
First Words

Whose Methods?

I believe that the only weapon we have is the Word of God. There is power there and in the gospel, but it's not meant to beat people into submission. I advocate what Paul said in Romans 14:4-5; *"Who are you who judge the servant of another? To his own lord he stands or falls. Yes, he will be made to stand, for God has power to make him stand. One man esteems one day above another. Another esteems every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind."* Whatever we consider to be the mission given to us, we should be "fully assured" of it. If your approach and mine don't agree, that's alright because we may not have been given the same marching orders.

So with that said, here's my point of view. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world, if it were, my subjects would fight." Fighting as the world fights, boycotts, petitions, lobbying and so on, isn't in Jesus' arsenal of weapons. If we learn to fight with the world's tactics, then who are we learning from (or disciples of)? That's one of the dangers I see.

It's been said by some, "That the early church rather than being on the outside, they did all they could to get into it, effect change and improve the system". This brings up some questions. One is when the Apostle James was killed by Herod, were do we read about "improving the system?" Were there protests or prayers? I see what the results of prayer are in that "Herod was eaten with worms." Acts 12 gives a good example of prayer rather than protests. In fact, I don't think, protest would have been tolerated at all, but prayer can't be stopped. Indeed the disciples were driven out of Jerusalem because of persecution. Peter wrote about how to handle this in his first epistle. He didn't talk about getting involved with the government.

I hold a view that the weapons we are to use are not according to what the world says. That is to say we don't need to pick up this world's weapons in order to bring about change. As Paul tells us, *"For though we walk in the flesh, we don't wage war according to the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the throwing down of strongholds, throwing down imaginations and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; (2 Cor. 10:3-5).* This is why I don't think that political action is preaching the gospel.

I will admit that I could be wrong, but right now

I'm rather convinced, as I'm sure you are. This nation isn't the kingdom of God. Preaching the gospel is our only tool to make any change, and it is one person at a time. This is the only way people are brought to repentance and born again to a living hope.

I am gaining an aversion to "pressuring people" to do anything I think they should. Part of it is in the first paragraph, another point is in 1 Corinthians 6:10. I'll only highlight one group, the extortioners (Gk. *harpax*). These are those who use undue force or legal power or ingenuity to force people to do what they don't want to. It's like wringing something out of someone. Those who practice this will not inherit the kingdom of God. This is an important fact to consider.

There was an incident in Grand Rapids, Michigan a couple of decades ago concerning an adult XXX theater, the Capri II. A group of Christians decided to picket the place with the desire to shut it down. We would all agree with this idea. I learned something from the owner. In an on camera interview, the owner said he was glad for the publicity for one thing, and that if he had no customers he couldn't stay open.

What I learned was, it's the individual heart that needs to be changed. That change turns this man's customers into non-customers, and he's out of business. This is the exact thing Paul the Apostle ran into in Acts 16. I do not read about protests, letters, lobbying or any pressure put on the government to "change". But I do read about deliverance through Yahweh's intervention. I would also assert that in Acts 17, Paul again found trouble because he was preaching the gospel against man's idea of what is right. Is it possible to conclude that the gospel won't have any effect but man's methods will?

This world won't last. Changing it into a Utopia isn't going to happen. When Christ returns, those who have used his methods will be recognized by him. Others won't. Be convinced of what you're doing.

Read On

Chuck

What Is The Gospel?

The Resurrection and the Promise of Eternal Life

by Patrick Navas

(Editors note: this is the fourth and final part of this series.)

The resurrection of God's Son assures the future, universal defeat of death, the enemy of all men. It is essential to the good news, the foundation of the Christian hope. That is why Paul was compelled to write to the early believers of Corinth:

"Now I would remind you, brothers, of the good news I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures..."—1 Cor. 15:1-5

According to the good news, Christ's victory over death assures our own victory through a promised resurrection of life "at his coming" (1 Cor. 15:24). The resurrection was—and remains—the true hope for the faithful. As the apostle Paul reasoned: "If Christ has not been raised" then our "faith is futile and [we] are still in [our] sins" (1 Cor. 15:17). Since death makes each man but "a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes," without the hope of life rooted in the resurrection, we might as well, as

the apostle put it, "eat and drink *for tomorrow we die*" (James 4:14; 1 Cor. 15:32). This is the reality of our mortal condition—apart from "the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus."—2 Tim. 1:1

"But the fact is," wrote Paul, *"Christ has been raised from the dead."* This means *"he has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again"* (1 Cor. 15:20, *NLT*). That is, although the certainty of death awaits all, a "resurrection of life" awaits all those who have "done good" in harmony with God's will on the "last day" (John 5:29; 6:40). Therefore, if "the spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in [us]," we live in genuine hope before the shadow of death, since "the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to [our] mortal bodies also, through his spirit that dwells in [us]."—Rom. 8:11

Jesus himself spoke with authority concerning the resurrection to his disciples when he said:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live...Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out..."—John 5:25-29

As God has purposed, the Lord Jesus will "reign as king until [God] has put all enemies underneath his feet. As the last enemy, *death*, is to

be brought to nothing" (1 Cor. 15:26). As we live in expectation of his second appearance in glory, and the destruction of God's enemies, we are instructed by our Lord to "strive to enter the narrow door" of life—knowing that "the world is passing away, along with its desire" but that "those who do the will of God live for ever" (Luke 13:24; 1 John 2:17; Compare Matt. 7:21-27; 24:13; Rom 2:6-11; Heb. 9:28). That is, if we continue "walking in the light, as [God] Himself is in the light" and if what we "have heard from the beginning abides" in us, then we will "abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is what He Himself has promised us, *eternal life*."—1 John 2:24, 25

In a world dominated by sin, death, and "the god of this age," the light of the gospel dispels the darkness of deception, ignorance, and the hopelessness of death (2 Cor. 4:4; John 8:12). It is in our union with Christ that we are "delivered from the dominion of darkness" by the power of the *truth*, as the Son of God declared,

"If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

And further...

"I have come as a light into this world, in order that everyone putting faith in me might not remain in the darkness."—Col. 1:13; John 8:31, 32; 12:46

Effectively freed from "the

power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19) and from the crippling “fear of death” (Heb. 2:15), Christians rejoice in the Messiah’s light and in the life-giving power of the gospel, since, as the apostle declared without shame, “*it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...*” (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 2:5). And, in the full assurance of faith, we wait for “the redemption of our bodies” as we “set [our] hope fully on the grace that will be brought to [us] at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” —Rom. 8:23; 1 Pet. 1:13

God’s will expressed in the “Greatest Commandments”

According to Scripture, God, “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” is not only “light” but “love” (Rom. 15:6; Col. 1:3; 1 John 4:8). The apostle John bore witness to God’s love when he wrote: “*In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might have life through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*” John concluded: “*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us*” (1 John 4:9-12). This is the testimony of a chosen apostle, an authentic witness of “the word of life” that “became flesh” in Jesus Christ. —John 1:1-14; 1 John 1:1-3

The apostles’ instructions were in accord with the teachings of their Master. For instance, when a certain scribe asked Jesus, “*Which commandment is the most important of all?*” Jesus answered, “*The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord [Heb. Jehovah; Deut. 6:4] our God, the Lord is one. And you shall*

love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

According to Jesus—“the author and finisher of our faith”—“*Everything in the Law and the prophets*”, in fact, “*hangs on these two commandments.*” —Deut. 6:4; Heb. 12:2; Mark 12:29-31; Matt. 22:40

Faith in, and confession of, Jesus as “the Christ” is essential, the true foundation of Christian faith

In addition to loving God whom we recognize as “one” (the only ‘numerical’ formula given for God in Scripture; Gal. 3:20; James 2:19), what matters most in His eyes is that we “love one another.” The apostle John even said, “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and yet hates his brother, *he is a liar*; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot be loving God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: that whoever loves God must love his brother also.” According to the apostle, “*We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers.*” Yet, the apostle wrote, in stark contrast, “Whoever does not love *abides in death.*” —1 John 4:19-21; Compare 1 John 3:13-18; James 1:27

If our love is genuine, consisting “not in word or in speech” but “in truth and in action,” then “we will know that we are of the truth and

will reassure our hearts before him; whenever our hearts condemn us, for God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.” As the apostle went on to say: “Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God, and whatever we ask of Him we shall receive, because we keep His commandments and live the kind of life that He wants.

