

Plain Truth

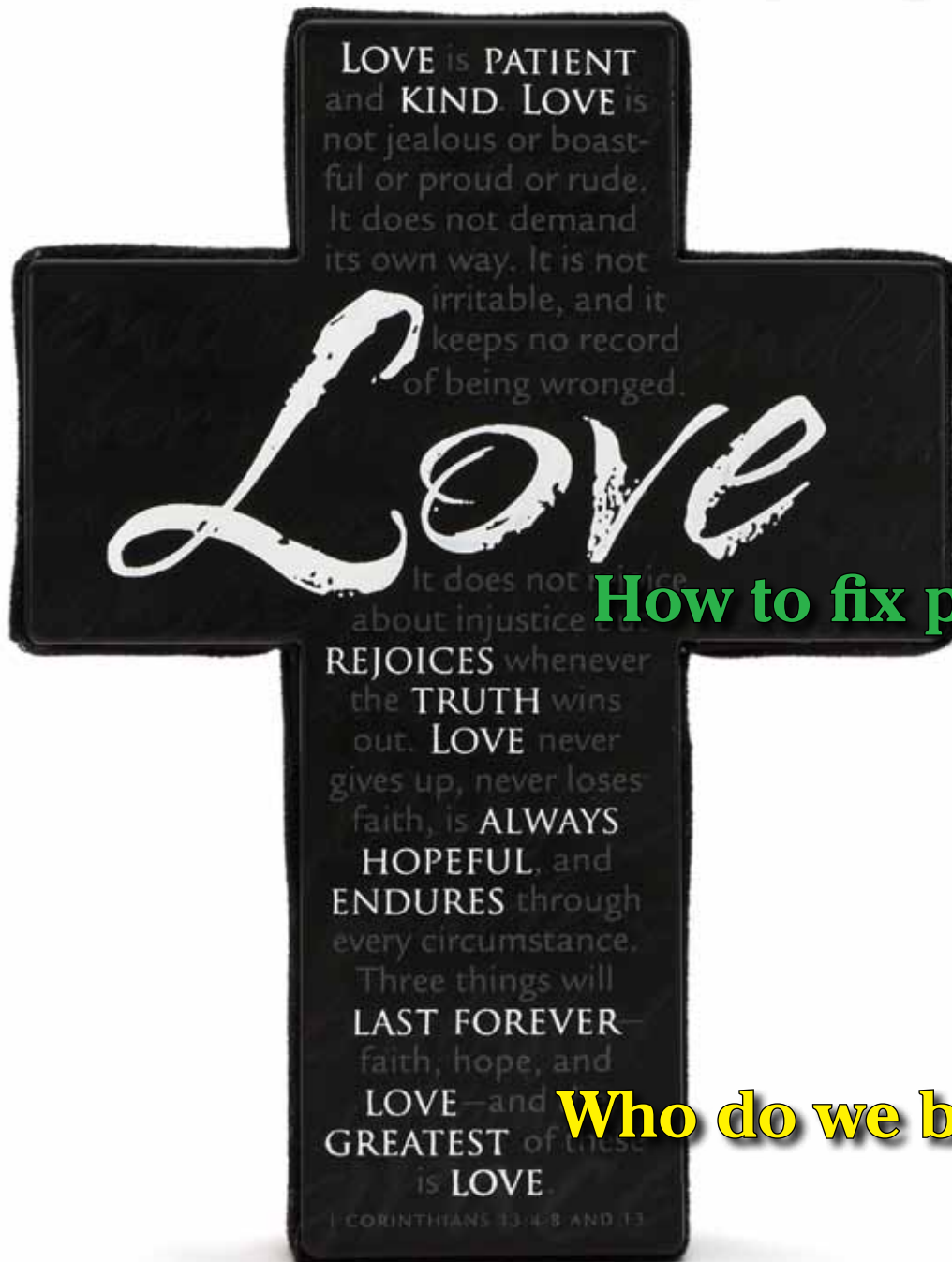
MCI (P) 132/05/2013

A Magazine Of Christian Understanding

Sep-Nov 2013

The self-emptying God

p.5

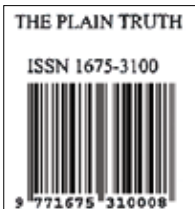


How to fix people

p.17

Who do we blame?

p.18



Two minus one

by
**Dr. P.
Sellappan**

It is simple arithmetic, but some still don't get it right. It is time that we get it right so that we can avoid carrying unnecessary burden.

The Bible has many 'two-minus-one' stories. For example: two trees, one was axed; two women, one driven away; two mountains, one abandoned; two covenants, one made obsolete; two Adams, one killed; two men/women, one taken away.

Two trees¹

The first book in the Bible, Genesis, introduces two trees—the Tree of Life and the Tree of knowledge of good and evil. The last book, Revelation, ends with just one tree, the Tree of life. In between Genesis and Revelation, one tree was felled.²

God gave Adam and Eve the freedom to choose life or death—to rely on him or themselves, to trust his word or reject it, to live by faith or by sight. They had to choose one or the other. One would lead to (eternal) life and the other to (eternal) death. He lovingly advised them to choose life, but they listened to the devil and chose death.

God could have easily blocked the Tree of death (knowledge of good and evil) and barred the devil from reaching out to them, but he didn't. He gave them freedom and asked them to choose wisely. He didn't force

them to choose life because love implies giving freely and receiving freely. It's the same today. God offers us eternal life; we can choose or reject.

As the first Adam (representing humanity) failed, Jesus came as the last Adam (also representing humanity) and chose the Tree of life. He trusted God completely for everything and lived a perfect life in our place and on our behalf and as us. In doing so, he secured salvation for us. That's why God's Paradise has only the Tree of life.³

Two covenants

The Bible also mentions two covenants—the Old Covenant (OC) and the New Covenant (NC). God gave the OC to the physical nation of Israel and the NC to the spiritual Israel—the Church consisting of Jews and Gentiles drawn from all nations.

The OC was sealed by the blood of animal; the NC, by the blood of Jesus. The OC was temporal; the NC, eternal. The OC was a shadow of things to come; the NC, the reality. The OC was physical; the NC,

spiritual. The OC was earthly; the NC, heavenly. The OC represented self-effort that produces death; the NC represents grace that produces eternal life.

God chose two women—Hagar and Sarah—to illustrate the two covenants.⁴ Hagar was a slave woman whereas Sarah was a free woman. Hagar pictures our human effort, our way of solving problems. Sarah pictures God's promise, his work in our lives through the Holy Spirit.

He also used Mt. Sinai and Mt. Zion to illustrate the same.⁵ Sinai pictures law-keeping and salvation by

works whereas Zion pictures God's promise and salvation by grace.

Jesus made the OC obsolete as it could never make them perfect. Its laws, written on stone tablets, could never change their hearts. The NC writes God's law of love in our hearts and gives us the Holy Spirit to change us from inside out.

Two Adams⁶

The Bible also talks about two Adams—one created from the dust of the ground and the other from heaven. The first Adam sinned and dragged humanity to eternal death while the second Adam (Jesus) lived a sinless life and raised humanity to eternal life.

The first Adam was crucified with Christ on the cross. He represented the old man in

us. The second Adam re-made us in his image in his resurrection. He represents us. We are a new creation in Christ.⁷

The verses below illustrate the death of the old man and the re-generation of new man.

"Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left."⁸

"I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two men will be in the field: the one will be taken and the other left."⁹

Carrying two trees, two covenants, two wives, two mountains and two men/women on our shoulders can weigh us down. Jesus came to lighten our burden.¹⁰ Why not let go the excess baggage and trust him for everything. Life will be so much fun and exciting. □



¹ Genesis 2:9; Revelation 22:2

² Matthew 3:10; Luke 3:9

³ Revelation 22:2

⁴ Galatians 4:21–31

⁵ Hebrews 12:18–24

⁶ Romans 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 15:20–28, 45–49

⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:17

⁸ Matthew 24:40–41

⁹ Luke 17:34–36

¹⁰ Matthew 11:28–30

THE Plain Truth

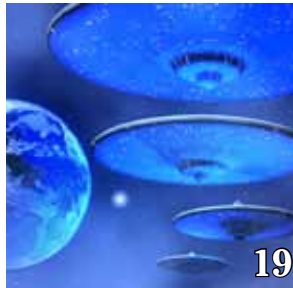
A Magazine Of Christian Understanding



17



5



19



15



11

Issue No. 3	Volume No. 12
September–November 2013	PP 12578/03/2013 (032108)
Editor	Dr. P. Sellappan
Managing Editor	Low Mong Chai
Co-ordinator	Susan Low
Editorial & Advisory Committee	Ben David
	Devaraj Ramoo
	Stefanie Tai
	Tan Ten Lee
	Wong Mein Kong
	Wong Teck Kong
Editorial Adviser	John Halford
Design	Richard Low
Design Adviser	John D. Stettaford

Malaysia

Office Address:
No.98, Jalan Zapin 3A/KU5,
Mutiara Point (off Jalan Meru),
Bandar Bukit Raja, Batu Belah,
41050 Klang

Website: www.gci-malaysia.org
Email: ptasiamy@gmail.com

Postal Address:
P. O. Box 2043,
Pusat Bisnes Bukit Raja,
Pos Malaysia Bhd.,
40800 Shah Alam.

Singapore

Jurong Point Post Office, P.O. Box 054, Singapore 916402

The Plain Truth is published five times a year as funds allow, and is sponsored by Grace Communion International (formerly known as Worldwide Church of God Malaysia), which is a member of the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship of Malaysia. It follows a non-denominational editorial policy and provides a message of practical help, hope and encouragement from a Christian perspective.
- For Non-Muslims Only -

DONATIONS: Although we do not put any subscription price for THE PLAIN TRUTH, we gratefully welcome donations from readers who support our desire to bring spiritual knowledge and understanding to our increasingly secular society. Cheques should be made payable to 'The Plain Truth' and mailed to the postal address listed above.

