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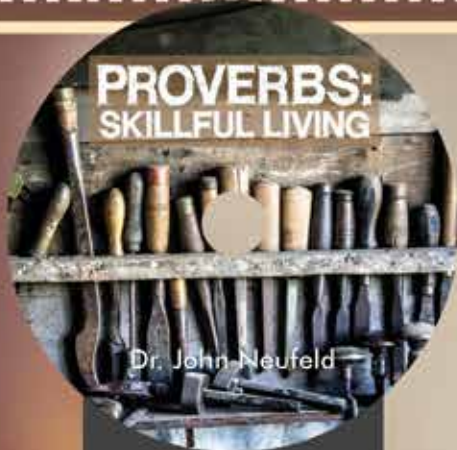
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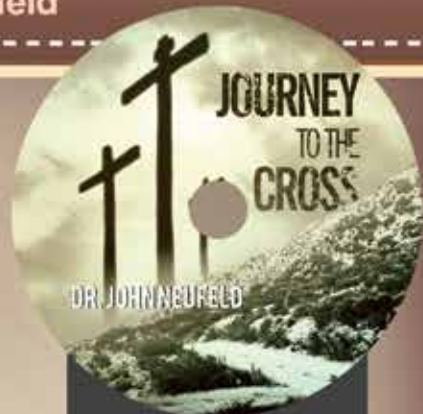
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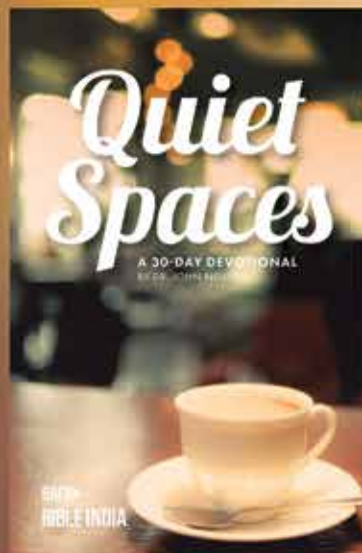
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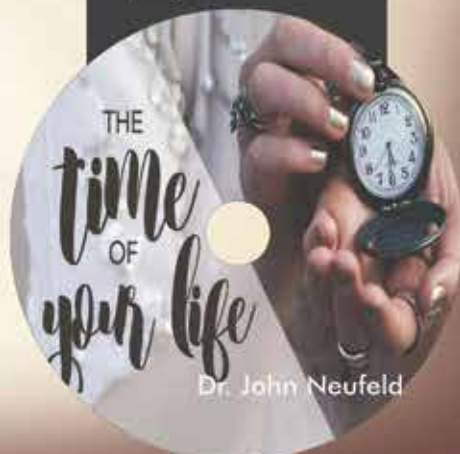
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Designed for your need...

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We're living in perilous times and ignorance of God's word can be disastrous. And Jesus pointed out in Matt 22:29 that, "You are deceived, because you don't know the scriptures or the power of God." Joshua 1:8 reinforces the significance of memorisation of God's word to "Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." Let's ask, personally how much of the Scriptures do we know and to what extent do we apply?

John Piper says that, "One of the reasons Martin Luther came to his great discovery in the Bible of justification by faith alone was that in his early years in the Augustinian monastery he was influenced to love Scripture by Johann Staupitz. Luther devoured the Bible in a day when people earned doctorates in theology without even reading the Bible." **Back to the Bible** endeavours to *Lead People* through daily Scripture engagement thus enhancing spiritual progress and victory over sin.

We have initiated recitation of Scriptures as it encourages to make God's word a central part of our life which not only reminds us of Godly precepts but honors the God of the Word. It is indeed encouraging to see people participate in the Recitation of Scriptures. Make a commitment to memorise the scriptures from today (see page—7)

As we commemorate the 500th anniversary of Reformation based upon the 5 Solas that emerged on the theological convictions of Christian Faith, **request all the Pastors, Elders and Church committees of the Local Churches to set aside one Sunday in the month of October 2017 as 'REFORMATION SUNDAY'** which will educate and edify the church.

Warren Wiersbe in his 'Your Defence: the interceding Son of God' exhorts not to listen to the voice of the devil! Instead, listen to the voice of God. Turn to the Word and believe what God says. Rest assured that your Advocate in heaven is waiting to forgive you and restore you. To delay admitting and confessing sin is only to give Satan a greater opportunity to damage your life and ministry.

In the article 'Gossip', Marion throws light on what Gossip is, what the Bible says about it and how to deal with those who Gossip. The problem often is not knowing exactly what gossip is or what to do about it when it crops up.

We regret to inform that the FM Radio program has been discontinued on FM 101.9 in Hyderabad, please pray with us as we look at alternatives for broadcasting the same. You can now listen to these messages by Dr. John Neufeld online at www.BACKTOTHEBIBLE.in

We are happy to release the Malayalam translation of Theodore Epp's book on 'Moses, Vol-1, God Prepares His Man', to order your copy see page—39.

May the Lord bless you as you continue to become doers of His Word.

With Best regards

Rev. A.P. Anil Kumar
Associate Director
(info@backtothebible.in)



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◦Theodore H. Epp◦

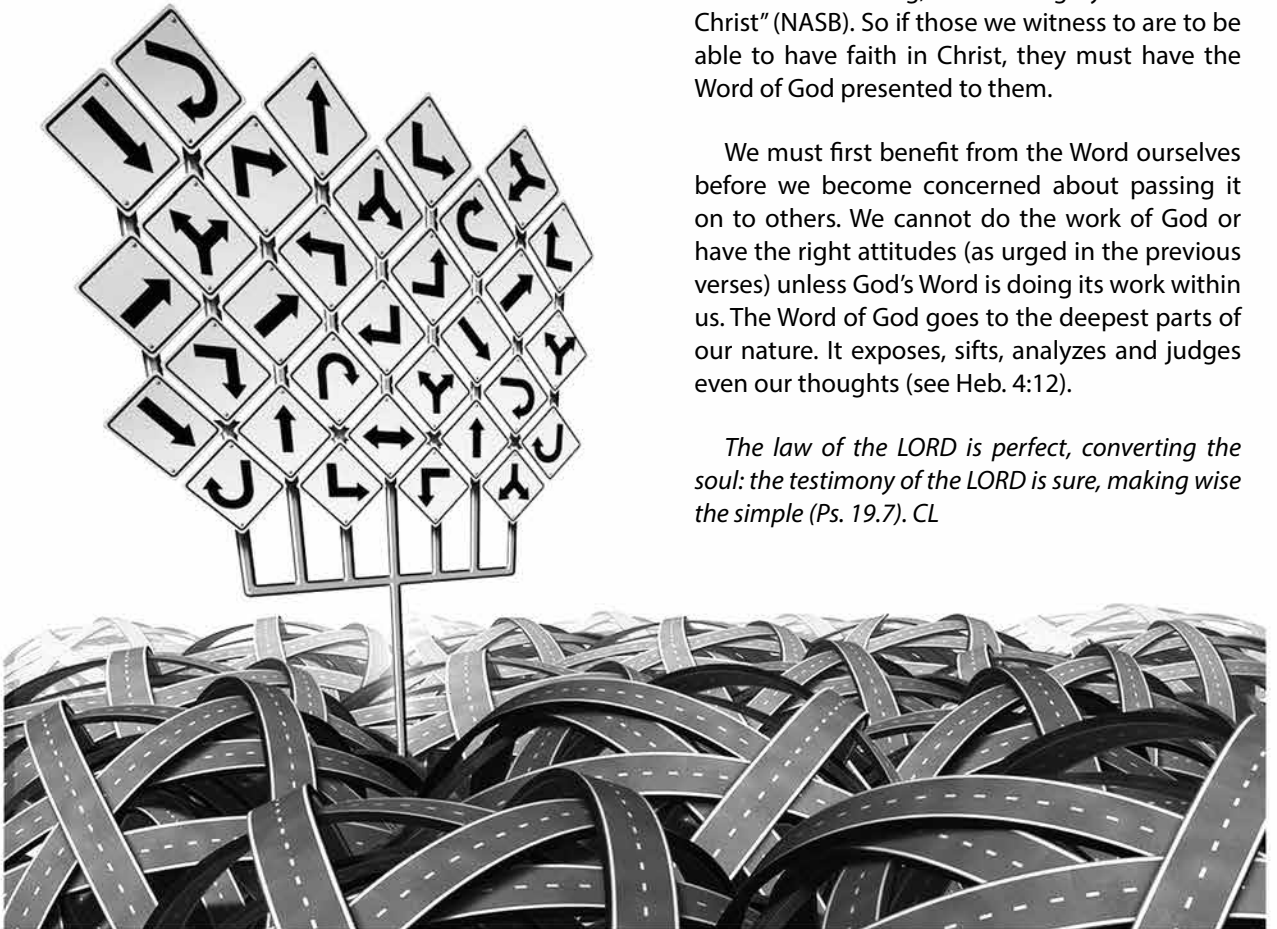
Philippians 2:15-16; Psalm 119:9-16

Never forget the centrality of the Word of God to the believer's witness. The Christian is to study the Word, apply it to himself and then translate it into daily living before a crooked and perverse world. And every believer may be assured that as God's Word is held forth it will have an effect on those who hear it. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (NASB).

There is no substitute for holding forth God's Word, for if people are to come into right relationship with Jesus Christ, they must know what God's Word says. Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (NASB). So if those we witness to are to be able to have faith in Christ, they must have the Word of God presented to them.

We must first benefit from the Word ourselves before we become concerned about passing it on to others. We cannot do the work of God or have the right attitudes (as urged in the previous verses) unless God's Word is doing its work within us. The Word of God goes to the deepest parts of our nature. It exposes, sifts, analyzes and judges even our thoughts (see Heb. 4:12).

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple (Ps. 19.7). CL



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Courageous Evangelism

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1 Peter 3:13-16 says: "Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame."

Suffering? No one wants a piece of that. So why does Peter speak about being blessed in this way?

Let's consider the context. In verse 13, he asks, "Who is there to harm you if you are zealous for good?" These believers in Asia Minor would have said, "Lots of people will harm us – our neighbours, our city, the trade guilds, the temple, the Romans. We are vulnerable!!"

Why are they vulnerable? Because they were taking a stand for their faith, refusing to bow down to the pagan culture around them. So Peter wrote these verses to encourage them.

In verse 13, Peter then tries to reinforce behaviour among Christians that will lessen any misunderstanding and endear God's people to the wider culture around them. No one, he says, persecutes people for being gentle, kind, loving and caring. That is the kind of behaviour that he is talking about here. The culture you live in may misunderstand your faith, but if you can become known as people of graciousness, then you will be half way to bridging the divide.

By the way, that is still important today. Nothing is so disarming as a person who forgives their enemies, looks for opportunities to bless others, volunteers in social endeavours, and looks for ways to encourage others. These kinds of attitudes open the door for the gospel. That is the first step to building bridges.

But where Christians are seen to be ungracious, the size of the moat grows larger, and the way to the castle – to the gospel – is uncrossable.

Then Peter adds, "even if you suffer for righteousness sake..."

The grammar here suggests that in the unlikely event that people do persecute you for being gracious, don't be discouraged. You are in fact blessed. Peter is quoting Jesus in Mt. 5:10: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake."

