

Prepare *the* Way

Issue No. 125

PREPARING THE BRIDE OF CHRIST FOR THE RETURN OF CHRIST

Peter Pollock:
An unknown God

**3 Ways the
Gospel is
embarrassing!**

A.W. Tozer:
**Let's get off the
defensive**



7 Motives for repentance

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by Paul S. Rees

IN the second and third chapters of Revelation, in those most moving messages that Christ communicated to the seven churches, He is speaking not only as Saviour, but as Judge.

He says, "This is wrong and that is wrong and that is wrong, and if you don't put it right, if you don't repent, unless you repent, I will remove your candlestick." We as members of the church stand under the judgement as well as the mercy of Jesus Christ.

During these days the Lord Jesus is walking in the midst of the candlesticks. He is pointing out the things in our lives and in our churches that need to be dealt with. He is saying, "Repent!" At the same time He is full of mercy.


The effect of His mercy, penitently sought for and richly received, is vividly described in the 126th Psalm: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing (verses 1&2)."

Usually our dreams, if they are on the pleasant side, are better than the realities of life. Not so when God in mercy grants revival. The reality is better than the dream!

"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring (Isaiah 44:3)." To be sure, these are times of dryness, barrenness, lack of faith. Even in such times as these, when there is repentance, God comes.

"Comes?" you ask. "Isn't He here already?" Yes, of course.

Still, He comes! Yes, He is here, but He is straitened, limited, fettered, by our unbelief and pride and unconfessed sin. By His coming we mean His fresh and forceful release through lives like yours and mine, surrendered to His will, pliant in His hands.

If revival comes around the world, great hosts of people who have no ringing witness are going to be able to say, "I know that I have passed from death unto life!" 



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SEVEN MOTIVES FOR TRUE REPENTANCE

by Richard Owen Roberts

HERE are seven God-given motives for repentance:

1. The Sovereign Rights of God.

The sovereign God who made us, created us not for ourselves but for Himself. By failing to live in repentance, we are violating the sovereign rights of the God who made us. If you are having a personal problem of repentance, remind yourself right now: God has His rights. When I sin, I am sinning against the rights of my Creator, and I'd better stop right now.

2. God's Person.

Sin is always an affront against our God. God has His rights and God in His person is holy; His Name is holy; He has an absolute intolerance of sin.

3. God's Word.

All sin is a violation of God's law. If one claims to love the Bible and can say with the psalmist, "Oh how love I Thy law. It is my meditation all the day (Psalm 119:97)," he has a profound motivation for repentance in the law of God and indeed in the whole of the Word of God.

4. The Love of God.

What an incredible thing that our Father in heaven sent His Son to die in our place! The love of God is an

incredible motive for repentance. How can anyone say that they realise God loves them, and yet persist in their sin?

5. The Body and the Blood of Jesus Christ.


How can someone come to the Communion table and harbour sin in his heart? How can anyone persist in his wrong thinking and in his wrongdoing when he is at the table of the Lord and is reminded of His broken body and shed blood? Every remembrance of the crucifixion, every remembrance of the tender atoning work of Jesus Christ ought to be a powerful prompt to thorough repentance.

6. God's Wrath.

Every sinner needs to be motivated by the dire threat that the Word of God makes perfectly plain: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation (Hebrews 2:3)?"

7. God's Aspirations for Us.

As long as we remain in an unrepentant state, we are missing God's heart aspirations for us and will always fall desperately short of the kingdom of God.

By Your mercy, O God, do not let one of us fall short of Your aspirations. May we be motivated to full and complete and perpetual repentance to the everlasting glory of King Jesus! 



by Peter Pollock

THE Book of Acts is full of powerful messages. In Chapter 2 we have Peter at Pentecost! God had prepared him for this auspicious day, the day the church came into being.

Teachings abound on various aspects of that day and the Holy Spirit's presence, but for me the profound aspect was Peter's message – all about the revelation of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This is the true Gospel and just look at the effect of that profound message.

What a response! They came under conviction on sin, righteousness and judgement and cried out "What must we do?" Peter gave the only answer that the church has ever been given the right and authority to give – "repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus." The listeners responded *en masse*. The message was received "gladly," says the Bible.

Then we have Acts 7, and Stephen's wonderful message that got him stoned. Paul was a spectator that day and finally, there was Jesus standing, yes, standing at the right hand of the Father in acknowledgement of His martyr. It still gets me choking every time I read it!

In Acts 13 we have Paul at Antioch, where they first became known as "Christians." Paul delivers a message that deals with the history of God's people, but with the total emphasis on Jesus. Abraham and Moses didn't even get a mention, something that truly impacted and intrigued me.

However, the Acts message I want to concentrate on is what Paul had to say in Acts 17, when he was summonsed to explain himself on Mars Hill in Athens. The City was the hub of the world, famous for its learning and crammed

full of religion and philosophies. Humanism and hedonism were thriving. It was all about I, me and myself; life being a "ball" and your god being however you perceive him to be!

In that atmosphere Paul's spirit was provoked – and rightly so. "His spirit was stirred in him," and he was sorely vexed! True prophets do get a sense of concern and foreboding. His spiritual eyes and discernment couldn't be anything but disgusted and alarmed by what he saw all around.

Individually, too, Paul never had a problem recognizing his own wretchedness, but corporately the Holy Spirit's imbued discernment had him utterly shocked at the godlessness that dominated everything.

The Holy Spirit convicts on sin, righteousness and judgement and reveals the true state of things. There will thus be no deception and no denial when the Holy Spirit is truly having His way – and we will not be fooled by positivism, patriotism, optimism, success and flattery. Nor will we be moved or swayed by criticism, negativism and emotionalism because, like Paul, we will be separated unto the Gospel. Holiness is separation unto God!

Romans 8:23 says that true believers "groan inwardly" as we wait for the return of Jesus, for only believers see the world for what it truly is. The unbelievers "have their eyes blinded by the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4)."

The Spirit also prompts action. Paul went into the Synagogue and into the market-place as he met with Jews and gentiles, no doubt motivated by the great commission to go and make disciples.

Paul did not just sit around having

fellowship and preaching to the converted. It is so easy to get caught up in "bless me" clubs, with emphasis sadly on ourselves. The Spirit emboldens and gets us out there as salt and light. The Spirit stands you tall and bold, as we saw that day at Pentecost, and when Stephen, full of faith, stood up to challenge the Sanhedrin.

There is always opposition, and here Paul was up against the philosophers, the intellectual moralists, the left-wing liberals and all those wealthy well-educated intellectual enemies of the Gospel. They called him a "babblers" because he preached about Jesus.

Paul, to them, was a fundamentalist, radical, absolutist freak who needed to be silenced. Paul was to them offensive, divisive and elitist. Nothing has changed!

"I did not come to bring peace," said Jesus. True gospel preaching does rattle cages, agitate and confront – no matter where its presented.

But on Mars Hill, Athens that day, he could not have faced a more hostile audience. They were not rabble, so at least he could comfort himself knowing that they would not be roused to physical violence. But intellectually he was up against it.

The classic confrontation of the world's wisdom versus the simple gospel!

Maybe we can take some notes on how Paul dealt with challenge. He got straight to the point, blunt and direct. "I see you are very religious."

Religion proliferates throughout the world. It's the biggest business in the world. In South Africa more than 70 percent of the people claim to be Christians. I always thought that I was one. In fact, I rated myself high up the ladder, having been born of Presbyterian

stock and having a grandfather who was not only a pastor but the moderator of the denomination.

But there is no anointing on denominations, cultures and structures. The Kingdom of God is an organism not an organisation. It's about the blood of Jesus, not buildings and projects. It's about the Cross, the revelation of Jesus Christ and Him crucified – it's not about a movement called Christianity!

It is not about religion! "You are worshipping an unknown God," said Paul. For sure this was going to get some tempers flaring. An unknown God was what they were worshipping. Certainly they knew about a god or gods, but there was no inspiration or revelation just their own intellectual interpretations. They were taught but had naught!

Just as today, there was a boom of teachers and philosophers all peddling their wares and building their edifices and businesses. But there was no God! A monstrous bottom line – God is not in all this.

Paul fearlessly proclaimed this truth. Listen, he said, as he opened his heart to them. The real God is awesome, God is sovereign, He is Lord, He is master and He is supreme! That's what the world desperately needs to hear.

God is mind-blowing and mind-boggling, and there is nothing that compares with Him. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are His ways above our ways. God is immutable, meaning He does not change, does not have to change, never makes any mistakes and never has to apologise.

He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is never different and there is no change between the God of the Old Testament and the different God some preachers proclaim was represented by Jesus Christ. "I came to reveal the Father," said Jesus!

God is love, grace, mercy, justice and judgement all at the same time. The Bible talks about the "kindness and sternness of God," which means He is neither a tyrant nor a doting father.

Truly finding God through Jesus Christ is like finding the pearl of great price. All else pales into insignificance by comparison.

God is indefinable, He is incomparable and He is awesome and that came out full force from the apostle Paul. No sparing the horses! Warming up, Paul then tells them that God does not need you and me.

A big church in Durban once had a huge banner outside their front entrance saying "Jesus needs you." When I pointed out that it's the other way round, they had the good grace to remove it!

We are the beneficiaries of what happened on the Cross. To truly benefit, we have to acknowledge our wretchedness, repent and hand our lives over to Jesus. Yes, we have to come to the end of ourselves; get over ourselves and give up our independent right to ourselves.

The rich young ruler was told by Jesus that he had to give it all away. The turning point for the prodigal son was in the pigsty when he finally realised that the biggest problem in his life was himself. "I have sinned!" That revelation that changed his life.