His commandments are these: *that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and that we love one another as He has told us to.*” In fulfilling the all-important command to “love one another,” we always abide “in the light” and in the *true* knowledge of God, knowing that “whoever keeps His commandments lives in God and God lives in him” (1 John 3:18-24). That is why “faith, hope, and love abide,” wrote Paul, “these three; but the greatest of these is love.” —1 Cor. 13:13

Jesus of Nazareth, the promised Messiah

Although controversy still rages in religious circles regarding the true identity of Jesus, in the first century, the original, foundational truth of the gospel was that Jesus of Nazareth was the long-awaited “**Christ**” or “**Messiah**”—God’s “beloved” and “anointed” Son. The sense of the term Messiah (‘anointed one’) is brought out in Jesus’ own words regarding himself as “**the one whom the Father consecrated and sent forth into the world,**” and when God himself testified of Jesus during his baptism, “**this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.**” He is, according to Scripture, the one whom God “**sent**” and the one on whom God, the Father, has “**set his seal.**” —John 10:36; Matt. 3:16; John 3:34; 5:30; 7:29; 6:27

Faith in, and confession of, Jesus as “the Christ” is essential, the true foundation of Christian faith; so much that the faith itself was, in the minds’ of the apostles, directly tied to one’s being “born of God”—a truth delivered by way of direct revelation from the Father. This was demonstrated in Matthew’s Gospel, when Jesus pointedly asked his disciples, “*Who do you say that I am?*”—to which the disciple Peter answered, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” In turn, Jesus responded, “*Blessed are you Simon, son of Jonah, for flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.*” —Matt. 16:13-18

In perfect harmony, at the end of his Gospel account, the apostle John summarized the purpose of his own writings in this way:

“*These things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you might have life in his name.*” —John 20:31

Unlike the doctrinal formulations of the historic “creeds,” the disclosure of Jesus’ identity as “the Christ” and “Son of God” is neither an interpretation nor a theological inference, but a divinely-revealed truth upon which the gospel stands. This is the true article of the Christian faith, resting not on the traditions of men but on the testimony of God Himself. As the apostle John wrote in his first epistle:

“*If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is surely greater; for this is the testimony of God, that He has borne witness to His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. He who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne to His Son.*” —1

John 5:9-10

The apostle likewise assured those whom he was writing to in the first century:

“*...everyone believing that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.*” —1 John 5:1-5

The children of God are not identified by conformity to a man-made tradition, but, as the apostle wrote, by believing that Jesus is “the Christ” and because they “practice righteousness” (1 John 3:4-10). And because “the righteousness of God is revealed” in the gospel, those “who hunger and thirst after righteousness” find their fill in the words of “the righteous one,” God’s Son (Rom. 1:17; Matt. 5:6; Acts 3:14; 1 John 2:1), who imparts in believers confidence that his message was truly from God, as he made clear:

“*My teaching is not mine, but His who sent me. If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.*” —John 7:16-17

That is to say, the words of the Messiah are trustworthy and righteous, for he has “not spoken on [his] own authority, but the Father who sent [him] has Himself given [him] a commandment—what to say and what to speak,” the commandment that leads to “eternal life.” —John 12:49, 50

The apostle John bore witness to the same hope, based on the same sure foundation:

“And we ourselves have seen and do testify that the Father has sent His Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that

Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God” —1 John 4:14, 15

In spite of the theological formulations of early “church” councils and traditional creeds, the life that Jesus has in himself, as God’s Son, was “granted” to him by one who is “greater” than himself—his Father—and he himself lives “because of” Him (John 5:36; 6:57; 14:28). He is, as Scripture says, “*the image of the invisible God,*” “*the reflection of [God’s] glory*” and “*the exact representation of His very being*” (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2, 3). He is “*the apostle and high priest of our confession*”—the “*one mediator between God and men*” (Heb. 3:1; 1 Tim. 2:5).

These are descriptions that reflect the true, divinely-revealed role and identity of Jesus, the Messiah. Unfortunately the so-called “orthodox” or “mainline” church institutions have, in a multitude of ways, defected from the original letter, and spirit, of Scripture—requiring the confession of doctrine and language that go beyond what is revealed there. As pervasive as they have proven to be historically, however, institution-based creedal formulas that go beyond the Scripture’s own language are unnecessary and often misleading. Because the Scriptures themselves are “able to make [one] wise unto salvation,” and because they spell out the truth with sufficient clarity on these matters, “the man of God” is under no obligation to recognize the authority of any other source (See for example: 1 Cor. 8:6; John 17:3; 1 Tim. 2:5; Deut. 6:4; 2 Tim. 3:14-18). ❀

Building Walls

by Chuck Jones

One of the metaphors Scripture uses to describe a spiritually strong person is a wall. This is a subject that we can all take to heart and put into use. Considering walls gives us a spiritual lesson that isn't too hard to understand.

Walls are meant for protection. Although cities today aren't surrounded by walls for protection as they once were, we can get an idea from our houses. The exterior walls are made to protect us from the wet, cold, and heat. The interior walls give us protection of privacy and they hold up the roof!

The metaphor of walls in Scripture is applied to how we guard our hearts. We are personally responsible for what we allow to enter our minds, whether through the eyes or ears. We are told to *"guard your heart, for out of it flow the issues of life"* (Proverbs 4:23). The issues, or stuff, of life flow out of our hearts and therefore what we allow to be there will come out, whether evil or good.

Walls Are Important

The importance of strong wall is shown in a couple of illustrations found in the book of Proverbs. One is in chapter 25:28: *"Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls."* This individual is susceptible to all sorts of evil because he doesn't have the ability to say no or yes when he needs to. Without self-control he will do what comes naturally, or what he "feels" like

doing, without regard for the consequences. This opens the door for all sorts of evil, like addictions (of all kinds), lying, stealing, angry outbursts, and so on. Without walls, every evil is either welcome or can't be restrained.

Another proverbial illustration is found in chapter 24:30-34 that shows us what it means to have broken down walls. *"I went by the field of the lazy man and the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding, and there it was, all overgrown with thorns: its surface was covered with nettles; Its stone wall was broken down."* Here is an individual who lacks understanding, who doesn't consider what life is about, or the consequences of his actions or inaction. He is one we could say, "goes with the flow" doing only what comes naturally. That's why his vineyard was overgrown with thorns and nettles. These point to the problems he has in his life. "If it isn't one thing, it's another", he may say, but he never finds a solution because his wall is broken down.

This passage goes on to tell us that he will learn from this: *"When I saw it, I considered it well; I looked on it and received instruction. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest. So shall your poverty come like a prowler and your need like an armed man"*

The wise person will gain spiritual insight from what he sees. He learns that taking the easy way isn't the best way. Seeking self-

gratification will lead to poverty and want. Poverty and need come because the walls are broken down. There isn't any protection. No one is on guard. Keeping the walls around your heart built up is very important. Walls are what keeps the enemy out!

What Walls Do

The wall you have around your life is seen in how you guard what enters your heart and mind. [these two elements, heart and mind, are not opposed to each other but represent the inner person]. It is far easier to keep something out than to try to forget what we've allowed to enter. There are too many images, thoughts, and ideas floating around the world for us not to be like a watchman. A watchman knows what's coming and what the consequences are if it's allowed to enter. This then means that we remain sober. This doesn't only apply to alcohol, but to anything we can become "drunk" with, like power, money, pleasure, or anger to name a few. It's putting stuff out of our lives that isn't a blessing or doesn't encourage. There are movies, television shows, books, magazines, and activities that promote hate, hurt, harm, and things that are anti-Jesus. We need to watch what we allow to enter into our lives.