Peter also encourages them to "have no fear," or to not be intimidated. How is it that in an increasingly hostile culture, you can be free from intimidation? Because, says Peter, in your heart you are regarding Christ as Lord. That is – He is fully equal with the Father, He is the second person of the Trinity, and He rules over all. As ruler, all things are subject to Him – even the hostility of your culture.

But of course, Peter is not just telling us to regard Christ as Lord, but to regard Christ the Lord as holy. What is he trying to communicate?

The key to understanding this is found in Isaiah 8:13, which says, "But the Lord of hosts, Him you shall honor as holy. Let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread." If you are going to fear anybody, fear God, fear Christ, regard Him as holy, and let your fear be of Him alone.

If the truth is told, there are some believers who are actually intimidated by the world. If that is you, you might think that the best thing to do is to believe in the gospel, but keep it private. You have been flying under the radar, so to speak, and until now, very few of the unbelievers with whom you interact know you are a believer. Or, even if they do, you have never entered into a dialogue with them because of fear!

But if you learn to regard Jesus the Lord as holy, it will give you courage to enter into the arena of discussing your faith openly with others.

Application: Are you willing to "suffer for righteousness' sake?" Let's reflect on the importance of honouring Christ the Lord as holy. Ask Him to remove your fear of man, and learn to fear Him alone.

"But the Lord of hosts, Him you shall honor as holy. Let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread." (Isaiah 8:13)

If you learn to regard Jesus the Lord as holy, it will give you courage to enter into the arena of discussing your faith openly. CL

(Adapted from the devotional book "Quiet Spaces" by Dr. John Neufeld. This book is now available for a donation of Rs. 50/- only).



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The Tyranny of Things

◦ A. W. Tozer ◦

○ ○ ○
A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. Luke 12:15

Before the Lord God made man upon the earth He first prepared for him a world of useful and pleasant things for his sustenance and delight. In the Genesis account of the creation these are simply "things." They were made for man's use, but they were meant always to be external to the man and subservient to him. In the deep heart of the man was a shrine where none but God was worthy to come. Within him was God; without, a thousand gifts which God had showered upon him.

But sin has introduced complications and has made those very gifts of God a potential source of ruin to the soul.

Our woes began when God was forced out of His central shrine and things were allowed to enter. Within the human heart things have taken over. Men have now by nature no peace within their hearts, for God is crowned there no longer, but there in the moral dusk, stubborn and

aggressive usurpers fight among themselves for first place on the throne.

This is not a mere metaphor, but an accurate analysis of our real spiritual trouble. There is within the human heart a tough, fibrous root of fallen life whose nature is to possess, always to possess. It covets things with a deep and fierce passion. The pronouns *my* and *mine* look innocent enough in print, but their constant and universal use is significant. They express the real nature of the old Adamic man better than a thousand volumes of theology could do. They are verbal symptoms of our deep disease. The roots of our hearts have grown down into things, and we dare not pull up one rootlet lest we die. Things have become necessary to us, a development never originally intended. God's gifts now take the place of God, and the whole course of nature is upset by the monstrous substitution.

Our Lord referred to this tyranny of things when He said to His disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take

up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 16:24-25).

Breaking this truth into fragments for our better understanding, it would seem that there is within each of us an enemy which we tolerate at our peril. Jesus called it "life" and "self," or as we would say, the *self-life*. Its chief characteristic is its possessiveness; the words *gain* and *profit* suggest this. To allow this enemy to live is, in the end, to lose everything. To repudiate it and give up all for Christ's sake is to lose nothing at last, but to preserve everything unto life eternal. And possibly also a hint is given here as to the only effective way to destroy this foe: It is by the cross. "Let him take up his cross, and follow me." CL

Hold loosely all that is not eternal.
—Agnes Maude Royden

Letters from Readers...

- I had been studying Genesis; it is amazing how many new revelations come through a deeper detailed study. I feel so blessed. After my mother passed away, who was one of your oldest members; I was really comforted by 'Confident Living' magazines. I read one article each night, and the study really kept my mind well occupied. God bless all of you at Back to the Bible, for encouraging and cheering many lives.
— Romola, Bengaluru
- All articles in the CL are fantastic and especially, SELF-IMAGE telling about now-a-day problems. It teaches that problems of the mind can be solved in the way of Jesus only.
— R. Arumairaj-Madurai
- I take this opportunity to sincerely thank you and your staff for all your work for Back to The Bible ministry. Thank you so much for the encouraging articles in your magazine.
— R. C. Satyavrata-Pune
- Nice to hear God's message, it is good to build up our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.
— D.J.N Rao-Bangalore
- Thank you for 'Confident Living' magazine which comes regularly. The articles touch various aspects of the Christian life and are well-balanced and spiritually enriching. May the LORD abundantly bless the valuable ministry.
— Mrs. S. Kumaresan, Coimbatore
- I have enjoyed reading all the articles of the last month magazine from cover to cover all was good. Thank you and congratulation for 500 yrs of reformation. I was happy to read about it, I also like to have a copy of the 95 theses if available.
— Mrs. B. I. Pereira, Chennai
- We all are praying for the Back to the Bible and also others who are serving our Lord. Thank you very much for the confident living and also for the calendar.
— Ms. Joy Charles, Mysore
- I am extremely thankful for your letter with a book 'Here I Stand'. Along with family we are really blessed with your prayers and magazines.
— Mr.Yashwant Singh, New Delhi
- Thank you for your Magazine "Confident Living". As the title goes the messages inside do really give us confidence to face the world and lead a Christ-centred life fearing him and no one else.
— Mrs. Winitha Kaunds, Bangalore
- Thank you very much for sending me "Confident Living" magazine and morning verses, Calendar and praying for us. We too uphold all the ministries in our prayer, but looking at persecution we need to equip more with the word of God.
— Mrs. R. Charles, Faridabad

Share with us how you have been blessed by the ministries of Back to the Bible.

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**Names of those who sent
the Answers for the Quiz
(Mar'-Apr' 2017) on Genesis 1-25
CONGRATS TO ALL THE
WINNERS !!**

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2. Nirmala David-Madurai
3. Chandra Kumari Mohan-Nagercoil
4. Joy Daniel-Chennai
5. P.Chandrakala eliah-Huzurabad
6. Hepzie Thomas-Chennai
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Perfect Foreknowledge

◦ William Macdonald ◦

You only have I known of all the families of the earth. —Amos 3:2

God is speaking in this verse to disobedient Israel. Obviously, God

knows all the nations of history in the ordinary sense of that word, so know must have a deeper meaning. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew verb know¹ often suggests an intimate knowledge (such as Adam's knowing Eve), personal involvement, and choice (here, His electing Israel). Hebrew has no compound words such as *fore-know* or *pre-destine*, but Greek, Latin, and English do.

The words foreknow and foreknowledge suggest more than merely "knowing ahead of time." If God were not sovereign, He could never be sure what might happen. But He is sovereign. He knows what will happen because it is part of His will and plan. In the New Testament, God's foreknowledge or preplanning is used in connection with the Lord Jesus, with Israel, and with believers.

Concerning our Savior, we read, "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and

foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death" (Acts 2:23); and "He indeed was foreordained [foreknown, NASB] before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Pet. 1:20).

In what sense was Christ foreknown² by God? Was it simply that God had prior knowledge of what He would do, or did God's foreknowledge plan and determine what the Lord Jesus would do? Surely, it is the latter.

Concerning Israel, Paul writes, "God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew" (Rom. 11:2). Here the divine foreknowledge could not have been based on the mere prescience of Israel's obedience because Israel was not obedient! Rather, God's foreknowledge was a sovereign choice of Israel as His earthly people.

Finally, concerning believers, we read, "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many

brethren" (Rom. 8:29); and "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Pet. 1:2).

Regarding God's choosing or electing sinners in these last two verses, there are two main interpretations. One is that in eternity past God knew certain individuals in the sense that He sovereignly decided to bless them. The other view is that God knew beforehand those who would trust Christ as Lord and Savior, and His choice of them was based on this foreknowledge. The first view emphasizes the sovereignty of God in the matter of salvation, although it does not exclude the necessity of individuals responding to the gospel call. The second view emphasizes people's responsibility and makes God's choice of certain individuals dependent on their repentance and faith.

Whichever view we believe to be biblical, we should hold two truths in balance. First, God is sovereign, and He has the right to choose whomever He wishes, entirely apart from any merit on anyone's part. Second, God makes a bona fide offer of salvation

to all the world, and people cannot be saved unless they put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot reconcile these two truths in this life, but it is essential that we hold them in balance.

The fact that God foreknows our eternal welfare should give us great thoughts about the Lord and lead us to praise Him. It should cause us to wonder why He ever looked on us with grace or favor. It should deliver us from pride when we remember that that favor was not prompted by any good in us.

An anonymous author penned these words:

*I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Savior true;
No, I was found of Thee.
I find, I walk, I love; but O the whole
Of love is but my answer, Lord, to Thee!
For Thou wert long beforehand with my soul;
Always Thou lovedst me.*

Notes:

1. Hebrew, yadah.
2. The Greek word *proginosko* literally equals "foreknow" (NASB), but KJV, NKJV and Charles B. Williams take the correct meaning to be "foreordain" (cf. "appoint," William F. Beck).
3. Merely knowing ahead of time without determining what will happen is called prescience (from Latin for "preknow"). CL

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Giving VERSUS Buying

• J. Allan Petersen •

“John Henry Jordan! Another phone call from your teacher! How do you think that makes us feel? What must she think of us? And after all we’ve given you too!” Does this sound familiar? Let’s think about giving versus buying.

Even before marriage, this intelligent, conscientious couple decided that when they became parents, they would make none of the mistakes their parents had made. When they visited their friends who had children, their determination was confirmed. “Our children will never act like that! There’s no excuse for such, behavior!”

They set out to be the world’s perfect parents— a very noble ambition. Of course, there is one drawback: It’s impossible! So this couple is always secretly defeated, trying to look the part they have chosen to play.

Also, to portray the perfect parent, it is absolutely essential that you have perfect kids. Your part is to write out all the lines, then see to it that they act them out without a hitch. And that’s quite a task!

But there is another less obvious factor. You are constantly knocking yourself out, really sacrificing for these kids. For years you wore the same old clothes so they could have

new ones. You have played with them, prayed with them, taken them on trips, helped with their school work. In other words, you’ve tried to be perfect parents.

And how do the kids show their appreciation? By goofing off at school, by shrugging off your words of wisdom and by rebelling against your authority. And then you get another call from school! What must that teacher think about you as this child’s parents?

Right now is a good time to ask some hard questions: Why have you sacrificed for your family? Why have you given your love, your time, your money? Have you done this to get their appreciation and their affirmation that you are an OK person? If that was your purpose, you didn’t really give anything, did you? You bought something! And, of course, you feel cheated because you didn’t get what you paid for.

But that is not the half of it! Why all this concern about other people’s opinions? You are training your children, dressing them well, teaching them manners, courtesy, obedience and respect. Why? Is it so that the teachers will say, “What lovely children! They must have wonderful parents”? Is this the

reason? Or is it so that your relatives and neighbors can say, “They’re doing a beautiful job with those kids”?