We need Jesus more than life itself. Jesus is life! He who has the Son has life, he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

They lead us in the wrong direction

Another thunderbolt! God does not live in temples, even though we just love building them. Stephen said that at his martyrdom, and it had impacted Paul enough for him to repeat it. Statues, altars and temples all lead us in the wrong direction.

"God does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything since He gives to all life, breath and all things. He has made from one blood every nation of men, has determined their pre-appointed times and boundaries, so they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they may grope for Him and find Him though He is not far from each one of us," said Paul. We have to seek, even grope, though He is not far away.

It's a relationship! We need to experience Him for "in Him we live and move and have our being."

We must be "born again" because, as

Jesus explained to Nicodemus, "flesh gives birth to flesh but the spirit gives birth to the spirit." We are all born once thanks to our natural human mothers, but we have to get "born again."

It's experiential, for we need to taste, smell, hear and see that God is good, promises God's Word. It's authentic, it's life-changing and it's for real. Most certainly, it's not synthetic or man-made.

It is not shaped by man's art or devising. It is not silver, gold or stone. With man it is impossible!

It's so easy to get caught up in Christianity and religion, to be almost obsessively involved and enthusiastic, and yet still not know Jesus!

When Jesus truly comes into a life, that life changes!

"It is possible to know all about doctrine and still not know Jesus. A soul is in great danger when the knowledge of doctrine surpasses touching Him," writes Oswald Chambers.

Mary knew nothing about doctrine but seven demons had been cast out of her and she truly knew Jesus. The book of Job deals with a lot of doctrine, as his friends try to explain to Job what has happened to him and why he was suffering.

"Though He slay me yet will I trust Him" and "I know that my Redeemer lives," said a suffering Job as he steadfastly opposed the doctrinal bashing he was receiving from his so-called friends.

Finally God intervenes, and there are no explanations! Just "what do you know?" – answered with a firm "nothing."

Job was only the most successful man on earth, as well as having a testimony that even God boasted about, yet his confession when confronted by an awesome God, was that he knew nothing. And he even apologised for maybe thinking that he knew anything.

There is only one way, finished Paul. Repent! Judgement is now at hand. Ignorance is now no longer an excuse.

Jesus gave His life so that you can give your life to Him. All God wants is everything. That's how to preach the gospel to the leaders of the world. Straight and true, and pulling no punches! 🏹

Let's get off the defensive

by A. W. Tozer

IN the kingdom of God the surest way to lose something is to try to protect it, and the best way to keep it is to let it go.

The law of keeping by surrendering and losing by defending is revealed by our Lord in His celebrated but little understood declaration: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me (Matthew 16:24)."

Here is seen the glaring disparity between the ways of God and the ways of men. When the world takes its hands off a prized possession someone grabs it and disappears. Therefore the world must conserve by defending. So men hoard their heart's treasures, lock up their possessions, protect their good name with libel laws, hedge themselves about with protective devices of every sort and guard their shores with powerful armed forces.

This is all according to Adam's philosophy which springs from his fallen nature and is confirmed by thousands of years of practical experience. To challenge it is to invite the scorn of mankind – and yet our Lord did challenge it.

To be specific, Christ did not condemn the world for defending its own; He turned from the fallen world and spoke about another world altogether, a world where Adam's philosophy is invalid and where his techniques are inoperative. He spoke of the kingdom of God whose laws are exactly opposite to those of the kingdom of man.

Long before Christ laid down the spiritual principles that should govern the new kingdom God had said by the mouth of His prophet, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways (Isaiah 55:8)" and Christ said elsewhere, "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:15)."

Between spiritual laws and the laws of



human society there is a great gulf. In His wisdom God moves on the high road according to His eternal purposes; man on the low road moves along as best he can, improvising and muddling through according to no certain plan, hoping that things will come out all right and almost always seeing his hopes disappointed.

The true Christian is a child of two worlds. He lives among fallen men, receives all of his earlier concepts from them and develops a fallen view of life along with everyone from Adam on.

When he is regenerated and inducted into the new creation, he is called to live according to the laws and principles that underlie the new kingdom, but all his training and his thinking have been according to the old. So he may, unless he is very wise and prayerful, find himself trying to live a heavenly life after an earthly pattern. This is what Paul called "carnal" living. The issues of the new Christian life are influenced by the automatic responses of the old life, and confusion results.

They cling to their treasure

Against this background it is easy to understand why so many Christians instinctively cling to their treasures, defend their possessions and fight for their reputation. They are reacting after the old pattern, which they had followed so naturally and so long.

It takes real faith to begin to live the life of heaven while still upon the earth, because this requires that we rise above the law of moral gravitation and bring to our everyday living the high wisdom of God. And since this wisdom is contrary to that of the world, conflict is

bound to result. This, however, is a small price to pay for the inestimable privilege of following Christ.

It is vitally important that we move up into the Spirit and cease to defend ourselves. I have never met a victorious Christian who was on the defensive, but I have met I cannot tell how many jumpy, skittish and thoroughly unhappy Christians who were burning up their energies in a vain endeavour to protect themselves.

These poor, dejected souls imagine that someone is forever trying, as they say, to "put something over" on them. The result is worry, resentment and a kind of low-pressure hostility toward everyone they may have reason to believe is after something they possess.

My earnest advice to all such nervous souls is to turn everything over to God and relax. A real Christian need not defend his possession nor his position. God will take care of both.

Let go of your treasures and the Lord will keep them for you unto life eternal. Hang on to them and they will bring you nothing but trouble and misery to the end of your days.

It is better to throw our little all to the four winds than to get old and sour defending it. It is better to be cheated a few times than to develop a constant suspicion that someone is trying to cheat us. It is better to have the house burglarised than to spend the rest of our days and nights sitting with a rifle across our knees watching over it.

Give it up, and keep it. Defend it, and lose it. That is a law of the kingdom and it applies to every regenerated soul. We can afford to trust God; but we can't afford not to. 🐟



Are we overcoming or covering over?

GOD demands reality in our experience, reality in our love to Him and in our love for each other. Sometimes I have said, "O, Lord, arouse me if in any way I am coming short, if in any way there is unreality in my experience!"

I have beseeched the Lord that He would use His sharpest instrument rather than let me be asleep or believe one thing which was not according to His Word. We are too close to Christ's coming to gloss things over now.

"For if by one man's offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17)."

We "shall reign in life." God wants us to see and know whether we are overcoming or whether we are just approximating. God never averages anything. God never pronounces a false judgement. He is never going to say, "Come, thou good and faithful servant," except to those who are good and faithful.

"Every man's work shall be made manifest (1 Corinthians 3:13)."

How we should pray, "Lord, go through our service; go through our profession; go through our experience

NOW!" It will be tried by fire at last and we cannot afford to be building with wood, hay and stubble.

There is fearful unreality too often in our testimonies. We have learned pious phraseology and often there is no reality behind it in our lives. Before we speak glibly about the Cross of Christ and about separation and consecration, we need to know if we have experience backing our words.

Overcoming Daily

God is probing deep into the hearts of His people. We "shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." The character necessary for reigning with Christ, God develops in a life of daily hardships, by attacks of the enemy, by misunderstandings.

The grace of God cannot do in a minute that disciplining which takes time and training. The grace of God cannot make a mature Christian in five minutes.

If with the grace of God we cannot get along here with people we meet and live with, we are not reigning with Christ. To reign means to overcome. Right where God puts us, God wants us to reign.

Every day He provides us with opportunities to reign over hard and

difficult things. If we cannot reign over little things in this life, how can we reign with Him on His throne? If everyone around us has to be angels, we are not very deep in God.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "I press toward the mark (or goal) (Philippians 3:14)." If, in the life to come, we are to sit with Christ on His throne, the Word of God teaches we are to reign in this life, reign over self, reign over Satan, reign over the world.

Christ died to make us holy. Love is jealous over the object of its love. It is love that is searching us through and through, seeking to make us in all things like Jesus. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17)." Are we one with the Lord in everything? It would be a sad thing for us to have anything between us and our Lord and not know it. Has the Lord first place in our life?

Unmoved by the story of Calvary

The Holy Spirit leads back to Calvary. In the Welsh Revival it was "Calvary." Evan Roberts writes of the conflict in his soul when he said, "Lord, bend me! Lord, bend me!" He said the thing that alarmed him was that he was unmoved by the story of Calvary. Saved by it, but somehow his sensibilities were unmoved by the sufferings of our Lord, when he cried out, "Lord, bend me! Lord, bend me!" He says this is what bent him: that the Holy Spirit showed him, "God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8)," and that love did not commend itself enough to Evan Roberts.

Does that love commend itself enough to us to constrain us to sacrifice everything for it? The Lord is calling upon us now to decide the question whether we are going to lay down our very lives for Christ's sake and show that selfless love and devotion to Him and His that impelled Him, through the eternal Spirit to offer Himself without spot to God for us. 🐟

THE SACRED ANCHOR

by Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).”

A CHRISTIAN'S chief happiness is in the future. A saint in this life is an expectant of heaven; he has little in hand – but much in hope. So says the text, “looking for that blessed hope.”

What is Hope?

Hope is a supernatural grace planted in the heart by the Spirit of God, whereby a Christian is quickened to the expectation of those things which are held forth in the promise. “If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it (Romans 8:25).”

Hope is concerned with a good. It looks at some good, so it differs from fear. Fear looks at evil, hope looks at good.

Hope is concerned with a future good. It looks at some good to come, so it differs from joy. Joy is exercised about something present, hope about something future.

Hope is concerned with a good that is hard to reach. It looks at some good, which is difficult to attain; so hope differs from desire. Desire is weak and transient; it is soon over. Hope is resolute and fixed, it wrestles with difficulties and will not give up until it has the thing hoped for.