What our walls are made of, and what holds them together isn't the responsibility of someone else – it's ours. When it comes to building

houses, there are building inspectors who are required to certify that walls (and other things) are constructed properly. They will point out flaws, but they won't fix them; the builder has to do that.

The Wall Inspector

We have a Wall Inspector who gives us instruction about building strong walls. Some of that instruction is found in Ezekiel 13:1-16. I won't quote the whole passage here, but you should take time to read it. I want to point out some important verses.

"Thus says the Lord Yahweh, Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing, O Israel your prophets are like foxes in the desert. You have not gone up into the gaps (breaches) to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in the battle on the day of Yahweh. They have envisioned futility and false divination saying, Thus says Yahweh! But Yahweh has not sent them. Yet they hope that the word may be confirmed (or come true)" (vss. 3-6).

There is certainly a problem here as the Wall Inspector points out. The problem revolves around the false prophets. They were using their own "common sense", or what can be called the wisdom of men, philosophy or theories. These sounded good, they tickled ears, but it wasn't Yahweh's counsel. The instruction the false prophets were giving didn't help build the wall. Their teaching did nothing to repair the gaps where it was broken down. What this means is that they didn't confront sin, but allowed or condoned it. Have you heard voices speaking about life styles, habits, and activities that say what was once wrong is now acceptable?

So, here is what the Wall

Inspector said; *"Therefore thus says Yahweh, 'because you have spoken nonsense and envisioned lies, therefore I am indeed against you,' says the Lord Yahweh. My hand will be against the prophets who envision futility and who divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of My people, nor be written in the record of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I, Yahweh am God. Because indeed, because they have seduced My people saying 'Peace,' when there is no peace and one builds a wall and they plaster (or whitewash) it with untempered mortar"* (Vss. 8-10).

Did you catch how serious Yahweh was about this? These false prophets wouldn't have a place in His land or among His people. These false prophets were the 'experts' of their day, teaching lessons of life. We have an abundance of them today. The problem was what they were teaching wasn't Yahweh's instructions. They were like foxes, undermining any good that was left. They weren't giving any protection where gaps were found.

The real danger in faulty walls is intensified with these words: *"Therefore says Lord Yahweh I will cause a stormy wind to break forth in My fury, and there shall be a flooding rain in My anger, and great hailstones in fury to consume it [the wall]. So I will break down the wall you have plastered with untempered mortar and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundations will be uncovered. It will fall and you shall be consumed in the midst of it. Then you shall know that I am Yahweh"* (vs. 13-14). We can see that it isn't only the wall, but it is also the foundation of that wall that will be revealed. What the wall is made of and the mortar

that is used is very significant. Will the wall you've built stand up to the storms of life that will come?

Remember the two houses Jesus talked about at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount? (Matthew 7:24-27). One was built on a rock, the other on sand. The house built on the rock withstood the storm, the house on the sand fell. Storms will come. In fact, we may have an economical typhoon headed our way. Will your house stand? Is your wall plastered with whitewash, or is it built to Yahweh's specifications?

The false prophets Ezekiel was speaking to talked of peace when there wasn't any. Think of this as believing everything is okay when it isn't. It's like believing you're at peace with Yahweh, when you really aren't. Harboring idols, habits, and lifestyles that oppose Yahweh, but make us feel good, is a faulty wall.

Thinking You're Safe Isn't Enough

Faulty walls exist when we make excuses for our sinful behavior, no matter how small it may seem. We accept the experts rationalization for our sin and think it's okay. It's blaming our sin on genes, environment, or a sickness. Let me be bold here to say that scripture never says that if I have a headache (or any other physical difficulty) I have the right to be sinful! There is no handicap that allows for unrighteousness. There is no gene that gives us a free pass to sin.

There is an interesting story found in Acts 19:11-20. It tells of a man who thought using the name of Jesus was "safe" enough. He tried to command an evil spirit to come out of an individual; it didn't work. Verses 15-16 say: *"The evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know*

and Paul I know, but who are you? Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.” This would be humorous if it wasn’t so tragic. Thinking you’re safe isn’t enough. Are your walls built to stand?

Building Walls,
Filling The Gaps

Reading about the importance of a strong wall is only part of the process. This needs to be related to practical everyday life. We can hear about wall, but not do anything, and that just wouldn’t do. For us to build a strong wall it takes a good foundation, like the rock. It also requires solid building material that’s found in Scripture. Then there is mortar, which will hold it all together.

So, here’s a plan to consider. It’s not comprehensive, just a beginning. See the illustration below. The foundation is Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth and the life. There is no other name given by which we can be saved

from the wrath to come. On that foundation let’s begin the first course with wisdom. This is the wisdom that comes from Yahweh and it is contrary to the world’s wisdom. Follow this with truth. No lies or excuses will be tolerated. Fear of Yahweh is next. It is critical that we remember that we always are in His presence. He always sees what we are “up to”. Love could finish the first course. This is love for Yahweh and others, as the first two great commandments tell us.

The second course of blocks include Scripture. This is our source of instructions for living in a godly manner. Prayer follows, as this is our communication with Yahweh. Thankfulness and praise fall in next. It’s very difficult to maintain a “bummed” mood while we are thanking and worshipping Yahweh. Good works finishes this row of blocks. Here we serve others rather than ourselves.

In this example, the final course of blocks include counsel. This is finding someone who will speak the truth to you and not ‘whitewash’ your wall. Fellowship, the next block, is with other believers. It’s important to have this time together.

Worship is the next block, and this represents not only corporate worship but private also. The better your private worship is, the better your corporate experience will be. Joy finishes this top course. This is the joy we are looking forward to when Jesus comes. This joy helps us endure hardship.

The cap on the wall consists of watchfulness, being on guard, and perseverance. It is a continual struggle to keep our wall sound and strong. This brings up the final element that holds this all together, the holy spirit. We’re told to walk in the spirit, be filled with the spirit, don’t grieve nor quench the spirit. Yahweh’s spirit in you will make your wall strong and stable.

Yahweh has given us all we need to build strong walls that will withstand the storms of life. He is also willing to inspect your wall. He will show you the faulty part that needs to be replaced. He will guide you to fill the gaps. Don’t trust your life to anyone else.

“The Name of Yahweh is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” (Proverbs 18:10). 🙏

WATCH, BE ON GUARD, PERSEVERE			
COUNSEL	FELLOWSHIP	WORSHIP	JOY
SCRIPTURE	PRAYER	THANKS	GOOD WORKS
WISDOM	TRUTH	FEAR OF YAHWEH	LOVE
THE FOUNDATION OF JESUS CHRIST			

Solution of Daniel Eleven and Twelve

by Anthony Buzzard

[Since this article was written in 1988, events in the Middle East have focused attention on the area of ancient Assyria (Iraq). It is precisely from this part of the world that the Bible expects the evil tyrant of the latter days to arise. As I edit this again in Oct., 1994, the Middle East is still very unsettled.]

In Daniel, chapters 11 and 12, we find a report of Daniel's great last vision, which summarizes and amplifies the astonishing prophetic forecasts given him earlier in Daniel 2, 7, 8 and 9. This vision has prompted a host of conflicting interpretations — a surprising fact, since the vision is written in simple narrative style without the symbols of beasts, heads and horns found in the earlier revelations.

The reason for the many differing views of the final vision of Daniel can be traced to the assumptions held by commentators before they arrive at chapters 11 and 12. With a clear idea of what we are looking for, it is all too easy for us to read into the text what we think ought to be there. This is the very opposite of sound method. Applying the criterion of simple attention to the grammatical sense of the passage before us, we may be surprised that it has caused so much difficulty.

First we should note that in the introduction to the vision of Daniel 11 and 12 the angel declares that the content of the revelation has to do with the "last days" (10:14), an

expression which elsewhere in the Bible describes the times just before and just after the establishment of the Kingdom of God worldwide at Jesus' return.

In Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 the "last days" are those in which the government or Kingdom of God will be established in Jerusalem and the nations "learn war no more" (Isa. 2:4), a state of affairs which evidently has not yet come to pass!