No wonder you’re upset! You are not giving your children a gift—the gift of love, discipline and a good example. You are buying the admiration—the standing ovation—of one and all. Certainly, our children should be taught appreciation, thankfulness and respect, but without our personal strings attached.

The beautiful thing about God’s love is that it is unconditional. He loves us—sinners, rebels, failures—regardless of how we act. And Jesus Christ actually gave Himself to die for us when we were not at all responsive to Him.

If we don’t appreciate this and thank Him for it, we are the losers. We lose the priceless privilege of knowing God personally and of enjoying His life that begins now and continues forever. For what profit is there if you gain the whole world and lose eternal life? (see Mark 8:36,37). CL



Conflict

◦ Gary L. Bradshaw ◦

The Source of Conflict

Why do Christians encounter conflict? How should we deal with it? What happens when the conflict is not resolved, especially when it happens in the church?

Conflict has many faces. There are family conflicts, job conflicts, world conflicts, conflicts with our friends and even conflicts in our churches. How we handle conflict determines whether it will destroy us or help us grow.

The Bible is filled with examples of conflict. Conflicts arose between Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Moses and Pharaoh, David and Saul, Jacob and Esau, the Pharisees and Jesus, and man and God. What we must understand is that outer conflict results from inner conflict (see James 4:1-3). The Bible also tells us how conflicts were resolved and how God strengthened His people by making them look inside themselves to deal with their inner conflict.

Dealing with Conflict

Jesus taught that what happens inside a person controls the outside (Mark 7:1-23). Thoughts and attitudes will determine words and actions. Jesus gave examples in

the Sermon on the Mount of what the inner life should be (Luke 6:20-49). Then He taught us by His own example. He was meek, merciful and a peacemaker. The scoundrels in the temple of Jerusalem (Mark 11:15-17) might not have agreed that Jesus was meek!

However, meekness and weakness are not the same. Weakness would not have allowed Jesus to submit to the humiliation that preceded the crucifixion - or even the crucifixion itself. Meekness is humbleness. It is not arrogant or pretentious. Jesus was gentle. The children recognized this, as did the woman at the well (John 4:5-26) and Mary, the sister of Martha. Jesus was merciful. He viewed people with love and compassion. The woman accused of adultery, who faced death by stoning, experienced His mercy (8:1-11). The thief hanging alongside Him at Calvary experienced His mercy (Luke 23:39-43). The parable of the Good Samaritan was His prime example of a merciful person (10:30-37). Jesus was also a peacemaker. Peacemakers are not always peacekeepers. Peacekeepers avoid conflict; they may even deny its existence. But Jesus forced people

to face up to what was happening within them and to deal with the ugliness darkening their lives. **Jesus knew that peace is more than the absence of outer conflict, that it is an internal condition.** And it starts with peace with God.

In dealing with conflict, prayer is a powerful tool. But even more can be achieved by studying the nature of Christ and striving to be Christlike. Being Christlike requires exhibiting the character of Christ. We must be able to see and to empathize with the struggle and pain inside others and then relate to them with love.

Resolving Conflict

We can expect conflict in our lives because we are human. Our weaknesses and our inner struggles cause us to come into conflict with others. Sometimes others expose our weaknesses or inner turmoil, and that prompts a fierce reaction from us. We can also expect conflict in our churches because they are composed of people with conflicts. So do we have any hope of resolving conflict? Conflict raged in the disciple Thomas (John 20:24,25). Jesus resolved the conflict when He allowed Thomas to be the first

disciple to touch Him after the resurrection (verses 26-29). Thomas's life was forever changed. Resolution of conflict will not only strengthen us, but it will also glorify God.

Some people say that confronting conflict can be hazardous to our health, especially our spiritual health. Yet allowing conflict to simmer is even more damaging, for it spoils how we feel about one another on the inside. And a small conflict that is not dealt with will grow into a larger conflict that involves more people and causes more pain. Scripture provides many instructions for dealing with and resolving conflicts between believers and in the church (see Matthew 18:15-17; Luke 17:3,4; Galatians 6:1-3; Ephesians 4:23-32). Caring enough about others to confront conflict requires patience, prayer, study of God's Word, tolerance, practice, sacrifice and a willingness to lovingly forgive. It requires the ability to see inner conflict as the source of outer conflict. Most importantly, we need to remember that God is greater than the conflict and that He can help us resolve it. *CL*

Peace is more than the absence of outer conflict; it is an internal condition.

WHENEVER YOU'RE IN CONFLICT WITH SOMEONE, THERE IS ONE FACTOR THAT CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DAMAGING YOUR RELATIONSHIP AND DEEPENING IT. THAT FACTOR IS ATTITUDE.

— *Mike Bickle*



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THE ACCUSER & YOUR DEFENCE THE INTERCEDING SON OF GOD

◦Warren W. Wiersbe◦

cont...

It is true that Satan stands at our right hand to resist us and accuse us. But it is also true that Jesus Christ stands at God's right hand to intercede for us!

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 1 John 2:1

Our Lord finished his work on earth and returned to heaven to take up his unfinished work. What is that work? Perfecting his children and preparing them for glory.

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21

This perfecting ministry has two aspects to it. As our High Priest, Jesus Christ intercedes for us and provides the grace that we need when we are tested and tempted. If by faith we turn to him and come to the throne of grace, he will see us through to victory. But if we yield to temptation and sin, then he ministers as our Advocate to forgive us and restore us to fellowship once again.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

Picture once again the courtroom scene in heaven. God the Judge is on his throne. Joshua the high priest stands before God and is dressed in filthy robes. He is guilty. Satan stands at Joshua's right hand to resist him and accuse him. But Jesus Christ is at God's right hand to represent Joshua and to restore him! This explains why Jesus returned to heaven with wounds (not scars) in his body. Those wounds are the everlasting evidence that he died for us. God was merciful and gracious to save us when we first trusted Christ, but he is "faithful

The Accuser

The Strategy of Satan

OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLE: JOSHUA

In the Previous Issue:

- SATAN'S TARGET: your heart and conscience
- SATAN'S WEAPON: accusation
- SATAN'S PURPOSE: to bring an indictment by God's will

In this Issue:

YOUR DEFENSE: the interceding Son of God

and right-teous" to forgive us when we confess our sins to him. He is faithful to keep his promise, and he is righteous or just because Christ died for our sins and paid the price of our forgiveness. As sinners, we are saved from wrath by God's grace and mercy. As children of God who have disobeyed him, we are forgiven by God's faithfulness and justice.

Did God close his eyes to the reality of Joshua's sins? Of course not! God will never defend his children's sins—but he will defend his children. When Abraham disobeyed and went down to Egypt, and there lied about his wife, God did not defend Abraham's sins; but he did defend Abraham. He kept the ruler from defiling Sarah, and he helped Abraham get out of the land safely. Abraham suffered the consequences of that adventure; for Egypt gave Lot a taste of the world, and this led to Lot's backsliding and downfall. The Egyptian maid, Hagar, that Sarah brought along caused problems in the home and eventually had to be cast out. But God still ruled and overruled to accomplish his purposes with Abraham and Sarah.

When you listen to Satan's accusations, you will focus your attention on yourself and your sins; and this will only lead to defeat and despair. But when you listen to the Holy Spirit's conviction, you will look by faith to Jesus Christ in heaven, your Advocate at the throne of God. You will remember that he died for you and that God cannot reject you, because you belong to Christ. It is because of the heavenly intercession of the Son of God that you and I can defeat Satan's accusations.

Note the stages in the experience of Joshua the high priest. First, there is Satan's resistance. The accuser names Joshua's sins at the throne of God and calls for a holy God to judge Joshua. Stage two is *God's rebuke of Satan*.

The Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" Zech. 3:2

Note that God's rebuke of Satan is based on his grace toward his

people. You and I have been saved by grace. God's grace does not depend on human merit. Jesus Christ went through the fires of judgment that he might pluck us from the burning. Our relationship to God is not based on law or merit; it is based wholly on grace. Grace means that God accepts us in Jesus Christ, not in ourselves.

The third stage is Joshua's restoration. God ordered them to remove the filthy clothes and put holy garments upon the high priest. He even put that "holy turban" on his head, the one with the gold plate at the front that read "Holy unto the Lord" (see Exodus 28:36). God did not even put Joshua on probation! He told him to return to the temple and carry on his service for the Lord!

R e s i s t a n c e — r e b u k e — restoration: these are the stages in the experience of confessing sin and returning to fellowship with God. Satan will accuse you, but do not listen to him. Turn by faith to Jesus Christ your Advocate, and confess your sins to him. Depend on what God's Word says, not on how you feel. Rest on the grace of God—he has chosen you, and he will not forsake you. Charles Wesley has put all of this into a beautiful hymn.

*Depth of mercy! Can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God His wrath forbear,
Me, the chief of sinners spare?*

*I have long withstood His grace,
Long provoked Him to His face,
Would not hearken to His calls,
Grieved Him by a thousand falls.*

*Lord, incline me to repent;
Let me now my sins lament;
Now my foul revolt deplore,
Weep, believe, and sin no more.*

*Still for me the Savior stands,
Holding forth His wounded hands;
God is love! I know, I feel,
Jesus weeps and loves me still.*

Unconfessed sin in our lives is a foothold for Satan. He can use that sin as the basis for accusation. The longer he accuses, the greater that sin becomes in our own eyes. It becomes so big that it covers the face of God and hides his grace and his love. We do not experience feelings of conviction that bring us back to God, but feelings of condemnation that convince us that we cannot go back. Guilt becomes in Satan's hands a terrible weapon that destroys our joy, our peace, and our fellowship with God. Our hope fades. We are swallowed up by despair. Then Satan's voice says to us, "Curse God and die!"

Do not listen to the voice of the devil! Instead, listen to the voice of God. Turn to the Word and believe what God says. Rest assured that your Advocate in heaven is waiting to forgive you and restore you. To delay admitting and confessing sin is only to give Satan a greater opportunity to damage your life and ministry.

*He who concealshis transgressions
will not prosper, but he who
confesses and forsakes them will
find compassion. Prov. 28:13 CL*

To be continued...

(In the next issue we will see **Living by Faith in God**)

**JESUS'
INTERCESSION
FOR US IS
STRONGER
THAN SATAN'S
ACCUSATION
AGAINST US.**

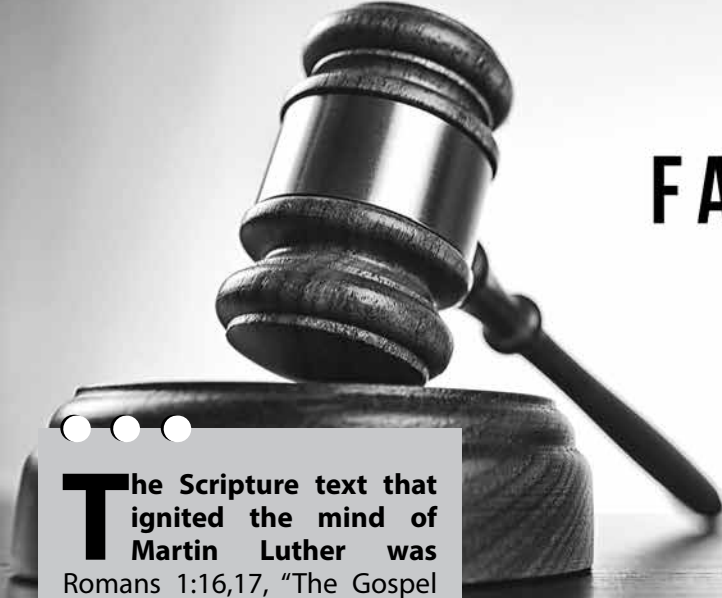
— Mike Bickle

SLOGAN 2

FAITH ALONE!