Hope is concerned with a good that is open to be gained. It looks at some good which is feasible, and which there is possibility of obtaining; so hope differs from despair. Despair looks on things with black spectacles and gives all up as lost. Hope is like cork to the net, which keeps the heart from sinking in despair.

How Does Hope Differ from Faith?

These two graces, faith and hope, are so alike that they have been taken one for the other. But, though they are placed near together like the two wings of the cherubim on the mercy seat, they

are not the same.

Indeed, in some things faith and hope do agree. Both feed upon the promise; both help to support the soul in trouble. Faith and hope are like two buoys put under a Christian which keep him from sinking in the waters of affliction.

Both of these graces, like medicinal water, comfort the fainting soul.

Though in some things these two graces agree and are alike – in some things they differ. Faith and hope differ in order and priority. Faith precedes and goes before hope. Faith shows a Christian the land of promise; hope sails there with patience.

Thus, you see how faith and hope differ – but these twins must not be parted. Faith strengthens hope and hope comforts faith.

What Does a Christian Hope For?

Emphatically, he looks for “that blessed hope.” A Christian's hope is not in this life; then he would have forlorn hope. There is nothing here to be hoped for but ups and downs. All the world rings changes – but we are looking for that blessed hope.

This is the difference between the seaman's anchor and the believer's anchor. The seaman casts his anchor downwards; the believer casts his anchor upwards in heaven, looking for that blessed hope. The believer is a rich heir (Hebrews 6:17), and he waits until the royal crown shall be set upon his head.

The object of a Christian hope is set down specifically – “the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Characteristics of True Hope

True hope is quickening

It is called a living hope (1 Peter 1:3). It puts life into a man. Hope is a spur to duty, a whetstone to industry. Hope of victory makes the soldier fight; hope of gain makes the merchant industrious.

Divine hope is as wind to the sails, as wheels to the chariot; it makes a

Christian active in piety. He runs the ways of God's commandments. Hope cuts away through rock; it wrestles with difficulties; it despises dangers; it marches in the face of death!

True hope never gives up until it has the thing hoped for. He who has divine hope will have Christ, even though it is in a furnace. He will profess the truth, even though the next word is “Christians, to the lions.”

True hope is purifying

“Every man who has this hope in Him, purifies himself (1 John 3:3)...” Hope is in the soul as lightning is in the air; it clears the air.

He, who has hope in Christ, sets himself against all sin, both in purpose and practice. He is a consecrated person. There is engraved upon his heart, “Holiness to the Lord (Exodus 28:36)!”

Hope is a virgin grace; it lives in a soul. Benard compares holiness to the root – and hope to the branch. True hope flourishes upon the root of holiness.

Now, then, try your hope by this Scripture touchstone. The hypocrite says he has hope – but is he a purified person? What! An unclean person – and he hopes to go to heaven? Nothing enters there which defiles (Revelation 21:27).

A true hope is a good hope

“Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace (2 Thessalonians 2:16).”

A true hope is a persevering hope

“Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end (Hebrews 3:6).” Hope makes us endure: therefore, it is compared to an anchor which holds the ship in a storm. In time of public calamities, hope keeps the soul from sinking.

“The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of His

people (Joel 3:16).” Though the heavens and the earth shall shake – yet a believer's hope abides.

A believer never casts away his anchor. The Jews were prisoners in Babylon, yet prisoners of hope – “turn to the strong hold, you prisoners of hope (Zechariah 9:12).”

When a Christian is on his deathbed and all hope of life is taken away – yet his hope in God is not taken away.

What unspeakable comfort is this to a child of God, who, upon a serious trial, finds he has a well-built hope. When Christ shall appear, it will be a glorious appearing to a believer.

The anchor of hope

If a Christian's outward comforts were taken away, and one should ask him what he had left, he might say, “the anchor of hope.” He has a confident hope of those eternal mansions which Jesus Christ has gone to prepare for him (John 14:2).

When Christ, who is his life, shall appear, then shall he also appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4).

Oh, what comfort is this; how may this lighten and sweeten the cross! After the bitter waters of Marah comes the wine of paradise! After a wet spring comes a joyful harvest!

Be exhorted to cheerfulness. We “rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:2).” Fear begets sorrow; hope begets joy. Divine hope, said Augustine, cannot be without some mixture of joy. Does a Christian have hope of heaven – and will he not rejoice? “The hope of the righteous shall be gladness (Proverbs 10:28).”

Our Hope Is Near

But may some say, “It is long before we shall enter upon possession of heaven, and hope deferred makes the heart sick (see Proverbs 13:12).”

It is not long. “Behold, I (Jesus) come quickly, and My reward is with Me (Revelation 22:12).” This glorious reward we hope for is quickly in faith's account; faith makes future things present. Christ's coming is at hand; the bright morning star begins to appear.

As a telescope makes those things which are far away off seem near to the eye, so faith makes Christ, heaven, and the day of recompense seem to be near.

It gives a kind of possession of them in this life.

Oh, then, Christians, rejoice! Turn your lamentations into “Hallelujahs.” It is but a little while – and you shall be made partakers of those blessed things you hope for. Think of the certainty of Christ's appearing, “Behold I come”; and think of the speediness, “I come quickly.”

Press on in Hope!

Maintain your hope against all discouragements either of fear or temptation. Christians, do not let the devil dispute you out of your hope. A soldier, who has the higher ground and has ascended upon a hill, will not let the enemy beat him off his ground – but will keep it to the last breath.

Has God set you on the higher ground? Has He raised your hope as high as heaven? Do not be beaten off your ground; maintain your hope to the last. Pray to God that He would further clear your title to heaven, that you may be as Mount Zion which cannot be

moved.

How this should make us abound in the work of the Lord! He who has a well-grounded hope of heaven, how fervent should he be in duty, how zealous in the cause of God! The hope of glory should give spirit and life to a Christian. Let divine hope be as oil to the lamp, as wind to the sails – to excite and to blow us forward in holy activity for God!

We sow in hope. “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Galatians 6:9).”

Let us live suitably to our hope – in a holy walking. Those who have heaven in their hope – should have heaven in their lives. Let us walk after that golden pattern which Christ has left us, “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked (1 John 2:6).” Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27). 🐟





COMMUNION

A reflection and preview of Good News

by *Tim Moore*

THERE may be no clearer example of the Gospel focus of Christianity's reflective "remembrances" and prophetic "anticipations" than the Lord's supper.

Communion as it is commonly referred to in most denominations offers a unifying moment of Christian clarity. Whether weekly or periodically, followers of Jesus pause to remember His sacrifice on the cross at Calvary.

The very words of Paul that instruct our observance of this holy sacrament convey the reverent meaning. Paul's own description of The Lord's Supper to the church at Corinth says it all:

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)."

The significance of those emblems

never wanes. There is a range of practices regarding the frequency and manner in which communion is shared. I will observe that while some are dismissive of the necessity of sharing in communion on a weekly basis as an aspect of Christian worship, I've found most churches that offer weekly communion do so in a much more reverent and meaningful manner than those who engage only sporadically.

Regardless of the frequency, Paul's admonition is one that he received from God: that we share communion with other brothers and sisters in Christ as often as we do in remembrance of Him.

The payment in full

The Gospel-centredness of the Lord's Supper is obvious. The elements point back dramatically to Jesus' great sacrifice. His death on the Cross was the propitiation – the payment in full – for our sins.

In the words of the great Keith and Kristyn Getty song, "on the Cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied." Jesus' act of atonement allows us to be reconciled with God – to quite literally be "at one" with Him.

The Apostles could never have conceived of a Gospel that did not

centre on the death of Jesus. They would recognise the so-called "prosperity gospel" – that proclaims health, wealth, and material blessings in this life, but minimises the shameful death of the Saviour – as what it is: a false gospel.

That is why Paul would purpose to preach nothing but Christ crucified. The great paradox of the Christian faith is that His death – the most ignoble and dastardly episode in human history – provides the path to salvation. By His stripes we are healed...

Sadly, many people stop reading at 1 Corinthians 11:25 – or at least fail to cast their gaze forward in anticipation. That is because Paul also stresses the purpose and foreshadows the extent of the sacrament known as communion.

He wrote: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:26)."

The first part of that statement is clear enough. By partaking of the Lord's Supper we proclaim His death. At the Passover meal we remember as the "Last Supper," Jesus blessed the unleavened bread and broke it, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in

remembrance of Me."

Then, after they had eaten, He took the cup and said, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood (Luke 22:19&20)."

Mark records that the cup would be "poured out for many (Mark 14:24)," while Matthew elaborates that it was "poured out for many for forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28)."

These passages make clear that communion is a Christ-centred celebration of a meal first ordained by God for the Jewish people to remember His angel of death passing over their homes and their firstborn children. In that sense communion drives our thoughts even further back than Calvary to another instance of God's grace toward His people.

But Paul emphasises that this commemoration is not only backward-

looking; it should also propel our thoughts forward in anticipation of the Lord's coming. Jesus also meant for His disciples to cast their gaze forward.

When He shared that last Passover meal with them, His death on the cross still lay in the future. Even as He tied the significance of the bread and the wine to His body and blood, He said, "I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God (Luke 22:16)" and "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:29)."

The prophetic closure

Following His resurrection, Jesus ate fish with His apostles (Luke 24:41-43). It is reasonable to assume that He drank water when He shared a meal with them at the Sea of Galilee (John 21:9-14).

But the special meal He re-purposed to commemorate His own crucifixion points to a prophetic closure that awaits final fulfilment. Luke says that after Jesus ate with His disciples before His ascension, "He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (specifically all things which are written about Him in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms) (Luke 24:44&45)."