This evidence ought to prevent us from imagining that Daniel 11 ends with a description of Antiochus Epiphanes (2nd century BC) or with events in AD 70. The resurrection of the dead obviously did not occur when Antiochus Epiphanes died, nor did it happen in AD 70. Proof of this fact is that the living Christians were not caught up together with the resurrected believers in AD 70. Paul taught that, at the resurrection, those alive in Christ "will be caught up to meet him in the air" (I Thess. 4:17).

The Range of the Vision

Very clearly, what Daniel saw stretched into the far future. He was writing in the 6th century BC, yet he predicts the resurrection of the dead: "Many of those who are sleeping in the dust of the ground [literally, 'dust-land'] shall awake, some to eternal life... [literally 'life in the coming age']" (Dan. 12:2).

When they awake, the righteous "shine like the sun in its strength" — a prediction which Jesus, as the

great interpreter of Daniel, places at the end of the age (see Matt. 13:43). This resurrection, of course, is the resurrection to occur at the second coming of Jesus (I Cor. 15:23, 51, 52; I Thess. 4:13ff; Luke 14:14; Rev. 11:18, 20:1-4).

Just prior to this resurrection Daniel foresaw a "time of trouble such as never was" (Dan. 12:1). This period of unparalleled distress features prominently in Jesus' own prediction of the events leading up to the end of the age (Matt. 24:21: "For then shall be a time of trouble such as never was...").

Obviously Jesus took this last vision of Daniel with the utmost seriousness, seeing in it an inspired forecast of the calamitous events destined to occur on earth just prior to his return.

There is much more to the vision besides the announcement of the great tribulation and the following resurrection of the faithful. The remaining material is most instructive, because it tells of the difficult times associated with the period of final tribulation immediately prior to the resurrection and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

A Simple Narrative

For those not familiar with the account of the future given in Daniel 11 and 12, it will be helpful to take a Bible and read straight through the entire passage noting particularly 11:21-12:13. It is

important to observe that the resurrection (Dan. 12:1-2) follows immediately upon the death of the tyrant whose career is described in Daniel 11:21-45. The wicked ruler in question obviously cannot be Antiochus Epiphanes who died in 163 BC! He did not die just before the resurrection. Nor can it be Nero, whose death, in the first century AD, was also not followed by the resurrection of the dead.

A very basic law of language dictates that a pronoun — “he” in our passage — describes a single individual unless there are very clear reasons in the context to show otherwise. We have no difficulty in discerning that a new personage appears on the prophetic screen in Daniel 11:21. He replaces his predecessor who dies in the previous verse (11:20).

Once on the stage, the “vile person” forms the subject of a long passage extending to his death in 11:45.

Unfortunately many commentators have disregarded the normal laws of language and proposed that we are dealing in these verses (21ff.) with a long span of time far beyond the lifetime of a single individual. Fortunately the data we are given allows us to be absolutely sure that the climax of the career of the “vile person” (Dan. 11:21) occurs just 1290 days before the end of the age (12:11). This limits the events of 11:31 onwards to a period of about 3½ years.

In order to get our bearings we must note carefully the critically important time information supplied by the revealing angel in Daniel 12:7, 11. Daniel is allowed to ask some important questions about the length of time allotted to the activities of the “vile person” presented to him in 11:21-45.

The answer to Daniel’s question about the duration of the awful

events of chapter 11 is most enlightening. The information is simple and clear: “From the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away and the Abomination of Desolation is set up there will be 1290 days” (12:11).

In order to grasp the point we naturally look back at the events of the vision to see where in the account the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation took place. We find this crucial event in 11:31 at the height of the career of the “vile person” who came on the scene in verse 21.

1290 days is a little over 3½ years. We can be sure, then, that from the moment the Abomination of Desolation is set up there will be a final time of trouble, at the end of which “all these things” (Dan. 12:7), including, of course, the resurrection (Dan. 12:2), will be accomplished.

The Vile Person

The single individual described as the “vile person” (Dan. 11:21) is seen in conflict with another ruler — the King of the South. The “vile person” is designated throughout the vision as the King of the North. These two rulers struggle for power in the area of Israel and even sit at a conference table and lie to each other (Dan. 11:27)! Ships from the West have recently troubled the Northern King and this stirs him into a rage. He then receives cooperation from some who forsake the faith (11:30). This in turn leads to his causing the interruption of sacrifices and the placing of the Abomination of Desolation (Dan. 11:31). This King of the North then harasses “those who have understanding,” marches southwards, and following a final battle with the King of the South comes to his end in Israel between

the Mediterranean sea and the holy mountain (Jerusalem) (11:32-45). (Again, this is not a description of Nero!)

This relatively simple account of the evil King of the North (Dan. 11:21-45) has received strange treatment at the hands of expositors. Frequently the invaluable time information given in Daniel 12:7, 11 has simply been ignored. This has allowed commentators the liberty of placing centuries of time between what they think was the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation and the end of the age. However, careful attention to the remarks of the angel reveals that from the arrival of the Abomination to the end of “all these things” (Dan. 12:7) there are 1290 days (12:11). This fact naturally proves that the events described from Daniel 11:31 (where the Abomination appears) still lie in the future.

What Does Jesus Say?

The application of Daniel 11:31 to a Syrian ruler in BC times does indeed challenge the authority of Jesus himself. Speaking around 30 AD Jesus declared that those living in Judea were to flee “when you see the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel standing in the holy place” (Matt. 24:15). This authoritative understanding of the prophecy of Daniel is the only one that should have been allowed by expositors. Strangely, this has not been the case. Jesus’ very simple directed link between Matthew 24:15 (the appearance of the Abomination of Desolation) and its appearance in the vision of Daniel (Dan. 11:31, 12:11) has been almost entirely disregarded. ☹

The Real Energy Crisis

by Pastor Rob Bernheisl

Once, a man was seen pushing a car down the road with his family inside. A passerby stopped and offered help. "What seems to be the problem?" he asked.

"Oh, I'm just out of gas," responded the man as he pushed.

"Can I get you some, there's a station just down the road," the second man offered.

"No thanks," respond the first man. "I hear that is pretty dangerous stuff so I prefer to get along without it."

The world is facing an energy crisis. Production has a difficult time keeping up with demand. Alternative energy sources are being explored to meet the demand, control the cost, and protect the environment. Coal, petroleum, hydraulic, nuclear, and solar power have all existed from the time of mankind's creation. However, it is only in recent history that mankind has learned to harness these power sources for constructive use. They were always here; we just needed to learn how to use them.

I would like to talk about a greater power, one that has been around for a long time, that I think is not being experienced to the fullest intent.

Jesus said, *"He who believes in me, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water"* (John 4:14). He also said, *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you"* (Acts 1:8). If you and I believe in Jesus, do we

really believe we have rivers of living water flowing from us? Please do not answer this question like a politician, but be honest. We're not talking about a quiet stream; the language is describing a raging river.

Jesus kept his promise. This is seen in Acts 2:4: *"All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability."* This was followed by a brief message from Peter and a great number of people being converted to Christ. A lame man was healed, people were generous with one another, enjoyed each others' company, worshiped God daily together, and more people were joining all the time. It appears the river was really flowing.

Of course there was opposition to what they were doing, but something interesting happened as a result. Leaders were warned not to speak of Jesus any more. They went to the believing community and shared their experience. This is where it gets even more interesting. They prayed together and *"when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness"* (Acts 4:31).

I noticed that they were filled, again. Apparently the first filling was not permanent. This is not to say that they had lost the Holy Spirit. They still had it but needed

to be filled again. This thought is reinforced by the Scripture where Paul instructs the believers to "be filled with the spirit." A better translation of this verse would be, "continue being filled with the Spirit." Living water needs to be constantly flowing. Otherwise, it ceases to be living water.

Jesus apparently thought this living power was very important since he told his disciples to wait until they received it before starting the all important assignment he had given them. The importance of this living power is seen throughout the book of Acts. It was even important for the men that were given the assignment of serving the tables (Acts 6).