(Sola Fide)

◦R. Stanley◦



The Scripture text that ignited the mind of Martin Luther was

Romans 1:16,17, "The Gospel of Christ is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes... For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." This is not an isolated or obscure text from the Bible. This appears in 4 places: Habakkuk 2:4; Galatians 3:11; Romans 1:17; Hebrews 10:38. The message is that we are NOT saved by any works of religion but only by faith on Christ. Apostle Paul emphasizes it in Ephesians 2:8,9, "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that NOT of yourselves; it is the gift of God, NOT of works, lest anyone should boast." Not of "yourselves" — our personality. Not of "works" — our performance.

Here lies the fundamental difference between the Old Testament and the New. The OT says, "It will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to OBSERVE all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us"

(Deuteronomy 6:25). On the other hand the NT declares, "But now the righteousness of God APART FROM THE LAW is revealed, even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe" (Romans 3:21,22).

Apostle Paul reiterates this truth in his Epistle to Galatians who were disturbed by the advocates of circumcision: "A man is NOT justified by the WORKS of the law BUT by faith in Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and NOT by the WORKS of the Law; because by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified" (Galatians 2:16). You will be thrilled to observe the repeated mention of the word "faith" in this Epistle (Galatians 2: 20; 3: 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 22, 23, 23, 25, etc.).

Abraham was justified by faith 430 years BEFORE the Law was given (Galatians 3:17). The Law was a later addition and that too for a stipulated period only: "The Law was added till the Seed (Christ) should come"

(v19). Also, Abraham was justified "NOT while circumcised, but while uncircumcised" (Rom 4:9,10). Yes, Abraham was justified by faith, and not by Circumcision or the Law. What does this teach us today? Water baptism, infant or adult, sprinkling or immersion, does not save us. You become a child of God the moment you personally believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour (John 1:12; Romans 10:9-11). Then follows baptism as the first step of obedience (Acts 8:36-38; 10:47,48; 16:30-33).

The one and only condition for salvation is faith on Christ. Here are two classic examples: (1) Evangelist Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian official in the Gaza desert. On seeing some water, the official asked Philip, "See, here is water, what hinders me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:35,36). Note carefully the instant answer: "If you believe with all your heart, you may" (v37). (2) The Philippian Jailor asked Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The instant answer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your family" (Acts

16:30,31). He believed on Christ with his family and they were all baptized "the same hour of the night" (v33). In both these instances the inquirer was not prescribed seven steps to salvation! By climbing seven steps you will not be saved, you will only become tired!

Beware of "discipleship" salvation. It teaches that you must reach a certain level of spirituality in order to be baptized. The word "disciple" simply means "student." Whether in kindergarten or postgraduate class, you are a student. It is AFTER enrolling as a student, you grow in knowledge. Similarly the moment you wholeheartedly believe on Jesus you are enrolled as a disciple (Matthew 28:19). Then follows growth through regular teaching (v20). It is not by self-efforts like "ascending" or "descending" that we get saved, but only by mouth confession and heart belief (Romans 10:4- 10). (Read my 128-page book, Faith Life, available in English and Tamil.) A Church-planting missionary organisation in India lost a tribal group when its missionaries insisted that the tribeswomen must break their bangles before baptism. Oh, how much we have failed to understand the New Testament truths! (Acts 15:28,29).

Everything in Christian life is of faith. Our leader is the "Author and Finisher of Faith" (Hebrews 12:1,2). Our community the Church is a "Household of Faith" (Galatians 6:10). Our very life is the "Spirit of Faith" (2 Corinthians 4:13). Our message is the "Word of Faith" (Romans 10:8). Our prayer is the "Prayer of Faith" (James 5:15). The fruits of our evangelistic labour are the "Children of Faith" (1 Timothy 1:2). Our warfare is a "Fight of Faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). You will be thrilled to see how many times the word "believe" or "believers" occurs in the Acts of the Apostles which is

the history book of the early Church.

It looks simple, but we need to "fight" to keep this virgin faith. Here's Apostle Paul's testimony: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim 4:7). Apostle Jude calls us to "contend earnestly (boldly) for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). We are to hold the shield of faith "above all" (Ephesians 6:16). During their follow-up missionary tour Apostles Paul and Barnabas exhorted the new believers "to continue in the faith," and added, "We must through many tribulations enter the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). Yes, Christian life means swimming against the tide to sustain faith! Our faith which is more precious than gold gets tested by fiery trials (1 Peter 1:6,7). According to Jesus, it's going to be tough to maintain faith as we approach the end (Luke 18:8b).

Then arises a question: "What about the statement that faith without works is dead?" (Js 2:17). Apostle James in this passage deals essentially with the works of charity (vv. 14- 16). He does not speak about works as a condition for salvation, but rather an evidence of salvation. This is clarified by Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:9,10, "We are saved not BY works, but FOR works!" Salvation is to be understood in three tenses: (a) Salvation past — "When we first believed" (Romans 13:11) — Deliverance from the penalty of sin. (b) Salvation present—"Now salvation is nearer" (Romans 13:11) — Deliverance from the power of sin. It's here we are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12). That is, we must endeavour to live as the "children of God" for His glory (vs.15). (c) Salvation future—"To those who eagerly wait for Him (in faith) He will appear a second time, without sin, for salvation" (Hebrews

9:28) — Deliverance from the very presence of sin. This will include the redemption of our bodies also (Romans 8:23).

While talking about faith we must make a reference to parental responsibility. Christian parents and grandparents should be strong in faith and communicate it to their children and grandchildren. Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice were noteworthy examples (2 Timothy 1:5). Unfortunately our children have more faith in computers than on Christ! This was the specific warning of Paul to Timothy lest he made a shipwreck of his faith (1 Timothy 6:20).

Sing —

*Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy wounded side which
flowed,
Be of sin the double cure;
Save from wrath and make me pure.*

*Not the labours of my hands
Can fulfil Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone!*

*Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thy Cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.*

*While I draw this fleeting breath,
When mine eyelids close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown,
See Thee on Thy judgment-throne,
Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.*

— (AM. Toplady, 1740-1778) CL

Equipment OF THE PALESTINIAN Shepherd



©G. Christian Weiss©

The Bible abounds with symbolism pertaining to shepherds and sheep. Because the ancient Hebrews were a pastoral people, such symbolism spoke vividly to them. The application of the spiritual truths thus portrayed was easy and completely natural to them.

Jesus designated Himself as the Good Shepherd, and using this symbol, He taught some precious truths. The New Testament apostles referred to Jesus as their "Great Shepherd" and "Chief Shepherd" and regarded Him as being related to them as a shepherd is to his sheep.

In the Old Testament, Jehovah revealed Himself to His people as a Shepherd (Ps. 80:1; Isa. 40:11; Jer. 31:10; Ezek. 34:12). The chief passage that comes to mind in this connection is undoubtedly the Twenty-Third Psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. ... He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness. Thou anointest my head with oil" (vv. 1-3, 5). This is one of the richest, sweetest and most loved portions of the entire Bible.

But just what does "shepherd" say to us in our modern, mechanized age? To one raised on a farm it obviously conveys meaning that is not as readily grasped by the city dweller. To one who has been in

the Bible lands and has lived in the culture of the Near East it says even more.

Let me describe briefly the usual equipment of a shepherd in Bible times and then point out some of the rich lessons we can learn, based on this knowledge.

Rod and Staff

"Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me," testified David in Psalm 23:4. Why did the thought of a shepherd's rod and staff comfort the king?

Are the rod and staff identical, the same object being described by two different terms? Or is each separate and distinct? Some seem to think the terms apply to the same instruments, and, consequently, they have been intertranslated. But this is not really correct. The Hebrew words used, though similar, are definitely not identical. They obviously describe two separate items. Such passages as Jeremiah 48:17 differentiate between the two quite clearly.

The "rod" is basically a club about 30 inches in length, usually with a knob on the larger end formed from the "bulb" at the root of the little tree from which it is made. This knob might be studded with heavy-headed iron nails or even with flint, thus making it a formidable weapon. When dexterously swung by a skillful

hand, it can be used to effectively maul an adversary. Or it might be flung at an enemy in somewhat the same manner as a boomerang is thrown by an Australian bushman. A hole is made in the smaller, handle end, through which a cord is drawn so the rod can be hung from the shepherd's wrist or fastened to his belt.

Shepherds carry these rods for the express purpose of protecting their sheep (and themselves) from marauding animals or assaulting humans— "thieves and robbers" (John 10:8). David must have used such a rod when he killed the lion and the bear that came to attack his father's sheep (I Sam. 17:34-36). No wonder he wrote in Psalm 23 that the rod of the Lord comforted him. It gave him a sense of protection and security and, therefore, comfort.

What is the "staff?" This is a kind of walking stick, about 6 feet in length, usually plain and straight but sometimes with a fork or crook at one end. It is used to aid the shepherd in walking over the rough terrain, climbing hills or clambering over rocks. The word itself signifies a "stay" or "support." It is also used to guide the sheep or even to punish them.

A staff with a crook on the end is used by the shepherd to lift a sheep

or lamb from a crevice between the dangerous rocks. It is also used to count the sheep as they pass under it while entering the fold at the close of the day. Jesus, in keeping with this, assures us that He knows His own sheep by name.

The Sling

The shepherd's sling was the device which David used in killing the giant Goliath. It was a common part of the shepherd's equipment. Of the men of Benjamin it is stated in the Scriptures that "every one could sling stones at an hair 36 breadth, and not miss" (Judg. 20:16), indicating their skill and dexterity in the use of the sling.

The sling is a very simple device, but it is an extremely accurate and dangerous weapon. It consists of 2 woven strings about 15 or 16 inches in length, fastened to a small, diamond-shaped, leather pad or pouch. This pouch has a small slit in the middle so that when a stone is pressed into it, it closes around it like a bag. The strings are correctly fastened around the fingers and the sling is twirled round and round with great speed until, at a precise time, one of the strings is released and the stone is hurled through the air at great speed and with deadly power.

The security of the believer is guaranteed by the Great Shepherd, who will not flee when the wolves or hyenas come to attack His sheep but will protect them night and day. His "sling" will simultaneously rout the Enemy and protect His flock (see I Sam. 25:29).

The Scrip

What was Jesus referring to when He told His disciples not to take a "scrip" with them on their special mission to the cities of Israel (Matt. 10:10)? An Old Testament passage will clarify this for us. In I Samuel

17:40 we read of David, "He took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand."

The shepherd's scrip is a bag made of skin, carried over the shepherd's shoulder by means of a heavy cord, in which he carries his supply of bread, olives, cheese, dried figs and parched grain. Sometimes these bags are crudely made of raw skins, but quite often they are made of well-tanned and attractively dyed leather with exquisitely embroidered designs. Merchants carry their money and other valuables in scrips. Shepherds use it not only to carry supplies for their own needs but also emergency items for the care of injured or sick sheep, since they must be both physician and surgeon to their flocks.