So there is much to look forward to in the Kingdom of God. I can't wait to dine with Him at the great marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9). Until then, when I revel in His presence and worship Him face to face, I will proclaim Jesus' death and resurrection – the Good News that offers salvation.

With grateful acknowledgements to Lamb & Lion Ministries 🐉

A family prayer

by *J. R. Miller*

For Morning

LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. You alone are enduring and eternal, and only in You, can our souls find a suitable home, a refuge of love which will be sure forever. Help us to make our home in You.

We thank You for this our earthly home. We thank You for the love that binds us together, for the refuge we find here from this world's enmities. Here we can trust each other, and are sure of each other's love.

Deepen our home affections. Draw us closer together as a family. Make our home life sweeter. Enable us to be more helpful to each other. Teach us patience in our family and in all our mingling together. Help us to find the best things in each other, and to give one to the other the best things of love we have in our hearts.

May our home life today be tender and affectionate. Fill us with Your divine love, so that heart and lips shall overflow, and that in us may grow whatever things are lovely. You know

our special needs – and we ask for personal blessings. Forgive us all our sins. Comfort us in our sorrows.

Give us now a blessing as we go out into the world. May we live so as to be ever receiving from Jesus – and then enable us to be ever giving out again the good things of divine love. We ask all this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For Evening

WE come with grateful hearts to You, O God our Father. We will sing praises unto You as long as we live. We call upon our souls and all that is within us to bless Your holy name, and never to forget Your benefits.

For You forgive all our iniquities. You heal all our diseases. You redeem our lives from destruction. You crown us with loving kindnesses and tender mercies. You satisfy our mouth with good things, so that our youth is renewed like an eagle.

You, Lord, are merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. You will not always chide us, neither will you keep Your anger forever. You have not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our

iniquities.

For as heaven is high above the earth – so is Your mercy toward those who fear You. As far as the east is from the west – so far have You removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pities his children, so do You pity those who fear You. For You know our frame; You remember that we are dust.

Our days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so do we flourish. The wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But Your mercy, O Lord, is from everlasting to everlasting.

We rejoice in Your eternity. We can rest on it and know that our trust shall never be disturbed. The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed – but Your kindness shall never depart from us, nor the covenant of Your peace be removed.

Grant us now Your peace, our Father, and keep us in the secret place of Your presence, from all harm during the night. Bless us with Your tenderest love, we ask through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer. Amen. 🐉

The power of the blood of the Lamb

by Roy Hession (1908-1992)

THE message and challenge of revival is searching in its utter simplicity. It is simply that there is only one thing in the world that can hinder the Christian's walking in victorious relationship with God and his being filled with the Holy Spirit – and that is sin in one form or another.

There is only one thing in the world that can cleanse him from sin with all that that means of liberty and victory – and that is the power of the blood of the Lord Jesus.

It is, however, most important for us that we should see what it is that gives the blood of Christ its mighty power with God on behalf of men, for then we shall understand the conditions on which its full power may be experienced in our lives.

Many blessings in the blood

How many achievements and how many blessings for men the Scripture ascribes to the power of the blood of the Lord Jesus! By the power of His blood peace is made between man and God (Colossians 1:20). By its power there is forgiveness of sins and eternal life for all who put their faith in the Lord Jesus (Colossians 1:14; John 6:54). By the power of His blood Satan is overcome (Revelation 12:11).

By its power there is continual cleansing from all sin for us (1 John 1:7). By the power of His blood we may be set free from the tyranny of an evil conscience to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14).

By its infinite power with God the most unworthy have liberty to enter the Holy of Holies of God's presence and live there all the day (Hebrews 10:19). We may well ask what gives the blood its power?

To that question we need to link this

other question – how may we experience its full power in our lives? Too often that precious blood does not have its cleansing, peace-giving, life-giving, sin-destroying power in our hearts, and too often we do not find ourselves in God's presence and fellowship all the day.

The answer to the first question is suggested by the phrase in the Book of Revelation which describes the blood of Christ by the tender expression, "the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14)." Not the blood of the Warrior, but the blood of *the Lamb!* In other words, that which gives the precious blood its power with God for men is the lamb-like disposition of the One who shed it and of which it is the supreme expression.

The title "the Lamb" so frequently given to the Lord Jesus in Scripture, is first of all descriptive of His work – that of being a sacrifice for our sin. When a sinning Israelite wanted to get right with God, it was the blood of a lamb (sometimes that of a goat) which had to be shed and sprinkled on the altar. Jesus is the divine fulfilment of all those lambs that men offered – the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Anyone but the Lamb would have resisted

But the title "the Lamb" has a deeper meaning. It describes His character. He is the Lamb in that He is meek and lowly in heart (Matthew 11:29), gentle and unresisting, and all the time surrendering His own will to the



Father's (John 6:38) for the blessing and saving of men. Anyone but the Lamb would have resented and resisted the treatment men gave Him. But He, in obedience to the Father (Philippians 2:8) and out of love for us, did neither. Men did what they liked to Him and for our sakes He yielded all the time.

When He was reviled, He reviled not again. When He suffered, He threatened not. No standing up for His rights, no hitting back, no resentment, no complaining! How different from us! When the Father's will and the malice of men pointed to dark Calvary, the Lamb meekly bowed His head in willingness for that too. It was as the Lamb that Isaiah saw Him, when he prophesied, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth (Isaiah 53:7)."

The scourging, the scoffing, the spitting, the hair plucked off from His cheeks, the weary last march up the hill, the nailing and the lifting up, the piercing of His side and the flowing of His blood – none of these things would ever have been, had He not been the Lamb.

And all that to pay the price of *my* sin! So we see He is not merely the Lamb because He died on the Cross, but He died upon the Cross because He is the Lamb.

Let us ever see this disposition in the blood. Let every mention of the blood call to mind the deep humility and self-surrender of the Lamb, for it is this disposition that gives the blood its wonderful power with God.

Hebrews 9:14 forever links the blood of Christ with His self-offering to God, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God..."

It is this fact that bestows upon it its power with God for men. For this disposition has ever been of supreme value to God. Humility, lamb-likeness, the surrender of our wills to God are what He looks for supremely from man. It was to manifest all this that God ever created the first man. It was his refusal to walk this path that constituted his first sin (and it has been the heart of sin ever since).

It was to bring this disposition back to earth that Jesus came. It was simply because the Father saw this in Him that

He could say, "My Son, in whom I am well pleased." It was because the shedding of His blood so supremely expressed this disposition that it is so utterly precious to God and so all-availing for man and his sin.

We come now to the second question – how can we experience its full power in our lives? Our hearts surely tell us the answer, as we look on the Lamb, bowing His head for us on Calvary – only by being willing to have the same disposition that ruled Him and by bending our necks in brokenness as He bowed His. Just as it is the disposition of the Lamb that bestows upon the blood its

power, so it is only as we are willing to be partakers of the same disposition of the Lamb, that we shall know its full power in our lives.

We may be partakers of His disposition (Philippians 2:5; 1 Corinthians 2:16), for it has been made transferable to us by His death. All the fruits of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5 – love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control – what are they but the expressions of the lamb-like nature of the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit wants to fill us with them. Let us never forget that the Lord Jesus, though exalted to the throne of God, is still the Lamb (the Book of Revelation tells us that) and He wants to reproduce Himself in us.

We may long to be cleansed from some sin...

But are we willing for this? There is a hard unyielding self which stands up for itself and resists others, that will have to be broken, if we are to be willing for the disposition of the Lamb, and if the precious blood is to reach us in cleansing power. We may pray long to

be cleansed from some sin and for peace to be restored to our hearts, but unless we are willing to be broken on the point in question and be made a partaker of the Lamb's humility there, nothing will happen.

Every sin we ever commit is the result of the hard, unbroken self taking up some attitude of pride – and we shall not find peace through the blood until we are willing to see the source of each sin and reverse the wrong attitude that caused it by a specific repentance, which will always be humbling. This means that we have not merely to try and make ourselves feel the humility of Jesus. We have to walk in the light and be willing for God to reveal any sin that may be in our lives. We shall find ourselves asked by the Lord to perform all sorts of costly acts of repentance and surrender, often over what we term small and trivial matters. But their importance can be gauged by what it costs our pride to put them right.

Jesus had no rights – do we?

He may show us a confession or apology that has to be made to someone or an act of restitution that has to be done (Matthew 5:23-24). He may show us that we must climb down over something and yield up our fancied rights in it. Jesus had no rights – do we have them?

He may show us that we must go to the one who has done us a wrong and confess to him the far greater wrong of resenting it. Jesus never resented anything or anyone – do we have any right to?

He may call us to be open with our friends so that they may know us as we really are, and thus be able to have true fellowship with us. These acts may well be humiliating and a complete reversal of our usual attitudes of pride and selfishness, but by such acts we shall know true brokenness and become partakers of the humility of the Lamb.

As we are willing for this in each issue, the blood of the Lamb will be able to cleanse us from all sin and we shall walk with God in white, with His peace in our hearts.

Taken from The Calvary Road by Roy Hession. ☞

The myth that you can have your own life in this world



by Jordan Yoshimine

THERE is a myth prevalent in the church today that goes something like this: “I can have my own life in this world and be a Christian as well.”

I really believe that it's a complete lie from the devil, and it's dragging people, good people, good professing Christians to hell, because they don't know any better.

They're just going along with the flow of what's happening in the church today; they're going to church and really experiencing God in a way that God did not intend them to worship.

Something is terribly wrong in the church, when over half of all married men in the Evangelical church are in

have to lose your life in this world. In Luke 9:23 it says we need to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow the Lord. But it says, “die daily!”