This same living power is emphasized in Scripture. In Romans, Paul speaks of being led by the Spirit. 1 Corinthians says a lot about gifts of the Spirit and maturity. 2 Corinthians and Ephesians mention the Holy Spirit as a pledge. Of what value is a pledge if we are not certain of it? Galatians shows the importance of the Spirit in salvation. We could go on but I observe that while a Christian receives the Spirit at salvation, the greatest works of God happen when believers are filled with the Spirit. And believers are instructed to seek to be filled.

Why did God pour out His Spirit, and in a way more abundantly than ever before? There was a great work to do and He

wanted to see it done. He gave it to teach and empower believers.

In examining the filling of the Holy Spirit in both the Old and New Testament, which included such people as Bezalel, Sampson, Balaam, Saul, Joshua, Micah, Simeon, Ana, John the Baptist, Zechariah, Jesus, Stephen, Paul, Barnabas, and more, I have made the following observations:

1. Many of the fillings were temporary for a specific purpose. This was especially before the pouring out in Acts 2.
2. The filling happened when God wanted it to happen, not at man's beckon. We are commanded to seek and wait.
3. It is important even for some of what we might think are simpler jobs, such as construction (Exodus 31:3) and serving tables (Acts 6:1-4).
4. This will probably be the most challenging of observations. It appears to me that no one ever sinned while being full of the Holy Spirit. Even Balaam, when he attempted to put a curse on Israel, instead pronounced a blessing.

I believe being filled with the living power results in God's glory and not man's.

It results in personal growth in such matters as the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23) and the increasing qualities of 2 Peter 1:3-9. If we are not growing more Christ like then I think we are failing to seek or be filled with the Spirit. It is God's desire that this happens to us. If it is not happening then *what is in the way?*

Once, a father had to go away for a long trip. He gave each of his children an assignment. The youngest was to go up the hill daily and clean the leaves away from the pipe to the water tank. There was a spring there, which filled the tank for the household needs. The young boy did it daily at first. Then he began to skip days and finally stopped altogether. When his dad came home, his mother was telling him how everything was going and she said, "But we do have a problem. There's not enough water coming for our normal use."

The father just turned to the son and said, "Come along." Up the hill they went to the tank. They cleaned away the leaves and the water once again began to flow freely.

What about your water line? Does the living water flow like a river or has there been a drought? Is it clogged by the cares of life or things that *look* more important? Or are you completely unaware that this promise is for you?

I have heard that as we grow older it is natural that our arteries become clogged and our blood flows more slowly. I think that can happen to us spiritually as well. In fact, I think that is the *natural* normal tendency. We need to take action against what is natural, the nature of the flesh.

There are a lot of energy sources available in the world today. Some are being put to use and some are not. Remember the man at the beginning of this article who was afraid of gasoline? We would consider the man foolish for not wanting to use gasoline. Are we any less foolish if we do not seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Never mind what other churches have done or are doing, what does the Word of God teach?

Let us seek after God with all our hearts to see what He can do. Let the living waters flow. 🌊

What's the one thing I tend to count instead of my blessings, which always shoplifts my peace of mind? Is it a financial thief? Psychological? Spiritual? Political? Relationship need? Physical infirmity? Is this thought and feeling - stealing black hole crippling my existence? How much better would I feel all around if I could learn to count and appreciate daily all the blessings I've been privileged to know? How would my attitude change? Lord, help me to notice my blessings more consistently and to offer you my most hearty gratitude on a more regular basis."

From Country Chapel News Update

Will the World's Economy Recover?

Part Two

by Jim Mattison

(Editors note: this is the second of a two part article).

“The destruction of Babylon described in Revelation 17 and 18 will decisively rid the world of the major evils that have plagued man for about five thousand years. We have already seen the destruction to be unleashed upon ecclesiastical or religious Babylon. Now we will focus our attention on the destruction of the commercial and governmental systems that will not take place until the end of the Tribulation” (Tim LaHaye, Revelation, p. 238).

The end-time godless Babylon upon whom God will pour out His wrath at Christ’s coming is given to us in two aspects in Revelation 17 and 18: the first Babylon called a harlot, the second a city. In Part One of this two part study, we noticed that God considers every manmade false-truth worship system to be harlotry, and condemns them. God alone is to be worshiped. In Part Two, we study the godless city Babylon, a commercial and economic world center that has the same spirit as the harlot Babylon. John Walvoord supports this thought:

“The destruction of the harlot in chapter 17 is the fall of Babylon in its ecclesiastical or religious sense...it probably occurs when the beast assumes the role of God at the beginning of the great tribulation.”

World worship systems of all kinds are destroyed in favor of a world religion that honors the world political dictator of Revelation 13.

“In chapter 18, the context seems to indicate that Babylon here is viewed in its political and economic character rather than its religious aspect....Out of ancient Babylon also came the political power, represented in Nebuchadnezzar...In some sense this is continued in the commercial system which came from both the religious and political Babylons....chapter 17 deals with the religious aspect and chapter 18 with the political and economic aspects of Babylon” (The Revelation of Jesus Christ, a commentary by John F. Walvoord, p. 258).

In Revelation 18 Babylon is six times spoken of as a city:

“Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment is come” (18:10).

“Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls” (18:16).

“And were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What city is like the great city?...And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste” (18:18,19).

“And a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, 'Thus will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and not be found any longer” (18:21).

Time after time she is called “the great city.” God sees her as immoral and sensuous (vv. 3, 7, 9). Her wealth will be immense. Other countries will become rich through her wealth (vv. 3, 15-19). “In one hour such great wealth has been laid

waste” (v. 17). “All who had ships at sea became rich with her wealth” (v. 19). “The merchants of earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality” (v. 3).

“The merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes anymore: cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots, and slaves and human lives...” (18:11-13).

Certainly this great city to come, to which ships can come to load and unload cargo of every kind will be the greatest city of trade in the earth. Nations will become rich because of this city (v. 15). She will deal with the most luxurious items earth affords, and thus satisfy the end-time most carnal cravings of men that the passage calls “sensuous.”

“The main reason for believing this Babylon must be rebuilt relates to some prophecies concerning her destruction which are yet unfulfilled” (Tim LaHaye, Revelation, p. 239). Mr. LaHaye is speaking of Isaiah 13 and Jeremiah 50. These passages show the destruction of Babylon in “the day of the LORD.” These passages show that a dual fulfillment must occur. Babylon was destroyed by the Medes and Persians in the 70th year of Israel's captivity. But since Revelation 18 shows Babylon as the headquarters of the world's governmental, commercial, and religious systems in opposition to the will of God, the second

fulfillment will occur at the end of this age. These prophecies in Isaiah and Jeremiah have not yet taken place.

The attitude of last-day Babylon is described as “she glorified herself” (18:7; Jer. 50:29). “I sit as a queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning. For this reason in one day her plagues will come” (18:7,8). Unlawful pride has always been one of man's sins that God hates the most.

Revelation 18:22 also indicates that, “in addition to commerce, religion, and government, Babylon will also be the music capital of the world. If her product is similar to present-day popular music, and it no doubt will be, its noise and confusion will cease upon her fall”. “The sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer.” (LaHaye, Revelation, p. 244)

There is another aspect of this worship/city godless system. Both kill the saints of God. “I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus” (17:6). “In her (city Babylon) was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth” (18:24).

After the city Babylon is rebuilt she will endure only a short time, and her destruction by “fire” will come quickly: “in one hour” (18:10,17). “She will be burned up with fire” (18:8). Like a great millstone cast into the sea will Babylon sink and rise no more (v. 21). She will be thrown down “with violence” (v. 21). This sounds like a catastrophic event, similar to what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah (see Isa. 13:19, 20; Jer. 50:40). “In one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned with

fire” (18:8). She will “sleep a perpetual sleep, and not awake, saith the LORD” (Jer. 51:39). “It shall be desolate forever” (Jer. 51:62).

Also, when Babylon is remembered before God, when He pours out His Wrath upon her, “there were flashes of lightning, and sounds and peals of thunder, and there was a great earthquake, such as there has not been since man came to be on earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty” (16:18-19).