Our Shepherd, Jesus Christ, has His "scrip" full of emergency supplies for all His lambs and sheep so that we need not worry, fear or panic, regardless of what may threaten to befall us.

Shepherd's Pipe

Shepherds frequently carry a reed pipe, or flute, on which they may play either weird or very beautiful music—and they do both. Often while the flock lies resting around the watering place, the shepherd, after eating his meal, takes out his pipe and plays both for his own amusement and for the soothing effect it has on his sheep. He may also sing to himself and to them as he rests in the heat of the day or in the twilight of evening. The sheep "know his voice" (John 10:4), and they enjoy hearing it.

It is easy to imagine David as a lad, singing, reciting poetry and making sweet music as he kept his father's

sheep. He became skilled not only with the pipe but also with the harp and probably with other instruments as well. His psalms reflect his musical ability.

Shepherd's Cloak

The large, outer cloak worn by shepherds (and others) is a large, flowing, robe-like garment made of heavy, hand-woven wool, either dyed or natural. In North Africa it includes a hood like that of a cape, which is pulled up over the head in wet or cold weather but is permitted to hang down the wearer's back at other times. Often the hood is used as a sort of knapsack in that position. The cloak has short, wide sleeves and, because of its loose-fitting nature, the hands can be withdrawn to the inside for warmth when desired. When night comes, the shepherd pulls the hood over his head, draws in his arms and hands, and curls up his feet inside the warm robe, the garment thus becoming his blanket and bed. This is the reason the Law of Moses prescribed, "If thou at all take thy neighbor's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: for that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep?" (Ex. 22:26,27).

Since this garment is always large and loose-fitting, there is ample space in the bosom area to carry or to hold a newborn lamb, and often a sick or injured one is carried here while the shepherd is nursing it back to health. The warmth of the shepherd's own body helps to promote healing and health. It was with this in mind that the Prophet Isaiah beautifully portrayed the grace of Jehovah-Messiah in the words, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom" (Isa. 40:11). CL

“Reformation Movement” Conference @ Pune

We praise God for the seminar on “Reformation Movement” in Marathi held at Pune on 9th & 10th June 2017, which was arranged by our Coordinator Rev. Vijay Kumar Sasane.

Our sincere appreciation to all the faculty who taught the subjects mentioned below: 1. *Introduction and History of Reformation* – Pas. Vineet Sasane, 2. *Sola Scriptura* – Rev. Mangesh Rayaram, 3. *Sola Fide* - Pas. Kaushal Kale, 4. *Solo Christo* - Rev. Vijaykumar Sasane, 5. *Soli Deo Gloria* - Pas. Klepa Awale and 6. *Conclusion* - Pas. Mangesh Rayaram.

About 85 participants from Kolhapur, Satara, Ahmednagar, Newasa, Washim, Hingoli, Mumbai and Pune attended the meeting.

Here are some encouraging responses from the delegates who attended the conference:

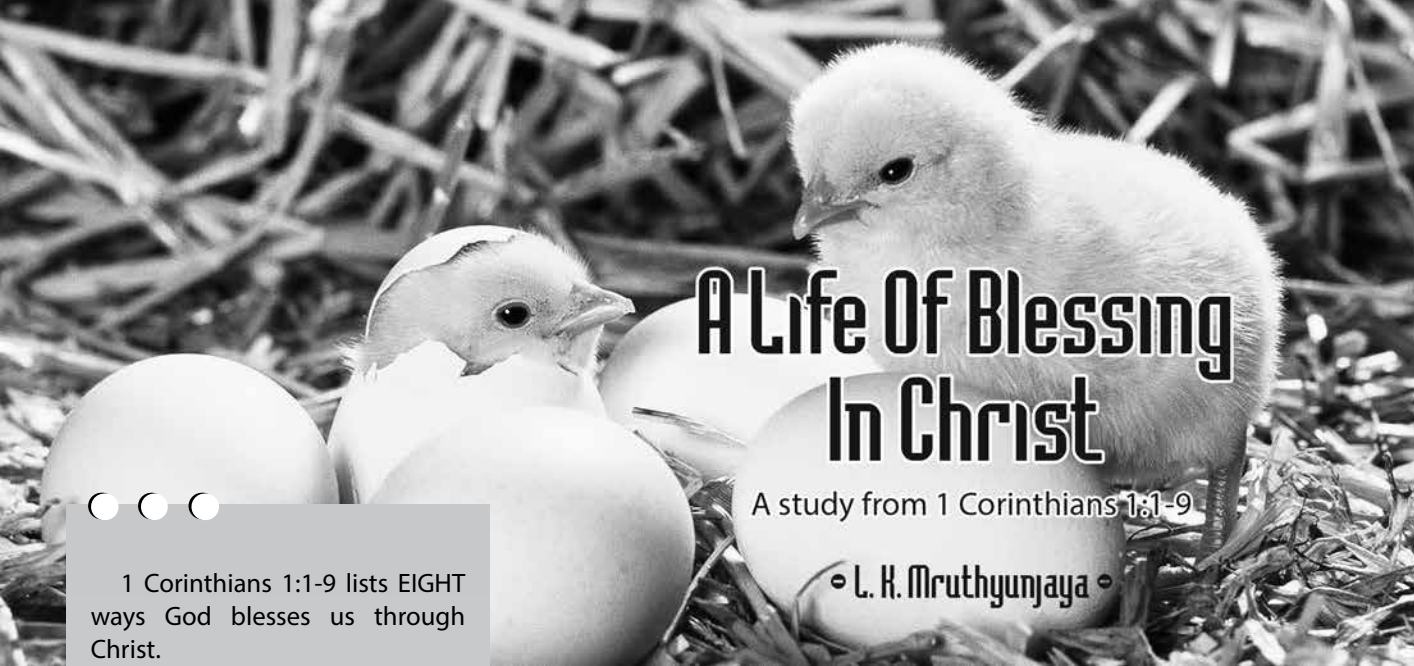
- *All subjects were well explained, especially Sola Scriptura and Sola Christos. Wherever God has placed us it is our duty to defend our faith. No matter what, I should never compromise, this can only happen by God's grace. I will look and examine myself to all the areas which are not according to God's Word. I feel obligated to share these teaching with my family & friends. — Mr. Shubham Saxena*
- *I liked the in-depth teaching on five Solas. The whole seminar was well arrange, I am blessed by the teaching. This will help me to talk to others properly. We need to reach more Marathi Christian Community, so that all will come to know this expository teaching. I would like to be a part of this team and will arrange seminar in my home town and other places. — Mr. Suyog Salvi*
- *All sessions were good. We can start a Fellowship, Bible Study across different locations in Pune. There is a great need of this teaching of Reformation Theology in Maharashtra. I can make myself available for this cause. — Suhas Waidande*
- *This five Solas were very well explained by all the teachers. I personally can become a part of the Reformed Church and will stand for God's Truth, such seminars should be regularly conducted so that more and more people will be benefitted. — PARTICIPANT*

These Seminar teachings on all the five Solas are available in DVD's which can be requested from our Coordinator Rev. Vijay Sasane (9325633664).

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A Life Of Blessing In Christ

A study from 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

◦ L. K. Mruthyunjaya ◦

1 Corinthians 1:1-9 lists EIGHT ways God blesses us through Christ.

About 1 Corinthians

Corinth was the major commercial center in the Roman Empire. The city was famous for its wealth and also for being filled with every kind of evil. It was home to twelve pagan temples, including the Temple of Aphrodite, which housed over one thousand prostitutes. The city was so wicked that the term “Corinthianize” was coined to describe someone who practiced sexual immorality.

It was a city many would describe as God-forsaken, but God loves the unlovable and saves the unsaveable. So He sent Paul to preach the gospel and establish a church there.

Now living in this environment you can imagine that these new Christians would have trouble and they did. There were divisions, legal problems, impurity and scandals throughout the Corinthian church. Instead of the Christians influencing the culture, the culture was influencing the Christians. So God lead Paul to write the book of 1 Corinthians to address these problems.

The book begins with nine verses laying out the believers standing before God and Paul uses this standing as the reason why they should change their ways. He basically says, “This is who you were, but this is who you are now in Christ, so live accordingly.”

1) God blesses us by adding us to His Church

Paul addresses the Corinthians in verse 2 as “the church of God which is at Corinth”. The word church means, “The called out ones”. It refers to people of every generation, every race, every nation, every walk of life, who were called out of the world and into the family of God.

1 Peter 2:9 describes the church as “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people,” who are to “proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

It’s a group made up of people so flawed and so deep in sin, yet they’re called “the Church of God.” The reason why this is possible is because of the second way of blessing mentioned below.

2) God blesses us by sanctifying us

In verse 2 Paul first calls the Corinthians “the church of God”, now he calls them “those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus.” To be sanctified means to be set apart for God’s purpose. We’re sanctified in three ways: positionally, progressively and ultimately.

- We’re sanctified “positionally” when we come to Christ. Hebrews 10:10-12 explains: “We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.” In the Old Testament the priests would continually make sacrifices because they never permanently paid for sin. But Christ offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice and has paid for our sins once and for all. So we’ve sanctified, or set apart, to obtain salvation through Christ.

- Then we're sanctified "progressively" throughout our Christian lives. Progressive sanctification is the process of dying to sin and living for Christ by becoming more like Him. Galatians 5:22 explains that whereas before we did the works of the flesh we're now to produce the fruit of the Spirit which "is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Progressive sanctification isn't about our salvation it's about how we live after we've been saved.

- Then finally we're sanctified "ultimately" when we go to heaven. Throughout our lives we wrestle with sin but when we go to be with the Lord our sinful nature is left behind. 1 John 3:2-3 explains that "now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

That brings us to the third way God blesses us.

3) God blesses us by making us saints

Paul continues his address in verse 2 by referring to the Corinthians as "called to be saints or literally "called saints". The word "saint" means the same as sanctify – to be made separate or to be made

holy. Those who are the recipients of sanctification are called saints. So we could refer to saints as "the sanctified ones". Notice that they're called saints now. Saints aren't canonized by the church. Verse 2 goes on to explain that saints are those "who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." If that describes you then you are a saint right now. Now we move on to verse 4 and find the fourth way God blesses us.

4) God blesses us by making us recipients of His grace

In Verse 4 Paul says, "I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus. The reason we're the church of God, the reason we're sanctified, the reason we're called saints is because of God's grace. To receive grace means to receive undeserved favor. Just as there are different aspects of sanctification there are also different aspects of grace that the Christian enjoys.

- There's saving grace which is described for us in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."
- Then there's sustaining grace which we find in 2 Corinthians 12:9 where Paul is asking God to remove some hindrance. God responds by saying, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." And that caused Paul to say, "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

So God's grace doesn't just save us, it also strengthens us, encourages

us, and enables us to have joy in all circumstances.

5) God blesses us by enriching everything by Christ

Verse 5 says "You were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge." Or, as the NIV puts it, "you have been enriched in every way-in all your speaking and in all your knowledge." James 2:5 tells us that "God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him." In 1 Corinthians 2:16 we're told we have "the mind of Christ" which enables us to think on spiritual things. God showers us with gifts of salvation, fellowship, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness and faithfulness. We're given everything we need to serve God and be fulfilled spiritually.