We need that daily death to self, and what's being promoted in the Church today is the message that “Hey, you can be a Christian, but have everything that you want in this life as well!”

We live in a me-centred culture. It has infected our core beliefs, and what we regard as sin. In the area of sexuality, anything and everything now goes.

You can see it in laws that are being passed, in the cultural shift, in sexuality, it's all about self, and it is all about pleasing self. It is all about, “Hey, what's good for you is alright as long as it doesn't impact me; You can do what you want, be whatever you want to be, dress how you want to dress, be whatever sex that you want to be...”

This is a sad mind-set, but tragically, it's permeating the Church.

And what is the result of this extreme self-centredness? What happens when you can't tell a Christian by his lifestyle from his unsaved neighbour? Jesus prayed that His disciples would not come out of the world, but they would be protected from its influence.

Both James and John warned that being a friend of the world makes us an enemy of God.

Gaining the whole world

What happens when the idolatry of this world takes over our lives? Jesus told us. Matthew 16:26 says “What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world yet forfeits his soul, or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”

And, a lot of times we think that verse applies to unbelievers only, but I think it's talking to believers, it's saying, “What is it going to profit you if you marry yourself to the world and you lose your soul?”

Yes, that is a good question, because a lot of people go to church, they sit in a pew, they tithe, they're in a bible study or a small group during the week, and yet, they are married to the world.

They've given themselves over to things that might not seem like sin – extravagant vacations, or obsessing over sports, or their children – it doesn't

seem like sin but if you take a long hard look you can see the idolatry in their lives.

Exodus 20:3 says very clearly, “You shall not have any gods before me.” Again, look at the reality of their lives. They call themselves Christians but they'll still skip Sunday church to watch an important sports match. Or maybe they say, “I'm going to skip church because my son has a soccer game today”, or “my kids have a game on Wednesday night so we're not going to go to church.”

God specifically commands that we don't put anything before Him. When we take all those little choices cumulatively over a lifetime... man, I don't want to be standing in front of God on judgement day and hear “Depart from Me. I never knew you.”

God isn't going to say that to complete heathens. He's going to say that to people who did a lot of things in His name. And the consequence of allowing the world into the church and telling people that they can have both is that many are going to stand in front of Jesus once day and He's going to say, “Depart from Me. I never knew you.”

Not just the big sins, but everything!

And people are going to be grieved, because they weren't taught that – how few people were saying “you need to look at how you're living your life in this world. Not just the big sins but everything else in life.”

I grew up in Anaheim, California, the home of Disneyland. I grew up in the church as a pastor's son, but everything about my life was driven by the world. I was obsessed with pleasure, obsessed with entertainment, movies, sports, food, everything to feed the flesh.

When my sexual sin started, it completely dominated my life for years. I left the church and was gone for a long time. Then when I came back to church, I continued in sexual sin, I did not cut himself off from worldly influences.

For about a decade I was living the double life, going to church, being a Sunday school teacher, being a youth director, leading church camps – but I was also fully engrossed in myself! Not just sexual sin, but drinking, partying,

buying clothes, spending all kinds of money, I just did whatever I wanted to do.

Eventually I got to the point where I said, “Either I can keep living the life or just go headlong into my sin” – and I just chose my sin.

I wanted my sin more than I wanted God. And yet, throughout the next three decades, I would still profess to be a Christian, and even sent a Bible to one of my drinking buddies! So ridiculous! I mean, what kind of testimony did I have? I had none.

I came back to church in 2005, and then went on staff in 2007, and was on staff for three years before my sin got exposed again... Yes, I was able to cultivate a double life again, and I felt like “If I just repent and keep repenting, God will honour that.” Yet, I wasn't denying my flesh.

And what is the inevitable result of being utterly worldly in our hearts, while maintaining the fake Christian veneer?

The answer's simple. It's a life-and-death question. Life with Jesus or death without Him. There's a reality to that.

“God will not be mocked,” Galatians 6 says. “He who sows to the flesh will reap corruption of the flesh.”

So, if we continue sowing to the our flesh, then where are we going to stand on Judgement Day? Were we really ever Christians, if we can continually do things are so displeasing to the Lord or not glorifying Him, and actually pointing people away from the Lord?

Real life IS possible

A real Christian life is possible. There is real life in relationship to Jesus Christ, and it is abundant life.

Revelation 21 says that when we see Him face to face, He'll wipe away every tear. There will be no pain, no sorrow, no more striving. Man, that's something to look forward to.

If you come to Jesus, “all who are weak and heavy laden and I will give you rest, there is rest for our souls. His yoke is easy, His burden is light.” If we will only submit ourselves and humble ourselves, and allow Him to guide us and direct us, there is rest.

And it says in John, “the fullness of His joy.” He wants to complete our joy.

He wants to make it full. I always thought joy was an emotion; joy is not an emotion like happiness. Joy is something much deeper, and much more profound than any emotion can ever describe. Joy in the Lord!

And making that joy complete is a knowledge and an assurance and a confidence in who the Lord is, what he's done for you, what the Cross means, all of that! And I have that choice now, whereas before, I was tossed to and fro like a wave, because I was just guided by my emotions. The Lord wants to give us life and life abundantly.

If you're thinking, “I can either choose Jesus or try this whole ‘Jesus and the world, too,’” I will tell you what it's going to be like. It's going to be life abundantly if you follow God, but if you choose to marry yourself to the world or try to have both, then you're going to allow Satan to kill, steal and destroy.

When you come into his rest, when you finally surrender, when you finally admit your weakness, and your inability to do anything on your own – 2 Corinthians 12:9&10 becomes a reality. “His grace is sufficient. His strength is perfected in our weakness. When I am weak, I am strong.”

When we understand that we just cannot do it, that we do need to deny ourselves, that we do need to be bondservants as Peter and James and Paul said, completely surrendered to the Lord; no dreams, ambitions, anything of our own, and completely allow the Holy Spirit to indwell us and guide and direct us, there is just so much that God wants to give us, and give to His Church.

He is longing for His Church to surrender and separate themselves from the world so He can give them the fullness of who He is, and give them peace and rest and joy and boldness and creativity – and all of these things, all these different facets of Jesus and the Lord, that He wants to give the Church, if only we will start denying ourselves.

If we will say, “No longer I, Christ who lives within me.”

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The way of Cain

by Zac Poonen

THE first epistle of John was written when John was about 95 years old. He was the only living apostle at that time. All the others had been killed. John had seen the day of Pentecost and the tremendous revival with which the Church of Jesus Christ had started. He also saw in his time the decline of many of the churches that had started in revival.

Perhaps the other apostles who had died earlier had not seen this decline to the same extent as John. But John saw that many churches that had once begun with tremendous power, great fervency and the Spirit's fullness, had declined to the place where they had lost their first love and backslidden in other ways too (as we read in Revelation 2 and 3).

But the elders (messengers) in those backslidden churches were still sitting on their thrones. One of the elders only had a name that he was alive, when he was actually dead. Another was so

lukewarm that the Lord warned him that He would spit him out of His mouth. Yet another was allowing the false prophetess Jezebel, to lead people astray.

All these terrible things were happening in their churches and yet those elders just sat back and did nothing about it. Both churches and elders had lost their zeal. This was the condition of those churches at the end of the first century.

Imagine how grieved John must have been and how he must have sorrowed. With this burden in his heart, he writes his first epistle. That's the background of this letter.

It is important to see what John emphasizes in his letter and what he doesn't – because Christendom's condition today is very similar to what I have just described.

There were great spiritual movements in the 18th, 19th and 20th Centuries, in different parts of the world – mighty movements that God started through

men who knew Him. These movements were born in revival, but they have all descended to the same level as the churches in John's time.

Compromise and corruption are rampant among them. Elders have gone the way of Balaam, seeking after money. They permit immoral standards among people in their churches. That, too, is part of the way of Balaam, for he led Israel astray by making them sin with the daughters of Moab.

We see so much similarity in what's happening in Christian churches today with what happened at the end of the first century. The problem is not with doctrine primarily, but with life. Evangelical churches and charismatic churches have all gone the way of the world. The spiritual power they once had is gone!

Bearing the burden of the backslidden churches on his heart, John writes much in 1 John 3 about loving one another. "By this, the children of God, and the children of the devil are obvious (1 John

3:10)."

John divides all people in the world into two categories here - "children of God" and "children of the devil". And he says that the way to find out the difference is this: "Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God. Nor the one who does not love his brother."

This is a very clear distinction. One who does not love his brother is not of God. He may perhaps have many reasons why he cannot love his brother, but he is not of God.

In verses 11 and 12, we read, "For this is the message, which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. And not be as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother Abel."

When Jesus spoke about righteous people, he began with Abel. He said, "From the blood of righteous Abel, to the blood of Zechariah (Matthew 23:35)..."

So Abel was righteous. But Cain, as we saw, belonged to the evil one, because he killed his brother. 1 John 3:12 goes on to say, "And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous."

Now I want you to read that verse carefully. It does not say that Cain's deeds were evil after he slew Abel. No. It says that his deeds were evil even before he slew Abel.

Why did Cain slay his brother? Because he was an evil man. We have often heard it said that God accepted Abel because he offered a blood-sacrifice, and that God rejected Cain because he didn't offer a blood-sacrifice. But there is more to it than that. See what it says here about Cain. "His deeds were evil; his brother's deeds were righteous."

And John goes on to say in verse 13, "Don't marvel brethren if the world hates you." He's talking about Cain hating Abel. Don't marvel if the world hates you. Hatred is the mark of the sons of Cain, and all who follow "the way of Cain" (as Jude calls it in verse 11 of his letter).