The answer to our question at the beginning: “Will the World's Economy Recover?” is clearly seen by this picture of end-time rebuilt Babylon in Revelation 18. “For future strong, luxurious trade to develop, as is described in that chapter, is required a recovery of the present level of trade and finance, for there cannot be healthy luxury trading without healthy financial circumstances. No matter how weak and bankrupt the present financial crisis will become, it has to recover to reach the high levels that is described in Revelation 18” (Bible Views on the News”, Australia).

How long will it take to recover? We cannot answer that. We just know it will. ☹



Inspirational Thoughts

by Kara Taylor

What's in Your Kitchen Sink?

One of the many things that I admire about my husband is that he is a very clean person. He stays on top of cleaning the house, especially the kitchen. Looking at the bottom of a clean, shiny sink is always a good feeling. This encourages me to clean the dishes right away rather than putting it off.

Discussing this makes me think of the term “kitchen sink communication.” Individuals will store up all their emotions (just like dirty dishes in a sink) and pile it on someone all at once. I'm sure we have all caught ourselves doing this at one time or another. People could wait days, months or even years to disclose information. However, it is better to refrain from doing this, and release our emotions at the moment to express how we are feeling – just as it is better to do the dishes instead of waiting for them to clean themselves.

I find that it is easy to “kitchen sink communicate” with God. Often times, we wait and wait until we are ashamed of our behavior or sin before we come and confess to Him. “I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin” (Psalm 38:18). We release it all at once, and find ourselves feeling somewhat better. Although, what does this do to our relationship with God?

When we procrastinate in expressing our emotions to God, we miss out on the spiritual healing that He wants us to experience at that point in time. James 5:16 says to “confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may

be healed.” It is inevitable that we will sin. I John 1:8-10 states, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and the word has no place in our lives.”

Our Father knows we will sin, but how we handle it is our choice. Don't let things pile up. Confession should not evoke feelings of guilt, obligation or routine. Rather, it should be seen as a positive way to communicate and maintain a healthy relationship with God. ♡

Build it Up

Numbers are big and scary, and have always had the power to overtake me in a way that gives me the creeps! At least, that was how I felt when I was eleven years old. I was in the fifth grade, and my teacher gave out an assignment that involved writing out all the multiples of the numbers one through twenty. She gave us a sheet of graph paper and told us to bring it in the next day.

I was confused with how I would possibly be able to finish this assignment on my own. Luckily, my older brother has always been advanced in math. He offered to help me finish it. My brother did not focus on my fear of numbers, but on the fun that we would have working together on a project. He encouraged me with my persistence, and told me that I could complete it.

Ephesians 4:29 explains, “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen”. My brother could have refused to help me – or worse, criticized me for not understanding the assignment. However, he made me feel like a hard worker for sticking with the challenge.

When he guided me through the assignment, I did not become an expert in math. In fact, I have accepted that I will probably never become one. However, I gained valuable skills while I received his teaching. I understood patience as I dealt with a very scary thing for me. “We have different gifts according to the grace given us” (Romans 12:6). So, it is normal to have difficulty in the areas in which we are not gifted. As believers, we will not possess every spiritual gift (Romans 12: 6-8), although, we are called to understand the different facets of the Spirit in which we live. Galatians 5:22 states, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

With my brother's help, I listed all the multiples up to the number twenty. He told me that he believed we could go further and write out all the multiples up to the number ninety-nine, which would fill up the entire sheet of graph paper. His encouragement, along with my persistence, allowed me to go beyond the expectation of the assignment.

What is your struggle? Have you accepted your need in this area? Which fruit can be fulfilled? I realize now that it is okay if I am not an expert in math, but I am thankful that I gained patience through my struggle. ♡

On Trial

Submitted by Fred VanAssen

It was like a dream; after living what I felt was a 'decent' life, my time on earth came to the end. The first thing I saw, I was sitting on a bench in the waiting room of what I thought to be a court house. The doors opened and I was instructed to come in and have a seat by the defense table. As I looked around I saw the 'prosecutor.' He was a villainous looking gent who snarled as he stared at me. He definitely was the most evil person I have ever seen. I sat down and looked to my left and there sat my attorney, a kind and gentle looking man whose appearance seemed so familiar to me, I felt I knew him.

The corner door opened and there appeared the Judge in full flowing robes. He commanded an awesome presence as he moved across the room. I couldn't take my eyes off of him. As He took His seat behind the bench, He said, "Let us begin."

The prosecutor rose and said, "My name is Satan and I am here to

show you why this woman does not deserve life." He proceeded to tell of lies that I told, things that I stole, and when I cheated others in the past. Satan told of other horrible fantasies that were ever on my mind, and the more he spoke, the further down in my seat I sank. I was so embarrassed and ashamed that I couldn't look at anyone, even my own attorney, as the devil told of sins that even I had completely forgotten about.

As upset as I was at Satan for telling all these things about me, I was equally upset at my attorney who sat there silently not offering any form of defense at all. I know I had been guilty of those things, but I had done some good in my life; couldn't that at least equal out part of the harm I'd done?

Satan finished with a fury and said, "This woman deserves death, she is guilty of all that I have charged and there is not a person who can prove otherwise."

When it was his turn, my attorney first asked if he might approach the bench. The Judge allowed this over the strong objection of Satan, and beckoned him to come forward. As he got up and started walking, I was able to see him in his full splendor and majesty.

I realized why he seemed so familiar; this was Jesus representing me, my Lord and my Savior. He stopped at the bench and softly said to the Judge, "Satan was correct in saying that this woman had sinned.

I won't deny any of these allegations and, yes, the wage of sin is death, and this woman deserves that punishment."

Jesus took a deep breath and turned to his Father and proclaimed, "However, I died on the cross so that this person might have eternal life and she has confessed me as her lord and master, so she is mine." My Lord continued with, "Her name is written in the book of life, and no one can snatch her from me." Satan still does not understand yet. "This woman is not to be given justice, but rather mercy."

As Jesus sat down, He quietly paused, looked at his Father and said, "There is nothing else that needs to be done. I've done it all."

The Judge lifted His mighty hand and slammed the gavel down. The following words bellowed from His lips: "This woman is free. The penalty for her sin has already been paid in full. Case dismissed."

As my Lord led me away, I could hear Satan ranting and raving, "I won't give up, I will win the next one." I asked Jesus, "Have you ever lost a case?"

Christ lovingly smiled and said, "Everyone who has come to me and asked me to represent them has received the same verdict as you; paid in full." 🍀



Refusing the Good

by Chuck Jones

The title of this article may make you wonder, “How is it that people can refuse what’s good?” Well let me explain, first of all, what I mean by “good”. I’m using the term good as what Yahweh says is good. Beyond that definition I think we can be clear on how we can refuse what is good.

This, I know, doesn’t fit everyone, but consider a good diet, one that perhaps doesn’t include your favorite food. That may be rejected because of what we want to eat. Also consider exercise. Most people know that exercise is good for you. Yet there is a substantial amount of people who reject that advice.

The same is true of what Yahweh calls “good” for us. What He calls good, when accepted, leads us to repentance, yet not everyone wants that. There are four areas of “goodness” that pertain to our current study, and we will see how these can still be rejected today.

The first is the grace of Yahweh. I will use the narrow definition of grace as Yahweh’s presence in the time of trouble. When we are suffering, for any reason, we can expect God’s grace to be on us to ensure that we will be able to remain faithful.

A second goodness is deliverance. Some people expect that deliverance is like a magic pill that frees us from the power of sin. I believe that Yahweh expects us to struggle in obedience to fulfill His

will. He is with us, to help us, but He won’t do it for us.

A third area of goodness that pertains to our study is guidance. How often at the moment of decision do we choose against what God wants? We all have a conscience that helps us know the mind of Yahweh (and Christ), yet we often refuse to accept the right choice.

The fourth and final good I’ll mention here is strength. This is the strength to go against the flesh, world, and Satan. When we are at those crossroads of decision and we need the strength to do what’s right, we often reject it. Yahweh’s strength isn’t measured in pounds lifted, but in choices made, this isn’t strength in the physical sense, but in our soul, as Psalm 138:6 says: “In the day when I cried out, You answered me, And made me bold with strength in my soul.”