6) God blesses us by confirming us

Verse 6 says that "the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you". When someone comes to Christ the Holy Spirit applies salvation to the believer. Ephesians 1:13-14 tells us that "In Christ you trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. We can rest secure in the knowledge that the promises of God are guaranteed to those who are in Christ.

WE AREN'T CALLED TO BE LIKE OTHER CHRISTIANS; WE ARE CALLED TO BE LIKE CHRIST.

7) God blesses us by causing us to be blameless in the day of our Lord

Verse 8 says that “you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The day will come when God will judge men according to their works. But Psalm 32:1-2 reminds us that “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity.” Through Christ we stand blameless before God because all our sins were covered on the Cross.

8) God blesses us by calling us into fellowship

Finally in verse 9 we’re told we’re “called into the fellowship.” We’re called into a relationship with God and with fellow believers. 1 John 1:3 says “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. God grants us the gift of a relationship with Him and the opportunity to join others in praising Him.

In conclusion,

Friends, every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is already blessed here now and for the eternity (Eph. 1:3-6) and our status is sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13). If we don’t realize it we are spiritually blindfolded. We may at the most good enough to see ‘physical’ goodies but never ‘spiritual’ blessings. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness... and the rest will be added unto you (Mat 6:33). So, let’s not go meeting after meeting and preacher after preacher just for ‘blessings’. And preachers too must not deceive followers promising blessing after blessing. It doesn’t work out that way. *CL*



For **YOUTH**

Graceful Movements

◦Marcia W. Claesson◦

Psalm 18:30-36 "He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to stand on the heights" (Ps. 18:33, NIV).

It was nearly dusk, and I was taking a walk along a dirt road. Suddenly I spotted a deer just a few yards away. I stopped and stared as he ran lightly across the grass. His movements were beautiful—almost musical.

Now, what do you think today’s passage means when it says we can have feet like those of a deer? I think it means we can be known as people whose lives are orderly and peaceful. We can respond with grace when our feelings are hurt. We can stand with sure-footed confidence when we face hard times. Our actions can bring glory to God, much like the graceful movements of a deer bring glory to the One who created him.

Think About This: *It’s hard to stand in the heights when you’re always down in the dumps.*



Jonathan Edwards

1703-1758

It is unfortunate that many people imagine Jonathan Edwards as a ranting Puritan preacher, pounding the pulpit and trying to frighten sinners into heaven. Of course, most of these people have probably never read his famous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" or even examined the life of this godly man. For Jonathan Edwards was a quiet scholar, a loving father, a concerned pastor, a burdened missionary, and a man who loved God and longed more than anything else to glorify him.

Edwards was born into the home of Reverend Timothy Edwards in East Windsor, Connecticut, on October 5, 1703. He was the only son in the family; he had ten sisters. He came from good Puritan stock, especially on his mother's side of the family. Her father was Reverend Solomon Stoddard, revered pastor of the Congregational Church at Northampton, Massachusetts.

Stoddard was the accepted spiritual leader of the churches in the Connecticut Valley; in fact, some people called him "Pope" Stoddard. He pastored there for fifty years, and under his ministry at least five special spiritual awakenings had been experienced.

Jonathan Edwards received his schooling at home; at an early age he learned Latin, and later he took on Greek and Hebrew. He had two passionate interests in those early years—science and religion. He watched spiders and wrote an amazing essay about them. He saw the mind and heart of God in creation; everything in nature revealed to him something about God.

But his interest in spiritual things was remarkable for a boy so young. He prayed five times each day. With some of his friends he built a "booth" in the swamp, and there they would gather together to discuss spiritual matters and pray. I must confess that the boys' clubs my friends and I formed in our youthful years centered more around fun and games.

In 1716, when he was thirteen, Edwards entered Yale college, where he invested four years in undergraduate study and then two more years studying theology. It was while he was at Yale that he had two life-changing experiences. The first was his conversion when he was about seventeen years old. Since childhood he had revolted against the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. But as he read 1 Timothy 1:17, he had a remarkable experience

of the sense of God's greatness and glory, and all his theological objections disappeared.

"As I read the words," he wrote in his personal account, "there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the divine Being; a new sense, quite different from anything I ever experienced before... From about that time, I began to have a new kind of apprehensions and ideas of Christ, and the work of redemption, and the glorious way of salvation by Him."

Edwards was never content to have only book knowledge of God. He sought to experience God in his own life in a personal way. He was not an ivory-tower theologian, spinning webs of words. He always centered on the experience of the heart; it was this conviction that brought him many spiritual blessings as well as many spiritual battles.

His second crisis experience was more intellectual than spiritual, although Edwards would never divorce the mind and the heart. He read John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and made an about-face in his approach to the problem of how people think and learn. He came to the conclusion that "knowledge" was not something

divorced from the rest of life, but that a man's senses helped to teach him truth. In other words, sensory experience and thinking must go together. Again, Edwards saw the importance of uniting the mind and the heart.

This approach would govern his philosophy of preaching for the rest of his life. He would first aim for the heart and move the affections before trying to instruct the mind. In one of his most important books, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, Edwards wrote, "True religion, in great part, consists in holy affections."¹ However, he opposed emotion for emotion's sake. He carefully explained the difference between shallow emotionalism and true affections that prepare the way for men and women to receive God's truth.

On January 12, 1723, Jonathan Edwards solemnly dedicated himself to God. Earlier he had made a list of resolutions that he read once each week and sought to obey daily. From time to time, he added to this list as he saw special needs in his life. He used it not as a law to bind him, but as a compass to guide him and as a mirror to help him examine his progress in his spiritual walk.

On February 15, 1727, Jonathan Edwards was ordained and became assistant to his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard. On July 20 of that same year, he married Sarah Pierrepont, an exemplary Christian lady who bore him eleven children. It is worth noting that Jonathan Edwards used to spend at least one hour each evening with his children before they went to bed. He often studied thirteen hours a day, yet he took time for his family. He and his wife were very happy together; their marriage and their home were a testimony to the goodness and grace of God.

In February 1729, Solomon Stoddard died, and Jonathan Edwards became the pastor of his church, perhaps the most important congregation outside Boston. Spiritual life in the American colonies was very low, and there was a desperate need for revival. Preachers were generally well-educated, but they lacked a burden for souls and power in preaching. Some of them were not even converted themselves!

"I am greatly persuaded," wrote George Whitefield when he visited New England, "that the generality of preachers talk of an unknown, unfelt Christ. And the reason why congregations have been so dead is because dead men preach to them."

But the preachers were not the only ones to blame. While the founders of the churches had, for the most part, been converted people who feared God, their children and grandchildren were too often unconverted but baptized church members.

The churches operated under what was known as the Half-Way Covenant. This permitted people to unite with the church if they had been baptized but had not made a profession of faith in Christ (they were baptized as infants, of course). Their children were then baptized as "half-way members," but they were not permitted to share the Lord's Supper or vote in church elections.

But Solomon Stoddard had gone even further in opening the doors of the church to unsaved people. He decided that the Lord's Supper was a saving ordinance and that unconverted people should not be barred from the table. The result, of course, was a church composed largely of unconverted people who gave lip service to the doctrine but

who had never experienced the life of God in their own hearts.

Obviously, the new pastor and his flock were on a collision course. Edwards had experienced eternal life in an overwhelmingly personal way. It was his conviction that truth must be experienced in the heart as well as understood in the mind. In his study of the Word, he concluded that church membership and the Lord's Supper were for saved people alone. He realized that many of the "children of the covenant" in the colonies were living in sin, apart from God, and destined for eternal destruction.

In 1734 he preached a series of sermons on justification by faith. The time was ripe, and the Spirit began to move. In the next year, Edwards saw more than three hundred people unite with the church. Some notable sinners in the town were converted, and some remarkable events took place. This was one of the early phases of the spiritual movement in America historians call the Great Awakening, which covered a period from about 1725 to 1760.

Whenever the Spirit works, the flesh and the devil start to work to counterfeit God's blessing; and it was not long before excesses appeared in the revival movement. George Whitefield had joined the movement in 1740, and in some of his meetings people fainted, cried out with fear, and even experienced fits of shaking. Whitefield, like Edwards, did not encourage these activities, but had no control over them. Ministers who opposed religious enthusiasm openly criticized Edwards and accused him of leading the people astray, so Edwards wrote and published a book on how to discern a true working of God's Spirit: *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God*. It is still today

one of the best studies of religious psychology available.

That same year (1741), Edwards was invited to preach at Enfield, Connecticut, and on July 8, he preached "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," perhaps the most famous sermon ever preached in America.

The text was Deuteronomy 32:35: "Their foot shall slide in due time." There is no question that Edwards had one purpose in mind: to shake the people out of their religious complacency and into the saving arms of the Lord. Edwards was always quiet in his delivery; he read from a manuscript and rarely looked at the people. He did not pound the pulpit or shout. He simply opened up the Scriptures and warned lost sinners to flee from the wrath to come.

The Spirit of God broke into the meeting, and many people came under conviction. Some cried out in fear. A minister sitting on the platform pulled at the preacher's coattails and said, "Mr. Edwards! Mr. Edwards! Is not God also a God of mercy!" Edwards had to stop preaching and wait for the congregation to become quiet. He concluded the sermon, led in prayer, and closed the meeting. Those who remained afterward to talk to the preacher were not necessarily upset or afraid. In fact, people were impressed with the cheerfulness and pleasantness of the expressions on others' faces.

Concerned with the salvation of the lost, Jonathan Edwards could not continue to live with the compromising situation that he had inherited at Northampton. In 1748, he informed the church that he would not receive as new members persons who had not given evidence of salvation, nor would he permit

unconverted people to come to the Lord's table. Even though ministers in that day had far more authority and respect than they do today, this step was daring and was violently opposed by most of the other church leaders.

There followed nearly two years of debate and discussion, and the result was the dismissal of the pastor. Edwards preached his farewell sermon on July 1, 1750, a pastoral message that showed no animosity or bitterness, although certainly the preacher was a man with a broken heart. His text was 2 Corinthians 1:14, and his emphasis was on what would happen when ministers meet their congregations at the future judgment.

History has proven that Edwards was right and his congregation wrong. The colonial churches that rejected the working of God and refused to examine people as to their spiritual experience eventually turned from the faith and became liberal. The churches that followed Whitefield and Edwards continued to win the lost, send out missionaries, and train ministers who were true to the faith. An unconverted ministry and an unconverted membership are the devil's chief weapons in opposing the work of God.

Jonathan Edwards moved his wife and large family to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where he ministered as a missionary to the Indians. His income was reduced, of course, and yet God provided all their needs. Freed from pastoral duties and church problems, Edwards now had more time to study and write; during those Stockbridge years (1751-58) he wrote several of his most important works, some of which were published after his death. In 1757 he was named president of Princeton College, an office that his

son-in-law Aaron Burr later held. He took office in 1758 when a smallpox epidemic was invading the area; he caught the infection through an inoculation that backfired, and on March 22 he died.

We have had more than two hundred years to evaluate the life and ministry of Jonathan Edwards. He was perhaps the greatest thinker that America ever produced, and yet he had the heart of a child. He was a great theologian, and yet his books and sermons touch life and reach into the heart. He was a rare blend of biblical scholar and revivalist. He had a longing to see people know God personally, but he refused to accommodate his theology just to get results. He was also a man concerned about missions. Even the Encyclopedia Britannica admits, "By his writings and example, he gave impetus to the infant evangelical missionary movement."

