable of understanding nor pondering these mystical abstractions, but I try. That is an eloquent expression of the position which many people have in regard to faith. The problem with this person, as with many of us, is that we are looking at our faith and trying to analyze it, thinking that if we can understand exactly what faith is, we somehow can produce it. Here is where the problem lies. For the strange thing about faith is that, though it is absolutely essential to experiencing anything from God, yet when you begin to examine it in your own life, it disappears. It flies out the window. You can’t find it anywhere. You can’t get your fingers on it. You can’t pin it down. It seems impossible to define. The reason is that faith,

in itself, is of no value whatsoever. In fact, it cannot even exist in itself. So the minute we try to look at it, it isn't there. This is like the trick of trying to grab your thumb with the same hand. Have you ever tried that? Hold your thumb up and grab it before it disappears. I have never been able to do it, though I have tried for years—ever since I was a little boy. That is like trying to analyze faith. The reason for this is that faith is produced only as we set our eyes upon the facts on which it rests. When we look at the facts, faith comes very naturally. The amazing thing is that the easiest thing in all the world for a human being to do is to believe. Over and over and over I hear these words—I have heard them for thirty years or more—they are the most widespread excuse for people either not being Christians or, having been Christians, not appropriating anything from Christ: “I just can't believe.”

But that is the one thing that human beings, by their very nature, are constituted to do. The proof of this is found in the first of the great epistles on faith, the letter to the Hebrews, in a very well known passage in the eleventh chapter—the Westminster Abbey of Scripture, the Hall of the Heroes of Faith—verse 6: “And without faith it is impossible to please him [God]. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” In other words, that is the minimum level of faith. That is the one thing necessary for human life, for the development of human fulfillment—in other words, for salvation. If we do not draw near to God we cannot be saved. Therefore, if faith is not possible to any human being, he is outside the bounds of salvation and redemption. But this is not true. Every human being can believe. That is what he is made for. Human nature is made to believe. We were made to be dependent creatures. We were made to be continually drawing upon another's resources. We are continually relying on something else. That is belief. Thus, the one characteristic which we have as human beings is the capacity to believe. We automatically do it. All day long we are believing. If you are sitting in a chair, you believe it will continue to hold you up. If you are under a roof, you believe it is adequately supported and is not going to crumble and fall on you. All through our life we are continually, unendingly believing. Therefore, faith is the most automatic response of the human spirit. The problem, you see, is that we need to fix our attention upon facts, because the process of human activity always follows the same channel, no matter what realm of life is involved. It is impossible for us to prove

anything completely before we experience it. Therefore, the idea some people advance—that they are not going to believe until they see the proof of Christian faith—is totally ridiculous, because it is simply impossible to prove any fact without experiencing it. Apart from experience there is nothing we can prove, even to our own satisfaction. All we can do is come to as good an evaluation by reason as we possibly can, and then plunge in and try it—test it, leap out on it, put our weight upon it. This we do continually all day long. This is the process of believing.

When we come to the epistles about faith, we find this same process is followed. In the letter to the Hebrews, the subject is “What Is Faith?” It is illustrated positively for us in the Old Testament through the lives of Moses, Joshua, Melchizedek and Aaron. And the negative is brought forth as well, so that we see what faith is not and what the results of not believing are. As we work through this letter we discover that faith is simply an awareness that there exist certain invisible realities which we cannot perceive with our five senses, but which we are nevertheless convinced exist by the evidence brought before us. After we have come to a certain level of knowledge concerning these facts, we are expected then to test them and try them. Our only other alternative is to draw back. The whole book of Hebrews is written to warn us what happens if we draw back and don't make the test, don't take the plunge—won't take it. All through this letter warnings are interspersed about what happened when men drew back after they had had all the evidence they needed that a fact existed upon which they could rest their faith. When you come to the eleventh chapter, you have the great record of men and women who did exercise faith. And they always did it in rather simple terms. There is nothing very dramatic about them. Only a few of them are what we would call “leaders of men,” or “outstanding” characters. Many of them are obscure personalities—common, ordinary people like you and me.

But in every case they were aware of certain facts which were propounded to them, but which they could not prove completely. Nobody could. But they finally became so convinced by the evidence being presented to them that they were willing at least to venture, to put it to the test. Over and over that is the story of the eleventh chapter; e.g., verse 8: “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and

he went out, not knowing where he was to go.” He couldn’t prove where he was going. But, having received the word which he could not deny came from God—certain evidence which was overpowering to him, which he had at least to accept as being there and undeniable—he ventured out upon the call. And the journey took him into the experience by which all that had been promised became available to him. That is all that faith is. We strengthen our faith not by looking at it but by concerning ourselves again with the facts upon which faith must rest. That is why the scripture says, “...faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17) The word of God has a quality about it that awakens faith. That is the amazing thing about this book. As you read it through and reread it and study it and think about it and meditate upon it, there comes a quiet conviction to the heart, “This must be true!” This is the basis upon which faith then is invited to act.

There also comes with faith, immediately, a doubt. All of us experience this. There is nothing wrong with it, nothing abnormal about it. We say, “Yes, this must be true.” And then a voice says, “Ah, yes, but maybe it isn’t, too.” So we are put in the place where we can have no further evidence until we venture. Faith is simply that willingness to venture—to reckon upon what God has said, to step out upon it. And then the answer comes, the proof follows, invariably. That is the entire record of scripture.

Now, I have dwelt upon the subject of faith at length in order to help us see more clearly what faith is as we go through these epistles. Faith, as the book of Hebrews tells us, is “the assurance of things hoped for”—what you long to be, what you long to see in your life—based upon “the conviction of things not seen.” What brings you to that conviction? Simply the remarkable quality about the word of God that rings a bell in our hearts and says, “This is true;” that is all.

We have, of course, the evidence of those who have ventured before us and have given testimony to us that what they ventured upon was found trustworthy. That is what Hebrews 12:1 means: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses ...” They are all talking to us, telling us, “Come on in—the water’s fine! It works. Try it and see.”

***We are continually being exhorted to venture out in faith.***

So don’t try to examine your faith to see how much or how little you have. Look at the facts. Look at what scripture says is true. Read it again and again. Study it. Think it through. Meditate upon it. As you do,

there comes—gradually sometimes, or sometimes suddenly—that awareness: “Well, it is worth a venture anyway. Let’s try it. It sounds as if it might work.”

Then you venture, and when you do you have the fact. Then you have the proof. That is the message of Hebrews. The epistle of James is a practical book. James was a brother of our Lord in the flesh, a half brother. Yet the amazing thing about the letter of James—and the letter of Jude, who was also a half brother of our Lord—is that there is no reflection of the human relationship with Christ here at all. Interestingly enough, neither James nor Jude inherited any of the mantle of Christ. This isn’t a family affair. Jesus was the Son of God, and they came to recognize him as such. But they had no positions of privilege or power because of their relationship to him. In his letter, James sets forth for us what faith does. The key to the letter is found in chapter 2, verse 2—that well-known verse: “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead.” All that James is telling us is that it really isn’t faith until you have ventured. That is what he is saying. We are so prone to say, “Well, yes, I do believe that such and such is true, but don’t ask me to try it or to do anything on that basis.” We call that faith, but it is not faith. It is not faith for me to say, “I know that chair will hold me.” I can stand here all night and say, “I know that chair will hold me. I believe that it will. I have confidence that it will. I am certain that it will.” But that is not faith. It is only mental conviction. Faith is when I go over and sit down on it. This is what James is saying. It is not faith until you have tried it, until you have ventured on it. Faith that does not venture, he says, is dead.

Therefore, when faith does venture, it will accomplish certain things. First of all, it will stand up under temptation. Second, it will not show respect for persons. Third, it will be kind and responsive to the needs of those round about. Fourth, it will watch its tongue and what it says.

Fifth, it will cause strife and jealousy and bitterness and envy to cease among Christians.

Sixth, it will teach patience and prayer. All through the letter you will find the most practical things resulting from the venture of faith. The two letters of Peter come from the disciple who, in his impulsive brashness, declared that he would never deny the Lord. He was perfectly sincere when he said, “Lord, the others may fail you, but you can count on me.” That very night, as Jesus had warned him, he betrayed the Lord with a curse and denied him three times before the cock crowed. He went away into the night

with Jesus' words ringing in his ears, "When you have turned again, strengthen your brethren."

When you turn to the letters of Peter, you find that this is what he is doing. He is strengthening his brethren in the midst of the trial of faith. For the things which make faith tremble are trial and testing, hardship and suffering, strange things which happen to us, unusual catastrophes which come into our lives out of the blue. These things make us fearful, and we ask, "Why?" Peter answers that question. Why do these things happen?

Because faith makes us a part of the life of Jesus Christ. And to reach the people of a lost and rebellious world costs pain, and suffering, and heartache, and the willingness of love to put up with rebuff and rebuke, and still to follow after them. We become part of that. Peter is simply saying that in the hand of the Lord we are the instruments by which he is fulfilling the work that he does in this world. As Paul put it in Colossians 1:24: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church..."

That is the reason for the trials of faith, the answer to why faith suffers

Then, when you come to the three letters of John you discover how faith works. The key verse is in chapter 3, verse 23, of the first letter: "And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us."

That is how faith works. It believes continually and is continually venturing—today one venture, tomorrow another; this moment a step of faith, the next moment another step of faith. As you see in the first letter of John especially, this will take the form of walking in the light, first of all; manifesting love, second; and reflecting the life of Christ, third. Light, love and life are the themes of 1 John. In 2 John the theme is the truth. In 3 John it is obedience in the position of responsibility and leadership. So faith works by a continual walking, step after step after step. This is the walk of faith. In Jude you come to the book that sets forth the perils of faith. The interesting thing about this book is that when Jude sat down to write it he planned to write on something else. He says in the third verse that he was "eager to write to you of our common salvation." I don't know whether he knew it or not, but Paul had already written on that subject in the letter to the Romans. It was not necessary for Jude to write on it, though he had planned to write a treatise on the common salvation. However, when he

began to write, the Holy Spirit guided him differently, and he ended up writing and appealing to them "to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." In this letter we find the subtle perils which will undermine faith and keep it from venturing upon the promises of God.

As we read it through we learn what they are. There is libertinism, i.e., the desire to have your own way. There is immorality. There is greed. There is false authority, divisiveness, worldly people, and all the other perils upon the pathway of life. But Jude closes his letter with these admonitions (verses 20-21): "But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith [that is the key; that is the operative word]; pray in the Holy Spirit [that is the exercise of faith]; keep yourselves in the love of God [that, again, is the exercise of faith]; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life"

All this is the continual exercise of faith. Now, it is possible for us to have great possessions in Christ without any or very little experience of exercising faith. That is why the continual exhortation is to be strong in faith—not by looking at our faith, but by looking at the great facts which God has set before us. As we contemplate these facts which God himself has uttered—a God who cannot lie—and we think about them, and as we remember how many others have stepped out upon these promises and have found they work, and as we read and think about the underlying foundations which God has deeply laid in human history, we find there is an awakening within us of the urge to venture. Then do it! That is the test.

There is the crisis. When you feel a sense of being led to try it, to dare it, then respond!

The book of Hebrews tells us of the great complaint which God had against his people. It is recorded for us in the fourth chapter, verse 2: "For good news came to us just as to them; but the message which they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers."

The message came with all its mighty proclamation of fact, but it didn't do any good because they didn't respond when faith was awakened with them—the y didn't venture out upon it.

But there is no limit to what you could accomplish, no limit to the mighty promises you can see fulfilled in your own life, when you begin to step out upon them. That is what faith is. May God increase our faith.

## Prayer

Our Father, we thank you for this look at your mighty Word. And we feel our need, Lord, in this respect. But we know that it doesn't do any good to look within and to try to feel around and find out and weigh how much faith we have. We thank you that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Give us an open ear. Give an illuminated understanding which hears these words as we have never heard them before. Let them come with brilliant clarity to our hearts, that we may waken and leap up and respond and say, "Thank you, Lord. On the basis of this promise, I will step out and be what you want me to be." For we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Catalog No. 199  
Hebrews-Jude  
May 24, 1964  
Series: Panorama of the Scriptures, #12

Copyright © 1995  
<http://www.pbc.org/pbc/dp/index.html>  
<http://www.pbc.org/pbc/index.html>  
Discovery Publishing, a ministry of Peninsula Bible Church.

This data file may not be copied in part, edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of Discovery Publishing. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Discovery Publishing, 3505 Middlefield Rd. Palo Alto, CA. 94306-3695.

## THE CALL OF GOD

BY

DAN JARVIS

The call of God is something to which every true believer must heed. It is the Creator telling his creations what they are to do; it is the Almighty God giving instructions to his people. "What is the call of God?" you may ask. "Is not everyone's call different?"

Although God's plan for your life is different from everyone else's, the call of God remains the same for all people. This universal call is not an option that God gives us—as Christians it is our duty and

obligation to not only hear it, but to act on it whatever the cost. (James 1:22, Luke 14:33, Romans 8:8-14)

### **The call of God is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8:**

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and in that matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. **FOR GOD DID NOT CALL US TO BE IMPURE, BUT TO LIVE A HOLY LIFE.**

Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man, but God who gives you his Holy Spirit.'

It is evident from this passage of Scripture that God's call on the life of every believer is to be holy, and to abstain from all impurity.

Furthermore, those who reject the call are rejecting God himself, and thus of course, lack true repentance and a genuine faith. Anyone who dares to reject God will never enter his kingdom. (John 3:36) Contrary to what many people believe, Christians do not have the right to sin. The Bible is crystal clear when it comes to this idea. If you are consciously living in sin and impurity, yielding to the temptations of the evil one regularly, chances are you do not belong to Christ.

(1 John 3:3-17, 1 John 5:3-5) A real citizen of heaven will be a follower of Christ, someone who obeys the Lord because they love him. (John 10:27, Hebrews 5:8-9, John 14:21) They will be led by the Spirit in their daily lives, not living by the sinful nature, but by the commands of Christ. (Romans 8:1-14, Galatians 5:7-8, Romans 6:1-23) True believers will attempt, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to think, speak, and act according to the Word of God; their purpose is to please their Heavenly Father by heeding to his call.

Examine yourself today—do you live according to the call of God, or do you live to please yourself first and God second? Do you hate sin and constantly battle against it, or is it a major part of your life? Are you led by the Spirit, not gratifying the desires of your sinful nature? Think about Galatians 5:19-24, "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. **THOSE WHO BELONG TO CHRIST JESUS HAVE CRUCIFIED THE SINFUL NATURE WITH ITS PASSIONS AND DESIRES.**”

God’s children have the responsibility to be holy— holy because God is holy. (1 Peter 1:16) Your purity and obedience is nothing less than a demonstration of your love for the Savior, the Savior who loved you enough to die to set you free from your sins.

The call of God is to live a holy life.  
Will you listen to his call?  
©November 1995 Dan Jarvis Medina  
Youth Ministries

## The Spirit of Division

by

Willie Jefferson

In looking for a sign of the return of Jesus, His disciples asked Him, “...And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”. Jesus replied, “Take heed that no one deceives you, for many will come in My name, saying ‘I am the Christ’, and will deceive many. And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. And all these are the beginning of sorrows.” Matthew 24:3-8. NKJV

We won’t deal with the entire end-time scenario here, just one small part - “for nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom”. The word “nation” translated here means, “people” or “race”. The word “kingdom” basically means a “sovereign power” or “country”. To put in another way, Jesus was saying that races of people fighting among themselves, and countries fighting among themselves would be a “sign” of His return. Today, we see constant reminders and “signs” of the fighting and contention between “kingdoms” (countries), but do we really notice the “sign” of racial fighting. “For **race** will rise against **race**, and country against country. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. And all these are the beginning of sorrows.”

## Racial Separation

The situation in Bosnia is probably the best example of this scripture coming to past in current affairs. The term “ethnic cleansing” is becoming the excuse for all types of crimes against humanity. We are now seeing countries torn apart by people motivated by the same desire to be with their own “race”. Just a few years ago, the Soviet Union was considered one nation of people. Since the fall of communism, we’ve seen states created by people and races that we didn’t even know existed. Jesus’ words in Matthew reveal a “spirit of division” being released upon the earth in the days preceding His return.

You’ve heard about the old military tactic “divide and conquer” haven’t you? This is exactly the plan of battle used by the enemy in his attacks against the christian church. It’s bad enough that we have more denominations than we can count. We now seem to be making less progress by separating into race-based congregations. It’s amazing that people who claim to love the Lord so much can’t worship together. Sure, there are cultural and language differences that exist. They do with all people. However, how do we expect the world to come together when the Body of the Lord won’t? We’re too content to “praise the Lord” with our “own kind”, not realizing how our “works of the flesh” keep away those who are looking for the truth.

## Lights of the World?

The shame of the Christian church is our lack of unity after the spirit of God. Our congregations are usually based on social, racial and economic lines. It makes us comfortable to see people like ourselves. We don’t mind helping “others”, as long as we don’t have to be with them. I should stop and say that there are many congregations that don’t have this problem however. They recognize the only two races of people in the world - “saved” and “unsaved”. Praise God for those who can look past the flesh to the work of the spirit. They are the ones the Lord will use for the coming harvest. How can we expect to draw anyone to the Lord when we live so much of our lives after the desires of the flesh? Street-wise people aren’t fooled, they know fakes when they see them.

## What does all this mean?



For the church to be strong and full of light, we must work to overcome the tendencies of the flesh. The “spirit of division” seeks to keep us from each other, thus weakening the body and our ministry to the lost. It’s not natural to be with others unlike ourselves, and that’s the point! God desires that all men know Him and be saved and He has chosen the church as His expression in the earth. It’s scary to think that people may not come to God because of us. The world sees that we can’t or won’t get along. God said the heathen blasphemed His name because of Israel’s failure to keep His commandments (Romans 2:24). How much more can we expect from God if the natural branches were cut off. Wake up church, God is not pleased! We must shake off the tendency to separate into our safe little worlds of what we know and like. Jesus told us to pick up our cross and follow Him. The cross is heavy and uncomfortable at times and it means death to self. Our lives are not our own, we have been bought and paid for with a price. Let us seek to be one with Him and with each other. We must fight against the enemy which seeks to divide us and show forth the love of God. As the song goes, “and they’ll know we are Christians by our love”.

W.J. 11/12/95

Elijah Ministries

Comments or questions, to [elijah@dartmaritime.com](mailto:elijah@dartmaritime.com).

## A Heart of Consideration

Comment  
by

Todd Yochem

A story about giving and sharing some of God’s love and peace in Galatians 5:22( but the fruit of the spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness and Faithfulness).

I would like to share a small part of how I enjoy sharing in Gods love and peace to people around. In traveling to far and distant places, or just around town like going to the market, the mall or even to church I like to park my car in the back 40. The reason for this is easy; I feel that because the younger man that I am, I could always use the exercise. That and by parking my car in the back 40, it leaves room for the handicaped and elderly a place to park closer to the

building that they are going to. Especially at church some people have asked me why I park my car across the street, rather in the parking lot. I tell them why and most are astounded, or shocked at themselves because the reason sounds so logical. For to look at where their own car is parked, and see some of the elderly and handicapped people in our church who had to park and walk such a long distance to the same building we are all going to. How selfish and self-centered!

So what I, as a Christian brother, would like to share with you, as brothers and sisters in Christ, is that if more of us would park our cars in the back 40 which would allow for the elderly and handicapped to park closer, it just might make their day a little bit easier and bring a little bit warmth to our hearts.

Copyright © December 1995 Todd Yochem

## Birthdate of Jesus

### MESSIAHMAS?

Most Gentile Christians wouldn't bother to speculate about the time when Y'shua (Jesus) was born. They celebrate it on December 25th even though they may suspect that there is no Biblical basis for choosing that date. However, there are some Messianic Jews who believe that they know, with a reasonable degree of certainty, the time of year when Y'shua was born. Taking into account certain Jewish customs and traditions, it's not difficult to calculate it.