Printed in Malaysia by:
Hin Press & Trading Sdn Bhd (71078-D)
No. PT 45855, Batu 2, Jalan Kapar,
41400 Klang, Selangor, Malaysia

ISSN 1675-3100. Copyright Worldwide Church of God, 2013.

cover story

5 The self-emptying God
God gives himself to us.

articles

7 No God behind Jesus
Jesus is the full image of God.

8 The miracle workers
You can experience miracles by letting God touch your heart.

10 Drive-thru church
Robs us of brotherly fellowship.

11 Concerning judgement
Judgement is restoration, not punishment.

12 Understanding Old and New covenants
Correct understanding of God's word leads to freedom.

15 Something to forget
Leave the past and press forward.

16 Once upon a happy ever after
God's plan is simply glorious.

17 How to fix people
See others as God sees them.

18 Who do we blame?
Admit your wrongs.

22 The most excellent way
Walk in love.

regular features

2 Editorial

4 What our readers say

19 Another angle

20 Speaking of life...

21 Tammy's turn

23 Hmm...
Something to think about.

What our readers say:

This is the third time I'm reading the Apr-Jun 2013 article "Does our salvation depend on us?" Under the objective/universal truth heading, Dr Sellappan wrote: Jesus came as our substitute and representative. He was born and baptized...suffered and died...raised and ascended for us...He lived a perfect life for us, on our behalf...We might say He *recreated* us through His own incarnate life (2 Corinthians 5:17). Haven't seen it that way before and it's exhilarating! Can you please illustrate some of the implications that have on our everyday life now? Much obliged.

Tzillah Wong
Ulu Kelang, Selangor

Ed.: Glad to hear that you have discovered something new in Jesus Christ's incarnation. His birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension have many implications. Here are a few: (1) Jesus has united us to God permanently; he is in us and we are in him; there is no separation whatsoever, (2) He has made us holy, so we don't have to work out our own righteousness to be acceptable to God, (3) He has given us eternal life; it's a done deal; we don't have to struggle to earn it, (4) He shares with us everything—all that he has and is, (5) He shares with us his intimate communion with the Father in the Spirit, so we can call God Abba Father. All this is good news. That's why the gospel is exhilarating! That's why we participate in his wonderful ministry. We pray the Holy Spirit will reveal this awesome truth to our readers and through them to others.

Thank you for the recent issue (Jul-Aug 2013). The cover design is stunning! And so is the cover story. Surely they reflect God's great love for us. Thank you also for making hard-to-understand doctrines simple and plain. Keep up the good work!
Paul

Damansara Utama

THE PLAIN TRUTH has helped me to understand the Bible better. The articles are well-written and inspiring. It is a very good Christian magazine for those who truly want to know God.

Lily T Y Yong
Kudat

THE PLAIN TRUTH is a thought provoking and

good educational resource. It provides great solace and encourages me in times of stress.

Lee Wai Kok
Singapore

I would like to congratulate the team for bringing out this wonderful magazine. I would also like to sincerely thank you for sharing the magazine that has changed my life and the lives of my family. It has helped us to understand God's word better.

Ho Nee Yong
Kulim

THE PLAIN TRUTH is very informative and helps me in my spiritual journey. I feel the presence of God when reading the articles. It is a great companion in my life. I pass it to my friends after reading it. Congratulations to all those involved in making this magazine a success.

Norman Serbatian
Penang

THE PLAIN TRUTH helps me in my spiritual maturity. I thank the editor, writers and staff for all the hard work and dedication in bringing out the message of hope to my door. Praise God.

Khor Cheng Leong
Sitiawan

I feel very refreshed after reading the articles in THE PLAIN TRUTH. It has given me more understanding of God's word than any other resource.

Lacius Salagon
Kota Kinabalu

THE PLAIN TRUTH provides spiritual knowledge that broadens my understanding. This has been the most favourite reading material in my family. Thank you for the great job.

Edditha Samuel
Kota Marudu

The articles are enlightening and I enjoy reading and sharing them with others. God bless your outreach ministry.

Florence Wong
Singapore

The articles in THE PLAIN TRUTH are thought provoking and relevant. It is a good reading resource for a growing Christian

like me. Thank you very much and God bless you.

Maria Goh
Singapore

THE PLAIN TRUTH helps me and my family to understand the Christian faith better. May God bless THE PLAIN TRUTH team.

H A Lim
K Trengganu

THE PLAIN TRUTH is very informative. The articles are interesting, a joy to read, simple and straight forward. It exposes the truth from fiction.

Michael Ovinis
Johor Bahru

THE PLAIN TRUTH gives me better and new-found understanding of true Christianity. It helps me to better assess myself as a human being, my true worth and limitations.

Irene Gan
Kota Bharu

Although THE PLAIN TRUTH is sent free of charge, it is not without cost. Each copy is made possible by the generosity of others. So we are very grateful for those readers who send a donation, and make it possible for us to continue to publish the good news of the Gospel. Donations should be sent to the addresses listed on page 3 or sent electronically to the bank account:

The Plain Truth
A/C No: 1203-0386318-05-6
CIMB BANK BHD
Jalan Dato Hamzah (Branch)
12-14 Jalan Dato Hamzah
41700 Klang,
Selangor, MALAYSIA.

We welcome your comments. Letters for this section should be addressed to: "Letters to the Editor", The Plain Truth, P.O. Box 2043, Pusat Bisnes Bukit Raja, Pos Malaysia Bhd., 40800 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia. or sent via electronic mail to: ptasiamy@gmail.com

The editor reserves the right to use letters so addressed in whole or in part, and to include your name and edit the letter for clarity and space.

The self-emptying God

What first comes to your mind when you think about God? Take a moment and consider. Your answer to this question may well be one of the most important things about you. Why? Because how we see God, what we think when we think about God, influences how we see and think about everything else—ourselves, others, life, the universe—the lot. It influences priorities, motivations, decisions, actions and reactions. It becomes central to who we are and how we live.

So what we think about God (our theology) is vitally important. Not as philosophical musings, but because it brings us into the very heart of the universe and into the very heart of who God is in eternity. Thankfully, our theology doesn't save us—only God does. But our theology profoundly influences how we experience this life, and experience our relationships with God and one another.

Try this for a minute: marginalised, humiliated, scorned—written off as nothing. Betrayed, insulted, despised. Suffering a brutal death, the ultimate punishment, executed as a condemned criminal. Not much of a biography! No success story here; not a storyboard that is likely to sell in Hollywood or the advertising industry. Yet this is the cosmic story we are reminded of each Easter.

Scripture tells us that the ultimate, full and final revelation of God is in Jesus Christ. Jesus comes from the very inner life of God to show us who God is, what God is eternally like. Not just to talk about God, like the prophets did, but as God in the flesh.

In his life on earth, his incarnation as a real flesh and blood person, Jesus is the human face of God. He shows us the Father.¹ There is no God other than the God revealed in Jesus. There is no angry Father behind the back of Jesus, who Jesus has to placate, soften, appease, so the Father doesn't destroy us in a fit of rage.

Lessons from the Cross: Carpenter or Caesar?

As Christians celebrate Easter, we focus again on the death of Jesus on the cross, and his resurrection and ascension. The cross can only be understood fully through the resurrection, of course. Nevertheless the cross is often used as a kind of shorthand for Jesus' whole life, death and resurrection. (As Calvin wrote, the whole life of Jesus was nothing but a sort of perpetual cross.) The cross is the central symbol of that life because it shows us something essential about the eternal nature of God.

This is something we would do well to heed, because in every age the challenge to Christians and to the

by
John McLean

Christian church is to choose—to choose between the message of a humble Galilean carpenter, or the seductive appeal of sheer, blatant power of Caesar. Which kingdom is our home?

At a moment in human history, Jesus reveals through the cross the changeless being and nature of God. And the heart of it is this: God eternally gives his life to us, generously, lavishly, graciously, sacrificially. Despite our complete unworthiness, in his grace, mercy and love, he forgives and invites us into fellowship, relationship, to share his life and love. His "vast eternal plan" is that he has chosen, in his perfect freedom and love, to share himself with us, to unite himself with us, even in pain and suffering, so we might live together in communion with him for all eternity.

If Jesus shows us the Father, then the cross is the event that explains and settles discussion about who God is and how God works in the world. And it is nothing short of astonishing. It still shocks and astounds, no matter how many Easter celebrations we share.

Love is...

In the words of Paul,² in the cross Jesus shows us that God is a humble servant, to the point of being self-emptying in his sacrificial and other-centred love. He doesn't exploit, or even grasp tightly his dignity, his might, his power—in fact his power is displayed in giving it away, in sharing it with others.

God reigns, but in grace, gentleness and patience. In an unassuming way, that doesn't constantly draw attention to itself, shouting at us through a megaphone. His still, small voice offers hints, touches, transforms. God's power is not just any kind of power, but the power of love.

God is love, and always has been and always will be, and has his very being in relationship, fellowship. In his divine freedom, he cannot and does not act without love. His nature is giving, not taking; sharing, not grasping; blessing others, not manipulating them; grace not greed; gentleness not harshness; kindness not cruelty. Thankfully, we start with love, not with rules and regulations. Thankfully, our focus is on the Son, not on the sin.

We speak of someone being "full of themselves". We are even encouraged today to think of ourselves as a brand—You Inc. Yet here is God emptying himself in humble service to others, his nature revealed, the story of the New Testament.

"It is not too much to say that the fullness of God consists in God's self-emptying, God's power to give up God's very life for the sake of others, indeed of every other. It is this which we see in the incarnation: Christ





empties himself for the sake of humanity, and in this act of supreme self-surrender Christ affirms the fullness of God’s almighty love”, writes theologian Michael Jenkins.

Or as John wrote, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers...God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.”³ Simply put, Christ became what we are in order that we might share all that he is, as sons of God by adoption.

In Jesus, the love of God is shown to be the free offering of oneself to another by self-gift. God himself does not force himself upon us. His power is that of self-emptying, other-centred service, not that of spectacular brute force and assault. Jesus is willing to meet humanity in all its darkness, evil, sin and mess, and suffer the worst humanity can do to him. Jesus, in his birth, life, teachings, death, resurrection and ascension back to the Father, takes our humanity into his and redeems it. He joins himself to us – forever, as the Son of God and the Son of Man, whereby the Son of God becomes man that man may become sons of God.