In verse 14 John says, "We know we have passed out of death into life" – not because we were baptised and not because we partake of the bread and the

wine – no, but "because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death."

John is still thinking of Cain as he writes this.

We are to love everyone. It doesn't matter which church those others belong to. "He who hates his brother is a murderer." Everyone who hates someone else is a murderer. "And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." The way of Cain, is the way of hatred.

In contrast, in verse 16 John says that the proof of love is this: that instead of slaying your brother, you slay yourself! You lay down your life. "We know love by this, that He laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Notice that in both cases there is a

death. In one we kill our brothers and in the other, we die ourselves!!

Cain killed his brother. That's the way of evil. The children of the devil manifest themselves by slaying their brothers and sisters.

The children of God are revealed by their putting their own self-life to death.

Cain smashed Abel's head in with a rock. But today people are gentler - they don't use rocks, they use their tongues! When you tear down your brothers and sisters with your tongue, speaking evil of them and making them look bad and small in the eyes of others, you're actually slaying them.

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by Samuel Chadwick

NOTHING would turn a nation back to God so surely and so quickly as a church that prays and prevails. The world will never believe in a religion in which there is no supernatural power. A rationalised faith, a socialised church, and a moralised Gospel may gain applause, but they awaken no conviction and win no converts.

There is passion in praying that prevails. There was passion in all Elijah did.

God loves a man aflame. He cannot abide the lukewarm. He never keeps hot tears waiting. "Then will I be found of you when you seek Me with all your hearts (Jeremiah 29:13)."

When Elijah prayed, he prayed in his prayer. The praying man was in his petition. It is always the same: Abraham pleading for Sodom, Jacob wrestling in the stillness of the night, Moses standing in the breach, Hannah intoxicated with sorrow, David heartbroken with remorse and grief, Jesus in a sweat of blood.

Add to the list from the records of the church, personal observation and experience. There is no power like that of prevailing prayer. It turns ordinary mortals into men of power. It brings power. It brings fire. It brings rain. It brings life. It brings God. ☩



Longing for the King

by *Nathan Jones*

THAT Jesus Christ is returning is a given. Three times in Revelation 22, Jesus promised that He will return (Revelation 22:7, 12, 20). Jesus said over and over, “Surely I am coming quickly.”

He even added that we could trust this promise stating, “These words are faithful and true (Revelation 22:6).” Jesus’ return is a promise made by God, a promise found so prolifically in the Bible that you can read about His Second Coming in nearly 500 prophecies of the Old Testament and one out of 25 verses in the New Testament.

The fact that Jesus fulfilled all 300 First Coming prophecies 100% means that you and I can rest assured that all of the Second Coming promises will be fulfilled as well. In the exaltation of that exciting promise, the Apostle John closed out the book of Revelation (and the entire Bible) with a prayer: “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus (Revelation 22:20)!”

Final messages often are the most poignant. Therefore, when Christians today pray, we can follow John’s example and do so with the mindset of, “It could be today!” If we, too, long for the King’s glorious return, and that becomes our heart-cry, then we can live every day in eagerness and preparation to, “Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:36).”

Indeed, that certain knowledge of Christ’s soon to be fulfilled promise can

dramatically change our daily prayer lives.

We live in a world where the alarming news and absurdity of what’s happening increases each day. Absurdities that we didn’t give much thought to before are suddenly becoming a nightmarish reality. It is obvious that society is speeding down the fast track to the end of the world as we know it.

What astounds us today is the speed of its approach. But, that also means we are speeding ever closer to the Second Coming of Christ.

But, how soon is soon? After all, it’s been nearly 2 000 years since Christ made that promise. From a human perspective, that’s a very long time. Though, from God’s eternal perspective, not so much. For Him, those two millennia have been only like two days (2 Peter 3:8).

The Apostles asked this very question of Jesus when He dropped the bombshell revelation on them about the eventual destruction of the Temple (Luke 21:6). This prophecy, found in Matthew 24 and paralleled in Mark 13 and Luke 21, resulted in the Apostles asking three questions specifically:

1. When will the Temple fall? (Related to New Testament times).
2. What will be the signs of the end of the age? (Meaning the end of the Church Age concluded by the Rapture, which is our time).
3. What will be the sign of Jesus’ coming? (Concerning Christ’s Second Coming, a time yet future).

Using the concept of prophetic perspective, which looks across time and

covers multiple events, Jesus answered all three questions with the same answer. He provided 10 signs that people could look out for that would mark the advent of these three events. He added the illustration of birth pangs, in that these signs would increase in frequency and intensity the closer humanity got to these events, much like a woman’s contractions leading up to a baby’s birth (Matthew 24:7-8).

THE 10 SIGNS

The following list contains the 10 signs that Jesus gave that are meant to show us that we are getting closer to His return.

1. False Messiahs

Jesus warned, “Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not follow them (Luke 21:8).”

We live in a time like no other as false messiahs and prophets such as Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell, Jim Jones, Sun Myung Moon and hundreds of others claim to speak for God, and even commit the blasphemy that they are Jesus Himself!

These fakes will lead up to the greatest of all false messiahs – the Antichrist – and his False Prophet (Revelation 13).

2. Wars

“When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom (Luke 21:9&10).”

British novelist Margaret Drabble labelled the 20th Century a “Beastly

Century” because an estimated 160-187 million people were killed by war. And, the 21st Century isn’t shaping up to look any different. Nation can also be translated as ethnos, meaning the great divisions along ethnic lines will widen.

3. Earthquakes

“There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven (Luke 21:11).”

According to the British charity, Oxfam, earthquakes and other natural disasters have gone up 400% over the last two decades. High Richter-scale level earthquakes have been increasing in frequency and intensity affecting nearly 254 million people per year.

4. Famines

Jesus also foretold how famines would increase the closer the world approached His return.

Seventeen famines have occurred in the first two decades of the 21st Century, decimating nations such as Myanmar, Malawi, North Korea, East Africa, Kenya, and Somalia. Some 925 million people go to bed hungry, and every day almost 16 000 children die from hunger-related causes. That’s one child every five seconds.

5. Plagues

Likewise, pestilence and plagues will increasingly continue to kill people by the masses. While over six million people have died from the latest Covid-19 pandemic; Malaria, Cholera, AIDS, and countless other diseases continue to ravage the world’s population.

6. Fearful Events

Fearful events, especially socio-economic disasters, loom over every horizon. Trillions in debt have been mounting as every country in the world tackled the pandemic by printing unbacked currency – leading to rampant inflation. The Bible prophesies an inevitable worldwide economic collapse (Revelation 6:6) and a new system that grants permission to people to buy and sell (Revelation 13:16&17).

7. Signs in the Sky

Great signs from the heavens include cataclysmic weather, such as tornadoes and hurricanes, and objects up in outer space hurtling past the earth at unimaginable speeds.

The NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) reports that every year unusually active and

deadly tornadoes are on the rise. And, in 2020, so many hurricanes tore through the Atlantic that naming them ran past the 26-letter alphabet.

8. The Persecution of Christians

“But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you... All men will hate you because of me (Luke 21:12-19).”

Voice of the Martyrs reports that tragically more Christians died for their faith in the 20th Century than in the 19 centuries leading up to it. But, as bad as the 20th Century was, the 21st Century is starting to make that look like a Sunday picnic. Tonight more than 200 000 Christians will try to stay warm in horrific North Korean labour camps. And, the mass murder of Christians in China, Nigeria, and many Islamic countries bloodily continues unabated.

9. Jerusalem Under Siege

“When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near... Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (Luke 21:20-24).”

One of the greatest prophetic signs foretold by Old Testament prophets was the regathering of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel. That happened in the 19th and 20th Centuries and continues today. And, when Israel was resurrected as a nation in 1948, all the other signs began to multiply in frequency and intensity – just like birth pangs.

Since the Six Day War in 1967, Jerusalem is once again controlled by the Jewish people. The United Nations Human Rights Council has passed more resolutions condemning Israel than it has all of the other states combined.

And yet, God promised: “I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves (Zechariah 12:2&3).”

10. The Return of Christ

Jesus Christ’s final sign specifically answers the third question concerning His Second Coming. “There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and

perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world (Luke 21:25-28).”

Just before Jesus breaks from the heavens, the sky will be alight with even more celestial signs, the nations will cringe in terror, the seas will toss violently, and all of His enemies will run in terror over the return of the King. Jesus then defeats Satan and his followers and ushers in His earthly kingdom defined as a 1 000-year reign of peace, righteousness, and justice.

These signs of the times indicate that Jesus is coming back, and we don’t have much longer to wait. Can we know the exact day and hour of His return? No, for Jesus stated point-blank, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only (Matthew 24:36).”

But, from these 10 signs and the many others Jesus provided throughout the Gospels, and knowing that these signs are happening more frequently and with increasing intensity, we can know for certain that we are now living in the season of Christ’s return.

So that begs the question: “Are you ready for the Lord’s return?” The only way to be ready is to embrace the Gospel. Repent and surrender your life wholly to Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord. Accept the Good News that He has died for your sins.

If you have already accepted Him as your Saviour, then make John’s prayer your prayer: “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus (Revelation 22:20)!”

Our prayers do not bring Jesus back. That date has been stamped in Heaven by the Father. But, prayer for the return of the King reflects the power of the Gospel working in and through us – radically changing us, releasing God’s power, and bringing about revival and spiritual awakening in those we encounter.

So, ask the Lord today to grant you His heart-cry of anticipation and pray according to His Kingdom purposes. One day soon, you will see the fulfilment of your prayers and experience that blessed hope of the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).

With grateful acknowledgements to Lamb & Lion Ministries. 🐑🦁

Three ways the Gospel is embarrassing...