There is quite a wide consensus of opinion that Y'shua was born at some time during the High Holy Days of Rosh Hashana (New Year) and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), or at Succot (Tabernacles) which follows soon afterwards. These festivals normally occur in the Autumn, about September or October, but it varies from year to year because the Jewish calendar is based on the cycles of the moon and doesn't fit in with the Gregorian calendar.

The calculation of the time of Y'shua's birth begins with Z'chariyahu (Zechariah), the father of Yochanan (John) the Baptist. According to Luke 1:5 he was a priest of the order of Aviyah. He was performing his duties, burning incense in the Beit HaMikdash (Temple), when an angel appeared and said his wife

Eli-Sheva would conceive and bear a son, and he would be called Yochanan (John).

The order in which the priestly families performed their duties is given in 1 Chronicles 24:7-18. According to the Mishnah, the cycle begins on the first Shabbat (Sabbath) of Nisan, and each family of priests would minister in turn for one week. Since there are 24 families, each family would minister about twice a year. The cycle would be delayed slightly because all priests, regardless of their families, were required to be at the Beit HaMikdash (Temple) for the three festivals of Pesach (Passover), Shavu'ot (Pentecost) and Succot (Tabernacles).

The family of Aviyah was eighth in line, so Z'chariyahu would have had his first period of duty during Sivan (about June) and his second period during Kislev about six months later. There is no way of knowing for sure which period of duty is referred to in Luke's Gospel, but if we suppose it is the first period we get some very interesting results.

Z'chariyahu finished his first period of duty about the middle of Sivan. Because of his unbelief, G-d struck him dumb, but his reproductive system was still working. He went home to his wife and she became pregnant. Count off 40 weeks, the usual period of gestation, and we get to the month of Nisan the following year. Beginning on the 14th of Nisan, and lasting for eight days, we have the festival of Pesach (Passover), which roughly coincides with Easter on the Christian calendar. This raises the distinct possibility that Yochanan the Baptist was born at Pesach, which coincides with the Jewish expectation that Eliyahu (Elijah) would come at Pesach. The Jews always put an extra cup of wine on the table at Pesach, in the hope that Eliyahu will come and drink it.

If Yochanan the Baptist was born at Pesach, Yeshua must have been born during the High Holy Days or at Succot. In Luke 1:26 and 36 we are told that Y'shua was six months younger than John.

When the decree went out for everyone to go to their home town to be registered, Yoseph and Miriam set off for Beit Lechem (Bethlehem). They would have set out in good time, before Miriam was fully 40 weeks pregnant, because she wouldn't want to be jogged into childbirth while riding on a donkey. Besides, they would have wanted to complete the journey before Rosh Hashana.

We are given a clue about the time of the birth by the angel who appeared to the shepherds and said "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people". (Luke 2:10). There are actually two clues here. Succot is a festival of joy, and it is also known as the "Festival of the Nations (or Gentiles)". The angel was actually giving them a greeting for the Festival of Succot. This is the only festival where the nations are positively encouraged to participate. (Z'chariyahu 14:16-19).

During Succot, the Jews construct flimsy shelters called "Succot", using wood and leaves, and eat or sleep in them. This is to remember how they were completely dependent on God as they wandered around for forty years in the desert when they came out of Egypt and were led by "a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night." Because of this, they celebrate that "G-d is with us" (Emmanu-El).

And so, the birth of Y'shua at Succot fulfils another prophecy: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel - which means, "God is with us". (Matt. 1:23, quoting from Yishaiyahu (Isaiah) 7:14).

If this is not enough, we also have to consider the type of dwelling in which Y'shua was born. Had it not been for the inconvenience caused by the census, he would have been born in a house like all other children. But he wasn't, he was born in a succah (or stable), a flimsy dwelling where servants of a household slept, or where they kept sheep and cattle. This was to indicate that G-d had come to earth to dwell with (and serve) humanity. Also in Yochanan (John) 1:14 we read about how "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling (Tabernacled) among us." - another obvious reference to Succot.

Eight days later, according to Luke 2:21, he was circumcised. NOT in the Beit HaMikdash (Temple) as some suppose, but in Beit Lechem, probably in the Succah where he was born. Miriam would still be ceremonially unclean for 33 days after the circumcision according to ViYikrah (Leviticus) 12. Besides, she would be unlikely to travel to Y'rushali'im (Jerusalem) so soon after the birth even though it was not very far.

If the day of his birth was the first day of Succot, the day of his circumcision would be the eighth day of Succot which, like the first day, is a day of sacred assembly. (ViYikrah - Leviticus 23:39). On this day, or traditionally the day after, Jews complete their annual cycle of Torah readings and start again from

Bereshit (Genesis). It is called Simchat Torah (Rejoicing of the Law), and is considered to be a time of "fulfillment" of the Torah. The circumcision of Y'shua at this time indicates how he had come to be the goal to which the Law and the Prophets pointed (Matt. 5:17-18).

When the days of Miriam's purification were over (33 days after the circumcision), they would have made their way to Y'rushali'im to sacrifice a pair of doves or young pigeons. (Luke 2:22-24). Then they went back to Natzeret (Nazareth) (Luke 2:39).

Every year they went to Y'rushali'im for Pesach. (Luke 2:41). During one of these visits, probably when Y'shua was two years old, they went to Beit Lechem and stayed, not in a succah or stable, but in a house. (Matt. 2:11). They were visited by the Magi, and then had to flee to Egypt to escape from Herod because he was killing all the male children two years old and under.

Starting from Z'chariyahu, the father of Yochanan the Baptist, and his first period of duty in the Temple, and doing a few simple calculations, we arrive at a result which gives a new and profound meaning to many passages of Scripture, and for that reason, we think Y'shua is very likely to have been born at Succot.

So what are we going to do now? Are we going to continue observing Christmas on December 25th (which incidentally has pagan origins), or are we going to switch to celebrating the birth of Y'shua at Succot? If we do (and we don't have to become Jewish to do it) we will be creating the conditions in which Z'chariyahu 14:16-19 can be fulfilled. People will say "Since we are celebrating the birth of Y'shua at Succot, why not do it in Y'rushali'im?". Up to a point, this is already being fulfilled by large numbers of Christians who go to Y'rushali'im for a Tabernacles celebration each year, but it could get even bigger.

In Israel it's impossible to miss these festivals, but for the benefit of those in the Diaspora the 1996 dates are:

Rosh Hashana (New Year)	Fri. 13 September
Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)	Sun. 22 September
1st Day of Succot (Tabernacles)	Fri. 27 September
8th Day of Succot	Fri. 4 October

Simchat Torah Sat. 5 October  
(Rejoicing of the Law)

The Jewish day begins at sunset which means, for example, Rosh Hashana begins at sunset on Fri 13th September.

Compiled from various sources by Uri Marcus, Haifa, Israel

Uri Marcus  
Secretary for The Nehemiah Trustees Covenant Fund  
P.O. Box 44840  
Haifa, 31447 Israel

Tel (Hm): 011-972-4-853-7234 Tel (Wk): 011-972-4-864-2761

Fax: 011-972-4-867-7733 e-mail:  
ntcf@NetVision.net.il

## THE SEPARATION

by

Ed Tucker

One of the hardest things to understand and receive is love. The Bible says God is love. Not God has love, but God is love. So the presence of love must mean the presence of God.

When God made Adam, every part of his body had a purpose. The heart was no exception. The heart pumps blood through our bodies, but this is physical. Spiritually, the heart is the place where love is kept. Not the love of man, the love of God. The love of God has answered one big question for me, why? Why does God do this or that for me? Why does the Holy Spirit warn me about things?

There have been days, when things have happened for good, and I never thought about it much. After a few days have passed and other events have happened, I can look back and see the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life. At the time, I didn't feel funny, or strange; just normal, but he was there. I have learned two things from these situations. First, the Holy Spirit is with me all of the time, and second, feelings have nothing to do with the Holy Spirit.

I can not trust my feelings. Most feelings come from the head, and not the heart. If I trust my

feelings, I will never know God. I have found out that by rejoicing in the Lord, I can control my feelings. This takes the focus off me and puts it on the Lord. Rejoicing is the outward manifestation of a spiritual battle won or that God is in control or the Holy Spirit is with me through a battle. Most battles are between my pride, or ego, and the Holy Spirit. Some battles are carried over to another day. I get tired of fighting, especially if it is with my pride or ego. I just can't win that battle, but I go down fighting. Sometimes my pride will bring out the worst for some stupid little thing that doesn't matter to anyone, but me. Like caring for someone that I totally despise. It does sound childish, immature and stubborn on my part, but I know God has a purpose.

Some battles are a series of conflicts. They often become something I want to hold on to, win or lose. Those, will be fought piece by piece. Sometimes, the Holy Spirit calls for a peace talk. A peace talk with the Holy Spirit goes like this. I sit down at one end of the table, and he sits at the other. Step two, he shows me a future giant battle that means I have a long way to go and a lot of battles will be fought. Also the big battle is one I'm not looking forward to at all, but I know there is nothing I can do to stop it. The more battles I surrender to the Lord, the more gifts I will allow myself to receive from him. I must give to the Lord to receive anything from him. I must say, this is what I want to do. The Holy Spirit will show me what he is really after. It hurts, I had plans. But then, so does God, and now I must trust him on faith. Last thing, he shows me what I am really fighting over and how silly, stubborn and self-centered, I have been. That means I must confront myself. It hurts, but he is there with me. It is for my best, and afterward I didn't lose anything of any value, just a perception of myself. From my experiences, walls are not blown up, but rather taken down brick by brick. There is no other way. Every brick taken down and doesn't get replaced by another brick, for it is these bricks that stand in the way. The wall must come down. God and I are separated by these walls of bricks. There just isn't one wall, but many, as I am finding out. We are complex. As each brick in my wall is removed, my relationship with God grows stronger. My faith increases and I find out about God's love for me a little more.

As I read the word of God, pride and ego are very dangerous. It was Moses' pride that kept him out of the Promised Land and David's ego, or (should I say his lust) that caused the destruction of his kingdom and family. Pharaoh's pride made him think he was a god, equal to the Almighty God. He and

Egypt lost everything. By knowing these things and through personal experiences, there is no place for my pride and ego in my relationship with God. With most battles, I just surrender; for I can not win on my own. I will just waste time and energy for nothing! because God is the only one I can trust, and the only one who has already won the battles. So it's just a matter of submitting to His victory, not my loss.

I hate to think of the fact, that I will bring out the Army and Navy to fight God over some small meaningless aspect of my life, and not do anything for him. Sometimes, I just don't understand myself: God is on my side, he's not the enemy! Besides, as time goes on, his side will be mine. God hasn't led me wrong. Everything, that I have let go, has brought me a sense of peace afterward. I get peace after giving up.

Sometimes I will start taking things for granted and look around to see someone with earthly things and without God. In a short time I realized that I am rich; after all, I am the son of a King! Not only king's kid, but rich because of treasure in my heart, God's love. My life before was chaos, disorganized, and in decay. Those days are hard to remember, but they let me know what I now have. What I have now, a rich man can not afford. You won't find it listed on the Dow Jones. God has blessed me with knowing that he will never leave or forsake me.

I am learning that the love of God is vital in my life. The more I learn of God, the more I learn of the role of love. There are things I must give to God and repent of, to allow myself to receive his love. There is a cup of God's love waiting for me, but I must drink from that cup. That means, I must remove the earthly things between the cup and myself.

I have the love of God in me. I find myself praying for others and spending a lot of time asking for forgiveness and strength to repent. I have noticed, I can not show love if I don't have it to give. I must have the love of God, to give the love of God.

It is the love of God that feeds my soul and keeps my life in order. It is the blood of my body. The trials, I go through, start inside. Once the battle is won, the physical act is a victory song. The physical act without the battle is nothing. It is meaningless. Love comes from winning the battle and that love will manifest itself in the action. For example, walking down the street and seeing a man with a cup. First question asked is, "Do I give or not?" If God is telling to give, but my flesh says no, then the battle begins. After a few moments, the battle is over and I know God wants me to give.

Once I know this, my heart is changed, and now, I can give with love and for no other reason.

My heart is the place for love, God's love. In my heart, there are needs and desires. My pride has and will continue to try to satisfy the needs and desires of my heart, but it's just wasted energy and time. Not to mention the pain, frustration and a sense of helplessness, which should tell me one thing. God created my heart. He put the desires and the needs in it, and only he can satisfy them completely. In a way that only he can do it.

My pride will also bring me down a road of emptiness and broken dreams. I am learning that to satisfy the desires and needs of a heart created by God, I must go back to him and have him fill it. Nothing else can do it. I had thought, I knew what my desires and needs were, and how to satisfy them. Not until I know God, will I know these desires and needs, and they will be met.

I have seen in my life, how and what my pride will do. My pride is a selfish and unkind seed. My pride has been used to show me, that my pride will do things that glorifies me. Making me think, I am better than someone else, or giving myself credit or taking the credit for things I have done. Always drawing attention to me, not to God. Sometimes pride will make me think I deserve something, because it meets my understanding. How ignorant can I be? I deserve nothing. Everything I have is because Christ gave it to me and any day he can take it away. My pride will only give me a false sense of who I am and give me things, that will never satisfy the real and true emptiness of my heart.

When I am driving in my car and pass someone, why did I pass them? Was I in a hurry? Were they driving slower than the speed limit? Did I think I was better than them and passed them to show them that I was? Pride starts with small things and then grows.

How can a pride filled man humble himself? Pride has no place before God. I find things between myself and God. God must have a clear path with no obstacle in the way, for it will only hamper my relationship with him. There will always be obstacles in the way, but I also know, there are moments when I remove these things, I will have a straight shot to the Holy Spirit. The greatest weapons against my pride are two things: The revelation of God and his love for us, for there is nothing that can compare to these.

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to

me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

Copyright © 1995 Ed Tucker  
The Christian Underground Journal

## God's Judgment, the Environment and Our Priorities

by

Dennis Hinks

Scripture frequently describes environmental disaster as an act of judgment against sin. This form of judgment is not necessarily directed toward *individual* people, but toward nations or people as groups. Also, it does not necessarily come as the result of "supernatural" judgment by God; rather, it can come by way of "providential" judgment - God using the natural forces of creation to accomplish his purposes.

Examples of God and his relationship to environmental issues can be found in the last few chapters of Deuteronomy, and in some of the prophetic books. The book of Revelation speaks of the final environmental cataclysm. Even the book of Job and some of the Psalms make reference to God and environmental issues.

The real, ultimate issue is *spiritual*, not *ecological*. And it is in the spiritual realm that the greatest long-term benefit to the environment can occur.

All creation is revelatory of the Creator. A nation that has open hostility toward the Creator *cannot* have a proper relationship with creation, which everywhere reveals Him. Inevitably, the environment will suffer at the hands of such a people. Of course, creation will *still* be revelatory of the Creator, but it will have an increasing tendency to reveal aspects of his *judgment*, rather than of his *love*.

On the other hand, a nation that ceases to be openly hostile toward the Creator (not the same as "becoming saved") will be in a position to receive the blessings that come from the Creator. It may take years, however, for the consequences of their rebellion to be minimized. (Some consequences might never be totally eliminated.)

I am not saying that people cannot do "physical" things that are beneficial for the environment. But there will be limitations to the success of those efforts

- or even very detrimental effects. A nation such as described above may focus on (and even partly succeed in) various environmental causes, but it will do so at the expense of something else. That “something” may be people (directly or indirectly) or another aspect of the environment.

In addition to these potentially detrimental effects, there is an even more serious issue at hand. *Anytime* one’s focus on the earth becomes *greater than one’s* focus on God, idolatry is present. As a result, much of the modern-day “environmentalism” is nothing more than a masked form of idolatry. “They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.” Romans 1:25 (NIV)

Our ultimate obligations are to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Compared with these obligations, environmental issues are secondary. Yes, they can be done as an expression of love toward God and neighbor (which includes our enemies), but they also can be (and frequently are) done in a manner that violates these commands.

Here are some examples of ways that environmental concerns can violate these commands: A person who spends so much time “saving the whales” that he no longer has time to take care of known needs of his neighbors (especially of neighbors who cannot give “pay backs”), is sinning against those neighbors. A person who has time to walk along the highway and pick up trash, but doesn’t have time to “walk” with God or pick up a Bible, is sinning against God. A person who devotes all his time and energies to improve the “quality of life” (or to promote an environmentally-correct “American dream”), yet who takes little thought about improving people’s “quality of *eternal* life,” is sinning against his neighbor and really has no love for him at all.

All the activities in these examples *can* be good and noble, *if* the person’s primary focus is on his ultimate obligations. They become wrong when they, though *secondary* issues, become one’s primary focus. As for the environment itself, there is some good news and some bad news. First the bad news: The book of Revelation warns us of some very terrifying things that will happen to the environment. God will bring many environmental judgments against mankind because of its increasing wickedness and its hostility toward him. These judgments will include his providential use of *naturally occurring events*. These judgments may also include natural consequences of *mankind’s previous misuse* of the environment. “The

time has come . . . for destroying those who destroy the earth.” (From Rev. 11:18, NIV)

Now for the good news: This final environmental “collapse” is only temporary. Ultimately, God will replace the devastated world with a new (restored) earth, in which all environmental problems will cease. Even at the present, there is good news: We can (in the “here and now”) have a positive effect on the situation. We can attempt to minimize our own contribution to this environmental “downward spiral.” If we do so in a manner that doesn’t go against our greatest obligations (love toward God and neighbor), our efforts will be pleasing to God. And we will have at least a temporary positive effect on our little “niche” in the world.

We can also have a greater, long-term impact. When we work to bring people into the kingdom of God, this will ultimately have the greatest positive effect on their environment - their eternal one! Remember: we all - Christians and non-Christians alike - are only temporary residents on this world that is destined to perish.

Dennis Hinks © 1995

## **The Kingdom shall be given to another**

by

Willie Jefferson

### ***Lessons from King Saul***

In I Samuel, chapter 15, we find the Lord regretting that He set up Saul as King of Israel because Saul’s heart was not in following the commandments of the Lord, but rather following his own mind and ways. When told to destroy the Amalekites (vs. 2-3) and all they possessed, Saul stopped short and allowed the people of Israel to keep some of the spoil. When questioned by Samuel, Saul replied, “...they (the people of Israel) have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the Lord your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed”. This is not what the Lord told Saul to do. Saul was quickly reminded by Samuel of what the Lord said, “Now the Lord sent you on a mission, and said, ‘Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed’. Why then did you not

obey the voice of the Lord? Why did you swoop down on the spoil, and do evil in the sight of the Lord?" (vs. 18-19). Saul consequently blamed the people for his disobedience (vs. 24). In the rest of the story, Samuel tells Saul that the kingdom of Israel will be given to another who is better than he. Later on David is anointed by Samuel and the rest is history.

