

# UPLOOK

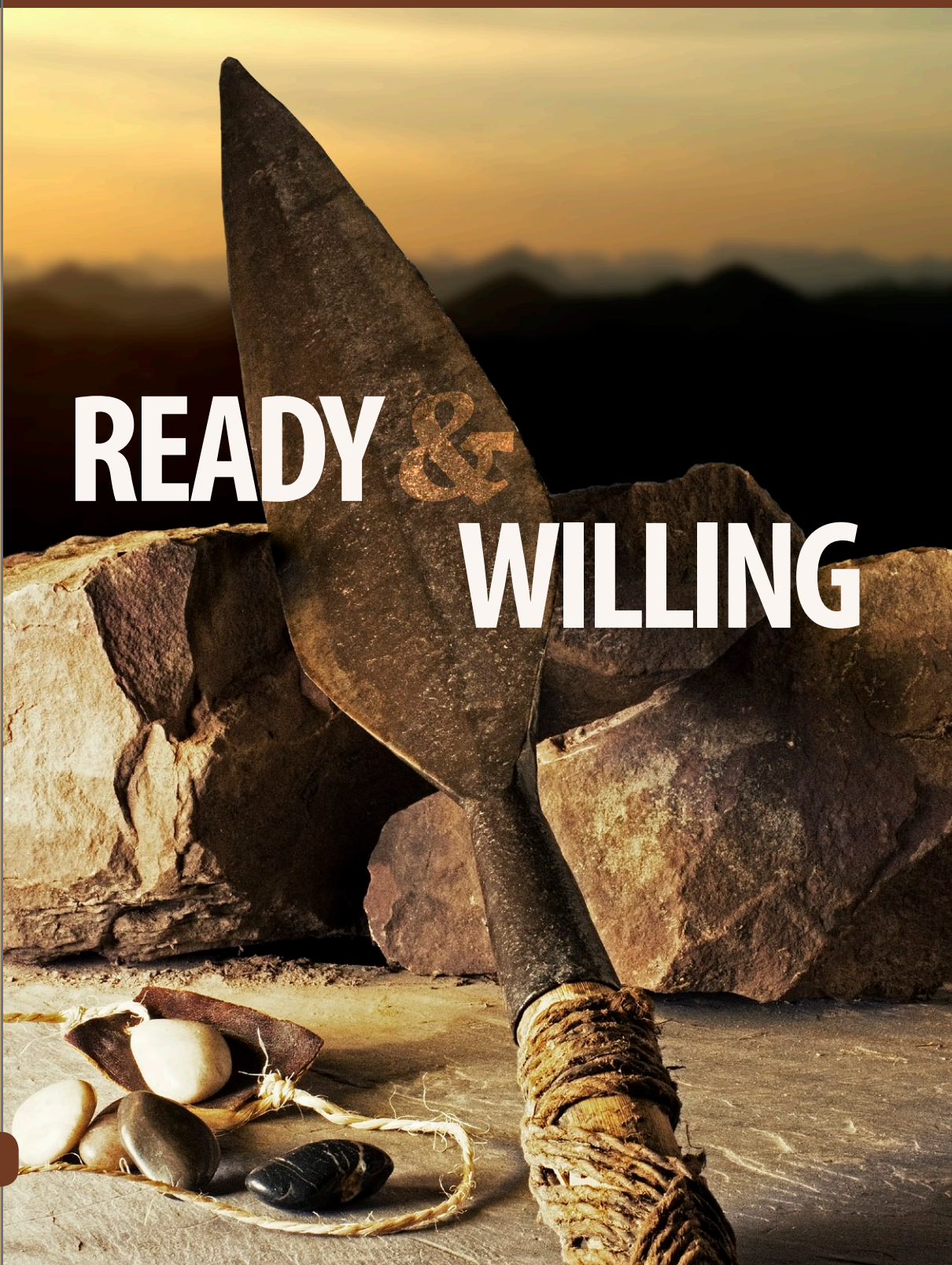
JAN-FEB 2010

Assess the Need • Catch the Vision • Take the Challenge

**FINDING MY  
MESSIAH**  
Noad Shapiro

**READY FOR  
BATTLE**  
Malcolm Horlock

**SACRED HEART  
PREP SCHOOL**  
H.R. Ghezzi



**READY &  
WILLING**

[www.uplook.org](http://www.uplook.org)