At-one with God

After the resurrection, his disciples began to understand that his death had meaning not just for them, but for all humanity for all time. He died once, Hebrews says, for the sins of all mankind. Paul says, “that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them”. Indeed, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, that we

might become the righteousness of God.”⁴

This is not just a legal solution to the problem of sin. Atonement is found not in a legal transaction, but in the person of Jesus—his whole life and being. This was not just to balance the books, to satisfy the solicitors, to move numbers from one column to another. It was not just to restore the old order of things. It was to produce a completely “new creation”. In Christ, human history is not simply reversed or restored; it is given new birth, a radical new creation. The prime purpose of this is to lift humanity up to share the life and love of God. In Christ, all parts of our salvation are complete; we are saved from sin and isolation for relationship, sonship with the Father.

Through the cross, Jesus reveals that God is not a harsh, vindictive legalist, a self-righteous moralist, a hanging judge, self-focused and self-concerned, given to anger, demanding satisfaction for offence and damage to his dignity. Nor is he removed, aloof, a cold abstraction of philosophical thought. Jesus did not come to change the mind of an angry God, but to reveal the loving heart of God toward all humanity.

In grace, he comes to us and saves us from ourselves, our darkness, misunderstandings, pain and suffering. He empties himself that we might be filled with the fullness of his love. In Jesus, the Triune God has forever united himself with us, enfolding us in his love, embracing us in the circle of life that is the Father, Son and Spirit, the eternal communion of the very being of God forever. □

¹ John 14:9;
Matthew 11:27

² Philippians
2:5–11

³ 1 John 3:16, 4:16

⁴ 2 Corinthians
5:19, 21

No God behind Jesus

by
Cathy Deddo

When my husband was a campus minister, he once had a young woman approach him and ask “Who should I pray to, God or Jesus?” When he inquired as to why she asked this question, she replied, “Well, I really like Jesus, but I am not so sure about God.”

Is there a split between Jesus and God? Does Jesus show us who God is, His very heart and purposes, or is there a God behind Jesus? Is God full of wrath, ready to punish us for our sins, but Jesus is the nice guy who protects us from Him? Are God and Jesus somewhat at cross purposes towards us? Or are there some things about God that Jesus doesn't show us?

I remember struggling a lot with this when I was a young Christian. I really liked Jesus. He was loving and compassionate. But I felt that, with God the Father, I could never be sure of being fully accepted and loved. I always felt that I was “weighed and found wanting.” While I believed that He loved me “unconditionally”, I felt a need to do what I could to make sure He continued to love me.

Is there a God behind Jesus? Is there some slippage of character, attitude, or heart between the Father and the Son? Or can we trust that Jesus fully reveals the goodness, the grace, the true character of the triune God? Is God just like Jesus?

What the New Testament writers emphatically declare is that Jesus is the clearest, fullest revelation of the character and purposes of God. In fact, in Jesus we don't just learn more about God, we meet God Himself. This is how the author of Hebrews begins his epistle: “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power.”

The epistle's author draws a sharp and absolute

distinction between *all* the others ways and times God has revealed Himself, or spoken, and when He reveals Himself in Jesus, the Son. Before, all revelation had been revelation about God, but now we have God's self-revelation. Have you ever heard a lot about someone and then met them yourself and come to know them as a friend? There is a huge difference, isn't there, between knowing about a person or coming to know them, as they reveal themselves to you in person, face to face. God did speak in various ways to individuals in the Old Testament: through a burning bush, dreams, angelic visitors, or a voice out of a whirlwind. But now,

in Jesus, God shows up and lives among His creation.

Jesus is not just another messenger, not even the greatest of all those whose spoke on God's behalf in the past. He is God, God the Word, who is eternal and always with God, as John puts it at the beginning of his gospel. Paul, in his epistle to the Colossians, declares that Jesus is the very image of the invisible God.¹ In Jesus, we meet God Himself.

Jesus declares that to know Him is to know the Father. During His last supper with the disciples, Philip asks Him to show them the Father. Jesus replies, “Have I been with you so long and yet you do not know me, Philip?

He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me?”² To see Jesus is to see God. To see Jesus is to see the Father.

Jesus is emphatic about this point. In the Gospel of John Jesus speaks of His close relationship with the Father and that to see Him and know Him is to see and know the Father. Jesus teaches, “He who believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And he who sees me sees him who sent me.”³ Jesus doesn't let His listeners consider Him alone, apart from His Father. There is no slippage between the Father and the Son. In



continued on page 9

The miracle workers

My favorite movie of all time is *The Miracle Worker*, the story of blind, deaf Helen Keller and her teacher, Annie Sullivan, whose love and patience taught Helen to read and speak. My favorite scene is the moment at the well where Helen suddenly grasps the link between symbols and objects. Today I was able to visit the place where the miracle happened.

Helen Keller was born in this quiet northern Alabama town. When she was 18 months old, she suffered an illness that left her blind and deaf. She grew up in a world of total darkness and silence. The little girl was intelligent, but unable to communicate or respond in any meaningful way.

Eventually her desperate parents hired a teacher and governess, Annie Sullivan. Annie took up the challenge of trying to reach through to the half-wild little girl. Helen would seem to enjoy it as Annie would allow her to feel objects, then, using a special finger alphabet, spell out the name of the object into her hand. But it was an exercise in frustration and futility. Helen could not make the connection.

Then one day the miracle happened. Helen tells it in her own words in her autobiography, *The Story of My Life*:

“We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Someone was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand, she spelled into the other the word *water*, first slowly and then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers.

“Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy and set it free!”

Helen’s dark and silent world suddenly exploded into a new life. She learned 30 new words that day, and then in the next few weeks hundreds more. Helen went on to graduate with honors from Radcliffe College, and until she died in 1968, traveled the world as source of hope and inspiration to all she met. It all began that day at the well with a dedicated and loving teacher who loved her and believed in her potential.

Helen Keller’s home has been preserved. The well pump is still there, although it is now covered with a protective roof instead of honeysuckle. Standing by the pump I tried to imagine the feeling of freedom and



by
John Halford

joy Helen experienced when she suddenly grasped language and her life was transformed. And it occurred to me that I, and probably you, have had a similar experience.

The hour I first believed

I can vividly recall the time and place when I first really understood that Jesus loves me, redeemed me and will never leave me. I had heard he was my Savior all my life, but it was just another religious cliché. I was born into a Protestant family, and we later became Catholic, but when I was in my teens I abandoned it all. I became interested in Christianity again when I was 20, and was re-baptized. But looking back I realize that, even though I was sincere, I still had not really understood what it meant. Then one day, after working late, as I was praying in the photographic darkroom of the print shop where I worked, it hit me. Like Helen, I suddenly saw the connection between the symbol and the reality. Why then? Why there? I don’t know.

I suspect that many people reading this can also remember a similar moment when it “came together,” and we suddenly knew we had a Savior. For the

apostle Paul, it was on the road to Damascus. For “Doubting Thomas” it was a face-to-face encounter with Jesus after Jesus was resurrected. For the thief on the cross it was the agonizing moments before death. For me it was while praying in a darkroom. For you...?

As my understanding of Christianity has developed, I have come to appreciate that Jesus is not only my Savior but the Savior of all humankind. He

came to bring the sights and sounds of salvation to a spiritually blind and deaf world. He said, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”¹

All people! Our triune God—Father, Son and Spirit—is one God who dwells in an eternal communion of love, and he has passed on that connectedness to the whole creation, and most especially to us humans. More than that, the Son of God actually *became one of us*, permanently identifying with us and sharing with us his own perfect relationship of love with the Father. “For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile all things to himself...” Paul wrote in Colossians 1:19–20.

Jesus isn’t *trying to* reconcile the world to God; he’s already done it. This surely affects how we look at our fellow human beings. They’re not outsiders; they’re insiders who don’t know it yet, brothers and sisters whom he is drawing to himself just as he said he would.

We religious people are very good at pigeonholing

“The truth is, we are all in the same boat—lost, blind and deaf until the Son of God took up our cause ...”

others. “Saved and unsaved,” “righteous and unrighteous,” “insiders and outsiders,” and even “our church” and “their church.” But the truth is, we are all in the same boat—lost, blind and deaf until the Son of God took up our cause and “the Light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”²

Every human is somewhere along that path of being drawn home to Christ. Some of us, thank God, have already had our eyes and ears opened, and Jesus wants us not to sit in judgment of those still on the path, but rather to share in his work of bringing them home too.

Annie Sullivan yearned to bring the light of human contact, communication and friendship into Helen Keller’s darkness. She could not force her mind open. But by months of persistent, unconditional love she built a relationship of trust and became the agent through which the miracle could happen.

Helen Keller was a devout Christian. Later in life, looking back on her years of silence and darkness, she wrote, “I always knew [God] was there. I just did not know his name.”

Like Helen, I suddenly saw the connection between the symbol and the reality. Why then? Why there? I don’t know.

For many people, the connection between life and Jesus has not yet dawned. But God is both patient and relentless in his undying love. He never forces anyone to receive it, for then it would not be love, but he won’t give up on even the most stubborn holdouts because even they belong to Jesus.

God has given us, those who already believe, the blessing of joining him in our small way in his ongoing work of making his good news known. Sometimes it might seem we aren’t getting anywhere. That is why we need to encourage, support and inspire one another—and along the way learn something about what it means to live together in Christ in loving communion.

After all, God created us to stick together in love—to love one another just as Christ loves us and gave himself for us. By that love, Jesus said, others will know that we belong to him.³ God’s gift of faith and salvation is a miracle—a miracle he wants us first to receive and then to live and tell others about.

This magazine is devoted to helping the process in its small way by being a place where we share our stories, our faith and our hope as the Holy Spirit leads us into knowing our Savior and our Father ever more deeply. Just as the water from the pump triggered a new life for Helen Keller, so the water of the Word triggers a new life for all who receive it. □



¹ John 12:32

² John 1:5

³ John 13:35

continued from page 7

fact, to trust in Jesus is to trust in the Father.