There are a couple of things to note here and parallels that can be drawn for the 20th century church. No relationship with God First of all, Saul had no relationship with the Lord. Of course, interaction with God was different than in the new testament since the Spirit of God "came upon" people instead of indwelling, but unlike David, Saul did not allow his heart to be changed by the presence of God. The Lord "gave him another heart" (see I Sam. 10:9), but Saul did not act accordingly (I Sam 10:7) as he was instructed to do. He allowed himself to be unchanged. Notice how Saul referred to the Father as "the Lord your God" in I Sam. 15:15. There was no relationship, only what he knew through Samuel. Following the will of men Second of all, he followed the will of the people rather than the will of God (I Sam 15:24). Saul was supposed to be the King, to lead the people of Israel in following the Lord. Rather, he became a weak example of leadership and lead them to embarrassment and destruction. Sin of Pride Finally, Saul was prideful and more concerned about how he looked to people than how he looked to the Lord (I Sam 15:30). 20th Century Parallels The New Testament church of today is running the risk of repeating the mistakes of Saul. Many of our churches and leaders have no personal relationship with God, only "knowing" Him through others or established religion. How can our hearts be changed unless we personally "know" the Lord and abide with Him. Like Saul, the Father is giving us another heart to do His will, but we must do as we are instructed or that "new heart" will grow cold and revert to the ways of the "old man". Also, we need strong biblical leadership that will follow the voice of the Lord and not of men. There is nothing wrong with seeking agreement and unity of the body, but never at the risk of disobeying God. How many Christian leaders follow the path of men and allow the people to "keep the spoils", rather than destroying the things of the world that would entangle us. Israel failed this test in the battle of Ai, when one man kept of the spoils and caused the defeat of the entire army (Joshua 7:1-5). Finally, pride always comes before a fall. Saul couldn't bring himself to repent and deal with his disobedience. Right after stating he had sinned, he asked Samuel to "honor him" before the "elders of my people, and

before Israel, ...that I may worship the Lord your God". How can we truly worship God when we are unclean before Him. We must take the holiness of the Lord seriously. Sin is never a simple matter, it spreads and corrupts everything it touches. When we fall we must earnestly seek the Lord's forgiveness and restoration first, before we seek the honor of men. Perhaps more people would be saved if they saw Christians for what we are, "sinners saved by grace". Tests before battle Occasionally, the Lord will try us and test us before sending us into battle. Obviously He knows what we are going to do, but we don't. Have many times have we made brash statements "for the Lord", only to find our hearts are not in the right place either. These tests are for our benefit, for the Lord knows we cannot withstand the battle with the enemy if he can "find anything in us". If we would only allow the Father to "crucify our flesh" so that His Spirit may work and shine through us. For it is only "through our weakness that He is strong".

### **Warning for the Church**

"Davids" will soon be anointed to do the Father's work because many who presently hold positions of leadership have the "spirit of Saul". The body of Christ desperately needs the ministry and leadership of "David" to enter into a new realm of relationship, worship and obedience to the Father and His concerns. The church today has too much of the "spirit of the world" and seeks her own ways and methods. We must be obedient to the urging of the Spirit of God and the lessons of the past to possess the kingdom. Those who persist in the "ways of Saul" will have these words spoken to them: "The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel (the church) from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent, for He is not a man, that He should relent".

Copyright Willie Jefferson ©12/22/95 - W.J.

## **KINGDOM SERVICE IV**

by

Jeff Dull

When I started this series of articles my intention was to try and describe and explain basic Christianity

from my view in the pew. As I type this we have just completed another Christmas season with the usual battle and pastoral lamenting over the meaning of the season. In my last article I said that today's church and Christianity was an unintended mix of Judaism, paganism, and real Christianity. I think our Christmas celebration practices illustrates the reasons for both the lamentations and my view of today's Christianity. Some historians have indicated that one of the primary reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire was due to Christianity and Christians unwillingness to fight for pagan Rome.

Christianity was growing so fast that it was hurting recruitment and the army was using mercenaries at great expense to supplement the difference. So enter into history Constantine, a believer in Mithraism and Sol Invictus, who sees a cross as he looks up at his god the sun prior to a battle that he wins. I and many of you have also seen this common phenomenon of what appears to be a cross in the sun as we look at it, but history has recorded that Constantine took it as an omen, and as a result of winning the battle he made Christianity the national religion and the politically right thing to be and do.

Constantine was a severe persecutor of Christianity during his first 3 or 4 years of his reign, and the vast majority of the Roman Soldiers were believers in Mithraism and Sol Invictus (unconquered sun) too. Add to this, that they worshipped their god on every seventh day called a Sun-Day, and the birthday of their god was December 25th. Also, the administrator or the secretary of religion, of all of the many varied religions in the Roman Empire was called the Pontiff, with his seat in Rome. One last major consideration:

When the Romans conquered a people they most always allowed the people to keep their religious and superstitious beliefs with few or little changes, which is why a Pontiff was needed. The Christian Church pretty much adopted the same attitude when and wherever it went. The church Christianized many of the local pagan deities, customs, and superstitions to facilitate the acceptance of Christianity so that the people would accept Christ as Lord and "be saved". The church had many unanswered questions, mysteries, and what appeared to be magical metaphysical powers to the common uneducated and superstitious people of the time. So the educated and well to do developed a priestcraft with rites and rituals to allay the fears of the ignorant and increase the power of the church.

Constantine waited until his last years to be baptized, because it was believed that baptism was a one time sanctifying event, which if possible should be done as close to a persons death as possible, because the forgiveness of sins went with it so that a person would spend less time in purgatory. The trail of the conquistadors and the Jesuits is the best example. If you were to go and observe Christianity in Southeast Asia, South America, and the Caribbean, you would find their version of Christianity is so filled with local superstition and superstitious practices that I believe you would find it to be as unrecognizable as I do.

In a recent news coverage, Haiti's religious establishment has been exposed as Christianized voodoo, or at least as a syncretized religion. Frankly, to me a lot of Christian practices throughout world remind me of a syncretized religion, and can be call Christianized voodoo. If I add to all of this, the Winter equinox celebrations, Hanukkah, and other pagan and superstitious rites and rituals, I get Christmas. The facts are and the truth is, that theologians have known for centuries that Christ was born in September or October. Yet we have this concocted religious celebration with the perpetuation of lies for centuries, and yet we hear pastors and Christians lamenting over the "loss of the reason for the season". We will reap what we sow. As I stated before, that no matter what mans motive may be, God will not be mocked. If you or I do the right thing for the wrong reason, no matter what our rationalization and justification (denial) may be, God will decline even knowing us, and cast us out with the rest of the trash. As a side note, ask yourself these two questions.

1. How is it that Christmas is on the same day of the month every year and Easter isn't?
2. Does Christ dying on Friday, and rising on Saturday night (Sunday morning) equal three days?

Man loves to pass on mankind's religion from generation to generation, but finds it hard to pass on God's religion and spirituality from generation to generation. For the record. I do celebrate the event of God coming into the world on December 25th along with my other Christian brethren, and I even make a birthday cake to Christ because he is, after all, alive. My anger and disdain is for what I believe to be a concocted religion, and reason for Christmas on the 25th of December, and for worshipping on Sunday, and then passing it off and passing it on as spiritually righteous for centuries. It is okay for



gentiles to worship on Sunday versus Saturday? You bet it is!

Gentiles are not under the law. What I would like to see is honesty in religion, for the theologians to get honest and stop the perpetuation of lies, and truthfully explain the rites, rituals and their priestcraftness to us all. Now that I have said that, let me return to the seven questions I posed in the first Kingdom Service article I wrote.

Some of you may be reading this journal for the first time, so I will take this opportunity to update and restate a set of questions I recommended people answer for themselves first before verifying their answers through the Bible. I also recommended that people present the questions to their friends for comparison to their own and the Bibles answers. Here they are:

1. What does the Bible say is the covenant agreement with the gentile?
2. What does the Bible say is the mission of the gentile?
3. How does the Bible define the Church?
4. What does the Bible say is the mission of the Church?
5. How does the Bible define Religion?
6. What does the Bible say about how the Church should be organized and the form of worship it should perform?
7. How does your religion and your religious practices match up with what the Bible says and why or why not?

First off, the word gentile in the first two questions should indicate to the reader there is a concept of differences being presented here. There is. God made the difference. It has been my experience that to most people, the word and concept of difference equates with conflict and strife. Man out of his ignorance, immaturity, insecurity, and the need to control usually does create conflict and strife over differences, even where none exists. The early church had two immediate conflicts over the main difference between the Jew and the gentile. The main difference between the two is the Law, and the two immediate conflicts for beginning Christianity were Judaizers and Pharisaism. This conflict has never ceased and is still in evidence today.

Think about it: Every time Christ healed a Jew where an aspect of the Law was involved He directed the Jew to proceed on to fulfilling the obligations of the Law. In contrast, every time Christ healed a gentile

He in effect said, go and have a nice day. Christ never required a gentile to fulfill a Law requirement. Why? Because of the covenant agreement with the gentile is the same as it was with Abraham...

FAITH!!! God grants it, increases it, and sustains it, but we activate it by humbly and unconditionally receiving it and through obedience perform God's commands. Peter and a number of Jews had a lot of trouble with this concept. God had to give Peter a vision on a roof top three times, and Paul had to rebuke Peter in public for his backsliding to the Law. Practically the whole 15th chapter of Acts is dedicated to the this problem and its resolution. James with the agreement of the elders finally declared what the gentiles should and should not do. The Bible indicates that Paul was hand picked by Christ for the mission of ministering to the requirement of the gentiles. There was to be no conflict between the Jewish and gentile believers in Christ, which is why Christ issued a new command for both factions to obey. John 13:34 says in the Amplified: *I give you a new commandment, that you should love one another, just as I have loved you, so you too should love one another.* This commandment is the essence of question number 5., above, which is the fulcrum point of all the above asked seven questions. To be able to fully understand all seven questions and answers, question 5., must be answered and understood correctly. The answer to number 5., can be found in James 1:26 and 27, as follows in the Amplified: *26-If any one thinks himself to be religious--piously observant of the external duties of his faith--and does not bridle his tongue, but deludes his own heart, this person's religious service is worthless (futile, barren). 27-External religious worship (religion as it is expressed in outward acts) that is pure and unblemished in the sight of God the Father is this: to visit and help and care for the orphans and widows in their affliction and need, and to keep oneself unspotted and uncontaminated from the world.*

If you read the Bible cover to cover and note all of the times God and Christ refer to this theme, its lack of observance, and the consequences for not observing and obeying God's commands in this area, the confrontation should create a severe case of disease and a spirituality check in you. Have you ever noticed how this principle and theme stated in James 1:26 and 27 is secondary, tertiary, and even at the bottom of list of things to do in our individual and corporate Christian lives. First we have to have fine clothes, cars, houses, church buildings, education centers, parking lots and garages, programs for tots, youth, singles, adults, couples, then mission programs, etc. Then finally we get to the special

offerings once or maybe even twice a year, for the angel tree, prisons, orphanages, and an extra special offering for a widow, or family out of work, and then of course there are the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter baskets. Man always seems to get it backwards, and then wonders why individual and corporate faith dwindles and spirituality dies, with the resulting lack of commitment and work. The mission of the gentile is in faith to embrace the cross, confess his or her sins, believe in and on Christ, obey the three great commands, practice pure religion, and go out and make disciples and baptize them in the name the Triune God. If the individual and the church practiced pure religion, there would be people trying to break the person's and the church's doors down to get in.

The last point of the James verses is that both the individual and the church is to leave, cleave, and become one flesh with Christ. Most of you will probably recognize this as the summation of chapters 1,2, and 3 of Genesis for the marital relationship. As I have now answered questions 1., 2., and 5., I will leave it at that and answer questions 3. and 4. in the next article. I will also expand on the two conflicts I indicated above in a separate article next time.

© January 1996, Jeff Dull Christian Underground Journal

## FRAUDULENT FAITH

by

Ray C. Stedman

Chapter four of 1 Timothy begins with dramatic and intriguing words. The apostle says:

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons...”

As a young Christian in my early 20's, I remember reading that verse in the King James version, which uses the phrase, “the latter times,” rather than, “the later times.” was taught that this meant that before the Lord's return, in the last days, there was to be a departure from the faith, a great apostasy within the church. That was the time of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy. The fact that so many were then turning toward a liberal Christianity was regarded as fulfillment of the great apostasy that is

predicted by the Spirit, and many church leaders at that time were saying so.

As we draw near to the end, before the return of the Lord, there may come an increasing departure from the faith, but I do not think this passage is talking about any one great departure. In fact, other Scriptures suggest that the departure from the faith will occur at the time of the appearance of the man whom Paul in 2 Thessalonians calls “the man of sin,” the so-called “Anti-Christ” who will lead this great departure from the faith.

This verse in 1 Timothy, however, is more properly understood when it is translated, “in succeeding seasons there will be many departing from the faith”-- -i.e., this is something that is going to go on, the apostle is suggesting, throughout the whole course of Christian history, in succeeding seasons of time. Just as there are several seasons in a calendar year, so in the calendar of history God has seasons for human events---seasons of war, seasons of peace, seasons of unrest in society, when everything seems to be torn apart (we are going through such a season now); seasons of discovery, when the human mind breaks through into new vistas of truth, geographical discoveries, scientific discoveries; seasons of retrenchment, when everything seems to quiet down; and, as the apostle clearly says here, “seasons of deceit,” when error breaks forth afresh; like a fountain, it seems to gush out a whole new spectrum of untruth. I have lived long enough to have seen several such seasons.

These seasons of deceit were predicted by the Holy Spirit, we do not know how. Perhaps Paul learned this in some of those direct visions and visits from Jesus himself. Perhaps it came through the prophetic ministry of some of the New Testament prophets. At any rate, the Spirit had precisely stated that there would be succeeding seasons of deceit.

Many of you may welcome the view of Archbishop Trench, one of the great teachers of the church. He explains this word as it appears in the original Greek, in this way:

The seasons are the joints or articulations in the times, the critical, epoch-making periods, foreordained of God, when all that has been slowly, and often without observation, ripening through long ages, is mature and comes to the birth in grand, decisive events which constitute at once the close of one period and the commencement of another.

In the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a pronounced season of deceit, when new cults that have occupied the scene ever since emerged here in

America. Mormonism was born then; Jehovah's Witnesses came into being during that latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; Christian Science emerged. All of these claimed to be Christian, yet they distorted biblical Christianity. That period in the 1<sup>st</sup> century was followed by a period of quiet, when no new cults emerged. Error was being taught but no new organizations were formed.

Suddenly, in the mid-60's, it all broke loose again. A torrent of error began to flood our churches and the media. The Moonies came into existence under the Korean leader, Sun Myung Moon; the Hare Krishna, those young people in saffron robes with shaved heads, started appearing in airports, passing out literature and pinning flowers to lapels; Scientology, with its strange and cruel doctrines, was born; Transcendental Meditation came into popularity then.

Here the apostle is explaining that strange phenomenon to us. He says these things will occur in successive seasons of time. During those times, Paul says, many will depart from the truth, depart from the faith as it is presented in the apostolic Scriptures.

These groups make their appeal in various ways: some appeal to the emotions, some to the intellect, some to the will, to the pride of mankind. But they all have one common characteristic. This characteristic is indicated in this passage by the way the apostle moves from the central truth of Christianity, "the mystery of wholeness" (the person of our Lord and his work) expressed in chapter 3, verse 16, to the sharp and stark contrast of this "departure from the faith." Thus Paul seems strongly to suggest that the central focus of all error is to present a different Jesus; that is the key mark of deceit.

If you want to know whether a group you are listening to or are in touch with is preaching and teaching true Christianity, ask yourself: What do they say about Jesus? Who is he? Is he God appearing as man? Did he come in the flesh? Is he the Savior who has in himself accomplished all that God requires for the redemption of humanity? Ask yourself, What part does the blood of Jesus play in this teaching? What is said about his Person?

The central deviation of all religious error is a negative testimony to the centrality of Christ in the universe. Even the unseen forces of life know that Jesus is central. Jesus is truly Lord, so the thrust of error is to attack him. This is why in a university like Stanford it is possible to teach Buddhism, or some other teaching, and find it widely approved and supported by the faculty and the administration. Someone told me this morning that he took a course

at Stanford University on Druids and Druidism and the religion of King Arthur. It became evident through the course that the teacher believed these things and was actively propagating a belief in Druidism---and nobody objected. But when Jesus, when true Christianity is presented, there immediately is sharp and subtle opposition against it. This is what the apostle is pointing out.

Paul reveals the ultimate origin of these cults as coming from "deceitful spirits." Men do not invent errors like this. They come through men (Paul is going to say something about that in a moment) but the actual origin of these distortions of reality about our Lord are coming from deceitful spirits, lying spirits, whose very nature is to lie. When we compare this teaching with other parts of Scripture we learn that these are fallen angels. At a time even before the world was created, these angels followed their leader, Lucifer (Son of the Morning), highest of the angels of God, into a rebellion against the will and purposes of God. Thus they became identified with Lucifer's nature, which Jesus himself informs us is that of a "liar and a murderer."

Yet that being, that strange, malevolent being who is by nature a liar and by intent a murderer, is called everywhere in Scripture, "the god of this world." That is a frightening thought. The god which the world ignorantly, and innocently, in many ways, follows blindly like an animal being led to the slaughter is a murderer and a liar. These hosts of spiritual beings, which Paul recognizes in Ephesians 6 as the ones with whom we Christians wrestle---"Not flesh and blood but principalities and powers, wicked spirits in high places, the rulers of the darkness of this world"--are the very ones who originate these false and twisted ideas about Jesus.

We learn from Scripture that these spirits have access to the inner thoughts and feelings of men, including Christians. We are all affected by strange urges, feelings and desires that arise within us. But those desires do not always originate with us. We need to learn that all the thoughts that cross our minds are not necessarily coming from us. Those thoughts are what Paul calls, "fiery darts of the wicked one," against which faith must continually wrestle. These strange, sinister, unseen beings who have access to the minds and hearts of men, mislead and misdirect by what seems to us and to many to be logical and essential things that human nature should accept and even require. All that becomes expanded and supported by intricate arguments and rationalizations until it takes the form of what Paul calls, doctrines, i.e., formally

reasoned presentations. But Paul clearly calls these, “doctrines of demons.”

These doctrines are not always overtly religious either. What Paul is talking about in that first century day is clearly religious, and he is warning Timothy about it, but these “doctrines of demons” oftentimes come cleverly disguised as scientific theories, psychological approaches, or even economic theories. But the result of them is always the same: they confuse, they mislead, they distort reality; and they end, ultimately, in the destruction of human life. One way or another, that is the devil’s aim.

Take, for instance, humanism. This is probably the most widespread philosophy of our day. All the great institutions of our country, such as Stanford University, are almost visibly dedicated to the propagation of secular humanism. Humanism says that man is his own god, there is no being greater than man, we are able by our intellect and by our technological abilities to control the universe to our purposes, that this is the whole purpose of life and nothing is greater, etc. This exaltation of man, this worshipping at the shrine of human wisdom and human knowledge is a “doctrine of demons.” It is not reality; it denies reality. It denies the greatest fact of the universe, that there is a Creator from whom we came and to whom we are ultimately accountable. It is a doctrine that is widespread, propagated by lying spirits.

I believe evolution also to be such a doctrine. Evolution finds recognition and honor in the scientific community, yet hardly a shred of evidence links evolution to empirical facts of the material universe. Yet evolution has been accepted, propagated widely, and taught in all our schools as though it were truth. When compared to the actual findings of scientific endeavor it can never find support. It is a doctrine of demons.

Some thirty or forty years ago the idea that we could spend our way out of poverty into prosperity---deficit spending--- took root in our nation. That too is a doctrine of demons. It ought to be recognized immediately as false. We ought to laugh it out of court, but it is widely accepted; political movements and parties have it in their platforms. Yet the end result of this philosophy is that we are burdened with a terrible load of debt that crushes and destroys us. It sets one family against another. resulting in violence and disturbance, and ultimately death, in society. That is a doctrine of demons.

We are not engaged in a Sunday School party. We are in a deep and abiding war that is being fought with

spiritual weapons. We are up against these spiritual “principalities and powers,” these “rulers of the darkness of this world.”

Paul narrows this discussion to religious error particularly. He says the doctrines of demons in Ephesus were making their appearance through human beings whom he says, in verse 2, are.”...pretentious liars whose consciences are seared.”

Ultimately these errors come into human knowledge through human beings. It looks like people thought them up, but the apostle tells us they did not. People themselves are deceived victims of a propaganda that has been placed in their minds by these invisible beings.