Edwards was not afraid to give his people solid doctrine. His Resolution 28 reads: "Resolved to study the Scriptures so steadily, constantly, and frequently, so that I may find, and plainly perceive myself to grow in the knowledge of the same." Some preachers today seem to have time for everything else but Bible study and the preparation of spiritual nourishment for their people. It is easy to borrow a sermon from a book or listen to a recording of another preacher's message.

Edwards used imagination in his preaching. Like every good teacher and preacher, he turned the ear into an eye and helped people to see spiritual truth. He knew that the mind is not a debating chamber—it is a picture gallery.

He was a courageous man who held to his biblical convictions even though they cost him his church

and the loss of many friends. He stood with George Whitefield when many were opposing him. Edwards encouraged spiritual awakening even though he knew there would be excesses and abuses. He would have enjoyed Billy Sunday's reply to the critic who said that revivals did not last: "Neither does a bath," said Sunday, "but it's good to have one once in a while!" Edwards preached for decisions in an era when ministers were not supposed to disturb the congregation.

The Works of President Edwards, a single volume, may be available in your local library. Ola Elizabeth Winslow has written one of the best

biographies, Jonathan Edwards, published by Macmillan in 1940. She also edited a helpful anthology of his most important sermons and writings, *Jonathan Edwards: Basic Writings* (New American Library).

Jonathan Edwards on Heaven and Hell by Dr. John Gerstner (Baker Books) is a fascinating and very readable study of this important subject. Dr. Gerstner is perhaps our leading evangelical scholar when it comes to the life and theology of Jonathan Edwards. For a satisfying but readable study of Edwards's theology, read *Jonathan Edwards, Theologian of the Heart*, by Harold Simonson (Eerdmans).

Our nation is desperately in need of spiritual awakening. But our emphasis on evangelism apart from doctrine will certainly not do it. The Great Awakening was the result of solid doctrinal preaching that addressed itself to both the heart and the mind. It was preaching that dared to expose sin in the church. And God used it to sweep thousands into his family.

Perhaps it is time that we dug again these old wells and learned why their waters flowed with life so fruitfully and so bountifully. CL

Corrected Answers for 1 & 2 Timothy

(1) Pure heart ,good conscience and sincere faith (1 Tim 1:5) (2) False (1 Tim 1 :9) (3) Ignorance and unbelief (1 Tim 1 :13) (4) Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Tim 1 :20) (5) True (1 Tim 3 :6) (6) Deceiving spirits and things thoughts by demons(1Tim 4:1) (7) Dead (1 Ti 5 :6) (8) Double Honour (1Tim 5:17) (9) False(1 Tim 5 :19) (10) Get rich (1 Tim 6 :9) (11) Godliness with Contentment (1 Tim 6:6) (12) Love of money (1 Tim 6 :10) (13) False (2 Tim 1:5) (14) Onesiphorus (2 Tim 1 :16) (15) Hymenaeus and philetus (2 Tim 2 :17,18) (16) Wickedness (2 Tim 2 :19) (17) Jannes and

Jambres (2 Tim 3 :8) (18) Persecuted (2 Tim 3 :12) (19) Holy scriptures (2 Tim 3 :14,15) (20) Teaching, rebuking,correcting,and training in reighteousness 2 Tim3:16 (21) Demas, this world (2 Tim 4 :10) (22) Alexander (2 Tim 4 :14) (23) Money (1 Tim 3:2) (24) Tested (1 Tim 3 :10) (25) In Speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity(1Tim4:12) (26) Unbeliever (1 Tim 5 :8) (27) Life and immorality (2 Tim 1 :10) (28) Disown (2 Tim 2 :13) (29) In season & out of season (2 Tim 4: 2) (30) Living and Dead (2 Tim 4 :1)

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THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY

◦Theodore H. Epp◦



The last verse in I Corinthians 12 reads: "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I to you a more excellent way" (v. 31). This more excellent way leads right up to Chapter 13. In fact, this verse is really the introduction to it and should not be separated from it by a chapter division.

The apostle is pointing out that the fruit of the Spirit supersedes the gifts of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is described in Galatians 5:22,23 and may be summarized in one word—love. Love leads the list, with joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance following.

The love spoken of here, however, is not mere human love. Love is a common word among us today and is often used carelessly by the man on the street as well as by the man in the pulpit. But the love of the Spirit is beyond human attainment. It is a divine love according to Romans 5:5. This love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is one of the results of salvation provided for all who have been justified in Christ. And this is the love that I Corinthians 13 describes. Paul shows here that unless these spiritual gifts are administered in the love of the Spirit, they are valueless.

The problem in Corinth was that men were seeking to use gifts without making sure their own inner hearts were spiritually in tune with God. The fruit of the Spirit was not in evidence. So the use of the spiritual gifts became a source of controversy and competition.

Love Essential

It is this point that Paul emphasized in I Corinthians 13:1 when he said, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." The word "charity" here in the word "love," and as we have indicated, it is the strong word for love. This is not human love but divine love. It is the love that the Holy Spirit has shed abroad in our hearts. Consequently, though we speak in the languages of men or in the language of angels and have not love, we are nothing but noisy brass utensils. Spiritual gifts are good if they are ministered in love. Without love, they lead to pride and conceit, to self-praise, to jealousy and slandering of others and even to lying.

Some people are contentious about these gifts even today. But the Bible says that unless we have

love along with such gifts, we are nothing. The fruit of the Spirit in the life is the proof of the controlling of the life by the Holy Spirit. Some try to change this by saying that the presence of the spiritual gifts is the evidence of the Spirit's filling. But the actual proof lies in the fruit of the Spirit. This is not something that can be produced naturally by any of us. It takes an apple tree to produce an apple, and it takes the Spirit of God to produce the spiritual fruit that is the evidence of His presence in the heart.

If the gifts of the Spirit are not administered in love, the gifts themselves are probably imitations. Satan can enter in and very cleverly deceive us. He can imitate many of the gifts mentioned in I Corinthians 12,13 and 14, but he can neither imitate nor produce the fruit of the Spirit.

The Book of Exodus contains proof of this. When Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh, they performed some miracles. They did this on the basis of wonderful, spiritual powers God had given them. But the sorcerers of Egypt imitated some of the things that Moses and Aaron were using to

prove the presence and power of God. Of course, the Egyptians could do this only up to a certain point. But it is possible for Satan to imitate some of these outstanding and spectacular gifts. Consequently, the test concerning the presence of the Spirit in the life lies in another realm. Love, part of the fruit of the Spirit, is the true test.

Do not misunderstand what we are saying here. This is no statement of opposition to the gifts of the Spirit. But we need to remember that Satan can imitate some of these things. He has done it in the past, and there is no doubt that he is doing it again today.

Paul was not content to use the gift of tongues as an illustration, but he also spoke of prophecy, the understanding of mysteries and all knowledge and faith. He showed that without love, all these are useless.

We have noted before that this love of the Spirit is a result of a person's being born again through the Spirit into God's family. The secret of the exhibition of this love lies in the fact that we are indwelt by Christ and He lives this life in us.

Galatians 2:20 says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Love Implanted

This is not a love that we wait for after we are saved. It is something that is put into our hearts the moment we believe. When the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within, He implants in us the love of God (Rom. 5:5). Love is already in our lives doing this divine work.

In Romans 8:9, we learn that if we are not the recipients of His Spirit, we do not belong to God at all. But when we are His, the Spirit has come and placed the love of God in our hearts. This, then, makes it possible for the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace and these other things listed in Galatians 5:22,23—to be seen in us.

Even though the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, it cannot be seen or witnessed by others until we surrender our hearts to the Lord. God has given us a divine nature, a new nature, and through the Holy Spirit, the old nature is overcome. The new life in Christ is seen in us. When we surrender to the Holy Spirit, He takes control. And when He has control, He is able to let the love of God flow through us.

Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, wrote: "That he [God] would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (3:16-19).

We should not be swept off our feet by the talk of love that people indulge in today. The average person knows nothing of the love of God. Such a person thinks merely of human love. Though that can help in many situations, what we need is supernatural love that goes beyond anything human love can accomplish. For this reason Paul prayed for the inworking of the Holy Spirit and for the filling of the believers' hearts with God's love. By

faith, we must recognize that Christ dwells within and that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Rooted and Grounded in Love

In the third place, we are to be rooted and grounded in love, which comes only through daily reading of, and meditating on, the Word and praying in the Spirit. Only as this is done can the Word of God permeate our souls and change us into the likeness of Christ. The final plea here is that we might comprehend, or appropriate, these things by faith. The love of God is magnificent. It is far-reaching. Paul speaks of its length, breadth, height and depth—a four-dimensional love, so great that no individual can appropriate it all or know it all in this life. Together with all saints, however, we can attain to certain portions of it.

It is also a love which passes knowledge. It cannot be fully known, but it can be known and enjoyed far beyond anything any of us have yet experienced. God, in His nature, is love. To be filled with the fullness of God is to be filled with that love.

We are also told in the Scriptures that we are to love God with all our hearts, all our souls and all our minds (Matt. 22:37). Humanly speaking, this is impossible. But, with the work of the Holy Spirit within us, it is an attainable goal. Furthermore, this love is not only to be manifested toward God but also toward those around us. And this will be the proof of the love in our hearts. Our love toward Him will be seen in our love for other people. The vertical relationship of our love to God is proved by the horizontal relationship of love to man. We cannot say we love God unless we love our fellow-man.

John makes this very clear in his Epistle. He says, "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). He also says, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (w. 20,21). In other words, if we say we love God and yet do not love our brother in the Lord, we are lying. This is the acid test of true spirituality.

This is where Christian leaders and Christian people often clash. There may be disagreements over issues or over principles, but when there is true love, we will not allow them to affect our relationship with others. CL

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GOSSIP

◦ Marion Duckworth ◦

Most believers do not have a problem in knowing that gossip

is wrong. The problem often is not knowing exactly what gossip is or what to do about it when it crops up.

What Gossip is

The word originally meant “one who was a sponsor in a baptism,” and the word was a combination of “God” and “sibb” (kin), or “one who is related in God.” Later, the meaning was broadened to include intimate friends, and since friends share secrets and then pass them on to others, “a gossip” came to mean “a person who repeats idle talk and rumors about another.” That definition suggests that people who share intimacies about others instead of keeping trusts, who participate in conversations about others that don’t have constructive purposes, or who repeat unconfirmed reports, are gossiping.

“Sometimes we have a legitimate reason to share information about another person.” Heide insisted when I talked to her. “It is our motive that determines whether we are gossiping or not.” I reviewed my own experiences. Recently, I had called a Christian who had been my prayer partner for several years and told her that a mutual friend was

having emotional problems. “Pray for her, will you? And if you think of something we can do for her, call me.” I had not been gossiping because my intention was constructive, not destructive. But even sharing prayer requests can become gossip if our underlying intention is to find out what is new or to analyze someone’s behavior and approve or disapprove of it. Whenever my motive isn’t to empathize and to promote healing, my conversation is “idle talk” and likely constitutes gossip.

Conversation between family members can be gossip too. Blood relationships are not immune. In a relaxed home and hearth-atmosphere, family members tend to lower their standards and speak carelessly about others. People need to ask themselves, Am I sharing this information for a genuinely constructive purpose?