And all of what Jesus says and does is always according to what He hears and sees from His Father.⁴ Jesus speaks the words of God and does what God is doing, and this is true because He is God. As God the Son He shows us the whole God: the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The whole God was at work in the Incarnation and in the Crucifixion, the Resurrection and the Ascension of Jesus Christ.

There is no God behind Jesus, because Jesus IS God, He is the Son and He is always with the Father and the Spirit, even when He was incarnate. God did not cease

being God, He assumed humanity. And therefore, we can rest in the wonderful knowledge that when we look at Jesus, we see the triune God Himself. What you see is what you get! He graciously enters our time and space and reveals Himself to us in flesh and blood. There is no “part” of God that remains hidden. The whole God wants a relationship with His creation, the whole God was willing to pay the price to free us from our sin, to heal us, and make us able to truly be His children, His very beloved children. The whole God, Father Son and Spirit is our loving, gracious Savior. □

¹ Colossians.1:15

² John 14:8–10

³ John 12:44–45

⁴ John 5:19–20, 30

Drive-thru church

I love drive-thrus. You are literally in and out in no time.

If you don't want to smell the sweat of other patrons whilst standing in the queue, or entering into conversations you are not interested in, or introduce yourself to people you will probably never meet again, then drive-thrus are the place to go. Some drive-thrus promise you that you will never spend more than 5 minutes at their outlets.

There are drive-thrus for fast foods, for automatic teller machines, for car washes, and many other services. One other service that has entered the drive-thru market is the church service. Yes—the church service! At one of such churches in the USA you get a five minute church service. You get a one-minute sermon, a one-minute Bible study class, a one-minute choir song, one-minute news update about the congregation, and one minute of passing the collection plate and making a donation. You can even have a drive-thru wedding there. One of the members of such a church in the US, who never used to be a regular at church said, “But now that I can get my weekly worshipping done in five minutes, I go every week. Thank you, Jesus!”

A relational entity

I think her comment tells more than meets the eye about what the drive for drive-thru churches is all about (please excuse the pun). She says she can get her worshipping done in five minutes! We do not go to church for worshipping. Whilst the word ‘church’ today has a connotation of a place or a building, that is far from what it originally meant. Church simply meant a group of believers, the called out ones. A church is therefore a relational entity. It is a connected community of believers. In fact, in the Biblical sense, *koinonia* (the Greek word) means communion by intimate participation. Although there is worship in song when the church meets, and there is teaching, and there is praying, these are a result of the fact that people are together. It is not the reason the people are together. Although people go to their homes at the end of the day after work and take a bath, eat, and sleep, it is not the reason people go home after work. They go home because they want to be with their families. If bathing, eating and sleeping were the reason they went home at the end of the day, they could just as well drop in at the nearest hotel or bed and breakfast.

It is because of family that they go home. They want to know how the day has been with their spouses, their children and whoever they live with. They want to hug their spouses and children. They want to share a meal with them. That is why, if you live with others in a family, it is not a good idea to catch a burger on the way home. You share a meal with the family. Family is the relationship. Church is the same. It is a family of believers. Once when Jesus was told that his mother

by
**Takalani
Musekwa**

and brothers were looking for him, he replied by asking “Who is my mother and brothers?” Pointing to his disciples he said these were his mother and brothers.

When we go to church, we are going home. We go there to hear how it is going with our brothers and sisters. We want to encourage them if they are discouraged. The writer of the book of Hebrews puts it this way: “Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.”¹

It is not just about motivating one another. It is about motivating one another to acts of love and good works.

I think drive-thru churches miss the essential reasons why we go to church. The downfall of the modern family is primarily due to the fact that most families are no longer places where people live together as a community in communion with one another. They are places where people sleep, bath and eat, with very little communion and interaction between them. If the drive-thru church movement grows, we are going to see the downfall of church as we know it.

Members share the same blood

Paul compares the church to a body with many parts. What is telling for me is that the parts of the body are connected to each other, and they are interdependent on one another. They share the same blood. So do the members of the church. What brings them into communion with one another is the blood of Christ. They cannot exist apart from each other. A drive-thru service will not do. A drive-thru church is a church where every member thinks they do not need anybody, and nobody needs them. They are wrong. We go to a fast food drive-thru for a service we receive. On the other hand, we go to church for a service we can give. The donation you make at the drive-thru church is not giving at all. It is payment for the packaging of your five minute service.

The same is true about TV church, Internet church or Radio church. There are many Christians who think they can sit in front of their TV, computer or next to their radio and listen to their favorite preacher, and that it is the same as church membership. I know it is convenient. You don't have to get out of your house, or change into your Sunday best. But despite the convenience, let's not confuse that with church membership. Church membership is about membership to the body, the body of Christ, joined in real flesh and blood communion.

The God who called us into the church is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They have been in communion with one another for eternity. They want the church to share in that life, a life of love and sharing. That is what the

continued on page 11

Concerning the judgement

How does Trinitarian theology address the idea of the judgment? How does it understand verses like Daniel 12:2, which says, “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.” If all, in Jesus, are included and forgiven, why this prophecy about some receiving “everlasting contempt”?

And what about the similar statement in 2 Thessalonians 1:6–9: “God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.”

These and other passages of Scripture speak of the judgment that occurs when Jesus is “revealed” (sometimes referred to as the Second Coming or Jesus’ “return in glory”). At that time, all humans will see clearly who Jesus is and thus who they are in union with Jesus. And this “revealing” presents them with a choice—will they say “yes” to their inclusion in Christ, or will they say “no”?

Their decision neither creates nor destroys their union/inclusion, but it does determine their attitude toward it—whether they will accept God’s love for them and enter the joy of the Lord, or continue in alienation and frustration (and thus in shame and everlasting contempt and destruction). The destruction is a self-destruction as they refuse the purpose for which they have been made, and the redemption that has already been given to them.

In the judgment, everyone will face Jesus, the Judge who died for all, and they will have to decide whether they will trust him. Those who trust their Savior take part in the joy of the life that God has given them in Christ. Those who reject him continue in their hostility and the hell that goes with it. □

by
Ted Johnston



continued from page 10

church is about. It is about how we share in the life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in their dealings with people. As we engage with other church members, we are sharing in Jesus’ engagement with those members. As we participate in the church’s outreach community service events, we are sharing in what the Father is doing through Jesus, in the Spirit. Jesus said this is what he is going to say when he returns: whenever you clothed my naked brother or sister, fed my hungry orphan, or visited my brothers or sisters in prison, you were doing it to me.²

Church is like high contact sport. You cannot participate simply from the seat of your car, or from the comfort of your lounge. You have to smell the sweat, engage in those conversations, help clean up the place, do the dishes, even wash the dirty feet of the other church members.

You can’t just drive thru! □

¹ Hebrews 10:

24–25

² Matthew 25:40

P.S. Please note that this article is not about Christians who are not able to meet with others due to poor health or long distances, or for whatever valid reason.

Understanding Old

It is very important to rightly divide (interpret) the word of God.¹ Otherwise, we will see inconsistencies and contradictions when there are none. Understanding scriptures correctly will help us live more satisfying lives as well as share the gospel more effectively.

The Bible mentions several covenants, but in this article we will only focus on two—the Old and New Covenants.

The Old Covenant

God gave the Old Covenant to the *physical* nation of Israel through Prophet Moses. It was based on the Ten Commandments (plus others) and came into effect when they promised to obey them. Obedience would produce blessings and disobedience curses.² Blessings included good weather, bumper crops, good health, wisdom and understanding and protection from enemy nations. Curses took the form of bad weather, poor harvest, famine, sickness, depravity and attacks by enemy nations. It was a *bilateral* or *two-sided* agreement—blessings for obedience, curses for disobedience. It was a *performance-based* arrangement, similar to an employment contract between an employer and an employee. It was sealed with animal blood and was effective *until* Jesus' death.

The New Covenant

God made the New Covenant with *Jesus* who represents the *spiritual* nation of Israel³—his Church, consisting of all believers (Jews and Gentiles). It is based *solely* on God's promises to them, not their good works/behavior. He offers to adopt them as his children and be their God/Father. He promises to forgive their sins, reconcile them to himself, and write his law (of love) in their hearts.⁴ He promises to send them the Holy Spirit so they could live godly lives.⁵ He promises to supply all their needs and never forsake them.⁶ He promises to give them eternal life⁷ filled with joy, peace and friendship. It is a *unilateral* or *one-sided* arrangement, based on his kindness and generosity toward them. It is *grace-based*, like what parents do for their children. Sealed with Jesus' blood, it is effective *forever*.

Reading scriptures correctly

Many Christians are not aware that the Old Covenant *doesn't* start with Genesis (the first book in the Old Testament) and end with Malachi (the last book in the Old Testament), and the New Covenant *doesn't* start with the *first* chapter of Matthew (the first book in the New Testament). The Old Covenant was still in *force* during Jesus' earthly ministry. He lived under the Old Covenant⁸ and preached *mostly* to the Jews who were under the same covenant. But occasionally he also preached to the Gentiles, e.g. the Samaritan woman at the well⁹ and the Roman centurion.¹⁰



by
**Dr. P.
Sellappan**

The Bible is like a colorful tapestry—the Old Testament foretelling events that would occur in New Testament times and the New Testament making references to Old Testament scriptures. This weaving of scriptures is clearly seen in the four gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Jesus often quoted scriptures from the Old Covenant but he also introduced the New Covenant. Sometimes in the very same passage he would refer to both.¹¹ You see, he was preparing his audience for the New Covenant.

Another thing to remember is: A will (or covenant or testament) is *not* effective until the person who makes the will *dies*. That also applies to the New Covenant. It came into effect at Jesus' death, some 2,000 years ago. That means all the promises he made to his Church are *effective* today. You can read these promises in the four gospels as well as from Acts to Revelation.

Difference between Old and New Covenants

Let's differentiate Old Covenant and New Covenant teachings with some examples.

- *Master-servant vs. Father-son relationship*
In the Old Covenant, people generally viewed God as their master and themselves as his servants/slaves. It was a master-slave/ employer-employee type of relationship. They didn't have an intimate relationship with God. They dared not approach God, so they often communicated through an intermediary like Moses.