The apostle suggests two things about these human propagators of error that are always identifying marks. First, they deal in pretentions. These people come to us with lofty-sounding claims. They appear to offer something extremely attractive and alluring, something that everybody would want. They make claims for themselves as having special prerogatives as teachers of truth. They have access to information that is denied the rest of us, they say; they have a special pipeline, a privileged relationship to deity, that the rest of us do not have. These are pretentions, the apostle says. They are merely claims people make.

Along with this these people are always characterized by some degree of a “seared conscience.” That means they no longer have moral scruples; they no longer can be restrained by appeals to their conscience. They will stop at nothing to accomplish their end; they are without compassion or mercy. They become cruel, voracious, impossible to stop. Though they may veil it with a velvet glove, behind their teaching is an iron fist.

Yet the word “seared” clearly suggests that there was a time, perhaps, when these people’s consciences were active. When they began they probably were simply egotists, men and women who were convinced they had abilities and powers beyond what they really possessed. They were out to get ahead. This is a widespread phenomenon in human society; we all suffer from it to some degree.

If you read the life of Adolph Hitler you discover that as a young man there were many admirable things about him. He was intelligent, knowledgeable about life; he had good morals, respect for the church, all these things, but he was an egotist. He always had to be dominant; he had to be in charge of everything he had anything to do with. Gradually, feeding that

insatiable maw of egoism, he dropped his moral scruples, until at last his egoism climaxed in the killing of six million Jews, just because they were in his way.

A seared conscience is what the apostle says becomes characteristic of men who give themselves to religious error. What a tremendous revelation along this line was given to us here in this area just a few years ago in the story of Jim Jones and the People's Temple! This was the story of a man who began with certain restraints and moral scruples. Nevertheless, by feeding his own ego he soon lost all those scruples, and ended up in that terrible scene in the jungles of Guyana.

Paul says the specific methods of these first century cultists are that (verse 3):

"[they] forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth."

One of the strange marks of religious error is that it is so often accompanied by ascetic practices, i.e., denial of certain normal, natural human enjoyments. One of them is marriage. A number of groups have been characterized through the years as forbidding marriage to their adherents, with the idea that sex is unclean, and those who indulge in it are certainly less dedicated than those who refrain.

Foods come under this heading too. I do not mean to imply at all that there is anything wrong with diets. It is obvious that some people need dieting. There is nothing wrong with studies on nutrition, proper eating, etc. Nevertheless, through the course of human history there has been a strange affinity between food restrictions, food fads, and religious error.

The reason is that at the heart of asceticism is a conviction that self-denial somehow pleases God. It can be very earnest, very sincere. Often Christians fall into this error in their early Christian days, thinking that if they deny themselves in some way God is going to be pleased and their status in his sight will be advanced. That is why some Christians love to get up early in the morning, or memorize hundreds of verses of Scripture, or pray on their knees for long periods of time, etc. These practices, which in themselves are not wrong, nevertheless become wrong because their motive (that of gaining God's favor by self-denial) is wrong.

This is a good example of the subtlety by which error begins. When a deviation enters a stream of truth, at

the first point of deviation error looks like truth; it is very hard to see it as error. This is what has misled so many people. They never recognize error until they became engrossed in it. Down the line they begin to suspect that it is error, but by that time they are already hooked. This is what many cultists use today to gain followers and hold them in bondage.

There is a difference between self-denial and denying self. Jesus said, "If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." That is denying self. But that is easily confused with self-denial, which says, "I will give up this thing or that thing." "I will not do this or stay out of that, because I want to reveal my dedication." "I want to be admired for my zeal." "I want to gain a special mark of favor before God." "I want to influence God to do something for me in return." That motivation renders it no longer denying self, but self-denial.

How subtle the differences are! Self-denial is an attempt to earn favor apart from faith in the gift of righteousness which makes us wholly acceptable before God right at the very beginning of our Christian life; while denying self is a refusal to heed those silken arguments of the inner ego that makes its appeal to us to show how good we are by giving up something, or to insist on having some right that we are defending.

"You are not your own," 1 Corinthians 6 says. To acknowledge that is to deny self in a proper and true Christian way: I do not belong to myself any more. I am not in charge of my life. Another is my Lord, not me. Another has the right to the final word as to whom I marry, where I go, what I do and how I behave. I am not my own. Acknowledging that is to deny that insistent claim of the flesh within: "You are your own. Don't let anybody tell you what to do. Don't let anybody take that position." That is what the Lord Jesus calls us to deny; that is a true denying of self. This other is self-denial, which becomes an expression of the pride and egoism of the flesh.

Paul answers these teachings in very simple, very beautiful words. He goes back to the doctrine of creation, saying that these teachers.

"...enjoin abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving; for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer."

Paul says it is simple to handle these strange pressures and urges of the flesh within us, by cultivating the habit of thanksgiving. See everything

coming to you as a gift that you have no right to, but it is yours by the grace and mercy of God.

Thanksgiving is a recognition that you do not possess anything in yourself, that everything comes as a gift from a loving God. When you do that you recognize two wonderful things: first, that God gave these things to our race for our enjoyment and enrichment. He did not give them that we might practice denial of them; he wanted us to have them.

But God wanted us to have them in ways that do not feed our ego and minister to our self-importance; and the only way that we can do so is to receive them with thanksgiving. That is what "for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer," means. Consecration means to put something to its proper use, and thus to render it safe for you to use.

The habit of giving thanks accomplishes that. When you take everything as a gift of God---your life, your breath, your family, your friends, your clothing, your food, your circumstances, your trials, your pressures, your problems---and thank God for them, then they are rendered safe. You no longer are the king on the throne, dictating to the rest of the world how to behave; you are a humble recipient of the gift from the Father's hand.

I love to see families giving thanks around the table before they eat. Food is the basic element of life. We are to give thanks for our daily bread because, "Back of the bread is the snowy flour, and back of the flour the mill. Back of the mill is the field of wheat, the rain and the Father's will." That is why we thank God. Everything comes from his hand.

Let me share with you these words from a young man of thirty-two years of age whose wife fell ill. As she slept by his side one morning he mused in these words:

"She may die before morning, but I have been with her for four years. Four years! There is no way I can feel cheated if I didn't have her another day. I didn't deserve her for one minute. And I may die before morning! What I must do is die now. I must accept the justice of death and the injustice of life. I have lived a good life, longer than many, better than most. Tony died when he was twenty. I have had thirty-two years. I couldn't ask for another day. What did I do to deserve birth? It was a gift. I am me. That is a miracle. I have no right to a single minute. But some are given a single hour, and yet I have had thirty-two years.

Few can choose when they will die, but I choose to accept death now. As of this moment I give up my

right to live and I give up my right to her life. And so it is morning. I have been given another day. another day to hear and breathe and smell and walk and love and glory. I am alive for another day."

On the wall of one of my rooms at home is a little plaque that says:

"There is no thought worth thinking  
Unless it is the thought of God.  
There is no sight worth seeing  
Unless it is seen through his eyes.  
There is no breath worth breathing  
Without giving thanks to him  
Whose very breath it is."

What paupers we are in ourselves! What rich people we are by the gift and the grace of God; and what we do to preserve sanity when we utter thanksgiving in God's name!

Catalog No. 3774  
1 Timothy 4:1-5  
Eleventh Message

Copyright © 1995  
<http://www.pbc.org/pbc/dp/index.html>  
<http://www.pbc.org/pbc/index.html>  
Discovery Publishing, a ministry of Peninsula Bible Church.

This data file may not be copied in part, edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of Discovery Publishing. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Discovery Publishing, 3505 Middlefield Rd. Palo Alto, CA. 94306-3695.

## **THE TRAINING OF CHILDREN**

By

Dennis Hinks

*These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Deut. 6:6,7 (NIV)*

## **Introduction:**

Teaching children is one of the primary tasks that God has given to parents. In order that we might perform this task properly, God has given us instructions in the Bible. It is our duty to cheerfully follow these instructions, knowing that they are ALWAYS superior to any substitute. In doing this, we can expect to reap the rewards of obedience--not only in eternity when we are judged for all we do--but also in this life.

## **Teaching Ourselves:**

The first thing we must do before we teach our children, is teach ourselves. We cannot merely TELL children how they should live; we must SHOW them by the way we ourselves live. (We must be their examples, because children follow the models they see.) First of all, children must be taught the Bible (and what it says about life and living), but they must also see the biblical principles demonstrated in our lives. They learn more from such an example than from any other means. In fact, whether they see us live in obedience or disobedience to God's Word, they will likely do the same. The way we live must agree with the things we teach. (How we live will show others whether or not we ourselves truly accept the Bible as God's Word.)

The Bible warns us that our willful sins may affect the lives of several generations to come. As an example, we can look at the way God describes Himself to Moses in Exod. 34:6-7: *"The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin."* Then He issues a warning, saying: *"Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation."*

When this happens, it is not that God is unjust or unfair, but it is because the children have followed the ways of their parents. Other verses teach that IF the children turn away from their sin to follow God, then God will not punish them. (See Ezek. 18:14-19)

In the New Testament we read, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"* 2 Cor. 5:17. The promise is to ALL people, including children. A child who receives the Savior will not follow the ways of his parents who

did not obey God. In time, he will become a godly parent who teaches his children to follow the Lord.

## **We Are To Live In Love and Obedience:**

The Bible teaches us that we are required to love God and our neighbor--regardless if he is an enemy. *"...Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind....Love your neighbor as yourself"* Matt. 22:37,39.

We are also required to obey God. If our love for God is genuine, we will obey Him. *"If you love me, you will obey what I command"* Jn. 14:15. *"This is love for God: to obey his commands"* 1 Jn. 5:3a.

The love mentioned in the above verses is tied to obeying what God has commanded. It cannot be associated with a lifestyle of disobedience to God. It is not emotional feelings or romantic desire or lust, that the world might call love. Rather, it is an attitude of commitment that seeks to do good to others, regard-less of how they respond--even if they respond with hatred. This love does not encourage sin in others. We express love to the sinner, but we do not love his sin. Rather, we encourage others to do good, and warn them, in a loving manner, not to do evil.

The Apostle Paul describes love in this manner: *"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy; it does not boast; it is not proud. It is not rude; it is not self-seeking; it is not easily angered; it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres"* 1 Cor. 13:4-7.

Jesus often had to condemn the religious people of His day for claiming to love God when they were actually denying Him by the way they lived. (See Matt. 7:21) We must not only accept what the Bible teaches, we must also LOVE it. This does not mean that we will live totally sinless lives. It does mean that we will DESIRE to live sinless lives, and that whenever we sin we will acknowledge it to God, turn away from it by repenting, and begin again to follow God. If God has changed our hearts--if we have truly become children of God--we will desire to live in obedience to God.

## **The Children's Responsibility:**

Although God commands the parents to train their children in the commandments of God, their responsibility does not negate the children's

responsibility. As our children grow up, they must decide for themselves whether or not they will follow God. But the way we follow Him will very strongly influence them.

### **The Work of the Holy Spirit:**

The parents' responsibility for the spiritual welfare of their children does not negate the work of the Holy Spirit. The best we can do for our children is to make them outwardly obey and follow the Bible. We might get them to follow the ethical principles of the Bible (and this is important even for unbelievers, if we desire to live in a peaceful society), but we cannot change the hearts of our children. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. He, by the means of biblical truth that we teach them, gives them new life.

### **Children Must Be Taught To Do What Is Right:**

Children are not born with a desire to please God, but rather to please themselves. Even though they are not able to make decisions as adults do, children are sinners from birth. Doing what is wrong comes naturally to them. When they have opportunity to do so, they demonstrate their selfish nature in their choices. (*"Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" Psa. 51:5 NIV.*) Therefore, we must teach children the right way to live. We must not only instruct them, but also provide an example for them, guide their responses (by means of discipline) and encourage them in every possible way to make God's will their will. The devil is doing everything he can to lead them into wrong, and their sinful natures are inclined toward following his ways. But by God's power, we can win the battle.

### **We Must Teach About Salvation And The Christian Life:**

We must teach children from the Word of God that they are sinners who deserve God's punishment. They must learn to confess their sin, turn from it, and follow God--trusting Him alone for salvation and learning to live in obedience to Him.

We must also teach children that the Bible is important in every area of life, not just on Sundays when we attend a place of worship.

### **We Must Teach At All Times, Under All Circumstances:**

When Moses told Israel the commandments of God, he said, *"Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" Deut. 4:7-9.* Tying the commands on their hands and foreheads was a symbolic act. Its purpose was to teach that every action (things done with the hands) and every thought (things done with the head or mind) were to be controlled by the commandments of God. These commandments were to be part of ALL of life--both at home and in the presence of those outside the family.

### **We Must Discipline Our Children:**

Discipline is a part of teaching. Just as a child should be praised and encouraged when he does what is right, so he should be corrected when he does wrong. Both are equally important and necessary.

The concept of; discipline can involve many things. It may include physical punishment, such as spanking of small children, but it should also include verbal admonition--rebuke, teaching, encouragement. It may take other forms of reward or punishment, such as granting or taking away privileges, or requiring some form of recompense to those who have been hurt or offended. Sometimes it may involve doing nothing at all if natural consequences would provide an adequate--yet not too severe--punishment by themselves.

But regardless of the form in which discipline occurs, it must be done for the proper reasons and with the proper attitude. We discipline our children so that they might learn to live in a way pleasing to God, and we do it with an attitude of love--both for God and for the one being disciplined.

### **Discipline and Love Must Go Together:**

God disciplines His children in love. He is our perfect example. *"The Lord disciplines those he loves and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son....God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness" Heb. 12:6,10b NIV.* We must follow God's example and discipline our children when they sin. We must do this out of love as God does, rather than



out of anger or vengeance. (Our children must be able to see that love.) *"He who spares the rod (of discipline) hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him"* Prov. 13:24 NIV.

Discipline and love are both necessary. To ignore one or the other could have disastrous results and adversely influence the child's view of God.

#### **Stressing Discipline/Neglecting Love:**

Some people think that discipline and love are opposites that cannot go together, so they choose to practice one or the other. In doing that, they fail to properly practice either. For example: If parents constantly stress discipline and do not show love, their discipline becomes harsh and cold and is often done in anger. Their children will learn to be cruel and vengeful, quick to retaliate when others offend them, unforgiving and unloving. Worse yet, they may view God as One Who is cruel and unforgiving, eager to judge and punish men for their sins. They may even learn to hate Him.

If, when these children are grown, they recognize the error of their parents, they will normally overreact. They become guilty of the opposite error--love without discipline--because they have been taught that the two cannot be practiced at the same time.

#### **Stressing Love/Neglecting Discipline:**

There are other people who constantly stress love and neglect discipline. Their children learn to be unruly, disobedient, having no respect for authority even God's authority--and are very self-centered. They grow up thinking that sin and disobedience are not serious matters, and they become unconcerned about obedience to God. They may view God as "too loving" to punish sin and may never learn to turn from their sins and to follow Him. Also, they never learn that *"the grace of God that brings salvation...teaches us to say NO to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives"* Titus 2:11,12 NIV. Persons who have never been disciplined fail to realize that *"the man who says, 'I know Him (God), ' but does not do what he commands is a liar and the truth is not in him"* 1 Jn 2:4 NIV.

#### **Final Comments:**

When parents obey the Bible and teach their children to do the same, they can expect the blessing of God.

Almost always, their children will follow the ways of God.

It must be remembered that teaching oneself and teaching one's children both require constant work and that neither we nor our children are perfect. Therefore, we need to constantly try to improve both in the way we live and in the way we teach our children to live.

Dennis Hinks © 1988[originally published in YOUTH, a ministry of WEC International, Fort Washington, PA]

### **SPIRITUALITY vs. RELIGION**

By

Jeff Dull

I have read and heard many definitions of spirituality, and most of them are one sided, indicating that it can only be a Christian experience. I disagree with this concept, because as I read the Bible, God made man in His image and God is Spirit. I also see man as a spirit, soul, and body, with the expression of the spirit as the ultimate form of expression called spirituality. That is to say that one's spirituality will be the expression of what ever is a person's standard for living and dying, or what ever is number one in a person's life at any one time in a person's life. I also believe that there are only two kinds of spirituality, positive and negative, with Christian based spirituality as positive and all others as negative spirituality. After all, Satan is also spirit, and we are in spiritual warfare as described in Ephesians. In my opinion, if there is a war going on, then there must be at least two contending spirits, and the expression of a particular spirit would be called spirituality. Add to that the fact that God designed us to live forever, and on the final judgment day we will find out where we will live forever, in heaven or the lake of fire according to our spirit and spirituality. Here is my analogy as to how I see it.

I use what I call the carbon analogy to describe mankind. When I read Genesis, I see God as creating a pure white sparkling piece of carbon, a diamond with a pure and clean spirit absorbing the light of God and reflecting God's brilliance all around. Then comes the fall... man sins, his spirit dies, and he becomes a piece of dead carbon, a hard black piece of

anthracite coal, which can no longer absorb God's light but only produce a surface reflection in one direction. Every person born after the fall is born as a piece of anthracite coal, spiritually hard and black. No matter how smooth and shiny a person may try to become through right living and doing good things, they are and always will be dead carbon, a hard black piece of anthracite coal fit only for the fire. When a person accepts Christ as Savior and Lord, their spirit is once again made alive and they once again become a diamond (albeit a diamond in the rough) and able to absorb and internally reflect God's light. Because there is still sin in our lives we never do attain that original purity and brilliance that Adam and Eve had back in the beginning. We are all diamonds in the rough. Some of us are yellow, flawed, and even uncut, but still a diamond, and saved by grace. As we mature and become more dependent on Christ, and we trust and obey more fully, God the diamond cutter refacets us, removes the flaws and yellowing, and restores the brilliance. However, two problems still remain. First, we are still carbon units, and it is not until Christ returns that we shuck this carbon suit and get transfigured becoming what God intended all along. Secondly, enduring God's cutting process of becoming spiritual and mature is a very painful one and can only be done at our consent. All too often we stop the process and return to religiosity.

In this analogy I have presented two spirits, one white, and one black, both of which result in an expression of spirituality in worship called religion. I also want to point out that the condition and color of the spirit has no relationship to the color of a person's skin. I point this out, because it has been my experience that people do equate the two as one and use it consciously or unconsciously as one of the underpinnings of racial prejudice and bigotry. Back to the two types of spirits. When man uses society, science, nature, knowledge, or himself as standard he is a black spirit and can only produce a surface reflection in that direction. The Bible is also clear that any standard other than God's standard, Christ Jesus, is idolatry and a lie, and one with the father of lies, Satan. Negative spirituality results in the worst type of religion, and the worst type of religious expression, the legalism, hypocrisy, ritualism, and the priestcraft the Pharisees. This type of negative spirituality and religious expression produces a black spirit, a tormented soul, and a tired body. For me the acid test is that Satan, sin, and any other standard other than Christ never delivers what it promises. The results are alienation from God, abortion, broken families, child and spouse abuse, addictions, broken dreams, and eternal separation from God. I believe that the

"American Dream" has become obsessive and become an idol which cannot deliver what it promises, and that the pursuit and or fulfillment of it in and of itself is emptiness and vanity. When a man has Christ as his Savior and Standard, he has an internal reflection of God's light returning to God and himself, as well as reaching out to society, science, nature, knowledge, and all others too. Becoming one with Christ is becoming one with the truth, and Christ always delivers what He promises. The positive spirituality produces a bright, clear, and glowing spirit, a peaceful soul, and a rejuvenated body. The results are healthy relationships with God, self, family, and others. The "American Dream" achieved as a result of this spirituality then becomes a by product, and is in proper perspective in value and worth as a gift of God's Grace, and not something deserved due to self righteous achievement. As I indicated earlier, we are not pure white diamonds as Adam and Eve were before the fall. We are flawed, so the expression of our worship and religion is flawed and tainted with Pharisees too. The title of this article contains the word versus in it. The word versus indicates conflict and contention, and rightly so, because we do battle the tendency of religion becoming an idol. It was the same for Israel. When the Jews were about to enter the promised land, God said to them, when you sin, not if you sin, to seek again God's face and confess the sin and receive healing and forgiveness. So when I hear most people speak about spirituality versus religion, what they really mean is positive spirituality versus religion. To close this article I would like to present to you a paper written by an unknown Baptist chaplain about this subject. I stated in the last journal that once I learned the difference between religion and spirituality that my whole life changed and I was able to really see and understand for the first time. This is the paper that initiated that change as I asked the Holy Spirit to show me its meaning for me in my life.