Heard About Gossip?

What the Bible says about Gossip

I knew vaguely that gossip was condemned in the Bible, but I had no idea how severely! Gossiping is described in the Scriptures as the antithesis of righteous behavior and the product of a corrupt mind: It is

listed with attitudes and actions such as murder, malice and hatred of God. Those who gossip are called wicked people.. They “stir up trouble” and “break up friendships.” They cause anger and quarreling, and they ruin lives. Slander, or talebearing, is said to be epidemic among those to whom God is not Lord (see Proverbs 11:9; 16:28; 25:33; Jeremiah 9:4; Romans). Proverbs 18:8, to me, was most condemning of all. I could remember times when that Proverb described me - times when I had nibbled with relish at some destructive morsel and bent closer to hear more. I could no longer caricature gossips as those other people - starched and thin-lipped - who whispered behind their hands. I had gossiped too. I was ashamed and asked for forgiveness.

Why People Gossip

Gossip is a product of the old sin nature. People gossip because they are sinners and their natural, God-given curiosity has gone awry. People often gossip in order to elevate their own egos - to build themselves up by tearing someone else down. By calling someone lazy, one infers that he himself is energetic in contrast; by describing another as cheap, one implies that he is generous instead.

When one nurtures anger,

resentment and jealousy toward someone, it will eventually demand expression. What better way is there than using a few carefully chosen, behind-that-back remarks against that person?

Avoid Being a Gossip

To keep from falling into the gossip trap, one must maintain moment by moment fellowship with God. He must allow the Holy Spirit to show him when his conversations are harmful. Hostilities must be confessed to God. Those with whom a person has grievances must be confronted in a biblical manner. God must be allowed to bring justice in His own way. The believer needs to allow God's love for others to stimulate his thinking about them. He needs to be concerned with ways to bring healing to their lives. He needs to think deeply about spiritual matters rather than monitoring the lives of neighbors. He needs to follow Paul's advice to fill one's mind with those things that are good, and that deserve praise, those things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely and honorable (see Philippians 4:8).

Handling Others Who Gossip

Some people will always be talebearers and try to pump others for a whisper of scandal, or they will insist that others listen while they chatter. At first they may take a person off guard, but when conversation fall into a vulturous pattern, it is time to act.

One might try one of several tactics. When that person begins with, "Have you heard? Last night the man down the street came home drunk again. It was just terrible; I saw him weaving all over the sidewalk," one might try to answer with, "I am sorry that he is having problems. I'll be sure to pray for him." And then change the subject. One should learn

to take charge of the conversation when he is with people who gossip. Subjects should be introduced that are idea-centered rather than people-centered. If He is asked to do so, God will help a believer glorify Him when he talks with a person who tends to gossip. And if gossiping begins, he should refuse to answer with anything but brief, loving responses about the person being discussed. He should change the subject. If he is consistent, his acquaintances will soon realize that he does not gossip. He should also pray for those who are talebearers. When Caroline moved into a new neighborhood, she discovered that all her neighbors talked about one another. "At first, I did not know what to do. They each wanted me to take sides against the other," she told me later. "I simply wouldn't participate in those kinds of conversations.

"Finally, they accepted me on that basis. Now I get along with all of them. They know they can confide in me because I will not prattle about them, and I have been able to witness about Jesus Christ to some of them."

It may be necessary for one to tell some people that he does not gossip, but he can do so gently in love, not judgmentally. When one is present at any extended prattle and tattle session that he cannot change, it is time to leave quietly. Auditing such conversations can convince gossipers that a person approves.

Again, it is not always wrong to talk about someone who is absent. One may be struggling with a problem that involves another person, and he needs enlightenment. Or a person may be legitimately called on to state true but uncomplimentary facts about another. When one's motives are genuinely constructive and not simply superficially so, and when he

senses the Holy Spirit's peace about what he says, he can be reasonably sure that he is not gossiping. Let's let love guide all of our conversation. "Love works no ill to his neighbor," Paul wrote (Romans 13:10). So "Follow after love" (1 Cor. 14:1). CL


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Bubbly Outside *Yet* Empty Inside?

◦ Duke Jeyaraj ◦

Jerrad Peters wrote about the heroics of German Midfielder, Bastian

Schweinsteiger: "Having run further, tackled harder and touched the ball more times than anyone else in the 2014 World Cup final, the 29-year-old midfielder took a much-deserved breather. He was empty. And he remarked, "My legs are gone." So there he sat, alone, on the Maracana grass, a winner's medal around his neck, a gash under his right eye, dried blood on his cheek. And a smile on his face." (sportsnet.ca, 15 July 2014, 8:44 post). Schweinsteiger did not mind receiving a bloody gash under his right eye to make Germany win the World Cup 2014. And Jesus was willing to shed His sinless blood so that your sin and each one of our sin may be washed by His blood so that you will gain salvation (Luke 22:44; 1 John 1:7-9, The Bible).

Because Jesus is 100% God who in turn is beyond the dimension of time He could die for all humans of all times. Because He is 100% human (even while He was 100% God) He could become the substitute for every human being. As the Bible puts it, "Jesus loved us and gave Himself for us" (Galatians 2:20, The Bible). No one could have loved us the way

Jesus did! No one loves us the way Jesus does. And what is more - Jesus came back to life, a feat that points to the fact that He is God and He is above everyone in the long line of self-proclaimed gods, so records the Bible (Romans 1:4, The Bible).

Poor Tyson Gay! He finished fourth despite clocking a sensational time of 9.80 seconds in the 100 meters final of the London 2012 Olympics. In every Olympic 100 meters men final before Beijing 2008, this effort would have won him the Gold Medal. But this time - thanks to Gold Medal winner Usain Bolt's power sprinting that pulled the seven out of the eight finalists into the sub 10 seconds mark - this guy called Gay did not even win a bronze medal despite a fabulous effort this Olympics and was reduced to tears. This is an imperfect picture of how all of us, sinful us, have fallen short of the glory of a Holy, Holy, Holy God despite our best efforts and how we can be saved only through placing our total trust in Christ!

The only cure for ache in your heart is to leave your life of sin and believe in Jesus. It is to turn away from sin and turn to Jesus. This is what the Bible teaches. When we take a U-turn in our sin-filled life journey and get back to the ancient

path called Jesus, we will find rest for our souls, the Bible asserts (Jeremiah 6:16, The Bible). The Bible calls this as "repentance". Jesus preached repentance. He said, "Unless you repent you too will all perish!" (Luke 13:5, The Bible).

Michael Schumacher was racing against time to catch a flight after having bought a puppy. This seven-time Formula One World Champion car-racer was in a taxi on the way to the airport. At that time, he politely asked the driver to vacate from his seat and took over the driving from him. And he drove incredibly fast and overtook at some improbable places to reach the aerodrome near Coburg in time. He gave the excited and amazed driver named Tuncer Yilmaz a very generous tip of 100 Euros over the 60 Euro taxi charge (www.Telegraph.co.uk, 11 December 2007). Jesus asks you to trust Him and turn over the driving seat of your life to Him by faith. When He drives the car of your life, the journey would be incredible and the reward He will give you at the end of that journey would be immeasurable - Eternal Life in Heaven. What is more, every moment of your journey with Him will be meaningful and purposeful. Don't wait even for a second to turn over the driving seat of your life to Jesus by faith. *CL*

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We are happy to introduce this Creative Bible Learning method of studying your Bible book by book. Send the correct answers with your Name & address to receive a **Special Gift** from 'Back to the Bible'. **Study One book at a time.**

Genesis 26-50 – Kindly Answer the Quiz with Bible References (NIV)

1. How did God tell Jacob he should feel about the journey to Egypt?
2. Who was listening when Isaac told Esau to go hunt?
3. How much did Jacob promise to give to God?
4. Who blessed Pharaoh?
5. What was the reason for Reuben's name?
6. Why had the Lord blessed Laban?
7. How did Joseph lose his garment?
8. How old was Joseph when Pharaoh promoted him?
9. How many years of famine were still to come after Joseph revealed himself to his brothers?
10. Why did Joseph get upset with his father?
11. Who was there when Joseph made himself know to his brothers?
12. Which son did Jacob say was unstable as water and would not excel?
13. What does the word "Fear" of Isaac refer to in Genesis 31:53?
14. Who did Jacob speak to before leaving Laban?
15. After planting in the land, how did Isaac's crop do?
16. What made the butler and baker sad?
17. What two things did Jacob do when he heard Esau was coming with so many men?
18. What did Jacob name the altar he set up near Shechem and what does the name mean?
19. As Jacob prepared his family to go to Bethel after meeting Esau, what did he tell his family to do?
20. Who was called the father of the Edomites?
21. Why did warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there?
22. To what did the brothers attribute their difficulty in Egypt?
23. What did Joseph first ask the brothers about when he saw them at his house?
24. Just before he died, who did Joseph say would visit the children of Israel?
25. What did Reuben do when he discovered Joseph gone?
26. Who killed the firstborn son of Judah and why?
27. Who said the following, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh"? To whom was it said?
28. If Jacob's sheep and goats were not speckled or spotted, what would they be considered?
29. Who told Laban not to harm Jacob?
30. What were the two purposes of the heap of stones called Galeed and Mizpah?

You can Also Send Your ANSWERS

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The next quiz will be from the book of **Acts** (NIV)

Quiz Answers: Genesis 1-25

- (1) From Ur of the Chaldeans. Gen.11.31 (2) Rested from all his work. Gen 2.2 (3) Adam's line. Gen 5.1 (4) They separated. Gen. 13:8-13 (5) To make a name for themselves and not to be scattered over the face of the whole earth. Gen.11.4 (6) 600 years. Gen. 7.6 (7) 930 years. Gen. 5.5 (8) The tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil. Gen. 2.17 (9) 400 years. Gen. 15.13 (10) Shem, Ham and Japheth. Gen. 9.19 (11) Clear Conscience and with a clean hand. Gen.20.5 (12) It would bruise the serpent's head Gen. 3.15 (13) Hagar said, "you are a God who sees me, I have now seen the one who sees me" Gen.16:13,14 (14) For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household... Gen.18:19 (15) Nimrod. Gen.10.9 (16) Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you Gen.9. 3 & 4 (17) Babel Gen. 11.9 (18) 1st day of 1st month of 601 year of Noah Gen.8.13&14 (19) Methuselah 969 years Gen.5.27 (20) 86 years Gen.16.16 (21) False (This is from the LORD) Gen.24.50 (22) The fire and the knife. Gen.22.6 (23) True Gen.17.17 (24) True Gen.20.7 (25) Obeyed me. Gen.22.18 (26) False (400 shekels of silver) Gen.23.16 (27) Sarah his wife. Gen.25.10 (28) Enosh Gen.4.26 (29) Adam was with Eve. Gen.3.6 (30) Seven pairs Gen.7.2&3

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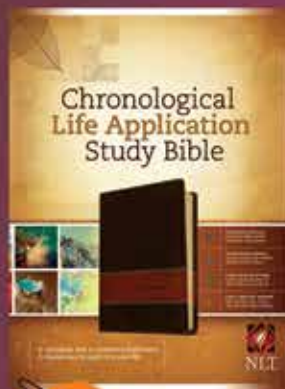
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