...and why that's a good thing



by Alisa Childers

THE gospel accounts found in the New Testament are embarrassing. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John included some pretty uncomfortable details in their writings. But if you're a Christian, that's actually a really good thing. We humans have a tendency to paint ourselves in a good light – to leave out the bad stuff and exaggerate or embellish the good.

If you need proof of this, click over to Facebook and check your newsfeed. You will be bombarded by photos of your friends holidaying at the beach, having ice cream with their children, drinking artisan coffee, and eating mouth-watering delicacies at the new local Bistro.

You will read a wife's birthday tribute to her husband that would convince the most sceptical rationalist that she is married to Superman himself. In short, Facebook is a highlight reel. That's not necessarily a bad thing – no one wants to scroll through Facebook and see everyone's dirty laundry.

But Facebook isn't exactly an accurate portrayal of history. When assessing historical documents, there are certain

attributes of authenticity that historians are looking for. One of those attributes is called the "Criterion of Embarrassment."

If an author includes details that might be embarrassing to himself or his cause, there is a much greater chance that he is telling the truth. This gives scholars more confidence in the historical reliability of the document.

What about the New Testament gospel accounts? Here are three ways the gospels are embarrassing, and why those "embarrassing details" actually demonstrate that the authors were telling the truth:

1. EMBARRASSING DETAILS ABOUT THEMSELVES

Let's say I wanted to make up a brand new religion that wasn't true, but I was hoping to gain money, power, fame – or all three. If that were the case, I would NOT portray myself as a dim-witted coward who was always getting scolded by my spiritual leader! But that's exactly what the writers of the New Testament did.

If they were making the whole thing

up, they would have most likely portrayed themselves in a much better light. Here are some of the ways they describe themselves:

- They never seem to "get" what Jesus is talking about. (Mark 9:32; Luke 18:34; John 12:16)
- They fall asleep twice when Jesus urges them to pray. (Mark 14:32-41)
- They get scolded by Jesus. (Mark 8:33)
- They fiercely disagree with each other. (Galatians 2:11)
- They run away and hide like cowards when Jesus is arrested. (Mark 14:50-52)
- They disown Jesus when asked if they know him. (Matthew 26:33-35)
- They constantly doubt Jesus. (John 2:18-22; 3:14-18; Matthew 12: 39-41; 17:9; 22&23; Mark 16:14; Matthew 28:16&17)
- They record that women were the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection. (This is embarrassing because back then, the testimony of women wasn't even admissible in court!) (Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20)

2. EMBARRASSING DETAILS ABOUT JESUS

Now back to that "made-up" religion.

If I was basing my newly invented religion on a spiritual leader such as Jesus, I would make sure that he came off in the best possible light. I would portray him as being respected and admired by all... especially by the most powerful and influential social and political elite.

But that's not what the writers of the New Testament did. In fact, they recorded details about Jesus in which he was thought to be morally questionable and even a little crazy:

- He is called "out of his mind" by His own family, who are so embarrassed by Him that they try to "seize" Him when a crowd gathers at His home. (Mark 3:20&21)
- His own brothers don't believe in Him. (John 7:5)
- He is thought to be "leading people astray." (John 7:12)
- He is called names like "drunkard" and "madman." (Matthew 11:19; John 10:20)
- He is called "demon-possessed." (Mark 3:22; John 7:20, 8:48)
- He is abandoned by many of His followers. (John 6:66)
- In trying to convert the Jews, he ends up almost being stoned by them. (John 8:59; 10:31)
- He is killed by Roman crucifixion, which was the method of execution used only for slaves, low-life criminals, and enemies of the state.
- He is crucified, despite the fact that his own Holy Book states that this brings a curse upon a person.
- He is seen with prostitutes, and even allows a prostitute to wipe His feet with her hair, which could have been interpreted as a sexual advance. (Luke 7:36-39)
- He dines with tax-collectors, who were considered by Jews to be the same as traitors. Tax-collectors were Jews who worked for the despised Romans and often cheated people and kept some profits for themselves. (Mark 2:15&16; Luke 15:1)

3. DIFFICULT AND DEMANDING SAYINGS OF JESUS

If I were inventing a guru-type spiritual leader, I would definitely NOT make him difficult to follow. I would

make his sayings emotionally pleasing, welcoming, and all-inclusive. After all, if I was making the whole thing up, I would want as many people as possible to join my movement. I would make sure that no one felt excluded!

But that's not what the writers of the New Testament did. Here are some of the difficult things Jesus said:

- Though the Scriptures defined adultery as a sexual act, Jesus said that even lusting in your heart is adultery. (Matthew 5:28)
- He set strict standards for marriage and divorce. (Matthew 5:32)
- He said, "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect," which is seemingly impossible. (Matthew 5:48)
- He said, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24)
- He labelled people as "Enemies," (Matthew 5:44) "Pagans," (Matthew 5:47) "Hypocrites," (Matthew 6:2) "Thieves," (Matthew 6:20) "Dogs" and "Pigs," (Matthew 7:6) "False prophets," (Matthew 7:15) "Blind guides," (Matthew 15:14) "Wicked generation,"


(Matthew 12:39) "Unclean," (Matthew 15:20) "Fools," (Matthew 23:17) "Whitewashed tombs," and "Serpents," (Matthew 23:27) "Brood of vipers," (Matthew 23:33) and "Cursed," (Matthew 25:41)... and that's just a few from Matthew's gospel alone.

If the gospel writers were just fabricating the events of Jesus' life in an effort to gain followers for their new religious movement, they were not off to a very good start!

The truth is that no-one would make this stuff up. Their tendency would be to simplify, unify, clarify, and beautify Jesus' sayings and character – to make Christianity much more simple, broad, easy, and pleasant.

That is... if their motive was anything but telling the truth. But they were telling the truth. They recorded what they saw... the good, the bad, and the ugly.

The Criterion of Embarrassment is just one of the principles scholars use to authenticate historical documents, and the gospels pass with flying colours.

Are the gospels embarrassing? Yes... and that's a good thing! 



by F B. Meyer

THE Welsh preacher, Christmas Evans (1766-1838) tells us in his diary that one Sunday afternoon he was travelling a very lonely road to attend an appointment in a village on the other side of the slope, and he was convicted of a cold heart.

He says: "I tethered my horse and went to an isolated spot, where I walked to and fro, in an agony as I reviewed my life. I waited three hours before God, broken with sorrow, until there stole over me a sweet sense of His forgiving love. I received from God a new baptism of the Holy Spirit.

"As the sun was setting, I went back to the road, found my horse, mounted it, and went to my appointment. On the following day I preached with such new power to a vast concourse of people gathered on the hillside, that a revival broke out that day and spread through the whole principality."

Convicted of a cold heart, of a worldly life, of self-seeking and pride, of having come short of God's glory. Then forgiveness. Then the baptism of fire and power.

God grant that the live coal, which has never lost its glow since the day of Pentecost, may come to every heart, to every mouth, to every life; and that this day a fire shall begin to burn in every mission, in every Sunday school, in every church!

She attended a school modelled after Harry Potter's Hogwarts, then became a 'goddess'

by Alina Jannol

As she sat on the playground at the Waldorf Steiner School in England, 11-year-old Naela Rose believes she became demon possessed.

"I remember sitting in the playground and I felt a spirit enter me, and I was instantly suicidal," says Naela on a Doreen Virtue video. "I knew this was an outside entity. From that moment on, I suffered from obsessive thoughts of self-harm and depression. It just hit me.

"Satan just loves to go after children. Children are so young and open and sensitive. If you're unprotected, it's very dangerous."

Naela's parents were liberal, open-minded, Reiki-instructed and thought the occult-based school, a real-life version of Harry Potter's Hogwarts, would be perfect.

Beginning at Waldorf, she learned pagan rituals, worship of the creation, tantra yoga and empowering the feminine through worship of ancient goddesses.

"I was a proud pagan. I loved Mother Earth. I called myself a witch. I was into all these things," Naela says. "I was completely seduced by the idea of divine feminine rising, and that I am in fact a goddess."

At first she touted herself as a high priestess only. But as the adulation of followers progressed, she decided to become a full-on goddess. She felt it very flattering to hear followers in her training affirm her god-status.

Naela had become a New Age master raking in money with constant seminars and training. "At the peak of my success in New Age, I felt the most hollow and empty," she recognises.

Meanwhile, she internally battled suicide, depression, anxiety and nightmares. She came from a broken family. The idea was to be a "wounded healer," a teacher showing the way she herself was following towards inner



Naela, then and now...



healing. When the occult didn't provide relief, she took to alcohol, drugs and chain-smoking.

She promoted herself on Instagram as a New Age guru. But inside, nothing could heal the hurt, even though she herself took course after course and combed through New Age readings and teachings.

In the fullness of time, Jesus came to her in a dream.

But since she had never read the Bible, she didn't know what to do. She added Jesus to her personal pantheon. Since she had a strong inclination towards worshiping feminine goddesses, she added Mary Magdalene and Sophia, the supposed female counterpart of Jesus.

"I had completely given my allegiance over to the goddess, to the point where I had really given her my life and my soul, and she was completely indwelling me and controlling me," Naela says. "You have to be an egomaniac to think you are a god."

She was living in South France at the time and was mounting an initiation school for Sophia seekers, but got interrupted.

"I felt the Holy Spirit drawing me to my knees in godly repentance," she says. "One day I went from being this egomaniac who thought I was healing the world to the next day being on my bedroom floor weeping, begging God –

even though I didn't know who that was – to forgive my sins."

All her delusions crumbled.

"I'm a liar," she cried in repentance. "I'm a thief. I've stolen all of this New Age stuff and put it together to make money for myself."