John Nicholson

*"For Thou, Lord,  
art good, and ready  
to forgive, and  
abundant in  
lovingkindness  
to all who call  
upon Thee."  
(Psalm 86:5)*

## Ready and Willing

It was a time of great need...

The Philistines had gathered their armies for battle against the people of God. As Israel watched, a champion came out from the armies of the Philistines—Goliath of Gath. The giant cried out, *"I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together"* (1 Sam. 17:10). Surely Israel was ready for this—it was for just such an eventuality that Israel had demanded of Samuel, *"Give us a king...that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles"* (1 Sam. 8) and had been given Saul (1 Sam. 9). But, in response to Goliath's taunting, we read, *"When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid"* (1 Sam. 17:11) and fled from him (v. 24). Not one man in all the army of Israel was ready and willing to meet the enemy. Not even the king.

But the Lord was ready. He had His own man—an unexpected man, a man after God's own heart. He had carefully prepared David for this day. When David saved his father's sheep from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, he had no idea that it was preparation to one day save his Father's sheep from the paw of the Philistine (v. 37). But God knew.

It was a time of great need. The people of God were oppressed. Sin—a much greater giant than Goliath—abounded. As before, those who were officially tasked with solving the problem were no help at all. In fact, the religious leaders compounded the difficulties by piling overwhelming loads onto the backs of those searching for deliverance from sin. But once again, God had His Man ready—an unexpected Man, the Man after God's own heart.

Untainted by sin, David's greater Son triumphed over the effects of sin at every turn—diseases cured, wild animals tamed, storms calmed, death turned back—proving that He was certainly able to deal with sin. But some wondered, was He willing? One such man, a leper, came to the Lord Jesus and, falling before Him, said, *"If You are willing, You can make me clean"* (Mk. 1:40). Imagine the joy and relief in this poor leper's heart when the Lord lovingly replied, *"I am willing; be cleansed."*

It is a time of great need. Spiritual darkness surrounds us. What comfort we ought to take from knowing that the Lord is willing! But do we doubt His willingness? Perhaps we wouldn't phrase it exactly that way, but when we are confronted with a spiritual crisis—a child struggling spiritually, a Christian marriage floundering, a local church withering, disinterest among believers—do we resign ourselves and expect the worst? If so, doesn't this reveal that, deep down, we don't truly believe the Lord is willing to help His people? Similarly, some question whether He desires to save the lost (or at least most of them), in spite of clear statements like, *"the Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Pet. 3:9).

One look at the cross ought to silence forever any fear that the Lord is reluctant to work for the good of His creatures. He paid the highest price. Emblazoned across Calvary we see God's eternal proclamation, "I am willing!" No, the problem isn't the Lord.

Which brings the issue to us. Any man in Israel could have defeated Goliath—the Lord was with them!—but only one man was willing. There are spiritual problems around and within us—some of them big problems, giant problems. Are we people after God's own heart, ready and willing to embrace the work that God has for us?

We apologize for the lateness of this issue. We are working to ensure better frequency.

# U P L O O K

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UPLOOK magazine is intended to encourage the people of God in fidelity to His Word, fervency in intercessory prayer, labors more abundant, and love to the Lord. Believing in the practical Headship of Christ and the local autonomy of each assembly, this is not intended to be an official organ of any group or federation of local churches. The editor and authors take responsibility for materials published. For any blessing which accrues, to God be the glory.