In the New Covenant, God sees us as his children and asks us



and New covenants



to see him as our Father. He invites us to an intimate Father-son relationship, the very kind Jesus has with his Father.

Because we are his children, we can boldly approach God's throne through his son Jesus and by his Spirit.¹² *We don't have to beg, plead, fast, beat our bodies, wear sackcloth, put ashes, and crawl up to him when we pray to him.* We simply make our requests known. *It is his good pleasure to give us good gifts.*¹³ While he may not answer our prayers in exactly the same way we wanted, he will definitely answer our prayers¹⁴ in ways that are good for us. After all, he knows our needs better than we do. We may not understand how he works, but it suffices to know that he loves us and that he is for us.

- *Letter vs. spirit of the law*

The Israelites were expected to obey the *letter* of the law like not murdering or committing adultery *physically*. In the New Covenant, believers are expected to obey the *spirit* of the law like not harboring murderous or adulterous thoughts. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus hinted to the Jews (especially the Pharisees) that they could never enter his kingdom by keeping the law. This is because they could never keep it perfectly. That's why he asked them to put their trust in him. He fulfilled the law for them. It is his righteousness given to us freely that saves us.

- *Loving people*

The Old Covenant encouraged the Israelites to love their neighbors (their own kind) and shun their enemies (everybody else). But Jesus told them that that approach wouldn't produce lasting peace. It might be okay for a civil society based on a system of rewards and punishments. *He taught them to love their neighbors (including their enemies) and pray for those who persecute them.*¹⁵ *He tells us to love one another from the heart, be patient with one another, forgive one another and live as a close-knit community,*¹⁶ *and treat each other as brothers and sisters.*

This *grace-based* approach would be far more effective in producing lasting peace.

- *Forgiving people*

In the Old Covenant, you must forgive others to receive forgiveness. Jesus declared, "For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But *if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*"¹⁷

The New Covenant teaching is: Because God has already forgiven you, so you must forgive others. Paul wrote, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, *forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you*¹⁸...Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance

against someone. *Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*¹⁹ He was exhorting believers to extend God's grace to others.

God's forgiveness in the New Covenant is not dependent on our forgiving others. God forgives us whether or not we forgive others. But *for our own sake*, we should forgive those who offend us.

- **Sabbath vs. spiritual rest**

In the Old Covenant, Sabbath observance—resting from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset—was *mandatory*. Israel was required to rest from their usual work and *was a serious offence if they didn't!* But God always blessed them for taking time off from their work. Believers today are *encouraged* to assemble and worship. *Christ is our true Sabbath.*²⁰ He provides true rest—rest from fear, worry and strife. He *is* our joy, peace, hope and life.

- **Tithing vs. generous giving**

The Israelites were required to give a tithe (tenth) of their produce toward temple services. They were also told to save another tithe for their annual festivals²¹ and yet another one every third year in a seven year cycle to support the poor/need. ²²

The New Covenant doesn't specify how much believers should give, but urges them to give *generously* towards church activities, missions, ministry work and support for the poor/need. They are encouraged to give *as God has blessed them—willingly and cheerfully*. As peoples' needs vary, they should not compare with one another. Some today insist on *tithing* by quoting Matthew 23:23. This verse, however, *doesn't* apply to believers. It was addressed to the Jews who were under the Old Covenant, not Gentile believers who are under the New Covenant.

- **Physical vs. spiritual blessings**

The Old Covenant blessings were mostly *material*²³ such as money and good health whereas the New Covenant blessings are mostly *spiritual* such as joy, peace, contentment, and fellowship with God.²⁴

- **Ministry of life and death**

The Old Covenant produced death because no one could keep its laws perfectly.²⁵ The New Covenant gives life through the Holy Spirit.²⁶

- **Proximity to God**

God was *near* to his people (Israel).²⁷ He accompanied them by a pillar of cloud and fire. He also appeared to them in the tabernacle. Today, God is *in* us and we are *in* him through the Holy Spirit.²⁸

- **Permanence**

The Old Covenant was *temporal*²⁹—it was a shadow of things to come.³⁰ The New Covenant is *permanent*—it's the *reality/substance*.³¹

- **Circumcision**

The Old Covenant prescribed circumcision of the *flesh*,³² picturing self-effort and *external/behavioral* change. The New Covenant prescribes circumcision of the *heart*—letting the Holy Spirit change us *from inside out*.³³

- **High priesthood**

The high priests from the tribe of Levi performed the temple services. They sacrificed animals to

cover their sins.³⁴ They were fallible and their tenure ended when they died. Today, Jesus is our *eternal* high priest. He offered himself as a *perfect sacrifice once and for all* to cleanse our sins—past, present and future.³⁵

The above are a few comparisons between the two covenants, but they are sufficient to make the point. We must read scriptures correctly; otherwise we will see all sorts of contradictions and inconsistencies. Jesus preached mostly to the Jews who were under the Old Covenant whereas Paul (and others) preached mostly to the Gentile converts who were under the New Covenant.

Cannot mix Old and New Covenants

Just before his death, Jesus instituted the New Covenant using the elements of bread and wine. He sealed it with his blood. The Old Covenant *ended* with his death and the New Covenant took effect. As the Old Covenant is *non-existent* today,³⁶ we should not seek to come under it (some sadly do). The New Covenant is *much more* glorious than the Old Covenant. So why cling to a shadow (laws and rituals) when the reality (Jesus) has come?

To impress this truth, Jesus told the Jews a parable saying that stitching a piece of new cloth to patch a tear in an old cloth is unwise. Why because the new will pull the old and make the tear worse. Similarly, pouring new wine into an old wine skin is unwise as the wine will expand and tear the skin. New wine must be poured into a new wine skin.³⁷

The lesson: mixing Old and New Covenants would lead to spiritual confusion. *The Old Covenant had been stretched to its limit and was found wanting. That's why Jesus made it obsolete and instituted the New Covenant which is expansive and glorious. We cannot mix the two covenants.*

The last of the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist, preached 'fire and brimstone' sermons.³⁸ But Jesus preached a message of grace—forgiveness, reconciliation, healing and restoration.³⁹ When John recognized Jesus as Messiah, he bowed out saying, "He [Jesus] must *increase* and I must *decrease*". His teaching had to give way to Jesus' teaching. That is good advice for preachers today.

God's covenant love

The Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—love each other *wholeheartedly, withholding nothing*. Although *distinct*, they are nevertheless *united as one being*. That's why we say God is *one*. There is *perfect unity* within the Godhead. They are inviting us to participate in their abundant life.

Our God is a *covenant-keeping* God. For Christ's sake, he has forgiven all our sins and has reconciled us to himself. Of his own *free* will, he chose to create us and *adopt* us as his own children and share his *never-ending* life of love with us. It's *gratis—free*—because we are his beloved children. May you receive his covenant love and be blessed richly. Amen. □

¹ 2 Timothy 2:15

² Deuteronomy 30

³ Galatians 6:16

⁴ Hebrews 8:7–12

⁵ Hebrews

10:16–17;

Jeremiah

31:33–34

⁶ Hebrews 13:5

⁷ 1 John 2:25

⁸ Galatians 4:4–5

⁹ John 4:1–26

¹⁰ Luke 7:1–9

¹¹ Matthew 8:5–13

¹² Hebrews 4:16

¹³ Luke 12:32

¹⁴ 2 Corinthians

1:20

¹⁵ Matthew

5:43–44

¹⁶ Colossians 2:2

¹⁷ Matthew

6:14–15

¹⁸ Ephesians 4:32

¹⁹ Colossians 3:13

²⁰ Hebrews 4:9

²¹ Leviticus 23

²² Deuteronomy

26:12

²³ Deuteronomy

26:9

²⁴ Hebrews 9:15

²⁵ 2 Corinthians

3:7

²⁶ 2 Corinthians

3:6–8

²⁷ Psalms 145:18

²⁸ John 14:20,

17:21–23

²⁹ Hebrews 8:13

³⁰ Colossians 2:17;

Hebrews 10:1

³¹ Colossians 2:17

³² Romans 2:28

³³ Romans 2:29;

Colossians 2:11

³⁴ Leviticus 16

³⁵ Hebrews 8:1

³⁶ Hebrews 8:13

³⁷ Luke 5:37–39;

Mark 2:21–22

³⁸ John 3:7–9

³⁹ John 1:16; Titus

2:11

Something to forget

The ancient Olympic games were popular during the time when the New Testament was written. Men competed in running, boxing, wrestling, jumping, javelin, and discus in hopes of winning a prize. The Apostle Paul frequently compared Christian life to athletes training for Olympic competition. In his letter to the Christians in Philippi he wrote, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead. I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."¹

What did Paul mean? When we look at previous verses, he mentioned his desire to know Christ more fully and to become more like Him. When he wrote that he had not yet "obtained all this", he was acknowledging he had much more to learn and accomplish as a Christian. Then he wrote that it helped him to grow spiritually by "forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead." He simply meant that he refused to be distracted by negative feelings and memories about unfortunate incidences of his past life. Instead, like an athlete in training, he focused on the Christian goal of becoming more Christ-like.

You and I can benefit from Paul's approach to Christian growth. We can hinder our Christian growth if we let our minds dwell on certain aspects of our past life, such as:

Guilt

We all have done wrong things, perhaps seriously wrong. It does help to keep *some* past mistakes in mind so we do not repeat them. However, when we habitually look back with feelings of shame and guilt we can burden ourselves to the point of spiritual exhaustion and stagnation. Scripture is clear—we are completely cleansed and forgiven through Christ's sacrifice. God does not want us to labor under burdens of guilt. Paul recognized that some Christians in the Corinthian church had been involved in thievery, drunkenness, and sexual perversion, but he went on to confirm that they too were washed and sanctified.²



by
Paul Hailey

When we view ourselves as "guilty" or "unworthy" we minimize Christ's perfect and complete sacrifice. As the American poet Carl Sandburg wrote, "The past is a bucket of ashes." God figuratively smashes all of our sins under His feet and hurls them into the sea—buried and forgotten.³ Someone noted with a bit of humor that all of our sins are where they belong—out of sight down where the ugly fish are.