## RELIGION VERSUS SPIRITUALITY

*—Much time and effort is spent clarifying the difference between religion and positive spirituality. So this paper is written to specifically clarify the inequality between the two.*

*—Religion is knowledge about God while Spirituality is knowing God. Religion satisfies the mind and emotions. Spirituality satisfies the soul.*

*—Religion puts on its best manners, clothes and face on Sundays or whenever certain people are*

around. Spirituality behaves itself everyday and everywhere, even when alone.

—Religion is working as hard as we can for God. Spirituality is God working as hard as He can in us after we have made our decision to turn our will and life over to His care.

—Religion will cause a person to be found in church - everyday, if necessary. Spirituality will cause the church ("Body of Christ") to be found in the person - everyday, as necessary. Religion will make us do a lot of things we really do not want to do. Spirituality will make us do only what we should do, because the desire is in our heart.

—Religion will make a certain set of "good habits" form us. Spirituality will cause us to form "good habits." A person works on their religion. Spirituality works on us. Religion will cause us to do good. Spirituality causes us to be good AND to do good as well.

—Religion can make us look good to others, while Spirituality makes us look good to God. Religion is concerned with showing "love, joy, peace..." (Galations 5:22-23). Spirituality is concerned with possessing "love, joy, peace..." then one will automatically produce these positive attributes.

—Religion makes us more pleased with ourselves than with God. Spirituality makes us pleased with God and never completely pleased with ourselves.

—With religion, the human is the dominant entity. With Spirituality the Creator is all in all. Religion is powered by the love of self. Spirituality is powered by the love of God. Religion will allow a person to feed the poor but hate their neighbor. Spirituality will cause us to love everybody. (1 Corinthians 13:3)

—Religion allows a person to worry about how people are treating them. Spirituality, however, causes us to be concerned about how we are treating people. Religion will make us "feel" like we earn and even deserve heaven. Spirituality will make us know that it is "But for the Grace of God" (gift).

—Religion may sometimes make people "sick" of another person. Spirituality will make us sick of ourselves. People will see the beauty of the Godly life and desire it. Spirituality attracts.

Religion is what we - since times beginning - have been offering to God. Spirituality is what God - since times beginning - has been trying to offer to us. This, then, is the chief difference between the two: Religion arises from the earth; Spirituality comes down from Heaven.

—To get religion, you must give up certain "things!" To get Spirituality, which is the free gift of God's Grace, you give up EVERYTHING out of love.

—Religion by no means is all negative, but it sometimes gets in the way of Spirituality when "THE RELIGION" becomes God. As a spa or gym is to an individual who has decided to become more physically healthy, so is religion to one who wants to exercise spirituality.

—I understand God in the traditional Christian concept of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the personality of God which is unconditional love or "God's Love" (Agape). For me, Christianity is not only a "Religion" but a relationship" with Jesus Christ as personal Savior. Therefore, the difference between religion and spirituality is only non-existent in Christianity, when Christ is the focus of attention.

Copyright December 1995 © Jeff Dull  
Christian Underground Journal

## THE GAME

by

Jeff Dull

In the last journal I ended the Kingdom III article with a paragraph about competition. Americans love competition and games. I think the bumper sticker that reads, *The one at the end who dies with the most toys wins*, epitomizes not only the American view but the whole world view in general on games and competition. The Bible itself uses the analogy of a race, but its context seems to me to be different. Every aspect of our life is viewed as a game where a person survives and out lasts others to become number "1", the king of the hill. The line, *nobody remembers who was number two*, again epitomizes what I believe to be the general world view. The worlds love affair with being number "1" is the driving force behind its moral, ethical, and spiritual values, attitudes, and behaviors. It contaminates all aspects of our life such as political, social,

educational, financial, recreational, philosophical, technical and unfortunately our theological ideologies. All of this is basically what is called in psychology an obsessive/compulsive control issue. One of the ironies is that the technical aspect of this is no longer under human control. It used to be that man was the driving force for technical advancement to enhance mans control over the uncontrollable, but now the technical aspect is driving mankind. Just like alcohol, or any addictive agent controls the addict, so technical advancements now becomes the first consideration before any choices are made in the world today. Think about it. Ever since World War One when the machine gun was invented, and especially today with heads up displays and laser guided smart bombs we don't throw more people into a war zone or any other situation as a first choice, we throw in more technology first. The need to out access, amass, process, interpolate, interpret, and implement information and technology, as well as to crush a competitor, opponent, or enemy has pervaded all aspects of our societies. I would say that we tripped over the line in the late sixties when automation really started taking off and become more important then people.

Everything I have mentioned so far however pales compared to what the world considers the biggest badest game of them all. This game has no greater competition, and no greater amount of resources or technology thrown at it by every person, society, government, and nation in the world today. It is the one item every single person is responsible for and will be held accountable for by God, and what Christ says is the cross we are to pick up and bear. What is **THE GAME? LIFE and DEATH!** The ultimate game of Man Vs God. The ultimate irony is that man is actually the pawn in the game. The real issue is spiritual warfare of Satan against God for the worship of man. Satan has convinced the world that man can be God so he must compete against God for his rightful position. To state the obvious, the only issue that makes this true is DEATH, the choice presented in the Garden of Eden, and in every choice man has made and will make until Christ's return. Death is the one absolute aspect of life people have no control over and want to control more then any other item, because to eliminate death means victory over God and the garden issues.

What makes any game the competitive situation it is, and the reason for the drive for number "1", is loss, and the finality of death is the ultimate loss concept and the ultimate victory. Weapons of mass destruction, abortion and suicide/euthanasia are currently mans ultimate control issue responses to God, the creator and giver of both life and death. No

one wants to loose or be number "2", certainly no one really wants to die, and no one wants to be labeled as not being in control of their life and choices. SO, **WHAT'S THE POINT?** I view it as the difference between religion and spirituality, surviving and living. To me man has once again turned upside down an infinite aspect and gift of God and made it a finite one. Christ has already won the victory and Satan in his loss and death throes is trying to take as much of mankind with him as he can. First of all life is not a game, it is a person, Jesus Christ. Remember what Christ told Martha before he raised Lazarus in *John 11:5, I am the resurrection and the life* (NIV) . Christianity is not a lifestyle, it is a relationship with Jesus Christ that produces a lifestyle, and Christianity is not a philosophy, it is truth revealed by the Holy Spirit that inspires a philosophy. As a person accepts Christ as Lord and Savior a relationship develops and grows. This mutual relationship is based on unconditional receiving by acknowledging the fact that none of us can repay God for His gift of Grace. The epitome of arrogance that reflects mans backward attitude is the line, *God is my co-pilot*. If God isn't the pilot then He isn't anything and not present at all. The attitude of "God is my co-pilot", is that man takes the gifts of God and claims them for himself to be used for his own control and to control God and others. This same perverted attitude has pervaded the church as well.

As I indicated earlier the need for survival and control is the driving force to be number "1". Anytime the need for control and the desire to be number "1" raises its ugly head then pride, and what I call the "Big I" or "Satan" syndrome of self- praise and self-glorification takes precedence over praising and glorifying God. Mike (the editor of this journal) and I were talking about this sometime ago and again this week, and he said two things that I think illustrate what I am taking about. First, Mike said, "Man has to quit doing things for God and allow God to do things through Man. For who is man to counsel God"? Secondly he said, "I wonder when the church is going to stop relying on the purse strings of man and start relying on the purse strings of God"? One last point on number "1". Think about this. Most churches that I am familiar with look and act like the business community. They have advertising and marketing strategies for a host of programs. There is also a rating system showing which church is the biggest, fastest growing, and the most financially secure. To sum it up, the church today uses the same system of success as the Jews and apostles did before the death of Christ, and the same views as Job's three friends did on him. We must always try to do our best and

become the best we can be, but this is not in relationship to any other person, place, or thing other than God's standard Christ Jesus.

As I said in the last article, I only compete against myself to see how far I have come compared to where I started from. Being number "1" in any aspect of my life then becomes a by product of living for God and not an end unto itself by surviving for self. This brings me to my second point. Every sinner who accepts Christ as Lord and Savior and persists to the end wins. There is no number one to the exclusion of another, all are winners and number "1". There is however an order and a rank structure in heaven, and the church, but not in the sense that all others are losers or number "2", but all are equal heirs with Christ Jesus and members of the same body of Christ.

### **One final note.**

In the beginning God gave us the gift of life, then He also gave us the gift of death and prevented us from eating of the tree of life so that we would not live forever separated from Him. Finally, God initiated a plan for the gift of eternal life with Him. Sin and death is what makes life heavy and burdensome. That is why the cross is so heavy. Christ is life, and God has a mission and purpose for each one of us that is to bring glory to God. Death is a gift of a merciful God to put everything else in proper perspective, to give life meaning, and to give us a reason to seek God's face. Our death and resurrection in Christ will bring God glory and put another nail in Satan. Remember, the Bible says it is God who will place death under the feet of Christ. If I take my eyes off my Lord, my God, and my God given mission by looking and comparing myself to others, and putting myself in competition with others, to that extent will I fail and like Peter sink in the sea of sin and doubt. Remember, we are in two games at present, and it takes two to play them both. First, is the game where we are in competition with God because we bought Satan's lies. The second, is the game where we are in competition with each other for status over each other and status in the first game. Stop playing, refocus on God, and these games of survival will end. This will allow you to start a life of real living, instead of surviving what the world calls THE GAME... of Life and Death.

Copyright December 1995 © Jeff Dull  
Christian Underground Journal

## **The Recycling of Sin**

by

Michael A. Kovach

### **AN INTRODUCTION**

Recycling of Sin deals with the cause of dysfunctional behaviors based on a biblical beginning, not symptoms, or social stereotypes. Its intent, is to attempt dispelling myths and notions that the devil forces people to sin.

As a former substance abuse counselor for the United States Navy, I had the unique privilege of gaining insight into the spiritual condition of many sailors. The reader must understand that military treatment is much different than its civilian counterpart; people undergoing treatment in the military don't have a choice in treatment. They are ordered to treatment because of an infraction of military law, or perceived to have a problem based on their behavior.

Now a civilian, I am no longer a practicing counselor, but I do continue to keep abreast of current trends, discoveries and insights. In addition, I maintain an active membership with The Association of Christian Counselors as one avenue for continuing education. My gift as a counselor, is still used by the Lord for those He leads into my life, who are called according to His purpose, for His glory and honor, and for their health. There is never a charge for services placed on any individual, since I see this as my commissioned ministry from Jesus Christ to freely give as He freely gave us life.

### **A MAJOR LIFE TRAUMA?**

**Romans 1:28** *"And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper."*

Some view a major life trauma as an event that took place some time in the past of a person's life, or usually the distant past, and sometimes the near present past; something that took place within the last five years. This trauma, or event, which some lock away in a secluded place of their mind, is usually

considered trivial by those affected, and as a result easily suppressed, or totally denied. There is an emotional consequence to this deliberate hiding that results in the repression of normal feelings do to an unpleasant event. This decision, holds a person's character hostage, by abating emotional responses to trauma and loss. As each response lessens more and more, different methods of expressing unpleasant events are developed. Some begin to express their pain, or dissatisfaction with inappropriate manners; such as fits of rage, or temper tantrums. Even fraudulent emotions can be staged by acting as if all is OK, or by becoming overly emotional by excessive crying without tears, or laughing during times of loss, or by drawing attention to themselves. These individuals appear to be very self-disciplined, focused and calm, or totally out of control when not controlled by an external source. To themselves they appear in control of their environment, self-confident and ambitious, eager beavers and ready to take the initiative by taking on any assignment. Usually, this type of character employs ethics that border on addiction and imperativeness. Often, their interpersonal skills are underdeveloped, which leads them to be insecure, and causes them to become obstinate, demanding, or abrasive as a means of defense which they believe hides their weakness, or displays their strength.

You see, we never really forget, totally control, or are able to hide much of anything. We simply dismiss it, or refuse to acknowledge a problem exists. Rationalizing becomes common and soon problems are forgotten, at least, that's what these individuals believe. These types of individuals are vulnerable to criticism and introspection, and begin to lie about their life and their character to gain acceptance and approval. These lies sleep in the recesses of their fragile minds, until an unsuspecting event takes place that forces them to remember their vulnerability. Once in a familiar setting, these lies are played back and the emotion of that experience, along with the learned coping strategies, are employed instantly to defend against feelings that seem strange and frightening.

These recurrences of a familiar event, leads individuals into repressing necessary emotions even further. Many convince themselves that what they feel, or don't feel is normal; while on the inside, there is something stirring that confuses them, trying to tell them that something is not right. When observing those who express the emotions openly and deal with hurt appropriately, they often feel a need to comfort them. But, their own sleeping feelings become

aroused and their defensiveness begins. No they begin to feel pity for these people, believing they are weak and not able to be strong when needed. Their response is often hollow, or surface-oriented, displaying what appears to be a normal by employing tactics that lessen confrontation, such as being politically correct, indirectness, or by not acting or reacting at all. Then, there are those who totally retreat inward, or retreat from confrontation a by altogether. They wont attempt working through a situation, they simply alter course and dismiss it by considering the event trivial. Many of these individuals often receive a prognosis that indicate some form of psychosis that took place prior to puberty, a personality disorder of any given name, or considered to be suffering from a depressive episode. Eventually, these labels and characteristics, become tools for manipulation and a means of coping in stressful situations. They often lead to a more severe problems such as, alcoholism, drug abuse, spouse abuse, workaholism, eating disorders, shopaholism and even addictions to exercise, or even reading.

It is very important at this point to state that some of these behaviors could be the result of biological factors which is extremely important to understand. Many individuals have given prognoses based on the behavior alone. Completely disregarding facts in behavior that could indicate a chemical problem. Any counselor ill equipped, could do more harm if all aspects of the individuals medical and mental state are not properly assessed.

These behaviors have been called many names by physiologists, therapists, social workers and counselors from every persuasion of life. Each argument is correct in its content and observation of those who suffer such traumatic experiences; and who do not have a biological problem. However, these observations I feel are simply symptom specific, not cause related. What I mean by that is, many see the problem, identify the symptom and label it as the cause. Why not, it appears correct and is an acceptable prognosis to those directly involved. There are even some clear cut signs that a cognitive therapy approach borders on helping people arrive at the point of their pain, or by believing they have reached the underlying cause of the problem. This being accomplished through thought processes. The secular cognitive approach posits that these events are not the cause of emotional problems, but how we think about these events is the underlying problem and if the thinking could be altered, the steps toward emotional health can be taken. It does appear to work for many who undergo cognitive therapy to uncover the

thought that suppressed the emotional event. However, it is usually short lived, with the person returning for additional help not long after therapy is completed. Many Christian therapists employ scriptural logic in their cognitive approach, dealing with the lies of the devil and re-enforcing biblical beliefs in God the therapist and directing individuals to develop the mind of Christ. They are successful in bringing out the facts about repressing sin, the need for forgiveness, the consequences of unforgiveness. Never-the-less, many never reach the actual cause of the pain, which to me, is usually a deception and lie from a very crafty and cunning enemy. Not much emphasis is placed on how the Lord has provided a way out of the devils attacks, or how the devil and his band of followers feverishly make a bunch of noise to drowned out the voice of Christ. One of the sadist facts I had to face, is that most people who profess to be Christian really aren't; they acknowledge Christ, but their idea of belief is misplaced, and their lives in general does not reflect one of holiness or hope. The reason is do the distortions in word meanings, such as the word believe. Many do not have a firm grip on this word. To some, the word simply means to say yes, without any consequences, or responsibility. Others simply use the trust aspect of the word without regard for hole heartedness and reliance. In the amplified bible the word believe is defined as "rely on, trust in, cling to," and not many do any of those.

Perhaps counselors should examine the possibility, that who they are talking to may not believe at all, especially since their problems are still present from a life they were supposedly delivered from. It is even conceivable to think that many counselors don't even consider the unbelief, or the devil, maybe some don't even acknowledge the possibility.

I have found an underling hate of God, do to a misunderstanding of His role in individual lives, or the attitude of failing God by not overcoming sin. Neither of these are attitudes of a believer, at least none I have studied in history, or are associated with today. When talking with people who have these characteristics concerning their relationship with God, I often get a variety of responses, mostly I hear: "Jesus will take care of it." "God is in control, I don't need to concern myself." "I'll just pray it away." "I'm not Job, can't God see that." "none of this would have happened if the devil didn't make me do it." "God did this to teach me a lesson." "God hates me, I can't do anything right in his sight." In some cases, I would get a similar story from someone who did not believe in God at all. At least that's what they claim. Most

would always comment: "you know, it was the other guy's fault that I drank too much and ended up in jail." "It wasn't my fault, man, I was pushed into doing it." "It's no big deal, I can't figure out why there's so much fuss." "I don't even think about God, He has nothing to do with my life!" "The devil isn't real so why blame it on him." "God's not against this, or that, he's a God of love."

Now that remark gets me going every time. How can someone believe in good, but not darkness. That always starts the red lights and sirens going! This is a personalized refusal to accept anything wrong, or inappropriate. Perhaps, some hidden hate is present; hate for someone because of what they did, or said. Here, is where intellectualization can come into play and to illustrate what I mean here's a brief definition: *Intellectualization—avoiding the awareness of severe inferiority feelings and other unconscious conflicts by the excessive use of intellectual vocabulary, discussions, and philosophies.* There is real danger here, know one can claim one side of life without the other—it's not cognitively possible, but it is spiritually; especially when the individual is separated from God, and does not have any form of relationship with Him. In most cases, these individuals have an alienation of affection and tend to be loaners and find it difficult to be affectionate, even if married.

It should be obvious that there is little difference between to believers and non-believers by the responses responses; and the direction blame has taken should be just as clear. Christians repress inward by self-blaming and those who claim not to believe, repress outward by other-blaming, so feelings of guilt and shame don't affect them. On one hand, there's the martyr, and on the other, opposition and a failure to identify with the cause.