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### Submissions

Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope with all unsolicited material. News items must be submitted at least two months in advance of issue requested. Selected news items will be carried for two issues (if time permits). The editor reserves the right to determine those items best suited for the magazine. Editorial decisions are final. Photos accepted. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for photos you wish returned. Send news items to [frontlines@uplook.org](mailto:frontlines@uplook.org)

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- 3) by contacting our office at any time, by phone, fax, mail or e-mail.

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## Overdoing It?

What is your 'reasonable service'?

**C**an you over-prepare? Whenever holidays arrive, much preparation occurs in homes across the nation. The fear of being over-prepared when your family walks through the doorway is nonexistent. We know that the longer the time spent preparing, generally, the more at ease you are when the event arrives.

### Too prepared?

If there were one preparation project that could be considered the greatest, if anyone could be thought to have over-prepared, this would have been the occasion: *"King David said... 'The work is great, because the temple is not for man but for the Lord God. Now for the house of my God I have prepared with all my might: gold for things to be made of gold, silver for things of silver, bronze for things of bronze, iron for things of iron, wood for things of wood, onyx stones, stones to be set, glistening stones of various colors, all kinds of precious stones, and marble slabs in abundance'"* (1 Chron. 29:1-2).

This describes what David prepared for the temple of the Lord, including all the materials for its building. Until then, there was no temple, only the tabernacle constructed in the wilderness. The tabernacle was simple; it did have its fair share of precious stones and metals but nothing of this grandeur. David planned to construct something much greater. To do this, he didn't simply collect materials and hope they would be used. He collected materials for specific purposes in the construction of the temple. There was a plan involved, and Solomon used all that his father had prepared.

### Too zealous?

*"Moreover, because I have set my affection on the house of my God, I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house, my own special treasure of gold and silver: three thousand talents of gold...and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls...Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?"* (vv. 3-5).

David's preparation was from his heart (28:2), reveal-



**"We are never forced to worship God; it's our decision."**

ing his passion for the worship and glory of the Lord. He didn't haphazardly grab materials but took time to properly prepare. Not only was it proper, it was whole-hearted. He could say, *"I have prepared with all my might."* And he went beyond collecting from others, to giving from (as the NIV calls it) his "personal treasures." David gave up his time, possessions, and career as king in preparation for a time to come. His perspective was right. How will we answer his question, *"Who is willing to consecrate himself to the Lord?"*

### Too important!

The choice is before us. We are never forced to worship God; it's our decision. Like David, we acknowledge, *"All things come from Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee"* (29:14). We have been given the materials: the Spirit reveals the Son to us, who in turn unveils the Father, all through the inspired Word of God. We must now, as David did, separate our lives to God. It may seem foolish to give up promising careers, time for ourselves, and our own possessions, but I'm sure David doesn't regret the time or resources he spent preparing for the temple.

In eternity, none of us will look back on this life and say, "I overdid it. I gave too much to the Lord. I over-prepared for the world to come." I imagine these sacrifices will be the moments we will remember at the end of our days. They are this life's wisest investments.

—DAVID NICHOLSON

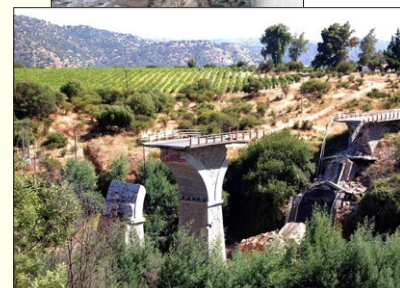
## News from earthquake-affected saints

Reports from Chilean and Haitian workers

Brother David Jones (San Filipe, Chile) tells of Christians miraculously spared, although several assembly buildings were badly damaged and a number of believers have lost their homes. He writes: "The Chile EQ Fund 2010 has been set up... Already close to \$12,000 has gone out. This has been used to purchase foodstuffs, building materials, and also help to families who have suffered loss." The need for food is lessening; now the focus is on reconstruction, as the rainy season is soon upon them.