Before we move on, I want to reiterate that these good things from Yahweh can be rejected. That’s the key that links us with Hosea; what he has to say should be taken to heart.

Israel’s Indictment

Hosea had these words for Israel: “Israel has cast off that which is good: the enemy shall pursue him” (Hosea 8:3). This indictment comes following the first two verses. Yahweh would come swiftly, like an eagle because they

had transgressed the covenant. Yet they said, “My God we know You”. Here is a good example of functional and professing believers.

By rejecting the good Yahweh offered, the results would be that Israel’s enemies would be unrestrained. Yahweh would withdraw His good and let sin have its destructiveness upon them. Allowing the enemies of Israel to be unrestrained means that there would be no grace, deliverance, guidance, or strength. This is a result of effectively telling Yahweh, “I don’t need what You have to offer, I’ll do life on my own terms”.

Hosea records five ways Israel rejected the good Yahweh had to offer. These five things may also be true of us. Here is a list before I go into specifics. They were disloyal, they were self-indulgent, they were self-assured, they refused God’s word, and they were rebellious. We will see later if these could be true of us today as well.

They Were Disloyal

Hosea 8:4 says in part, “They set up kings, but not by Me. They made princes but I did not acknowledge them”. Israel was telling Yahweh that he couldn’t do the job of governance well enough to suit them. Yahweh wanted to be king (which is good), but they rejected that notion; instead they established their own king, Jeroboam.

Today there are ways we can reject Yahweh's king, Jesus. Even though we say we know him, our actions speak louder. Love of the country, or patriotism, can over come our loyalty to Yahweh and Christ. Patriotism can twist our thinking to the point where our country and the kingdom of God are the same thing.

This leads to political agendas. One party over another that will bring something good to the city, state, or nation, while God's desire is forgotten. In times of elections and political debate we are often drawn in because of ideological statements, and God's plan is forgotten. Even social organizations, as good as they may be, can distract our loyalty from Yahweh and His Christ. We must be on guard as to what we place our loyalty to. It was true in Israel's day and it is in ours as well.

Self-Indulgent

In the face of the economic crisis of the past months, there is no doubt that there is nothing new. In Hosea's day he said, "From their silver and gold they made idols for themselves, that they might be cut off" (Hosea 8:4).

This sounds so much like today that it may not need any comment, however, to be sure, I'll say that many Christians today have fallen into this trap. Money is spent on idols, and the storage units to keep all the stuff in. Israel invested their silver and gold into making gods for themselves. They were guilty of finding satisfaction in what their money could produce. They were interested in their own needs first and forgot about Yahweh.

I've heard people say, "It's my money, I've earned it, and I'll spend it as I want." Here's an alternative: have you ever sought Yahweh's

input before you spent money? Not just the large amounts, but the folding money in your pocket? Israel was guilty of using their money without Yahweh's input. Ask yourself how often you are guilty of refusing God's guidance? And are self-indulgent rather than God-indulgent.

Being Self-assured

Israel was also guilty of trusting in their own abilities. There are dire consequences when this happens. Hosea said, "For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: he has no standing grain; the blade shall yield no meal; if it should yield, strangers shall swallow it up" (Hosea 8:7).

Sowing to the wind represents human ability. It's doing the best you can without Yahweh's good. It turns out to be a lot of effort for nothing. Sowing to the wind and reaping the whirlwind is simply another way to say, "you reap what

"have you ever
sought Yahweh's
input before you
spent money?"

you sow". Without Yahweh's guidance we are in the dark, bumbling, stumbling and wondering why we can't get ahead. The fact is that it isn't our ability, knowledge, or strength, as Psalm 127:1-2 says: "*Unless Yahweh builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless Yahweh watches over the city, The watchman guards it in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, To stay up late, Eating the bread of toil; For he gives sleep to his loved ones*".

Yahweh's goodness extends to our desire to be assured. We don't need to trust in our own intelligence, but we can trust in His protection. This is seen in those who know "how to handle an enemy". They trust in their power to get even, their ability to make them pay; yet this avenue will only reap the whirlwind.

The problem is also present in those who trust themselves in spending their money, having conversations, and carrying out their duties. We must be reminded of Proverbs 3:5, "Trust Yahweh with all your heart, and don't lean on your own understanding". Often we dive head long into the day's activities without so much as a "by your leave".

There is always a necessity to seek Yahweh's leading in spending thousands of dollars, but what about that five or twenty dollar impulse purchase? The same goes for conversations, even the surface ones. Are we sure our conversation is with grace, seasoned with salt? Even our daily tasks should be considered first in prayer before we move into them. I'm thinking of our employment, household chores, or anything. "Whether we eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). We are not wise enough nor strong enough to have assurance in our own abilities. Trusting in what we can accomplish in ourselves is sowing to the wind. The results will be disastrous; the whirlwind.

Considered Yahweh's Laws Strange

Hosea's words were to the point; "I have written for him the great things of My law, but they were considered a strange thing" (Hosea 8:12). The very thought of thinking God's law "strange" ought

to make us tremble. It's the thought that Yahweh's law is old and out dated; something that is hypothetical. Israel may have thought that God's law was a set of good ideas but didn't have any relevance in everyday life. It was thought of as something foreign that applied to everyone else, "but not to me!" There are people well versed in the Old Testament that say that it isn't relevant for the Christian today. I don't agree with that idea.

All of Scripture applies to the believer, from Hosea's day to the first disciples, right down to us. The principles that are contained in scripture won't change; if one chooses to act like anyone who defied Yahweh, they can expect the same results recorded in Scripture! What is contained in Scripture concerns everyone, believer and non-believer alike. It has truth for both groups of people. As you read the Bible you will find yourself there; you will find something that speaks directly to your life. God's word is not a "strange," foreign thing.

Their Rebellion in One Statement

The first four indictments against Israel are summed up in Hosea 8:14, "For Israel has forgotten his Maker..." Their lives had become involved with things that didn't include Yahweh. He was no longer important to them. This is described in what Hosea goes on to say, "... and has built temples; Judah also has multiplied fortified cities; But I will send fire upon his cities, and it shall devour his palaces."

They built castles of false security, the same is true today. There is talk of a border wall to keep illegal aliens out. America has inter-continental ballistic missiles

for protection, yet do these things make us secure, if Yahweh says we are not? Our trust needs to be in Yahweh, not the security measures

“if one chooses to act like anyone who defied Yahweh, they can expect the same results recorded in Scripture!”

we can devise.

As the Apostle Paul said, *“They profess to know God but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work”* (Titus 1:16).

For Us Today

We too have the ability to refuse Yahweh's good for us. The question is, how do we avoid that? Here are a few guidelines that will help.

1. Know that Scripture is true and speaks to you directly. There are many voices in the world that seek your allegiance. You are responsible to know Yahweh's voice! A current argument used to draw people away from Scripture is, "All truth is God's truth". That is a factual statement, there is not doubt about it, yet on the other side it still remains that all lies come from the devil. One sure way of knowing the difference is knowing Scripture; read it and take it to heart.

2. Confess your loyalty in word and action. There is a necessity for what we say to be in agreement with what we do. Don't settle for being a professing Christian, move on to being a functioning one. Worship Yahweh in spirit and truth.

3. Seek God's guidance. Pray about everything and seek to honor Him in all you do, say, or think. Do you pray about which TV program you watch (this goes for web surfing too)? It's not enough to think that if you earn the money, you can spend it as you wish. Yahweh is involved in giving you health and employment in order to supply you with what you need. Spend your money with His guidance so that it will glorify Him.

4. Don't be too proud. All of our achievements, money, influence, or family origins are nothing to brag about. There is nothing we have, can do, or have done, that will impress Yahweh.