What I'm going to propose next will sound strange at first. Try to bear with me on this, and I'll try to make as much sense about my understanding that I can. In some medical circles, the root cause of these types of problems could receive a prognosis of mixed emotional disturbances during childhood, oppositional disorder, or a misery and unhappiness disorder. All of which would be true, in respect to natural observation and accepted standards. These prognosis would indicate a trauma occurring early in life, or from a near past experience, as the root causes for the onset of a particular emotional problem. On the other hand, I believe, that the early event in a person's life is not what causes an individual to repress thought, rationalizing their taking place, intellectualizing the trauma, or resorting to



manipulation as coping skill. I believe, the event adds to the problem that goes back to the first sin which has been reeking havoc on man ever since. But how could I say that? What evidence supports such a claim, and what about Jesus' redemptive work at Calvary? What about saved by grace, or predestination? It's true. The blood of Christ washes us from the stench of sin and cleanses us, through a new birth in Him as scripture states in **2 Corinthians 5:16-17**, *"Therefore from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."* However, we have an adversary who lost his power to control death, and now he's out to deceive, steal, kill, or destroy, any hope a person has. He does this, I believe, by invoking the same tactics he did long ago by leading many to live dual faith, (law and grace). For the law **Romans 3:19-20** says: *"Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin."* And for grace we read in **Ephesians 2:8-10**: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."* Putting these two together by human effort and trying to live a dual life, would cause the strongest Christian to fall flat on their backs. It would be a contradiction of the gospel to attempt a life by Law and Grace. A more appropriate view of law and grace is found in **Romans 3:27-31**: *"Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one. Do we then nullify the Law through faith? 'May it never be!' On the contrary, we establish the Law."* There is the balance for right living and understanding, and this is exactly what the devil attempts to get us to misunderstand. If we allow his lies to take root, the consequence would be a constant failing to deal with emotional pain that restrains. I believe the real trauma is not what happens to us in life, it's the separation from God that is the real trauma. And this trauma

fuels the Recycling of Sin. As a result, depression sets in because of the anger toward a personal inability to overcome bad habits and sin; pride would take the place of guilt and failure causing the hurt to become hidden, or repressed. This is what happened to Adam and Eve as recorded in **Genesis 3:8-13**, *"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man, and said, 'where are you?' And he said, 'I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself. And He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' And the man said, 'The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.' Then the Lord God said to the women, 'What is this you have done?' And the woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'" He's a powerful advisory, the second most powerful in all of creation after the triune God, and we need to realize that his power can no longer physically harm us, that his power can only lie and deceive us, and if we give in to his fiery darts of wickedness, he eventually gets many to believe anything he conjures up. Sadly, even though he's a powerful being, he's not the cause, we are! he's just a symptom of the cause. The apostle Paul gives us a clue in **2 Corinthians 11:3** how this can happen: *"But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."* We must take the responsibility for our pain, failings and disappointments, and refuse to listen to the devils belly aching. Refusing to accept responsibility is the actual root of dysfunctional behaviors and if you look at **James 1:14-17** we quickly see where responsibility lies, *"But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow."**

Yes, we experience painful events, sometimes even dreadful and horrific ones, but it's our responsibility to deal appropriately with them by placing them before the Lord and asking for His sustaining power to see us through; we cannot develop the mind of Christ by our own efforts, nor can we overcome the devil and our lusts on our own. If we try, we fail, and if we fail, we end up repressing our failures. There's a reluctance to take that step into



assuming responsibility for situations that we allow ourselves to get into. As a consequence, others close to us are asked to take the fallout from our irresponsibility and assume the blame and guilt for them. That's the tragedy of dysfunctional behaviors, it births co-dependence and counter-dependence. The devil loves to see God's children separated internally and externally. It hinders the preaching of the gospel, and restrains God's children from living a holy life; each as a separate member of the body of Christ, becoming complete and mature in Him. I envision the devil and his band of cohorts standing between us and God yelling as loudly as possible to drown out God's voice. All of us need to stop listening to the noise and begin to listen to the quiet voice we recognize as the shepherds. Counselors need to stress that this devil who hates the very sight of God's children was rendered powerless to make us do anything we don't choose to. There is no reason to declare war on the devil, or ourselves; Christ has won the war and has assigned us to occupy until He comes. This not only means physical property, but us, because when Jesus prayed before His death, He said the to Father in **John 17:9-11, "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine; and all things that are Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are."** So I perceive this occupation as the occupation of what is His, the ones He died for.

If you take a close look at the story of the Adam and Eve, you will see each of the characteristics discussed above. In fact, if you look at the story of Cain and Abel, you will see them lived out. In addition, if you look at some of the practices in many churches you will see an occupied sign; and this is not the occupation spoken of earlier. This occupation is one of busyness, and a constant struggle to grow larger and larger. As a result, many believers who are in need of help are sidetracked because of schedules, status, a pre-occupation with the self-life, burn out, overworked pastors and counselors, or an indifference toward others. In many ways the church has become Cain. However, we have an advocate, the high priest Christ Jesus. He's the one who took the keys of death away from the devil and who gave us freedom so we no longer need to live a life of constant struggle. He is never too busy to listen to our petitions and give help to those who call upon His name. Now it's time to make a choice concerning

whose voice we will follow, the one who sustains and refreshes us, or the one who lies and deceives us. If the right choice is made, any pain you have is taken as you are transformed into a new creation in Christ Jesus. But this won't work for anyone if their belief is self-motivated, or copiousness. It can only work with the kind of belief spoken about in scripture; *clinging to, relying on and trusting in.*

***The choice is yours to make!***

**2 Timothy 1:7, "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and of a sound mind."**

---

Copyright January 1996 ©Michael A. Kovach  
Christian Underground Journal All rights reserved  
To use this document this copyright notice  
must accompany it. This article must be maintained  
in its entirety without alteration.

## DIS-EASE

By

Jeff Dull

Dis-ease is defined as the state of anxiety (fear) and discomfort (pain) due to a perceived and or actual loss. This loss can be loss of control, failure of an expectation(s), confrontation, or any combination of the three. This is a malady that we are all afflicted with. The difference between the defined perceived and actual state is the difference between what is "real" versus what is "reality". This difference is often seen as an affront to our values, and often displays itself by a "reaction" versus "action" in our attitudes and behaviors. This may sound confusing so let me further explain and illustrate what I just said.

Perceptions and the feelings they invoke are real for all of us. Perceptions are thoughts that occur in the mind and reside in the brain actually setting off electrical impulses. The emotions that arise can set off further thought patterns, and can be seen in bodily responses as changes in the eyes, breathing, blood pressure, facial features, and other body language. It is the fact that because thoughts and feelings are real that they can be equated with reality, and allow a person to reach false conclusions. I think the difference between what is "real" versus "reality" has been illustrated especially well in television situation

comedies. I think the best examples were the shows starring Andy Griffith, as Sheriff Andy Taylor, and Don Knotts, as Deputy Barney Fife. Barney was always jumping to conclusions (what seemed real) and reacting to perceived situations, while Andy would always take the time to find out what was really going on, (reality check) and then act on it. This obviously also illustrates the difference between "reaction" versus "action", which is time and thought. A "reaction" tends to be an emotional response where no time or thought is given to the attitude and behavioral action taken by an individual in a given situation. i.e. You slap my face, I instantly slap you back. An "action" tends to be a more logical response where there is some time taken to give thought to a given situation by the individual about his attitudes and behaviors before he responds. i.e. You slap my face, I ask you why you did it, and then I chose to hit you back, or not to hit you back.

Children are especially vulnerable to equating what is real as reality because their feelings are easily hurt due to lack of information and their inability to process information in a non narcissistic fashion. When you think back to Barney and Andy, Barney is a grown up little boy, living in constant fear and perceptions and making emotional, selfish, and reactionary decisions. while Andy is just a grown-up, dealing with his fears, doing a reality check, and making rational responsible responses. Probably the ultimate example of "real" versus "reality" are the magicians (sorcerers) with their illusions. I don't need to elaborate any further here, except to note that the word hocus- pocus is a colloquial term used by the common folk of medieval times from the Latin term *hocus corpus* used when the priest fluttered the cloth and waved his hand over the bread and wine making it the literal body and blood of Christ. A side note, the word abracadabra is also a real word used in medieval times from the Hebrew term *abraq ad habra*, which means, 'hurl your thunderbolt even unto death'. It is also related to Abracax of the Gnostics, and is a name used for the sun-god of Mithraism. Now for the last comparison of "real" versus "reality". Our judicial system. In our judicial system a verdict is a decision based on facts that have revealed the truth. The problem here and the one that is recognized by our judicial system and the reason why the lady with the balance is blindfolded is facts are not necessarily the truth. That's right, I'll say it again. Facts are not necessarily the truth. This is also why in our judicial system a person is **never** found innocent. A person is always found either guilty or not guilty based on the evidence or facts presented. A verdict of not guilty does not mean a person is

innocent, hence the term 'justice is blind', but that person cannot be found in violation of the law as written, by all of the evidence or facts that were presented during the trial. The confusion arises because a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty, so when a person is found not guilty the presumed innocence is maintained. In a capital offense trial such as a murder one case, the jury has an additional burden that they must be greater than 90 percent sure that all of the facts point to the truth. In our judicial system then, facts are real but not necessarily reality or the truth, and the trick is find which ones are true, and if there is sufficient amount of true facts by law to warrant a guilty verdict. I don't know about you, but this sounds to me more like life than a judicial system. The last item to discuss in the afore mentioned definition of dis-ease, is the word and concept of loss. To me all loss is the death of a person or thing or both. If a person close to me dies, not only to I lose the person but I lose the relationship as well. The things that die, and the losses that are experienced don't have to be attached to another person, they can be only of the self. Frankly, I find the death and loss of the self to be the most painful. To me the book *On Death And Dying* by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross pretty well sums up the loss issue. I believe that whether my loss is of another or of self, the same five stages of: 1. denial/isolation, 2. anger, 3. bargaining, 4. depression, and 5. acceptance, that Ms Kubler-Ross identifies in her book is the healing process in Christ I or anyone must go through to unload the dis-ease state and return to the comfortable state of peace, rest, and harmony.

That was a pretty lengthy explanation. So let me state my definition again. Dis-ease is the state of anxiety (fear) and discomfort (pain) due to a perceived and or actual loss. I also said that this loss can be loss of control, failure of an expectation(s), confrontation, or any combination of the three. Humans do not like to suffer loss or to lose, they don't like being uncomfortable, they don't like pain, anxiety or fear. Humans will do whatever it takes to return to a state of comfort up to and including addiction and death. **SO, WHAT'S THE POINT?** The most human thing to do is to avoid dis-ease at all cost. The most Christian and victorious thing to do is to embrace dis-ease at all cost. The ultimate example of total loss of control, total loss of expectation, total confrontation, just total loss, and ironically total victory is the Cross of Calvary. When you and I came to the Cross and unconditionally received the gift of salvation through God's Grace, knowing there was no way to pay it back, we just took it, and praised and blessed the living God for the faith to do it. It

was in the recognition and acceptance of our pain and sin that we became victorious and received the blessing of God. The Cross is the only true point of confrontation and victory in the world today. Every other point is rhetorical gibberish utilizing rationalization and justification to create red herrings resulting in denial and isolation. The only way to accept Jesus is to come to the Cross and accept its verdict. Without accepting the Cross, one cannot accept Christ. The church, the bride of Christ, is to hold up Christ as the standard of the Christian life and lifestyle, and be the helpmate of the Lord, thus making the church the most confrontational and victorious place in all the world. I see the church today being more interested in becoming a "Christian Social Club" separating itself from the rest of society and dividing itself over self righteous issues. I also see the church today building monuments to itself in constructing bigger buildings and centralizing its power base, instead of practicing what the Bible calls pure religion. Personally I have three criteria I use to evaluate a local church and the church overall. First, does the church make continual effort to hold to and hold up the standard of Christ. Second, does the pastor and the church continually try to work their way out of a job. Third, does the church make continual effort to practice the Bible's definition of pure religion. No one I know, and no church I have attended meets the standard of perfection that God demands and reflected in Christ Jesus. Instead of holding up some denomination, some dogma of man, we should be holding up Christ and confronting ourselves, each other, and the world as to what needs to die so we may come closer to God's standard. Instead the church spews contaminated and adulterous religion instead of good spirituality. The local church doesn't lift up the standard of Christ and make the congregation uncomfortable creating a diseased state. If the Cross and the Lord would be truly lifted up there would be a revival of spirituality that would spread across the world so fast a person couldn't keep up with it. But, first I believe at least one third of all congregations would leave outright, and another two thirds would need to undergo biblical church discipline, of which half of those would leave, and the other third would just hit the floor on their knees and repent. What ever happened to the faith that brought us to our knees before the Cross and the Lord? Most people and churches, have died only once, received only one blessing, and have become stagnated by stopping at one death instead of dying daily. The difference is having one Christian experience for twenty years or having twenty years of experience. To become a disciple of Christ, and the church the bride of Christ they must count the cost.

For most the cost is too high and they just want to stay where they are. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book *The Cost of Discipleship* sums this up pretty well in the description of cheap grace versus God's Grace. My second favorite song after Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus", is a song sung by Steve Green, entitled "Enter In". I also think this song says a lot about the cost of discipleship, picking up the cross, and receiving God's blessings. I really want to show you the whole song, but copyright laws prohibit that without permission. So here are the opening lines of the first verse, and the closing lines of the second verse, the words are by John Mohr.

**First Verse Lines:** *Nothing chills the heart of man  
Like passing through death's gate  
Yet to him who enters daily  
Death's a glorious fate.*

**Second Verse Lines:** *My only hope is full surrender  
So with each borrowed breath I inhale the Spirit's  
will for me  
To die a deeper death*

I realize that we are in a spiritual battle, and the issue is one of an overall spiritual warfare as described in Ephesians. Paul summed it up best in Romans Chapter 7 when he said, I do the things I don't want to do, and also, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. There is no perfect Christian or church as Christ is perfect, and we probably will not achieve it while on Earth, yet Romans Chapter 8:1, says there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. This does not allow us sit down and rest. We are to persevere and run the race till the end. We are to seek God's face and try to be perfect through our faith in the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit and God's Grace. Every person as well as the church has been fighting this battle since Christ's ascension into Heaven. It is a battle that I obviously think most of us and the church are currently losing. I sum this battle up as Fear versus Faith. Fear is the exact opposite of faith. It takes faith to love and approach a person who is a filthy, dirty lying in the gutter, drug addicted, AIDS ridden, homosexual, murdering, sex offender, or any other personal characteristic you don't like, and invite that person into your home, and share with them the same gift God gave you, and wants to give them. Its fear that makes us turn our face, run away, deny our pain, and miss the blessing God has for us. Once you give your life to Christ, you are no longer in control, you will be confronted daily with who and what you are in comparison to Christ, any and all expectations you may have of others are no longer rightfully yours, you will be persecuted for your faith and trying to fulfill your God prescribed mission, and finally you will die the

death prescribed for you by God. Welcome to the Cross and victory. If that doesn't produce the severest case of dis-ease in any person then I don't think their human. Christian, it is faith that brought you here, and it is faith that will get you through.

That was demonstrated by Abraham with Isaac, Moses with Israel, and by Christ on the Cross. The Bible says, I can endure all things through Christ Jesus. It should be obvious no one is enduring this battle as the only combatant. We are all in this together.

That is why it is important to congregate and share all our ups and downs, get our wounds bandaged, and get resupplied for continuing the stand in Christ. I believe that Christians and the Christian Church as become addicted to the ways of the world for individual and corporate growth and maintenance. It has been my experience that the very first item to atrophy and die in the individual or corporate body is the spirit, secondly the soul, and finally the physical aspect of the body. Unfortunately it is only when the body and soul have become so ill and dysfunctional that do we take notice and initiate repair. So we start with healing the body and the soul, but often leave out the spirit. Whatever course of treatment is tried for the addict that does not include spiritual healing is doomed to ultimate failure. To be cured, the individual and the church must embrace the Cross and its verdict, and embrace the dis-ease of daily dying to our self will and "Enter In" to revive the spirit. In closing I want to share with you one final illustration of Peter the one who I consider to be an identifiable example of dis-ease and victory in Christ.

The setting I want to take you to is the Garden of Gethsemane. In the days just before the apostles have the last meal with Christ, all of them have total awareness that Christ is the Messiah, that he will be betrayed by one of them, that he will be turned over to the authorities to be crucified, and that they are not to be alarmed because he will rise again. They have the proof of resurrection power and authority after a four day period of death in Lazarus, and Peter has suffered a rebuke from Christ for the denial of Christ's forthcoming crucifixion. Add to this that during the last supper, Christ once again says he is about to be betrayed, and that all of the disciples will scatter and forsake him. Peter takes offense goes into denial again, and Christ once again tells Peter not only will Peter forsake him, but Peter will also deny him three times before the cock crows. Basically the mind set of Peter and the rest of the disciples is one of a worldly kingdom to be set up by Christ, a denial of the crucifixion and especially the resurrection. Their

world view and judgment seem to be that of Job's three friends. The disciples especially Peter are ready to go to war and even physically die for their Lord, and Peter is just waiting for the chance to prove himself. Herein lies the problem we all have as well as the church. Now comes the crisis in the garden. Christ is betrayed, Peter sees his chance, pulls his sword and cuts off an attendant's ear, and Christ rebukes Peter for the third time. Then it appears that Peter becomes hurt and totally confused. The authorities take Christ away, and Peter tags along well behind, probably still looking for a way to save Christ and prove himself to his Lord. I also suspect from reading the story that Peter really wanted to try and stay close to see what was going on and what would happen to Christ. Then, I think, when he was confronted by the lady as to his identity he lied so he could stay free, stay alive, stay warm, stay close, and still find some way to prove himself to Christ. Unfortunately denial is denial to God no matter how pure a man may think the motive is, and when the cock crowed Peter became aware of it. This brings me back to the problem I mentioned earlier. I have found that most Christians don't have a problem with suiting up drawing their proverbial swords and going out to fight and die for Christ and Christianity.

There is plenty of historical evidence to prove this. The Crusades, Conquistadors, Croatia then and now, and today's anti-abortionists. The problem is Christ's call is not to go out and die for Christ, it is to go out and live in and for Christ. If you die as result of living for Christ that is His purpose and business not yours. This is what Peter found so hard, uncomfortable, and dis-ease ridden to do. This is also what the individual Christian and local church finds so hard and dis-ease ridden to do. Living for and as Christ, standing in Christ to fight in spiritual warfare, and resisting the devil is the call in Christ's new command to, 'love one another as I have loved you'. The call to die for Christ, is to die daily, to kill our self will, and self righteous attitudes. We need to stop playing what I call "The Game" (described later), and learn the difference between religion and spirituality. Doing it God's way and not our own is difficult, but it is the victorious one. If we do it God's way, we will hear, 'Well done good and faithful servant'. If we and the church don't do it God's way, we and the church will be confronted with our continual denial of God, and the consequence of that continual denial is to hear from the mouth of the Lord, 'Depart from me, I don't know you'.

Copyright ©1996 Jeff Dull

# THE COMING DAY

by  
Ray C. Stedman

This is the last message in the section of John's Epistle on Maintaining Truth. In this section which began in chapter 2, verse 18, the whole problem John has been facing here is how to live as a Christian in the midst of a confused and confusing world. A world no different in his day than it is in ours; no different in ours than it was in his. In this section we learned many things. We learned that error appears in cycles of deceit throughout history. That is why, proverbially, history repeats itself. We learned that error arises first within the church, through church leaders, and then moves out to infect the world. It is most interesting to trace this fact through history. Religious error never originates with worldly, secular thinkers, but within the church.

Then we saw error always aims at one definitive point, made clear by John in this section. It is an attack, ultimately, upon the person of Jesus Christ; upon the deity of the Son of God. As Joe Blinco put it so forcefully, "The devil is no pimple-squeezer". He does not waste time with trivialities, he is always striking for the jugular vein. Trace this through history and you will see this is always true. The full impact of heresy always comes out at that point, an attempt to destroy the real fundamental teaching of the deity of Jesus Christ.

We also learned in this section that no lie is of the truth, i.e., there is no such thing as grey areas in moral or doctrinal truth. No lie is of the truth. Relativity in these areas does not exist. Finally, we saw that the believer's defense against the deceitfulness of the age in which we live lies in two special things: in his obedience to the word of truth, the apostolic word, the word which we have "heard from the beginning," and, that word as taught to the heart by an abiding Spirit. The word and the Spirit: these are always the defenses of the Christian. Not legislation; no forming action groups, not creating voting blocs, but by the word and in the Spirit. These are our defenses, always have been and always will be. But these must be held in balance. The word without the Spirit is dead orthodoxy, lifeless, unappealing, completely repulsive to most people. The Spirit without the word is wildfire, fanaticism, mysticism. But the two held in balance keeps us to the central truth of God as revealed in his Son. These are the things John has set

before us here. We close this section with a verse that looks on to the end, when each Christian stands at last face to face with Jesus Christ.