Al Adams (FL) writes: "The doctors, nurses, elders, full-time workers and helpers (from assemblies in the Dominican Republic)... usually have about 600 patients show up every day... A flatbed truck was loaded with rice, sardines, baloney, water and pastas at the capital. When we were leaving the triage unit, [they] asked if there was any way we could send 5,000 tents. We told her that we would do our best to help. Let the reader note that the rainy season starts in approximately 30 days... The Dominican brethren are very determined that a permanent testimony be gained by the efforts that is being done for the Haitian people in Port au Prince."

Support may be sent through Missionary Service Committee ([www.msccanada.org](http://www.msccanada.org)) or CMML ([www.cmmlusa.org](http://www.cmmlusa.org)).



### **GREATER VANCOUVER EASTER CONF.**

The conference, sponsored by 6 local assemblies, is planned for Apr 2-3 at Granville Chapel, 5901 Granville St., Vancouver, BC. Scheduled speakers are Ian Grant (UK) and James Hull (CO). There will be children's programs each day. **Contact:** Norm Chandler ph: 604-271-108

### **RETREAT IN GEORGIA**

Camp Hope will host their Father & Son Retreat Apr 16-18 beginning Friday with registration at 6 PM and ending Sunday with lunch. The speaker will be Rex Trogdon (NC). Cost: \$60 per family. **Contact:** Steve Roys ph: 770-536-4787 7011 Pony Lake Road, Dahlonega, GA 30533 email: [camphopega@arilion.com](mailto:camphopega@arilion.com) web: [www.camphopega.org](http://www.camphopega.org)

### **8th ANNUAL BELIEVER'S CHALLENGE**

Sponsored by Louisville Bible Fellowship, KY, a retreat for

unmarried young people 13 and older will be held Apr 16-18 at Country Lake Christian Retreat, 815 Country Lake Road, Underwood, IN. Dr. Steve Price (KS) will be the speaker. Registration cost of \$35. per person includes lodging and meals. Please register by Apr 1. **Contact:** Russell Webber ph: 502-543-8209 email: [rsabmbw@yahoo.com](mailto:rsabmbw@yahoo.com)

### **CONFERENCE IN INDIANA**

The annual spring conference at the Gospel Chapel, 321 Cliff Dr., Logansport, IN, will be held Apr 17, Lord willing. The expected speaker is Ken Fleming (IA). Refreshments at 9:30 AM with sessions at 10 and 11 AM with lunch provided. **Contact:** Ralph Garver ph: 574-722-1012 email: [leegar@verizon.net](mailto:leegar@verizon.net)

### **SPRING CONFERENCE IN AL**

The Christians meeting at Hope Bible Chapel in Birmingham, AL

would like it to be known that their annual spring conference will be held Apr 23-25. The invited speaker is David Dunlap (FL). **Contact:** Buddy Hughes ph: 205-467-2601 Alton Sizemore ph: 205-988-9931

### **CHICAGO AREA CONFERENCE**

The Palos Hills Christian Assembly is hosting its annual conference Apr 23-25. Scheduled speakers are Randy Amos (NY), Charlie Fizer (IA), and Jim McKendrick (MI). In addition to the main sessions, there will be a program for children. **Contact:** Rich Battaglin ph: 708-599-9407 e-mail: [paloschristians@hotmail.com](mailto:paloschristians@hotmail.com)

### **LADIES MISSIONARY CONFERENCE**

Hosted by Oakwood and Turner Road Bible Chapels, the 33rd Annual Conference is planned for May 1 from 9:30 AM to 3 PM at Oakwood Bible Chapel, 2514 Cabana W., N9G 1E5, Windsor, ON. Lunch provided.