Pride of past accomplishments

Whatever good deeds we have done we should remember they originated from desires, abilities, and circumstances that God had fashioned and orchestrated into our lives.

Jesus commented that He relied completely on the



Father to guide Him in His words and actions.⁴ If Jesus, who lived a perfectly righteous life, gave the Father all the credit for His righteous deeds, how much more should we do the same? When we think or talk about worthwhile things we have done, let us acknowledge God who gave us the ability or opportunity to do good. Paul put it this way, "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."⁵

Past hurts

We can hinder and even stop our spiritual growth by having an unforgiving attitude toward people who have hurt us. It can be a difficult struggle to truly forgive

continued on page 21

Once upon a happy ever after

With her long, golden dress the little girl ran around with glee, a small, plastic tiara upon her head of blond hair.

In between her playing, she suddenly stopped next to her mom, took off her tiara and put it on her mother's head. "Now you can be a princess too mommy", she said with joy. Watching all of this happen, I wondered what it is about fairy tales that children (and most adults too) love so much? My favourite movies are fairy tale, animation films like Shrek, Despicable Me and Nemo, to name but a few. C.S. Lewis once said, "When I was ten, I read fairy tales in secret and would have been ashamed if I had been found doing so. Now that I am fifty, I read them openly. When I became a man I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up."

Could part of the attraction be the adventure? All good fairy tales have a journey filled with numerous isolated, often unrelated, adventures along the way. Most of them involve overcoming obstacles that stand in the way of the hero or heroine getting to their final destination. The fire-breathing dragon blocking the rickety rope bridge, which is the only way across the deep, dark gorge to the castle. Or something similar. Most of these adventures or challenges seem insurmountable at first. There is just no way to beat this dragon and yet somehow it is done and on we go. I have never watched a fairy tale or read a fantasy novel, which have no obstacles along the way. If they exist they did not make the best-seller list.

Could the attraction of fairy tales be the fact that a common pauper becomes a prince? Or a beautiful princess finds her knight in shining armour, who fights all those dragons and trolls to rescue her from the dungeon? Not just anybody, but her.

Where dreams come true

Maybe the lure of all good fairy tales is all of the above, plus some more. They are filled with dreams that do come true. They are projections of our longing hearts, as CS Lewis also said. Most have beautiful far off places where troubles disappear with a wave of a wand or the flash of a sword. Finally, an important ingredient in all good fairy tales is that they all have happy endings.

Then life happens. We grow up and fairy tales lose their magic for us, because they all happen in never-never land. The tiara the little girl put on her mother's head was after all, just cheap plastic, not real diamonds set in pure silver. No real princess. Or am I wrong?

There is a story about a young orphan girl who grows up poor, with a life full of daily grind and hardships. People look down on her and see her as a nobody. Even some of her own family think she is only good for washing clothes and scrubbing floors. Then one day the king has a banquet. The prince is looking for his bride-to-be. Everyone is invited, but at first she doesn't realise this. To cut a long story short, she eventually

by
**Johannes
Maree**

goes to the banquet and there meets her prince charming on the dance floor. Things go wrong and she runs away, but her prince comes looking for her and finds her. And they live happily ever after. Heard this story before? No, it's not Cinderella. In fact, it's not even a fairy tale - it is a true story. You'll find it throughout the pages of the Bible. It's our story.

Jesus, the prince of the universe, came to this earth for each one of us. He chose each one of us personally.¹ He came that we may have life and have it more abundantly.² No doubt, we will still have problems and difficulties. There will still be many dragons along our life's path, but be of good cheer and have peace in your heart, because Jesus has overcome the world.³ He has slain the dragons for us. He has rescued us from the dungeon. The king of the universe has prepared a great banquet and he has personally invited each one of us.⁴ Even those of us who feel poor and blind and incapable of making it through this life.⁵

Our prince in shining armour

We are all princes and princesses. We are not nobodies, we are the children of the king of the universe, the living God.⁶ Ours is an election assured and Jesus has promised that he will never leave us nor forsake us.⁷

In all fairy tales there are times when the hero is just too tired to carry on and ready to give up. This happens in real life as well, just in case you didn't know. Please understand that I am not making light of the hardships and heartaches many people have to face each day. It is no joke. It is real and hard to bear. But it is even more true and real that at times like these we need to hang onto the promises of Jesus (our prince in shining armour).

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."⁸ Not even in fairy tales will you find this kind of rest.

But what about the ending? Do we all live happily ever after? Well, it wouldn't be a great story if it didn't have a happy ending. In fact, when you really understand God's plan for us, you will see that it is even more fantastic than the wildest fantasy tale. One of my favourite sections in the Bible is found in Revelation chapter 21. It is a sneak glimpse of the ending to the story. Read the whole chapter, it's beautiful. We will be his people and God himself will be with us and be our God. "He will wipe away all our tears, and there will be no more death, or sadness, or crying or pain. For the former things will have passed away."⁹

...and we all lived happily ever after. □

¹ 1 Thessalonians 1:4; Ephesians 1:4

² John 10:10

³ John 16:33; Luke 11:22

⁴ Luke 14:16

⁵ Luke 14: 21

⁶ Ephesians 1:4-5,11

⁷ Hebrews 13:5

⁸ Matthew 11: 28

⁹ Revelation 21:3-4

How to fix people

We live in a quick-fix society. If we want a quick lunch, we eat fast food. If we want a quick home-cooked meal, we make Stouffer's lasagna or instant rice in our microwaves. If we want a quick marriage, we go to Vegas. If we want to change our TV channel quickly, we use the remote control. We have a quick fix for just about everything—except people.

Being a Christian is not really difficult if you don't have to deal with people. But then what do you do with those pesky scriptures that ask you to "love your neighbor,"¹ "love your family,"² "love one another,"³ and yea verily—even "love your enemies"?⁴ Still, I wish I had a remote-control gizmo I could just point at people who irritate me and "quick fix" them.

I would zap the woman ahead of me in the ten items or less lane who has 70 products in her cart. She always acts clueless, but I know she's doing it deliberately. I would zap the boss taking credit for my hard work and the self-appointed counselor giving me unwanted advice about my children when his are wreaking havoc.

I would zap the know-it-all wanting me to respect his opinion while he discards mine and the pessimist refusing to count his blessings. I would zap those thinking their likes and dislikes are the same as God's. I would zap the self-righteous, rude, thoughtless, humorless, nosy, and those who make me feel unvalued, unappreciated, or unwanted.

What fun I would have "quick-fixing" people!

However, Jesus didn't come to "quick-fix" people; he came to redeem them.

Fortunately for all us, God does not look at people through human eyes. In biblical times people saw Peter as impetuous or impulsive, James and John (sons of thunder) as angry and Thomas as lacking faith. God saw beyond outward appearances. It mattered not if people were tax collectors, women of ill repute, poor, rich, diseased or just plain annoying; God saw them all as his beloved children. And that's how he sees you and me—and everyone I would like to zap.

Actually, God loves all of us so much that he gave his only begotten Son Jesus Christ. Jesus loves us so much he gave his life.⁵ He gave it for all of us. Although I hate to admit it, this includes each and everyone who irritates me. God loves them and so should I. That doesn't mean I have to condone everything they do, but it's not my job to "fix" them. If they need to be "fixed," I guess I'll let God do it his way. □

by
**Barbara
Dahlgren**



¹ Mark 12:31

² Ephesians 5:25

³ John 13:34

⁴ Matthew 5:43

⁵ John 3:16–17

Who do we blame?

I couldn't help but think of Basil when I read Proverbs chapter 19 verse 3.

People ruin their lives by their own stupidity, so why does God always get blamed?

Basil? Who is Basil?

Basil Fawlty. He's the main character in the highly successful British comedy *Fawlty Towers*, played by John Cleese. He is the cynical, rude, paranoid bully who runs a hotel in the seaside town of Torquay, England. He takes many of his frustrations out on

by
Gordon Green

Are you like Basil? Blaming others—even God—for the bad things that happen to you?

- If you fail an exam you just say, "I would have passed but my teacher doesn't like me."
- If you lost your temper, it's because "they" provoked you.
- If your team loses, it's because the referee was biased.
- If you have psychological problems: "It's because of my parents. They never treated me right. Or it could have been my sisters. I was always overlooked. But then again it could have been my grandparents..."

And on it goes. I'm just the innocent victim.

Blaming others for the bad things that happen is not just Basil's problem—it is deeply ingrained in our nature. It is in our family tree. When we blame others we are doing exactly what our ancestors did. When they sinned, Adam blamed Eve and God. Eve said the devil made her do it.¹

But why did they react in that way? The answer helps us discover what makes us what we are today. Did you know we actually play out what happened there? Picture the scene.

Satan comes to Adam and Eve and tempts them. His intention? Destroy God's plan for them and all who came after them. Satan's method? He told them a lie. "You can become just like God." How would you react if you were Adam or Eve and heard these words? You look around and you see perfection. God is perfect, he has made a perfect world and he is in perfect control of everything. He is perfectly adequate within himself. It is not difficult to imagine Adam and Eve thinking; "If I can become like God I will be perfect. I will reach my highest potential and I will be in perfect control of my life and everything else!"

Adam and Eve fall into Satan's trap.

They disobey God and eat of the forbidden fruit. "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie."² To their horror they realise they are not like God at all. Even worse - they are less than they were just a few minutes earlier. Although they are surrounded by God's unconditional love they lose all sense of being loved. They feel embarrassed, ashamed and guilty. Not only have they disobeyed God they now realise they are not perfect, they are not in perfect control—they are totally inadequate. The couple, now ill at ease

continued on page 20

others by blaming them for his very own stupidities—especially the hapless Spanish waiter Manuel: "Sorry about that. He's from Barcelona" is Basil's usual way of attempting to place the blame for anything and everything.

In one scene Basil loses it completely. There is a fire and Basil tries to find the key to turn on the fire alarm, but he has misplaced it. This time, instead of blaming humans of every variety and even inanimate objects (such as his car), he punches the sky and screams, "Thank you, God! Thank you so very, very much!"

continued on page 20

Would God make His home with you?