"And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming." I should like to begin our examination of this verse by asking this question: What is it that lies ahead for each believer? The answer clearly is, a face-to-face encounter with the Lord Jesus. John uses two phrases to describe this, "when he appears," and "at his coming". "Appears" is the word for manifestation, when he is manifest, when he is openly evident. The word he uses for "coming" is the word, *parousia*, which is Greek for "presence," the presence of the Lord Jesus.

Perhaps you have recognized in reading your Bible that this is the most frequently mentioned truth in all of the New Testament. This great hope of the appearing again of Jesus Christ underlies every other truth in the New Testament. It is found on almost every page of our New Testament. In the face of that, it is passingly strange that it is one of the neglected doctrines of our day. There are people who are totally unaware that the Bible teaches that Christ is to return to this earth for his church, and of the various aspects of this. Yet this has been the hope of believers in every age, and has sustained Christians in the darkest hours of the persecution of the church.

The truth appears in various ways in scripture, and I cannot take time to go into it in any detail. I will give only the briefest survey of this because I want to move on to the point John is making. In certain passages, the coming of our Lord appears as an event yet to come, occurring in a moment of time, when Christ shall once again enter into open manifestation in the history of men. We read such a passage in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

"For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

Wonderful comfort is here in these words, especially when you stand at the edge of a grave where you have laid away the body of a loved one. I have used these verses many times on such occasions and found they speak wonderful comfort to the heart.

But there are other passages that view this encounter with Christ from the standpoint of the experience of

the believer who steps out of time into eternity, at death. For instance, in II Corinthians, Paul speaks of being “absent from the body, present with the Lord.” Compare that with the message in I Thessalonians, “so we shall always be with the Lord.” Paul says this occurs in the experience of the believer at death, “absent from the body, present with the Lord.” In writing to Timothy, he speaks of his own death in this way, “Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day.” (“Day” here is not used in reference to a point of time but as a characterization of an event), and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.” Here he uses the same term that John uses, “when he appears”.

If I may just summarize this: in the experience of the believer this encounter with Jesus Christ occurs at death; in the calendars of men, in time, it is yet an unknown point in the future when the eternal One shall step again into time and reassert himself, manifest himself openly, in the affairs of men. That event may occur today, it may occur this week, it may be next year, it may be fifty or a hundred years from now, who knows? It may be while most of us are yet alive, it may be before this service is over. But at any rate, this meeting with Christ, from the standpoint of every believer in Jesus Christ, is no further away from any of us than the day of our death—and it may be even closer than that!

This is the Day in which, as John says, he will be “manifested”. In chapter 3 John says, “When he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” He will be no longer hidden behind the scenes, no longer invisible to our physical eyes, no longer forcing us to live, as Peter describes it, “whom having not seen, we love”, but now openly evident, manifest, visible, face to face. We will stand in his presence, John says. As the disciples in the Upper Room after the resurrection found that suddenly the Lord Jesus was with them, so, suddenly we will be with him. As then, so with us, with the marks of crucifixion yet upon his body, perhaps he will invite us to touch him, as he did with Thomas, to feel and to see that this is the very one who once was crucified upon a cross outside Jerusalem, and rose again from the dead. With the marks of crucifixion yet upon him he will be readily identifiable to us. Sometimes we sing in that hymn of Fanny Crosby’s, “I shall know him, I shall know him, when redeemed by his side I shall stand. I shall know him, I shall know him, by the prints of the nails in his hand.” What a day that will be, what a wonderful day.

But let us move on to ask another question about the verse John sets before us. What are the alternatives awaiting Christians on that day? Well, clearly there are two, and only two. It is possible for us to have “confidence before him,” or “to shrink in shame from him,” one or the other. There is a false teaching that has arisen within Christian circles that suggests that the day of our appearing before the Lord will be a day only of the giving of rewards. There are to be no regrets, no shame, no negative notes at all; it is all sweetness and light. It is hard to understand how such teaching arises in the face of a scripture like this where John warns that it is all too possible to shrink in shame before him at his coming.

Paul says in 11 Corinthians 5, speaking of the same event, “we must all appear at the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body. Two possibilities: good or evil; one producing boldness and confidence and one producing a sense of shame. If you look at the Scriptures you will see the reason why it is necessary that there should be these two alternatives. We learn from the Scriptures that this is to be the day when reality is made evident, when things will be seen as they really are. We are aware that illusion blinds our understanding as we view things today. Even looking back in our lives we can see that events were not quite what we thought they were when we were living through them. But there is coming a day, the Lord Jesus says, when that which is hidden shall be revealed, where everything covered will be uncovered, and that which has been spoken in secret will be shouted from the housetops. It is the day of reality, the day when the secrets of men are judged by the Lord Jesus.

See how Paul describes this in 1 Corinthians, chapter 3. Speaking of the

foundation which is Jesus Christ himself, Paul says in verse 12,

“Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones; wood, hay, stubble (two classifications of activity)--each man’s work will become manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.” And then in chapter 4 of that same book, he says in verse 5, “Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the

heart. Then every man will receive his commendation from God.”

As someone has well put it, “What we weave in time, we shall wear through eternity.” Every motive is to be revealed, every secret thought to be uncovered before all, every activity laid bare. In the light of that fact, what will you be? Will you be bold and confident, or will you shrink in shame before him? That is the question John sets before us.

Perhaps some of you are saying, “I hope it will be some of both; there will be some boldness, and some shame.” But think about that for a moment and you will see that it is impossible for it to be both. There is nothing in Scripture that suggests that there will be both; it is either one or the other, as John implies here. It is characteristic of us that one element of shame looms up before our eyes and overpowers all the areas of confidence. Haven’t you noticed that in your own experience? You have a gravy spot on your tie, and it does not make any difference how impeccable the rest of your dress is, you know that every eye is fastened on that gravy spot and you cannot be comfortable in society because you are so aware of that spot on your tie. Or with you ladies, it is a run in your stocking. It does not make any difference how beautiful your hair styling is, there is that ugly run that you know is drawing every eye, and you feel a sense of shame. You feel unfit to be with others because of one spot, regardless of the rest. Then if we are going to be bold and confident before our Lord at his coming, it must be that we should be absolutely without shame. If there is one thing wrong, we will shrink in shame at his coming.

Now look at this matter of shame for a moment with me. What will make us ashamed? Well, what makes you ashamed now? In thinking through this this week, I took a piece of paper and headed it, “Things Which Make Me Ashamed.” Then I began to think through my own experience, my own life. The first thing I put down was, “Indecent Actions.” Someone has said, “Everyone knows that of himself which he would not dare tell his dearest friend.” Indecent things, shameful things, hidden things, cruel deeds, vengeful, spiteful actions. As we think back on them they make us ashamed.

Then I wrote down, “Hurtful Attitudes”. How many times have I been ashamed at the attitude I have had toward another. Even though I did not express it in words, I felt it. How many times have I been ashamed of my pride, of my jealous, hateful thoughts, of my loveless, callous unconcern for another who was obviously in need of help from me. How many times has my thankless ingratitude made my face flush with

shame. I thought back upon how I have taken things from man and from God and never had a thought of gratitude for them.

Then I wrote down, “Neglected Opportunities”. Who of us does not feel this? Who has not had, at one time or another, a bad case of the “If onlies”. “If only I had done this”, “If only I had said that”, “If only...”. This week Decision Magazine printed the story of the World Champion Weight Lifter, Paul Anderson, a Christian. He told of winning the world’s heavy weight lifting championship, and in his testimony he said these words:

“We go through life looking back and thinking, boy what I could have done. This is the way I remember Russia. I became one of the most popular men in the Soviet Union. I couldn’t go out in public without being mobbed. Radio announcers trailed me when I appeared on the streets. I caught the empty stares of the young people and reflect now that I could have told them about the One who puts a sparkle in the eye, but I failed to lift up our Lord. Not once did I mention the name of Jesus Christ because at that time I was not living for him. A once-in-a-lifetime chance to witness behind the Iron Curtain was lost.”

What is shame? Is it not a sense of unfitness, a sense of defilement, a sense of self-dislike, even contempt, because we feel we are not worthy? Therefore, its manifestation is a desire to hide. John suggests this in the Greek word he uses, which is rightly translated “shrink in shame”, to hide. Do you remember the first manifestation of this in the Scriptures? In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, after the Fall, hid from the Lord God as he walked in the Garden in the coolness of the day. God called out “Adam, where are you?” Adam at last acknowledged the call and the Lord said, “Why did you hide?” And Adam said, “Because we found we were naked.” That is symbolic, suggestive. They were naked, i.e., they had nothing besides themselves, nothing to show for being alive, just them, we they were, that’s all. Unfruitful, unproductive, no purpose beyond themselves, waste. That’s why they hid.

As I thought back through the things that make me ashamed, I realized that this is the common element in all of these factors, a sense of waste, no purpose in them, no good thing coming from them. That is why I am ashamed of my indecent actions. That is why I am ashamed of my hurtful attitudes. That is why I am ashamed of my neglected opportunities. Nothing fruitful, nothing productive ever comes from them. The thing that John makes us face up to in this passage is the terrible possibility that if we do not learn the right basis for living, it is horribly possible

for us to fill every day with activity, to achieve what passes for success, but in the only accounting that has any value at all, that accounting before God, to come to the end of our lives and find it all fruitless, wasted, without purpose. <P>Is that not the charge the Lord makes against one of the churches in the letters to the seven churches of Revelation? In chapter 3 he says to the church at Laodicea, “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.” What was the cause of this condition? “You say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Therefore, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.” It is nakedness that causes shame, and that possibility is set before each of us. The one thing that is absolutely certain about your existence and mine, as a believer, without any doubt whatsoever, is that one of these days we will stand before the presence of the Lord Jesus. But I do not want to close on that note, for this verse is not intended to be negative. It is given to show us how to avoid this condition. Its whole purpose is to declare the clear possibility of standing in his presence unashamed, to have boldness, to have confidence before him. Well, then, what can make us bold? What gives boldness now in your life? To answer that for myself I took another sheet and headed it, “Things That Make Me Bold”. What do you think I put down on that? First, I am bold or confident when I know what I am doing, when I have complete familiarity with a process. When I first began to shave I was not very skilled with a razor (electric razors were not very much in vogue at that time) and I used to cut myself so frequently that I looked like a sieve. I leaked at half a dozen points after every shave. But the longer I shaved the more familiar I became with the process until finally I was bold and confident. I could shave quickly without cutting myself. Watch a driver who is just learning to drive. How cautious they are. They grip the wheel tightly and do everything very deliberately. But watch a driver that has become accustomed to driving. How bold he is. We have a skyrocketing accident rate to prove how bold such drivers can get! But there is a feeling of confidence that comes when you know the process. You are familiar with that.

Then I discovered that I am bold and confident when I know that the results are guaranteed, some actor gives me confidence that it is going to work out all

right. Such confidence in an end result makes anyone bold. I was riding in a plane not long ago, and a mother and her five-year-old boy sat in the seat opposite me. She informed the stewardess this was their first flight, and this was very evident because she was very nervous. She kept looking out the window, adjusting her seat belt, biting her fingernails, and was very nervous the whole time. But not the little lad. He was relaxed and confident, utterly untroubled. Why? Because he trusted adults. His mother had brought him into his situation and he knew that she would not have done it if there had been any danger, so he was trustful and utterly bold. He knew it would all work out—and it did. They arrived safely and the mother could have saved herself all the worry.

Now I discovered that I am also bold when I have an undisclosed resource, what is called familiarity, an ace up the sleeve. When I have something I can count on that the other fellow does not know about, it makes me bold. It does the same for you too, does it not? Now look at what John proposes as the way to avoid shame and to give confidence in the day of the Lord Jesus, when we meet him face to face.

“And now, little children, abide in him (there it is in three words) so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.”

It is all in those three words. Abide in him. That sums up all that he has previously said about hearing the word, believing it, obeying it, and trusting it; that word as taught to us by the anointing Spirit, etc. This is to abide in him. It is the same thing exactly as what is called in other places “the walk in the Spirit”, or “fellowship with Christ”, or “the fullness of the Holy Spirit”, or “the victorious life”. Do not be confused by these various terms. This truth is so magnificent, so broad, so wide, it takes many terms to describe the full sweep of it, but they are all referring to the same thing.

Abide in him, he says. Basically that means to give up all confidence in yourself and step out each moment in full dependence on him who dwells within you for everything you do or say, anywhere, anytime. Abide in him, so that your actions are no longer a result of you, mobilizing all your resources to do something for him; but it is him, utilizing all his abundant resources to do everything through you. That is abiding in him, and it involves three specific things. It means that you accept his evaluation of the past. You prepare to change the ideas that you learned from your childhood through tradition or secular education and have accepted as true, but are contradicted by



what the scriptures say. You are prepared to change those ideas, not cling to them. This is the problem with most of us. We take it for granted that what we were taught as we grew up is the truth, and we judge everything by what we learned, even the word of God. We cling to these ideas. We refuse to set them aside. What we have picked up, when challenged by the scriptures, we choose to believe rather than to believe what God has revealed to be the truth. As a result we go on clinging to the past and to these ideas from the past, and thus refuse the cleansing and forgiveness of Christ. This results in wide areas of weakness and ineffectiveness, and these we must someday face in all their waste and unproductiveness, in the presence of Jesus Christ. It is these that will make us shrink in shame before him at his coming. But if we face his evaluation of the past, and change our ideas, then the thing is over with now. There is a wonderful verse in 1 Corinthians 11, verse 31, "But if we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged." It can all be over, be settled now.

Then, abiding in him means we are to accept his provision for the present.

In writing to the Philippians, Paul says "Work out your own salvation." That means, work out the solutions to your problems. He is not talking about redemption but about the every-day problems of life. Work them out "with fear and trembling", i.e., with a consciousness that the deceitfulness of the enemy is so subtle that it can slip up on you without notice, and you need to be very careful not to start relying upon yourself again. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you, both to will (he is in the choosing, in the making of decisions, in the choices) and to work, for his good pleasure (to do what is pleasing to him)." That is the process, and it is said again and again in Scripture. Now accept that. Operate in that manner for God knows what he is doing. Well, Jesus Christ knows exactly what he is doing in you. He was never at a loss for what to do in any situation, and he never will be at a loss for what to do in any situation he puts you into. He does not always tell us in advance what he is going to do. We just have to say, "Lord, here you are. You put me into this, now you have some purpose in it—work it out. I'm confident that you know what you are doing."

Also, you and I are bold when we know that the results are guaranteed. Have you not noticed that this is exactly what the word of God promises? Paul says in 11 Corinthians, "But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph." He never fails. He guarantees the results. You are fighting a battle that is

already won when you rest upon the activity, the wisdom, the responsibility of an indwelling God. It is done—the battle is won. It still must be fought and you are to fight it, but the results are guaranteed, they will come out as God has said they will. He always leads us in triumph in Christ.

Furthermore, we are bold when we have an undisclosed resource, an ace up our sleeve. And is that not exactly what is provided for every Christian who understands the programming of God? We do not rely on our own human weakness, "we have no confidence in the flesh," Paul says, we do not think we have the intellectual acumen to figure out all the problems, we are not trying to mobilize all the resources of our powerful personalities to put over something. But we step into every situation, no matter what it may be, at home, at work, or wherever, in the quiet realization that the Son of God indwells us to do this thing through us. Others, looking at us, say "what a self-assured individual; how well he gets things done, how poised, how calm he (she) is in a situation." They do not know the secret we know, that it is not us, it is Christ. "I am crucified with Christ," says Paul, "nevertheless I live (Oh how fully he lived); yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live I live by faith in that indwelling Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." That is to accept his provision for the present.

Then, abiding in him means to trust his assessment of the future. What is the result going to be? Perfectly acceptable to God! Well-pleasing in his sight! The record of the Gospels is that Jesus Christ never did a thing that displeased the Father. For thirty-three and a half years on earth, not once did he ever do anything that displeased God. How could it be, since it was the Father, in him, who did everything? The miracles occupy only a tiny portion of those thirty-three and a half years; the rest of them were filled with the ordinary events of life, such as you and I have to go through—getting up in the morning, living with people, eating, preparing food, sweeping, cleaning, all the multitudinous details of life—but not once did he ever do one thing that was displeasing to the Father. That is still true of what he does today—what he does in you. His activity in you is already acceptable to the Father. Not once will he ever do in you that which is displeasing to the Father, not once. Therefore, if you are facing those times in your life which are not lived out of his activity, and these are cleansed and put away, the only possible conclusion to this is that we can stand at last in his presence without shame. All the wastefulness of the past and present is judged and everything else is fulfilled by Christ; therefore, all is pleasing to God. There will be

pains. He makes clear that his desire is to live a life that has no waste moments in it, no times when he is reckoning on himself, no seasons when he is acting out of the energy of his own brilliant personality, or from the background of his training as a Hebrew leader, not a single moment. He says, "I am constantly pressing on, pushing on, for the prize—that wonderful prize—then I shall stand in his presence and shall realize that everything worthwhile that has been done in my life since I have come to know him has been done in the activity of his life in me, and everything else has already been settled before I get there." That is what he is saying.

Have you ever noticed how Jude closes his letter? Look at his last verse.

"Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing."

Is that not it? John says, "abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming." It may be that some of you need to settle certain things with the Lord right this moment. Think of the things that make you ashamed; the attitudes you harbor toward someone else, the habits you cling to that are unsightly, unseemly, unwholesome, the long-standing disagreements that you have had with another which makes you avoid them. These are the things that need to be settled now. Abide in him now, so that you will not have to shrink in shame before him at his coming.

**Prayer:** Our Father, we confess our lovelessness, we confess our unconcern, we confess our foulness before thee. We confess our failure to live together in peace and sweetness and harmony. We confess to you, Lord, any aspect of our life that has been displeasing, and receive from you now that wholesome cleansing of the blood of the Lord Jesus, that we might be what we are intended to be, men and women, so possessed by an indwelling Lord that all that we do or say is a reflection of his image, and not of ours. Thank you for this.

"Now to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time now and forever, Amen."

Catalog No. 149  
1 John 2:28  
January 15, 1967

Sixth Message

Copyright © 1995

<http://www.pbc.org/pbc/dp/index.html>

<http://www.pbc.org/pbc/index>.

Discovery Publishing a ministry of Peninsula Bible Church

This data file may not be copied in part, edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of Discovery Publishing. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Discovery Publishing, 3505 Middlefield Rd. Palo Alto, CA. 94306-3695.

## A bit of News From Break point

by

Charles Colson

### THE TRUTH

For years, liberal theologians have insisted that the Gospels were written hundreds of years after Christ and that Jesus' contemporaries didn't believe that He was divine. They said that the stories of miracles and the resurrection were products instead of the oral tradition.

Scholars have now proved them dead wrong. Three small fragments of papyrus that have been hidden away in Oxford's Magdalen College library have finally given up their secrets. German researcher Carsten Thiede recently studied the fragments, which contain lines from the 26th chapter of Matthew, and realized that the fragments were written in a Greek script that went out of fashion in the middle of the first century. He had to conclude that the manuscript was written in about 50 A.D. only 17 years after the crucifixion.

And, most important, the manuscript refers to Jesus using a Greek term for the word *Lord* that was used exclusively to refer to God. That proves that the earliest Christian did, indeed, believe that Jesus was God.

Luke 18:8 (NIV) . . . When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

## BELIEVING THE TRUTH

Faith is believing in what is true. Faith has two elements:

1) Being convinced of the truth, being certain of reality, having evidence of unseen things

2) To believe, to hope in, to embrace, to seize the truth.

Heb 11:1 (KJV) Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Heb 11:1 (NIV) Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Heb 11:1 (NEB) Faith . . . makes us certain of realities we do not see.

Heb 11:1 (Mof) Now faith means that we are confident of what we hope for, convinced of what we do not see.