## FRONT LINES *continued*

The group who  
gathered at the 2009  
Vessels of Honor



Child care for 2 yr. olds and under. Speakers are Dr. Nadia Mikhael and Ruth Toy - Wycliff Bible Translators, plus missionary teams reports. **Contact:** Jan Gillis ph: 519-967-1975 email: [ngillis@cogeco.ca](mailto:ngillis@cogeco.ca)

### 65th ANNUAL BIBLE CONFERENCE

Lake Park Chapel, 201 Schlieff Dr., Belle Chasse, LA will hold its conference May 1-2. This year, Keith Trevolt (KS) will be the speaker. **Contact:** Ray Cummings, 103 Dickson Dr., Belle Chase, LA 70037 ph: 504-239-7068 or 504-393-7083 email: [lakeparkchapel@cmaaccess.com](mailto:lakeparkchapel@cmaaccess.com)

### IN TENTS

This is an opportunity for young women age 18 and older for practical preparation in supporting the work of the Lord. Learn how to be a woman who can strike a victory for God and still be in tents like Sarah and Jael. You will learn about organizing, telling your personal life story, how to host an evangelistic event, visit the elderly, have personal devotions, Bible study, how to keep the tent clean and much more. It will be held during May in the tent of John and Ann Bjorlie in Grand Rapids, MI. **Contact:** Ann Bjorlie email: [abjorli@hotmail.com](mailto:abjorli@hotmail.com)

### ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN CALIFORNIA

The believers at the Claremont Bible Chapel in Claremont, CA, invite you to their spring conference being held May 14-16. The speakers will be Mike Attwood (GA) and Scott DeGross (KS). Meetings begin Friday at 7:30 PM Friday and 10:00 AM Saturday. Overnight accommodations and nursery care are available. **Contact:** Rick Markley ph: 909-625-7463

email: [rickmarkley@markleymedia.com](mailto:rickmarkley@markleymedia.com)  
web: [www.claremontchapel.org](http://www.claremontchapel.org)

### HOME SCHOOL CAMP IN GEORGIA

Camp Hope in GA will hold their Home School Camp May 24-29 for ages 7-19. The speaker for junior campers is TBA and Gerald St-Laurent will speak to the teen campers. The week begins Monday at 3:00 PM with registration and ends Saturday after breakfast. Registration form and a complete summer camp schedule are available on the web at [www.camphopega.org](http://www.camphopega.org) **Contact:** Steve Roys, 7011 Pony Lake Road., Dahlonega, GA 30533 email: [camphopega@arilion.com](mailto:camphopega@arilion.com) ph: 770-536-4787

### VESSELS OF HONOR 2010 MISSOURI

A Young Adults Conference convened by East Tulsa Bible Chapel will be held May 28-31 on the campus of Park University, Parkville. The theme will be "New Testament Power - Renewing a Passion for Christ." General session speakers are Mike Attwood (GA), Joe Reese (ON) and Scott DeGross (KS). Seminar session speakers, along with the general session speakers, are Ann Reese (ON) and Jesse Gentile (FL). **Contact:** Jim Lindamood ph: 918-663-1121 email: [jimlindamood@vesselsofhonor.org](mailto:jimlindamood@vesselsofhonor.org) Dan Moffitt ph: 918-744-6484 email: [danmoffitt@sbcglobal.net](mailto:danmoffitt@sbcglobal.net) web: [www.vesselsofhonor.org](http://www.vesselsofhonor.org)

### IBF CONFERENCE 2010

The Indian Brethren Fellowship Conference, with a theme focused on *Delights of our life in Christ*, will be held Jun 30-Jul 4 at Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, IN. Speakers are Kenneth Daughters

(IA), George Dawson (India), and Albert Sunil (India). **Contact:** web: [www.ibfus.org](http://www.ibfus.org) email: [info@ibf.org](mailto:info@ibf.org)

### DISCIPLE WEEKEND IN MICHIGAN

The third annual Disciple Weekend for young men age 15 and older will be held Jun 24-27 at the Good News Center in Marne, MI. It is an opportunity to learn, as a follower of Christ, how to be His disciple and become a disciple maker for Him. John Lyman (MI), John Bjorlie (MI) and Bill Moore (IA) will speak on the subject The Disciplines of a Godly Man. The schedule includes rigorous Bible teaching, Christian fellowship and outdoor activities. The cost is \$60 for the entire weekend, discounted by \$10 if you register by Jun 5.