I have always been fascinated by space exploration. When I was a boy, the Star Trek television series would hold me in awe as I watched every space adventure of Captain Kirk and his crew of the starship Enterprise. Even today once in a while I would watch this series that has evolved into many newer imaginative episodes and movies. Imagine my delight when one evening a Star Trek movie was being screened on television as I stretched out on the sofa after a tiring day at work. This movie was particularly interesting as the Enterprise was hijacked by alien individuals who were bent on searching for God in space!

The leader of the hijackers began to influence everyone in the ship that the Creator existed and that he could be found. He even had an idea about where in the galaxy God could be found. Eventually the starship arrives at a most unique and astounding area in the galaxy filled with awesome phenomena. As they pass through this part of space, a planet appears where they think God would be. A team soon lands on the planet and eventually they encounter an entity that presents itself as Creator God. However the entity projects itself in the form that every individual in the team imagines God would look like. Then the entity makes a surprising request to board

the Starship to leave the planet. Captain Kirk then asks the question, "Why would God need a spaceship to travel?" They soon realize that the entity is actually an evil being out to destroy them. The crew flee for their lives and later as the movie ends, some of them ponder on the question of how and where in the infinitely wide cosmos could God be found.

Well, finding God in space while on a space ship is too far fetched. God cannot be found that way. But do you know that it is God who finds us? There is an amazing verse in the bible that reflects the completion or fulfillment of our experience in God. That fulfillment is linked with Jesus Christ. In the gospel of John, Jesus makes an amazing statement. He said "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."¹ Now that's very interesting. Can anyone believe

that God who is infinite in power and wisdom would choose to make His home with lowly humans? The verse speaks of God making His home with individual humans. How is this possible? Can we even begin to comprehend the magnitude of the revelation given in this verse?

On closer examination of many verses in the Bible, a pattern appears whereby God reveals His intention to be with his creation at all times. Even in the time of Moses in the Old Testament, God wanted to stay with his chosen people.² His presence was in the Tabernacle close to His people. Jesus Christ was born as God with us. The gospel of Matthew reveals this when it states, "Behold, the virgin shall be with Child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, "God with us".³ There is absolutely no need to travel in a space ship to find God. He's right here with us! The real question that we need to ask is "Would someone actually desire for God to make His home with them?" You might enjoy someone visiting you, but would you enjoy having that person stay with you permanently? What would be the difference in our lives if God made His home with us?

Firstly, God's presence in our lives is infinitely desirable. There is a level of blessing in God's presence

that cannot be fathomed or imagined. You wouldn't want Him to leave once He comes to you. Life would be absolutely empty if He left. That's because God comes with another presence to abide with you. That is the Holy Spirit of God.⁴ You literally become the Temple of God with the Holy Spirit residing in you.⁵ This is the level of closeness with God that Christ promises to anyone who accepts Him wholeheartedly. Secondly, with God making His home with us, we will become more like Him. Our attitudes, behavior and desires in life will begin to reflect Christ.

We do not need to travel trillions of miles or light years to reach God. He will make the journey to come to you. All that is required is a willing heart to receive Him. Is that heart in you? □

1 John 14:23
 2 Exodus 25:8
 3 Matthew 1:23
 4 John 14:16-17
 5 1 Corinthians 3:16



by
**Devaraj
 Ramoo**



Jesus, the fulfilled covenant

One of the most enduring arguments among religious scholars is “Which part of the Old Testament law has been done away with, and what parts are we still obliged to observe?”

The answer to that question is not “either/or.” Let me explain.

The Old Covenant Law was a complete package consisting of 613 civil and religious laws and regulations for Israel. It was designed to separate them from the world and lay a spiritual foundation that would lead to faith in Christ. It was, as the New Testament says, a shadow of the reality to come.

It was not so much “done away” as “fulfilled” in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Christians are not under the Mosaic law. Rather, they are subject to the Law of Christ, expressed in love for God and fellow humans. The New Covenant is personal, spiritual, and relational in nature.

During his earthly ministry, Jesus did observe the religious customs and traditions of the Jewish people, but with a flexibility that often surprised even his supporters. For example, he upset the religious authorities by the way he treated the strict rules for keeping the Sabbath. When challenged, he explained that he was Lord of the Sabbath.



by
**Dr. Joseph
Tkach**

The Old Testament is not obsolete, it is an integral part of the Holy Scriptures. There is continuity between the two testaments. We can say that God’s covenant has been given in two forms: Promise and Fulfillment. We now live under the fulfilled covenant of Christ. It is open to all who believe in him as Lord and Savior. It isn’t necessarily wrong to observe the Old Covenant regulations pertaining to the specific forms of worship and cultural practices if you want to. But doing so does not make you any more righteous or acceptable to God than those who do not. Christians can now enjoy their true “Sabbath rest”—freedom from sin, death, evil, and alienation from God—in a relationship with Jesus.

That means that every obligation we have are obligations of grace, ways of living in and under the gracious covenantal promises of God and his faithfulness. All such obedience then is the obedience of faith, of trust in God to be true to his Word and faithful in all his ways. Our obedience is never meant to condition God to be gracious. He is gracious and so we want to live in ways that keep us receiving his grace extended to us daily in Jesus Christ.

If our salvation depended on our fulfilling the law, we would all be doomed. But thankfully, Jesus shares with us his fullness of life in the power of his Spirit. □

continued from page 18

together, and with their minds plunged into darkness, make makeshift clothing from fig leaves to try and hide their shame from each other. “I’m not going to let you know that I’m really not perfect—you are not going to find out what I’m really like. I’m ashamed of who I am.” Their lives are now based on the perception that they could only be loved if they are perfect.

Is it any surprise then, that today we struggle with thoughts of; “I’m worthless, flawed and unimportant?” This is where it came from. Adam and Eve’s understanding of who God is and who they were became so confused “that there was neither sense nor direction left in their lives.”³ Like a toxic waste spilt into a river, the lie and its effects swiftly spread and polluted humanity. The “fig leaves” have become sophisticated.

Blaming and excuse making is a gigantic mask we put on because we cannot admit to ourselves or others we are less than perfect. So we lie, exaggerate—and blame. If anything goes wrong in the office or in my home it’s not my fault. We wear the masks to hide our sense of worthlessness and shame: “See, I am perfect—I’ve got my life together.” But behind our masks we are saying; “If you knew me as I really am you wouldn’t love me but if I can prove to you that I’m in control then you will accept and like me.” Performance has become our identity.

What can we do? Recently I lost my car keys. I

looked in my pockets, in all the rooms in my house, in drawers, on the floor, every nook and cranny. To my embarrassment I blamed my wife and children. I have my life in order. I’m in control—I don’t lose things! Eventually I found my keys—in the ignition of my car. No matter how thoroughly, no matter how hard or how long I could have looked, I would have never found the keys in my house or in the possession of any of my family members - because they weren’t there. Likewise, when we set out to find the causes of our problems in others, we’ll seldom find them, because they aren’t there. They are in you and me. “People ruin their lives by their own stupidity.”⁴ Admit you are wrong when you are. Take responsibility.

But most of all—stop trying to be that perfect person you think you are supposed to be. Stop believing that when—and only when—you become that perfect person, you will be accepted. In the Fall we lost our true identity of who we really are but when Jesus died on the cross he destroyed the lie of conditional love forever. Don’t believe the lie, instead believe that God cherishes you, accepts you and loves you unconditionally—regardless of your feelings, failings or even your stupidities. Rest on that foundational truth.

You don’t have to prove anything.

Don’t blame others. Don’t be a Basil. □

¹ Genesis 3:12–13

² Romans 1:25

³ Romans 1:21

⁴ Proverbs 19:3

He knows my name

The population of the world is about seven billion. According to an article on wikipedia.org, about one fifth of all the humans who have existed in the last 6,000 years are alive today. That's a lot of people. But how many of them can you name? A hundred? Five hundred?

How many names of all the billions of people ever born on this earth are remembered today? All those names, faded on headstones (if they were on headstones), are now forgotten. Only the names of the famous and the infamous can be recalled, and only some of those.

How sad to think of all the lives over the centuries lost to the mists of history. How sad personally, to think no one will remember our names or the names of the ones we love. The reality is, not too long from now, our names will be forgotten. But there's One who can remember every name of every person ever born. God knows and remembers each name of each human, and not only their names, but everything about them.

The song "He Knows My Name" by Tommy Walker reminds us we won't be forgotten to history. God knows our names, even our middle ones. He knows our every thought, sees each tear and hears us when we call.

It seems to be a basic need—we want to hear our own names and we want others to remember them. Anyone who works with the public will tell you to learn

by
Tammy Tkach

and say a person's name when speaking with him or her. It adds a personal touch to a sales pitch. Hearing his or her name from a doctor helps a patient feel cared for. We don't want to think others don't care enough to remember who we are. Of course, as we get older, it does become harder to remember names! I often have to ask, even if I know the person. And then at times I can't remember my kids' or my own!

This world seems impersonal at times. It can be a sad and lonely place. Some days we all feel like we're just a number, obscure and unimportant. We wonder if anyone really cares. But every time a tear falls from my eyes, God sees it. He understands and even cries with me. If no one else in the world cares, he does. Knowing God knows my name and will never forget who I am is a comforting thought.

Is life getting you down? Feeling a little sad, lonely, unappreciated? God knows and he cares. He knows your name and knows your pain. He has your tears in a bottle¹ and his heart is for you. He has even written your name in his book of life.²

Next time you feel like a number, like no one cares or remembers who you are, think of the One who saves your tears, has numbered the hairs on your head³ and takes care of your every need.⁴ He knows your name and hears you when you call. □

¹ Psalm 56:8

² Luke 10:20

³ Luke 12:7

⁴ Matthew 6:30

continued from page 15

others, but Jesus can remove those emotional burdens. He invites us to cast *all* our cares on Him.⁶

When we pray for a forgiving heart, we will be fully in accordance with God's will. He wants us to be like Him who graciously forgets the sins we all have committed. We can know we have forgiven someone when we become able to accept him or her the way they are.