Heb 11:1 (Wey) Now faith is a well-grounded assurance of that for which we hope, and a conviction of the reality of things which we do not see. Knowing the truth is only half of faith. God's word must be believed, hoped in, embraced, seized! For real faith to exist you must be completely convinced that what you are embracing is the truth. But embrace it you must.

Luke 17:5 (NIV) The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you."

Belief without certainty is only half of faith, but Scripture gives examples of situations where belief alone is required, even commanded. There's no time for evidence collection, to wait, to hear, for certainty. Just Believe. Like Peter walking on the water - don't think, act! God even requires us to believe in him when, temporarily, the evidence looks bad: to Trust. [We will study Belief and Trust separately.] God requires Belief and Trust in moments of human weakness, but faith is what makes us strong. Faith is the state of being without doubt, unwavering, absolutely certain about what you hope for.

## HOW TO GET MORE FAITH . . .

Contrary to popular teaching, faith is not a feat of psychological gymnastics or self-deception, but a work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

Rom 10:17 (NIV) . . . Faith comes by hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

Rom 10:17 (Phi) Faith, you see, can only come from hearing the message, and the message is the word of Christ.

Rom 10:17 (Wey) And this proves that faith comes from a Message heard, and that the Message comes through having been spoken by Christ.

## NEW-AGE FAITH

C.S. Lewis: "We must not encourage in ourselves or others any tendency to work up a subjective state which, if we succeeded, we should describe as 'faith,' with the idea that this will somehow insure the granting of our prayer. . . . The state of mind which desperate desire working on a strong imagination can manufacture is not faith in the Christian sense. It is a feat of psychological gymnastics." Websters: CREDULITY \ kri-du-let-ee, CREDULOUS \ krej-u-les 1) Naive, not critical, believing on slight or uncertain evidence. 2) A tendency to believe too readily, especially with little or no proof. Belief detached from the truth is not faith. Believing in what is not from God, not true, believing in "the word of your own imagination," or even the "word of Satan," is deception pure and simple. Calling this deception "faith" does not make it so. Such "faith" leads to eternal death.

A.W. Tozer: "I do not recall another period when 'faith' was as popular as it is today. If only we believe hard enough we'll make it somehow. So goes the popular chant. What you believe is not important." Only What is overlooked in all this is that faith is good only when it engages truth when it is made to rest upon falsehood it can and often does lead to eternal tragedy. For it is not enough that we believe we must believe the right thing about the right One.

2 Thes 2:10 (NIV) . . . They perish because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved. For this

reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie. . .

“It is no sin to doubt some things . . . it may be fatal to believe everything. Faith never means gullibility. Credulity never honors God. The healthy soul, like the healthy blood system, has its proper proportion of white and red blood cells. The red corpuscles are like faith: they carry the life giving oxygen to every part of the body. The white cells are like discernment: they pounce upon dead and toxic matter and carry it out to the drain. In the healthy heart there must be provision for keeping dead and poisonous matter out of the life stream. This the credulous person never suspects. He is all for faith”

“To hope for heaven by means of such ‘faith’ is to drive in the dark across a deep chasm ON a bridge that does not quite reach the other side.”

### **THE WAY OF FAITH FOR THOMAS . . AND US**

Rom 14:5 (NIV) . . Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

Mat 24:4-5 (NIV) Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.”

Mark 13:5-6 (Phi) “Be very careful that no one deceives you. Many are going to come in my name and say, ‘I am he’, and will lead many astray.”

Luke 21:8 (Jer) He said, “Take care that you are not misled. For many will come claiming my name and saying ‘I am he’”

John 20:25-28 (NIV) When the other disciples told him [Thomas] that they had seen the Lord, he declared, “. . . I will not believe it.” A week later . . . Jesus . . . said to Thomas, “Put your finger here see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

. . . . . John 20:31 (NIV) . . these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of

God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

### **BELIEVING THE GOSPEL TRUTH**

Col 1:5-6 (Phi) . . that hope that first became yours when you heard the message of truth. This is the Gospel itself, which has reached you as it spreads out all over the world. Wherever that gospel goes, it produces Christian character, and develops it, as it has done in your own case from the time you first heard and realized the truth of God's grace.

Col 1:23 (Phi) This reconciliation assumes that you maintain a firm position in the faith, and do not allow yourselves to be shifted away from the hope of the gospel, which you have heard. . .

C.S. Lewis: “The battle is between faith and reason on one side and emotions and imagination on the other. . . Supposing a man's reason once decides that weight of evidence is for Christianity. I can tell that man what is going to happen to him in the next few weeks. There will come a moment when there is bad news, or he is in trouble, or is living among a lot of other people who do not believe it, and all at once his emotions will rise up and carry out a sort of blitz on his belief. Or else there will come a moment when he wants a woman, or wants to tell a lie, or feels very pleased with himself, or sees a chance of making a little money in some way that is not perfectly fair: some moment, in fact, at which it would be very convenient if Christianity were not true.”

“Now faith . . is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods. . . Make sure that, if you have once accepted Christianity, then some of its main doctrines shall be deliberately held before your mind for some time every day. That is why daily prayers and religious reading and churchgoing are necessary parts of the Christian life. . .

If you examined a hundred people who had lost their faith in Christianity, I wonder how many of them would turn out to have been reasoned out of it by honest argument? Do not most people simply drift away?”

Heb 2:1-3 (Phi) We ought, therefore, to pay the greatest attention to the truth that we have heard and not allow ourselves to drift away from it. For if the message given through angels proved authentic, so

that defiance of it and disobedience to it received appropriate retribution, how shall we escape if we refuse to pay proper attention to that greater salvation which is offered us? For this salvation came first through the words of the Lord himself.

2 Tim 2:15-17 (Phi) For yourself, concentrate on winning God's approval, on being a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, and who knows how to use the word of truth to the best advantage. But steer clear of these unchristian babblings, which in practice lead further and further away from Christian living. For their teachings are as dangerous as blood-poisoning to the body, and spread like sepsis from a wound. Hymenaeus and Philetus are responsible for this sort of thing, and they are palpable traitors to the truth. . .

2 Tim 1:12-13 (NIV) . . . I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you, guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit that lives in us.

### **ABRAHAM AS A CLEAR ILLUSTRATION OF FAITH**

Rom 4:18-21 (Phi) Abraham, when hope was dead within him, went on hoping in faith, believing that he would become "the father of many nations." He relied on the word of God which definitely referred to "thy seed." With undaunted faith he looked at the facts - his own impotence (he was practically a hundred years old at the time) and his wife Sarah's apparent barrenness. Yet he refused to allow any distrust of a definite pronouncement of God to make him waver. He drew strength from his faith, and, while giving the glory to God, remained absolutely convinced that God was able to implement his own promise.

Rom 4:22-25 (Phi) This was the "faith" which was counted unto him for righteousness. Now this counting of faith for righteousness was not recorded simply for Abraham's credit, but as a divine principle which should apply to us as well. Faith is to be reckoned as righteousness to us also, who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered to death for our sins and raised again to secure our justification.

### **FAITH TO CRUCIFY THE FLESH**

A.W. Tozer: "The Word of God well understood and religiously obeyed is the shortest route to spiritual perfection. And we must not select a few favorite passages to the exclusion of others. Nothing less than a whole Bible can make a whole Christian."

"True faith requires that we believe everything God has said about Himself, but also that we believe everything he has said about US. Until we believe that we are really as bad as God says we are, we can never believe that He will do for us what He says He will do. Right here is where popular religion breaks down."

Luke 9:23-24 (NIV) Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."

John 11:25-26 (NIV) Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Gal 5:24 (Jer) You cannot belong to Christ Jesus unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires.

As God calls each Christian to "die to self" and promises "new life," the flesh protests: "What if it doesn't work? What if I'm left empty-handed? What if God isn't faithful?" But we have the gripping example of Jesus's faith - when He let the life drain out of Him on the cross - with the attitude, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And about that much easier thing His Spirit is convicting you to give up now, this same Jesus says from the cross: "Follow me!"

Heb 12:1-3 (Phi) Surrounded as we are by these . . . ranks of witnesses, let us strip off everything that hinders us, as well as the sin that dogs our feet, and let us run the race that we have to run with patience, our eyes fixed on Jesus, the source and goal of our faith. For he himself endured a cross and thought nothing of its shame because of the joy he knew would follow his suffering and he is now seated at the right hand of God's throne. Think constantly of his enduring all that sinful men could say against him and you will not lose your purpose or your courage.

## A LIFE OF FAITH

Heb 11:6 (NIV) . . . Without faith it is impossible to please God. . .

Heb 11:24-27 (Phi) By faith . . . Moses . . . refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He preferred sharing the burden of God's people to enjoying the temporary advantages of sin. He considered the &quot;reproach of Christ&quot; more precious than all the wealth of Egypt, for he looked steadily at the ultimate reward. By faith he left Egypt he defied the king's anger with the strength that comes from obedience to the invisible king.

Heb 10:32,35-39 (NIV) . . . in the face of suffering. . . do not throw away your confidence it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." But we are not of those WHO shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.

2 Cor 4:8-10 (Phi) We are hard-pressed on all sides, but never in despair. We are persecuted, but are never deserted we may be knocked down but we are never knocked out! Everyday we experience something of the death of Jesus, so that we may also show the power of the life of Jesus in these bodies of ours. Yes, we who are living are always being exposed to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be plainly seen in our mortal lives.

2 Cor 4:16-18 (Phi) This is the reason we never lose heart. The outward man does indeed suffer wear and tear, but every day the inward man receives fresh strength. These little troubles (which are really so transitory) are winning for us a permanent, glorious and solid reward out of all proportion to our pain. For we are looking all the time not at the visible things but at the invisible. The visible things are transitory: it is the invisible things that are really permanent.

1 Pet 1:6-7 (Phi) This means tremendous joy to you, even though at present you may be temporarily harassed by all kinds of trials. This is no accident - it happens to prove your faith, which is infinitely more valuable than gold, and gold, as you know, even though it is ultimately perishable, must be purified by fire.

Eph 6:16 (Phi) Above all be sure you take faith as your shield, for it can quench every burning missile the enemy hurls at you.

Heb 11:1 (Phi) Faith means that we have full confidence in the things we hope for, it means being certain of things we cannot see.

Rom 4:16 (Phi) The whole thing, then, is a matter of faith on man's part and generosity on God's. He gives the security of his own promise to all men . . .

Job 13:15 (NAS) Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him. . .

Job 19:25 (NAS) I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God I myself will see him with my own eyes - I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Extra Stuff on Faith  
Acts 17:11 Home Page  
E-Mail vandruff@bga.com

## The End of the Age

1 Tim 4:13 (NIV) Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

Rev 1:3 (RSV) Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein for the time is near.

The purpose of this study is not to teach a specific eschatology, but to meditate on the Scriptures concerning the Rapture and Day of the Lord for the purpose of preparing ourselves - **preparing our hearts and minds**- to meet the Lord Jesus when he returns.

### READY OR NOT . . .

Are we looking to the skies, longing for the return of Jesus with power? Is the cry of our hearts: 'Come, Lord Jesus!', or is it 'Let's wrestle some more, 'or' Just let me indulge my flesh a little longer, then I'll repent.' Will the events of the End of the Age strike us with hope and joy, or dread?

This study is meant to be an act of worship. Don't skim or read it piecemeal, wait until you can devote 20-40 minutes to meditate on the Lord. If possible, read the Scriptures aloud with someone. We may need these scriptures, lodged in our souls, very soon.

We start with the words of Christ in the Olivette Discourse. Notice how Jesus focuses **onhow we should respond**. The things He 'tells us in advance' are meant to produce the proper response in us, the purpose for which the Word was spoken. Things like repentance, holiness and faith - NOT speculation / obsession / division over the specific details of the prophecy. In the same Spirit, Joel, Paul, John, and Peter encourage us to **prepare ourselves** for the End of the Age.

### **THE OLIVETTE DISCOURSE: Interwoven from Matthew, Mark, and Luke**

Mat 24:3-9 (NIV) As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. 'Tell us,' they said, 'when this will happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?' 'Jesus answered:' **Watch out** that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but **see to it that you are not alarmed**. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.'

Mat 24:10-14 (NIV) 'At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase in wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but **the one who endures to the end** will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.'

Mark 13:11 (Phi) ' . **do not worry** beforehand about what you are going to say simply say the words you are given when the time comes. For it is not really you who will speak, but the Holy Spirit.'

Luke 21:12-16 (Phi) ' . . handing you over to synagogue or prison, or bringing you before kings and governors, for my name's sake. This will be your

chance to witness for me. **Somake up your minds** not to think out your defense beforehand. I will give you such eloquence and wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict it. But you will be betrayed, even by parents and brothers and kinsfolk and friends . . '

Luke 21:20 (NIV) 'When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, **you will know** that it's desolation is near.'

Mat 24:21-25 (NIV) 'For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or , 'There he is!' **do not believe it**. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive the elect - if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time.'

Mark 13:23 (NIV) '**So be on your guard**, I have told you everything ahead of time.'

Mat 24:26-27 (NIV) 'So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' **do not go out** or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' **do not believe it**. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.'

Isa 34:4 (NIV) All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree.

Mat 24:29-31 (NIV) 'Immediately after the distress of those days, 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' At that time the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather the elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.'

Luke 21:25-28 (NIV) 'There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of

Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, **stand up and lift up your heads**, because your redemption is drawing near.'

Mat 24:32-35 (NIV) 'Now learn a lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.'

Mat 24:36-42 (NIV) 'No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill one will be taken and the other left. **Therefore, keep watch**, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.'

Mat 24:43-44 (NIV) 'But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must **be ready**, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.'

Mat 24:45-51 (NIV) 'Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away for a long time,' and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.'

Luke 21:34-36 (Phi) '**Be on your guard** - see to it that your minds are never clouded by dissipation or

drunkenness of the worries of this life, or else that day may catch you like the springing of a trap - for it will come upon every inhabitant of the whole earth. You must **be vigilant at all times, praying that you may be strong enough** to come safely through all that is going to happen, and **stand** in the presence of the Son of Man.'

## **JOEL, THEN PAUL ON THE NATURE OF THE END**

Joel 2:28-32 (NIV) '. . . I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. . '

1 Thes 4:16-18 (Phi) One word of command, one shout from the archangel, one blast from the trumpet of God and the Lord himself will come down from Heaven! Those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, and then we who are still living will be swept up with them into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And after that we shall be with him for ever and ever. So by all means **use this message to encourage one another**.

1 Thes 5:1-6 (Phi) But as far as times and seasons go, my brothers, you don't need written instructions. You are well aware that the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. When men are saying 'Peace and Security,' catastrophe will sweep down upon them as suddenly and inescapably as birth-pangs to a pregnant woman. But because you, my brothers, are **not living in darkness** the day cannot take you by surprise, like a burglar! You are all sons of light, sons of the day, and none of us belongs to darkness of the night. Let us then never fall asleep, like the rest of the world: let us **keep awake**, with our wits about us.

## **AN EPISTLE OF CORRECTION TO SET RIGHT A COUNTERFEIT LETTER**

Thes 2:1-4 (NIV) Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, **not to become easily**



**unsettled or alarmed** by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, [2 Thes?] saying that the day of the Lord has already come.

**Don't let anyone deceive you in any way**, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He opposes and exalts himself above everything that is called God or is worshipped, and even sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

Thes 2:5,9-12,15 (NIV) Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. . So then brothers, **stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you**, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

1 Cor 1:7-9 (Phi) And you have been eager to **receive his gifts** during this time of waiting for his final appearance. He will keep you **steadfast in the faith** to the end, so that when his day comes you need **fear no condemnation**. God is utterly dependable, and it is he who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Heb 10:25 (Phi) And let us not hold aloof from our church meetings, as some do. Let us do all we can to **help one another's faith**, and this the more earnestly as we see the final day drawing nearer.

## **BODY BUILDING**

1 Pet 4:7-11 (NIV) Yes, now, little children to live continually in him. So that if he were to reveal himself we should **have confidence**, and not have to shrink away from his presence in shame. The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever spiritual gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the

very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Christ Jesus. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 John 2:28-3:3 (Phi) You all know that God is really good. You may be just as sure that the man who leads a really good life is a true child of God. Consider the incredible love that the Father has shown us in allowing us to be called "children of God" - and that is not just what we are called, but what we ARE. This explains why the world will no more recognize us than it will recognize Christ. Here and now, my dear friends, we are God's children. We don't know what we shall become in the future. We only know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is! Everyone who has at heart a hope like that **keeps himself pure** as Christ is pure.

1 Cor 15:50-52 (Phi) Listen, and I will tell you a secret. We shall not all die, but suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye, every one of us will be changed as the last trumpet sounds! For the trumpet will sound and the dead shall be raised beyond the reach of corruption, and we shall be changed.

Rev 11:15,18 (Phi) The seventh angel blew his trumpet. . . 'Now is the time for destroying the destroyers of the earth!'

Phi 1:6,8-10 (Phi) I am confident of this: that the One who has begun his good work in you will go on developing it until the day of Jesus Christ. . . God knows how much I long, with the deep love and affection of Christ Jesus, for your companionship. My prayer for you is that you may have still more love - a love that is full of knowledge and every wise insight. I want you to be able always to recognize the highest and best, and to **live sincere and blameless lives** until the day of Christ.

2 Pet 3:1-7 (Phi) I have tried to stimulate you, as men with minds uncontaminated by error, by reminding you of what you really know already. This means **recalling the words spoken of old** by the holy prophets as well as the commands of our Lord and savior given to you through his messengers. First of all you must realize that in the last days cynical mockers will undoubtedly come - men whose only guide in life is what they want for themselves - and they will say, 'Where is his promised coming? Since our fathers fell asleep, everything remains exactly as it was since the beginning of creation!' They are deliberately shutting their eyes to the fact that there

were heavens in the old days and an earth formed by God's command out of water and by water. It was by water that the world of those days was deluged and destroyed, but the present heavens and earth are, also by God's command, being carefully kept and maintained for the fire of the day of judgement and the destruction of wicked men.

2 Peter 3:7-9 (Phi) But you should **never lose sight** of the fact, dear friends, that with the Lord a day may be a thousand years, and a thousand years only a day. It is not that he is slow about keeping his own promise as some men seem to think the fact is that he is very patient with you. He has no wish that any man be destroyed He wishes that all men should find the way to repentance. Yet the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. In that day the heavens will vanish in a tearing blast, the very elements will disintegrate in heat and the earth and all its works will disappear.

2 Peter 3:10-14 (Phi) In view of the fact that all these things are to be dissolved, **what sort of people ought you to be?** Surely men of good and holy character, who live expecting and working for the coming of the day of God. This day will mean that the heavens will disintegrate in fire and the burning elements will melt, but our hopes are set on new heavens and a new earth which he has promised us, in which justice will make its home. Because, my dear friends, you have a hope like this before you, I urge you to make certain that the day will find you **at peace with God, flawless and blameless** in his sight.

Rev 13:16,20 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. . . I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the Bright Morning Star.' . . &quot;he who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.'

Rev 22:12-16,20 (NIV) 'Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone **according to what he has done** I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. 'I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the Bright Morning Star.' . . 'He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.' Amen, Come, Lord Jesus.

## WHY DOESN'T GOD JUST SHOW UP NOW?

C.S. Lewis: 'God will invade. But I wonder whether people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our world quite realize what it will be like when He does. When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on to the stage the play is over.'

'God is going to invade, all right, but what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else - something it never entered your head to conceive - comes crashing in something so beautiful to some of us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choices left? For this time it will be God without disguise something so overwhelming that it will strike either irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. . . That will not be the time for choosing: it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realized it before or not. '

'Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last forever. We must take it or leave it.'

For questions E-Mail [vandruff@bga.com](mailto:vandruff@bga.com)