**Contact:** Brian Veenstra email: [godsroofer.veenstra@gmail.com](mailto:godsroofer.veenstra@gmail.com) web: [www.gracentruth.info](http://www.gracentruth.info)

### FAMILY CONFERENCE IN GEORGIA

Camp Hope will be hosting the Third Annual Southeast Family Conference Jul 24-30. Speakers will be Joe Reese (ON) and John Gordon (NC) for the adults and Phil Guikema (FL) for the children. Registration will begin Saturday afternoon with the first meeting at 7:00 PM. Camp will end Friday morning. **Contact:** Steve Roys email: [camphopega@arilion.com](mailto:camphopega@arilion.com) 7011 Pony Lake Rd., Dahlonega, GA 30533 ph: 770-536-4787

### FAMILY CAMP DISCOUNT

Looking for a spiritually-uplifting, relaxing, and inexpensive vacation, a chance to make new friends and have fun with your whole family? Family Camps at Camp Iroquoia, located in northeastern PA near Binghamton,

NY, offers all this. Family Camp I will be Jul 25-31 with Warren Henderson (WI) and Family Camp II will be Aug 15-21 with Randy Amos (NY). This year, \$200 discounts are available for a limited number of first-time camping families. **Email** Tom Steere at [lookup@frontiernet.net](mailto:lookup@frontiernet.net) to apply for a discount. First come, first served, so hurry!  
web: [www.iroquoia.org](http://www.iroquoia.org)

### FAMILY CAMP IN WV

The West Virginia Bible Conference invites you to their annual family camp Aug 1-6 with speakers John Gordon (NC) and Randy Amos (NY). Nursery and children's ministry are provided. The conference is held at Bluestone Camp and Retreat near Hinton, WV, surrounded by beautiful mountain scenery. A detailed brochure can be mailed to you per request. **Contact:** Brent Jones ph: 304-466-4738 e-mail: [brentandhope@verizon.net](mailto:brentandhope@verizon.net)

### MEN'S BIBLE STUDY SEMINAR

Pine Bush Bible Camp, located in Bloomingburg, NY, is planning an intensive Bible study seminar Aug 29-Sep 2 with Randy Amos (NY). This session for men who are serious about the study of God's Word begins with Sunday dinner and ends with breakfast on Thursday. The theme is "Highlights of Galatians and I Corinthians: Foundation and Building Structure of the Christian Church" and

the cost is \$100. **Contact:** Charles Myers ph: 732-451-9444 email: [Cvspeedie@aol.com](mailto:Cvspeedie@aol.com) After Jul 1, call the camp directly at 845-361-1871.

### LABOR DAY CONFERENCE IN TN

The annual Mid-South Labor Day Conference is scheduled to be held Sep 3-6 at Horton Haven Christian Camp in Chapel Hill, TN. This conference is for the entire family. Larry Price (FL) will minister to the adults, Justin Phelan (IA) will be speaking to teens and Art Manning (IA) will provide teaching for the children. Plan to attend and enjoy teaching from the Word of God, fellowship with other believers and a variety of activities for all ages. For registration information contact Wendy Phelan ph: 931-364-7656 email: [Wendy@hortonhaven.org](mailto:Wendy@hortonhaven.org)

### ASSEMBLIES UNITE IN KANSAS

Spruce Hill Bible Chapel in Kansas City, MO has closed and is no longer meeting as an assembly. Believers from Spruce Hill Bible Chapel are now meeting with believers at The Bible Chapel of Shawnee in Shawnee, Kansas. Please remove Spruce Hill Bible Chapel from your mailing lists.