Unmet expectations

Maybe we didn't get the job or the house we wanted, an important relationship turned sour, or perhaps our health deteriorated. We all face failures and disappointments. But let's remember that our loving God is directing our steps.⁷ He is intimately aware of our difficulties and heartaches, but He will eventually work everything together for our ultimate good.⁸ When we let our minds think unpleasant thoughts about unmet expectations, we may be thinking negatively about something that our loving God put in our path for our spiritual growth or to better our circumstances in ways that we are unable to see at the time. Instead, let us look forward—our future will be magnificent.

Pressing forward

When Paul referred to forgetting those things that

were behind, he was writing in the context of pressing forward to spiritual maturity. He did not let negative memories or attitudes from his past keep him from knowing Christ in a personal way and striving to live as he lived. His phrase "I press on toward the goal to win the prize" would have reminded his readers of Olympic athletes who trained intentionally, with single-mindedness, not distracted by outside influences. We too are called to train diligently, not to win an athletic prize, but to be all we can be as followers of Jesus.

In Paul's letter to the Hebrews he included a chapter describing the actions of many people who lived productive lives of faith. Then he challenged his readers with this statement, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."⁹

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, and not be burdened by baggage from our past. □

¹ Philippians 3:12–14

² 1 Corinthians 6:9–11

³ Micah 7:19

⁴ John 8:28

⁵ 2 Corinthians 10:17

⁶ 1 Peter 5:7

⁷ Proverbs 16:9

⁸ Romans 8:28

⁹ Hebrews 12:1, 2

The most excellent way

The church in first-century Corinth was plagued with social divisions and rivalries. Paul explained to them that God gives different people different abilities—not so that some people can exalt themselves over others, but so that everyone will work together for the common good. No one is self-sufficient, and no one is unnecessary.

Near the end of chapter 12, he again explains that God appoints different roles in the church. He asks, “Is everyone in the church an apostle?” Of course not, he implies. It’s silly to expect everyone to have the same role.

Nevertheless, some gifts are better than others, and Paul encourages the Corinthians to “eagerly desire the greater gifts.” But even if they get better gifts, how are they to use them? He explains: “And now I will show you the most excellent way.”

This superior pathway, he says in chapter 13, is the way of love. Love is not a gift that some people have and others don’t—it is the way in which *all* gifts should be used. This is what the Corinthians needed most. Indeed, without love, all the other gifts were pointless.

Without love, we are nothing

Paul begins with the spiritual gift that the Corinthians valued the most: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.” No matter how special the words are, if they aren’t helping anyone, they are just noise.

“If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” Eloquent preaching, deep wisdom and strong faith are all wasted if they are not being used to help others.

“If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my

by
**Dr. Michael
Morrison**

body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.” Even great sacrifices, if done for selfish purposes, fail to do anything for us. Selfish actions, no matter how good they appear on the outside, do not improve our standing in the eyes of God.

A description of love

Real love is not proven through spectacular performances. Rather, it is demonstrated in much smaller things we do in everyday life: “Love is patient,

love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.”

This is a description of God himself, and this is the life that the Father, Son, and Spirit enjoy with one another. This is the life God wants us to enjoy forever—and the life he wants us to have now, as well.

Love “is not rude,” Paul says. “It is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.” God encourages us to participate in this life now: freed of selfishness, fits of anger and grudges.

The reason that God wants us to live this way is because this is the way God already is. He does not keep a record of wrongs—he has already forgiven us for everything we’ve done. He does not tell us to do something he has not already done himself.

“Love does not

delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.” Unfortunately, we often fail. Paul is describing a way that we, of ourselves, cannot achieve. But Christ in us has already achieved it, and God wants us to participate with Christ in his perfect life by trusting him and letting him live in us. □



I want the whole Christ for my Savior, the whole Bible for my book, the whole Church for my fellowship, and the whole world for my mission field.

John Wesley

I am always content with what happens, for what God chooses is better than what I choose.

Epictetus

The Christian Life is about relationships, not performance.

Neil Franks

Putting our trust in God and depending on His intrinsic goodness frees us from the need to find explanations for everything.

Frank Retief

If we do not die to ourselves, we cannot live to God, and he that does not live to God, is dead.

George MacDonald

Raised voices lower esteem. Hot tempers cool friendships. Loose tongues stretch truth. Swelled heads shrink influence. Sharp words dull respect.

William Arthur Ward

God is the God of promise.

He keeps His word, even when that seems impossible; even when the circumstances seem to point to the opposite.

Colin Urquhart

Because our understanding is earthbound... human to the core... limited... finite... we operate in a dimension totally unlike our Lord... who knows no such limitations. We see now. He sees forever.

Charles R. Swindoll

We do not segment our lives, giving some time to God, some to our business or schooling, while keeping parts to

ourselves. The idea is to live all of our lives in the presence of God, under the authority of God, and for the honour and glory of God. That is what the Christian life is all about.

R.C. Sproul

We Christians must simplify our lives or lose untold treasures on earth and in eternity. Modern civilisation is so complex as to make the devotional life but impossible. The need for solitude and quietness was never greater than it is today.

A.W. Tozer

As a physician, I have seen men, after all other therapy had failed, lifted out of disease and melancholy by the serene effort of prayer.

Alexis Carrel

A Christian should always remember that the value of his good works is not based on their number and excellence, but on the love of God which prompts him to do these things.

Saint John of the Cross

The human soul is God's treasury, out of which he coins unspeakable riches. Thoughts and feelings, desires and yearnings, faith and hope—these are the most precious things which God finds in us.

Henry Ward Beecher

You can't do anything about the length of your life, but you can do something about its width and depth.

Evan Esar

A vision without a task is a dream; a task without a vision is drudgery; a vision and a task is the hope of the world.

Anonymous

The world is God's nursery for his upper rooms.

George MacDonald

Christians are supposed not merely to endure change, nor even to profit by it, but to cause it.

Harry Emerson Fosdick

A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.

Henry Gardiner Adams

Flee for a little while thy occupations; hide thyself for a time from thy disturbing thoughts.

Cast aside now thy burdensome cares, and put away thy toilsome business. Yield room for some little time to God, and rest for a little time in him. Enter the inner chamber of thy mind; shut out all thoughts save that of God and such as can aid thee in seeking him. Speak now, my whole heart! Speak now to God, saying, "I seek thy face; thy face, Lord, will I seek."

Saint Anselm

The church's core mission never changes, but how it's accomplished is up for revision.

Wayne Pohl

God proved his love on the cross. When Christ hung, and bled, and died, it was God saying to the world, "I love you."

Billy Graham

It's the nature of God to make something out of nothing; therefore, when anyone is nothing, God may yet make something of him.

Martin Luther

It's not that we don't believe in God, we just have too many other things on our minds.

Robert Harold Schuller

Since teenagers are too old to do the things kids do and not old enough to do things adults do, they do things nobody else does.

Anonymous

No man should desire to be happy who is not at the same time holy.

He should spend his efforts in seeking to know and do the will of God, leaving to Christ the matter of how happy he shall be.

A. W. Tozer

No man ever sank under the burden of the day. It is when tomorrow's burden is added to the burden of today that the weight is more than a man can bear. Never load yourself so. If you find yourself so loaded, at least remember this: it is your own doing, not God's. He begs you to leave the future to him, and mind the present.

George MacDonald

The Christian is called upon to be the partner of God in the work of the conversion of men.

William Barclay

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know one from the other.

Reinhold Niebuhr

Do not weigh highly who may be for you or against you. But take thought and care that God be with you in everything you do. Have a good conscience, and God will defend you well.

Thomas A Kempis

An Eastern monarch once charged his wise men to invent him a sentence to be ever in view, and which should be true and appropriate in all times and situations.

They presented him with the words: "And this, too, shall pass away."

How much it expresses! How chastening in the hour of pride! How consoling in the depths of affliction!

Abraham Lincoln

I see not a step before me as I tread on another year; but I've left the past in God's keeping—the future his mercy shall clear; and what looks dark in the distance may brighten as I draw near.

Mary Gardiner Brainard

Every noble work is at first impossible.

Thomas Carlyle

All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters.

John Henry Jowett

In quarrelling, the truth is always lost.

Publilius Syrus

Where is the church at 11:25 on Monday morning?" The church then is in the dentist's office, in the car sales room and repair shop, and out in the truck. It is in the hospital, in the classroom, and in the home. It is in the offices, insurance, law, real estate, whatever it is. That is where the church is, wherever God's people are. They are doing what they ought to be doing. They are honouring God, not just while they worship in a building but out there.

Arthur H. Dekruyter

A man should never be ashamed to own he has been in the wrong, which is but saying that he is wiser today than he was yesterday.

Alexander Pope

Man thinks he loses something—time—when he does not do things quickly. Yet he does not know what to do with the time he gains—except kill it.

Erich Fromm

God does not ask about our ability or our inability, but our availability.

Anonymous

The Plain Truth Magazine



TO VOLUNTEER: If you live in the vicinity of Klang and would like to volunteer in packaging the magazine for mailing, please contact / sms Susan Low 017-2559244

FOR FREE SUBSCRIPTION (within Malaysia & Singapore only), please either:

1. SMS Susan Low 017-2559244 (Malaysia) / Jane 91440187 (Singapore)
2. Email your request to: ptasiamy@gmail.com

TO ATTEND SERVICE AT GRACE COMMUNION INTERNATIONAL (GCI):

Klang, Selangor
Tel: 017-2559244
(Susan Low)

Penang
Tel: 04-6587132 / 012-4237800
(Ong Eng Soon)

Kota Bharu, Kelantan
Tel: 09-7192528 / 017-9399373
(David Ong)

Kulai, Johor
Tel: 012-7771038
(Keok Chai)

Kota Kinabalu, Sabah
Tel: 088-244773 / 012-8285442
(Ranen Bhattacharyya)

Singapore
Tel: 65453813
(Joe Zachariah)

Published by Grace Communion International (formerly known as Worldwide Church of God, Malaysia)

Printed in Malaysia by Hin Press & Trading Sdn. Bhd. (71078-D), No. PT 45855, Batu 2, Jalan Kapar, 41400 Klang, Selangor, Malaysia.