The conviction weighed heavily on her.

"The fear of God came upon me," she admits. "I literally felt like I could not go on unless I got forgiveness. I felt like I would die unless I was forgiven for everything I'd done. The next day, I felt the Spirit of Jesus enter my room and I just broke down and cried."

Prompted by the Spirit, she confessed out loud with her mouth something she didn't yet fully understand: "Jesus is the only way to God."

"I'd never read the Bible – so where did that come from?" she wondered.

Ironically, two clients who attended her last seminar also became born-again at the same time, and the three connected to ask each other what was happening and to look for a church together.

"We're broken. We cannot fix ourselves... we need a Saviour," they decided.

As Naela came to God and grew in His church, she realised she had to make financial restitution to her past clients as best she could. This was something she couldn't do completely because she had been a spendthrift and had no savings.

"My whole life was made by selling this deception," she says. "Healing is free. You don't need to pay to get free."

As she grew in Jesus, she saw how the feminine deity was a delusion. Instead of being liberated from patriarchy by worshiping the goddess, she had become lost. Now, she has a different take on adoring God the Father and Jesus the Son.

"There's nothing more empowering for me as a woman than to completely submit to Jesus Christ," Naela says.

"I felt complete peace for the first time in my life and I felt loved for the first time in my life," Naela says. "If you are truly an open-minded, spiritual person, take a look at the Bible, pray to Jesus, ask for the truth. You shouldn't be threatened by the idea that Christianity could be true." 🐟

WATCH & PRAY

by Elizabeth Kendal TURKEY IN SYRIA: RISK OF ETHNIC CLEANSING AND DESTABILISATION

Turkey is threatening to re-invade northern Syria to create what it calls a "safe zone." When Turkey and its jihadist proxies invaded in early 2018, they captured, ethnically cleansed and colonised the northern reaches of Aleppo Governorate. When the same forces invaded north-east Syria in October, 2019, they captured territory between Ain Issa and Tal Tamr.

Turkey now wants to complete its proposed 32 km deep "safe zone" along the entire Turkey-Syrian border. The zone would be ethnically cleansed and repopulated with around one million of Turkey's 3,6 million Syrian refugees. If enacted, the plan would see hundreds of thousands of Kurds, Syrian Arabs and Christians (mostly Assyrians and Armenians) killed and displaced. It would massively destabilise north-east Syria, creating perfect conditions for a revival of Islamic State. **Please pray.**

MORE AMHARA MASSACRED IN ETHIOPIA

Whilst the threat to Addis Ababa has diminished, the ethnic cleansing of predominantly Christian minority Amharas in Oromia Region appears to be gaining pace. On Monday July 4, Oromo ethno-nationalist militants slaughtered at least 150 – possibly more than 300 – predominantly Christian ethnic Amhara in Hawa Gelan Woreda in Kellem/Qellem Wollega Zone, Oromia Region.

The massacre comes just a couple of weeks after the June 18 massacre of as many as 1 600 ethnic Amhara in Gimbi Woreda in neighbouring West Wollega Zone. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission has called for an "urgent reinforcement" of government security forces to prevent further civilian deaths. Prime Minister Abiy is under intense pressure to broker peace with the Egypt-Sudan-US-backed Marxist-Leninist and separatist TPLF. Fears abound that this may involve sacrificing the Amhara. **Please pray.**

NEW DRAFT DECREES ON RELIGION FLOATED IN VIETNAM

Vietnam's ruling Communist Party has published two draft decrees that concern the implementation of Vietnam's repressive Law on Belief and Religion and the punishments that can be imposed for administrative infractions. While unregistered churches would remain illegal and subject to severe criminal penalties, the new decrees would worsen the situation for registered churches by extending and tightening government regulation over all religious activities, including online meetings.

Vietnam might be following China, which has in recent years passed numerous "Regulations" and "Measures" designed to regulate the Church to the point of suffocation. Morning Star News (MSN) reports that shocked officials have urged Church leaders to object. One Vietnamese observer told MSN, "If these decrees are passed in their present form the Church will be like a small candle facing a typhoon." **Please pray.**

VIRAL HATRED SPREADS THROUGH INDIA

India's unconstitutional anti-conversion laws fuel anti-Christian hatred, discrimination and persecution. In recent weeks, pastors in Uttar Pradesh's Basti District were warned to cease all religious activities or face jail under the state's anti-conversion law. In Karnataka, on the same day anti-conversion legislation was enacted, Hindu nationalist activists pounced on Pastor Kuriyachan and his wife, Selenamma, who minister to poor tribal labourers in the coffee estates of Kodagu district.

The couple have been arrested and found guilty face three to 10 years in prison. In Goa, which does not yet have an anti-conversion law, Pastor Domnic and his wife, Joan, who lead a growing independent Protestant church in north Goa, were arrested after two complaints were made against them. Now Goa's Chief Minister wants anti-conversion

legislation introduced in Goa. **Please pray.**

DEATH FOR BLASPHEMY IN PAKISTAN

On June 15, 2017 a business rival filed a baseless blasphemy charge against Christian mechanic Ashfaq Masih (34). Ashfaq has been in jail in Lahore ever since. On July 4, 2022, a judge deemed Ashfaq guilty and sentenced him to death by hanging.

Advocate Nasir Saeed, explains: "Because of pressure from the Islamic groups, lower-court judges are always hesitant to free the victims but make popular decisions to save their skin and shift their burden to the high court." Ashfaq's family will appeal.

Pastor Zafar Bhatti (56) was sentenced to life in prison in 2017 after an Islamic cleric filed a baseless blasphemy charge against him. However, on January 3, 2022, a judge in Rawalpindi upgraded the sentence to death by hanging. His already fragile health has since deteriorated markedly. **Please pray.**

NIGERIA IS FALLING APART

On June 12 Fulani Muslim terrorists stormed a Christian community in Okpokwu Local Government Area (LGA) of Nigeria's mostly Christian Benue State. They arrived on motorbikes, shooting indiscriminately as people prepared for church, killing at least 37 people and displacing hundreds. Dozens of homes were burned.

On June 5, as terrorists were massacring Catholic worshippers in Owo, in Ondo State in Nigeria's South-West, terrorists were descending on a Christian community in southern Kaduna's Kajuru LGA. They arrived on around 150 motorbikes, each carrying two turbaned gunmen. They killed 32 villagers and destroyed a church and dozens of homes.

Critically, victims report that the terrorists were assisted by gunfire from a white-painted helicopter that provided air cover for the terrorists as they looted and torched the villages. Nigeria is falling apart. **Please pray.**



The gentleness of God

by Octavius Winslow (1872)

"I will do you no hurt (Jeremiah 25:6)..."

WHAT a tender, touching declaration of God is this! How condescending and considerate of His people's feelings!

Would God, could God hurt a hair of the head of His child, severe and painful though His dealings maybe? Oh, no!

They may be called to leave their father's house, as was Jacob – they may go down into Egypt, as did Israel – they may be tried in their children, as was Eli – they may be bereft of property and children and health, as was Job – they may be cast into the lions' den, as was Daniel – and into the fiery furnace, as were the Hebrew children – they may have a thorn in the flesh, as did Paul – they may be banished, as was John – yet God will do them no hurt!

Nevertheless, His dealings with His beloved saints and servants of old, were but among the all things that worked together for their good. It was a mysterious; and to them a trying and afflictive way. Nevertheless, He was only unfolding His purposes of wisdom, His thoughts of peace and His ends of love.

Consider this, my soul, whatever God's way with you is, He will do you no harm.

And first, there is the utter impossibility that God could hurt one of the children of His love. His nature is love – His heart is love – all His

attributes are manifestations of His love – all His dealings are but unfoldings of His love.

Listen to David's representation of God, "You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."

Cannot you, my soul, affix your seal to this testimony? What has your God been to you through these many long years of your pilgrimage but a God who could do you no hurt?

Oh, no! He loves you too deeply, cares for you too tenderly, watches over you too vigilantly – you are too dear to Him as a child of His adoption, too precious to Him as a jewel of His cabinet, too lovely in his eye as accepted in the Son of His love, that He should do you hurt.

Gentleness made me great

Whatever His conduct may be, you shall exclaim with David, "Your gentleness has made me great."

His rebukes will do you no hurt. They are the probings of the Lord, searching into the deep evil of our heart, and into the sinnings of our spirit, but to bind up and heal. We may shrink from the cuttings of the surgeon's knife, wince at the searching of his probe as it penetrates to the core of the disease – nevertheless, painful for the moment as the process may be, it is essential to our cure.

And so God's searching of the heart,

His deep probing of its hidden evil, His intent to discover the concealed agent that has caused so much ill health to your soul, will do you no hurt, but will result in your greater purity of heart, conformity to Christ, and real advance in the divine life.

The Lord will do you no hurt in His afflictive dispensations. For the present the disappointment is grievous – the blow is crushing – the hand of your God is heavy upon you – nevertheless, underlying all, there is a divine tenderness, infinitely more gentle than the gentlest nurse with her child, infinitely more tender than the tenderest love of a mother towards her first-born.

Then, be still, lie passive, and as a weaned child, behave and quiet yourself beneath a loving Father's gentle hand, for He has said, "I will do you no hurt."

Nor will He permit others to hurt you. What a wonderful passage is that in the history of His dealings with His people in the wilderness, "When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, He allowed no man to do them wrong." And so He will shield and protect you.

And when we hurt ourselves, as we continually do by our sin and folly, He graciously and tenderly binds up our self-inflicted wounds, soothes the bruises of our falls, and makes our broken bones once more to rejoice.

So, my soul, yield yourself to Jesus. He never has hurt you, He never will. ☩