5. Know who Yahweh is. The words of Jeremiah are fitting here. They serve to give us a proper perspective: *“Thus says Yahweh, Don't let the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, don't let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he has understanding, and knows me, that I am Yahweh who exercises loving kindness, justice, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, says Yahweh”* (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Don't refuse what Yahweh wants you to have. What He says is good for us, is good indeed. Trust Him, you won't be ashamed. 🙏

“Trust in Yahweh with all your heart, And don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, And he will direct your paths. Don't be wise in your own eyes. Fear Yahweh, and depart from evil” (Proverbs 3:5-7)

Ability and Availability

by Pastor Steve Taylor

It's not so much about ability as it is availability. In fact, it seems that God more often than not uses those with limited ability. Consider Gideon of the Old Testament:

"The LORD looked at him and said, 'Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?' He said to Him, 'O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house.' But the LORD said to him, 'Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man'" (Judges 6:14-16).

God's use of men such as Gideon drives home the truth that "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong," (1 Corinthians 1:27)

The absurdity of the ages is that our Lord Jesus is preparing His followers, most of whom have little power and influence in this present age, to rule His world-wide one-thousand year kingdom on earth. It is the ultimate foolishness and weakness which will shame the wise and the strong.

Most of us are in good company with Gideon. We may be the "least likely to succeed" in our class or

family, and we may live in relative obscurity in a nearly-forgotten corner of the world, but like the minuscule mustard seed, we are growing in the Lord for the greatness He has designed.

I am awed by the company I keep. The believers I minister to and within the body of Christ are destined for far greater fame and influence than the most notable of today's leaders and dignitaries. It is thrilling to be in the company of the foolish and weak!

Government leaders, don't lose sight of your exalted status even as you look at the foolishness and weakness of your life today. Perhaps you'll live life today with a mischievous smirk on your face that will cause others to think you are up to something, because you are! In partnership with the Coming King, we are conspiring to rule the world in perfect justice and truth.

It really is far more about availability than ability. The King of Kings supplies the ability as we are available to Him. May He take our foolishness and weakness and turn them into wisdom and strength today as we surrender to Him and His "government-in-training" work in our lives. 🍀

Children's Science Exam

Submitted by Donna Marshall

To all the teachers--who says that grading papers isn't fun? Read through these Children's Science Exam Answers ...

Q: Name the four seasons.

A: Salt, pepper, mustard and vinegar.

Q: Explain one of the processes by which water can be made safe to drink.

A: Flirtation makes water safe to drink because it removes large pollutants like grit, sand, dead sheep and canoeists.

Q: How is dew formed?

A: The sun shines down on the leaves and makes them perspire.

Q: How can you delay milk turning sour? (Brilliant, love this)

A: Keep it in the cow.

Q: What are steroids?

A: Things for keeping carpets still on the stairs.

Q: Name a major disease associated with cigarettes.

A: Premature death.

Q: How are the main parts of the body categorized? (e.g., abdomen.)

A: The body is consisted into three parts - the brainium, the borax and the abdominal cavity. The brainium contains the brain, the borax contains the heart and lungs, and the abdominal cavity contains the five bowels, A, E, I, O, and U.

Q: What is the fibula?

A: A small lie. 🍀

Who wrote the song “Precious Lord”?

Submitted by Donna Moore

Back in 1932, I was a fairly new husband. My wife, Nettie and I lived in a little apartment on Chicago 's south side. One hot August afternoon I had to go to St. Louis where I was to be the featured soloist at a large revival meeting. I didn't want to go. Nettie was in the last month of pregnancy with our first child. But a lot of people were expecting me in St. Louis . I kissed Nettie good-bye, clattered downstairs to our Model A and, in a fresh Lake Michigan breeze, chugged out of Chicago on Route 66.

However, outside the city, I discovered that in my anxiety at leaving, I had forgotten my music case. I wheeled around and headed back. I found Nettie sleeping peacefully. I hesitated by her bed; something was strongly telling me to stay. But eager to get on my way, and not wanting to disturb Nettie, I shrugged off the feeling and quietly slipped out of the room with my music.

The next night, in the steaming St. Louis heat, the crowd called on me to sing again and again. When I finally sat down, a messenger boy ran up with a Western Union telegram. I ripped open the envelope. Pasted on the yellow sheet were the words: “Your wife just died.”

People were happily singing and clapping around me, but I could hardly keep from crying out. I rushed to a phone and called home.

All I could hear on the other end was 'Nettie is dead. Nettie is dead.'

When I got back, I learned that Nettie had given birth to a boy. I swung between grief and joy. Yet that same night, the baby died. I buried Nettie and our little boy together, in the same casket. Then I fell apart.

For days I closeted myself. I felt that God had done me an injustice. I didn't want to serve Him anymore or write gospel songs. I just wanted to go back to that jazz world I once knew so well. But then, as I hunched alone in that dark apartment those first sad days, I thought back to the afternoon I went to St. Louis . Something kept telling me to stay with Nettie. Was that something God? Oh, if I had paid more attention to Him that day, I would have stayed and been with Nettie when she died.

From that moment on I vowed to listen more closely to Him. But still I was lost in grief. Everyone was kind to me, especially one friend. The following Saturday evening he took me up to Maloney's

Poro College , a neighborhood music school. It was quiet; the late evening sun crept through the curtained windows.

I sat down at the piano, and my hands began to browse over the keys. Something happened to me then. I felt at peace. I felt as though I could reach out and touch God. I found myself playing a melody, once into my head they just seemed to fall into place: 'Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn, through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the light, take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.'

The Lord gave me these words and melody, He also healed my spirit. I learned that when we are in our deepest grief, when we feel farthest from God, this is when He is closest, and when we are most open to His restoring power.

And so I go on living for God willingly and joyfully, until that day comes when He will take me and gently lead me home.

-Tommy Dorsey- 🎷

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Some Interesting Answers From Children.

TEACHER: Maria, go to the map and find North America .

MARIA: Here it is.

TEACHER: Correct. Now class, who discovered America ?

CLASS: Maria.

TEACHER: John, why are you doing your math multiplication on the floor?

JOHN: You told me to do it without using tables.

TEACHER: Glenn, how do you spell 'crocodile'?

GLENN: K-R-O-K-O-D-I-A-L'

TEACHER: No, that's wrong

GLENN: Maybe it is wrong, but you asked me how I spell it.

TEACHER: Donald, what is the chemical formula for water?

DONALD: H I J K L M N O.

TEACHER: What are you talking about?

DONALD: Yesterday you said it's H to O.

TEACHER: Winnie, name one important thing we have today that we didn't have ten years ago.

WINNIE: Me!

**HAVE YOU
TALKED
TO GOD
TODAY?**

TEACHER: Millie, give me a sentence starting with 'I.'

MILLIE: I is...

TEACHER: No, Millie..... Always say, 'I am.'

MILLIE: All right..... 'I am the ninth letter of the alphabet.'

TEACHER: George Washington not only chopped down his father's cherry tree, but also admitted it. Now, Louie, do you know why his father didn't punish him?

LOUIS: Because George still had the axe in his hand.

TEACHER: Now, Simon, tell me frankly, do you say prayers before eating?

SIMON: No sir, I don't have to, my Mom is a good cook.

TEACHER: Clyde, your composition on 'My Dog' is exactly the same as your brother's. Did you copy his?

CLYDE: No, sir. It's the same dog.

TEACHER: Harold, what do you call a person who keeps on talking when people are no longer interested?

HAROLD: A teacher

TEACHER: Glen, why do you always get so dirty?

GLEN: Well, I'm a lot closer to the ground than you are. ☹

The Center Of The Bible

Q: What is the shortest chapter in the Bible?

A: Psalms 117

Q: What is the longest chapter in the Bible?

A: Psalms 119

Q: Which chapter is in the center of the Bible?

A: Psalms 118

Fact: There are 594 chapters before Psalms 118

Fact: There are 594 chapters after Psalms 118

Add these numbers up and you get 1188.

Q: What is the center verse in the Bible?

A: Psalms 118:8

Q: Does this verse say something significant about God's perfect will for our lives?

The next time someone says they would like to find God's perfect will for their lives and that they want to be in the center of His will, just send them to the center of His Word!

Psalms 118:8 "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man."

Now isn't it interesting how this worked out (or was God in the center of it)? ☹