### NEW WORK IN CALIFORNIA

Seeking believers to begin a New Testament assembly in the Modesto, CA area. **Contact:** Paul Burgio email: [paburgio@comcast.net](mailto:paburgio@comcast.net) ph: 209-577-2846

The gospel being shared at a C3 event in 2009.



### MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

#### Cross Canada Cruisers

Team C3 Is gearing up again! Focusing on Ontario, orientation is being planned for mid-May 2010. The team is hoping to join Good News on the Move for their final gospel effort at the beginning of June. The team will then return to work with assemblies, in both southern and northern Ontario. Are you 18 years or older? Do you have a heart for those without a Saviour? Do you have a cooperative team spirit? Are you "well reported of" by your assembly? This could be a turning point in your life for God. Those responsible are also looking to the Lord for His provision for:

- Individuals and assemblies willing to pray for the Lord's blessing on all aspects of this venture for Him.
- Assemblies interested in hosting the team and having the team partner with them in their gospel outreach.
- Those interested in serving with the team in a leadership or teaching role.

**Contact:** Randy Hoffman email: [randyhoffman@sympatico.ca](mailto:randyhoffman@sympatico.ca)  
Fil Capuano email: [fil.capuano@sympatico.ca](mailto:fil.capuano@sympatico.ca)

## WHERE and WHEN is the GOOD NEWS on the MOVE FINAL OUTREACH?

Good questions! Hopefully we are also close to some good answers, but not for a few days yet. The time will most probably be the first full week of June (Jun 7-12). Of course any are free to join the GNOM team for the prep week,

the week previous to that. There is the possibility that we will try covering three satellite towns in a yet undisclosed region of the Midwest. The saints prayers are encouraged. Watch [www.goodnewsoutreach.info](http://www.goodnewsoutreach.info) for the latest news.

## FRONT LINES *continued*

### *Health Care Director*

Horton Haven Christian Camp in Chapel Hill, TN is looking for an individual to serve as Health Care Director. This is for 10 weeks of summer camp from Jun 1-Aug 6. **Contact:** Matt Phelan ph: 931-364-7656 email: [Matt@Hortonhaven.org](mailto:Matt@Hortonhaven.org) Horton Haven Christian Camp, Box 276, Chapel Hill, TN 37034

*Rest Haven Homes* is seeking to fill a management position with a Human Resource professional. Primary duties include management of the hiring process, wages, and benefits. The position requires knowledge of Federal and State laws including Workers' Compensation, Family Medical Leave, and Unemployment. The candidate must be a believer who seeks to serve others with love. Prior experience or training is highly desirable. Rest Haven is a long term care facility located in Grand Rapids, Michigan. **Contact:** Brian Wilson, Administrator email: [Brian@resthavenhomes.org](mailto:Brian@resthavenhomes.org) ph: 616-363-6819

*Riverview Chapel*, Hinton WV, is looking for a few good men (age 18+) who love the Lord and have a burden to reach the lost for a 3 month local mission (Apr/May/June). With the encouragement of your local elders, contact Pat Brandon ph: 304-466-1117 or Avi Bastajian ph: 304-309-4311 email: [bastajian@suddenlink.net](mailto:bastajian@suddenlink.net)

### *Camp Li-Lo-Li*

The camp, located in southwestern New York State, is looking to fill the position of Assistant Property Manager to support the year-round operation, maintenance and protection of camp's facilities, equipment

Please continue to pray for the ongoing efforts of the Lord's people in challenging locations.

and grounds. The applicant should have a personal testimony of saving faith in Christ, exhibit a sincere love for the Lord, spiritual maturity, and a desire to serve Him at Camp. In addition, the applicant should have a high degree of mechanical aptitude. Housing is provided. **Contact:** Terry Wilson ph: 209-814-6957 email: [campadministrator@camp-li-li.com](mailto:campadministrator@camp-li-li.com) web: [www.camp-li-li.com](http://www.camp-li-li.com)

## COMMENDATIONS

### *Joshua and Stephanie Shelor*

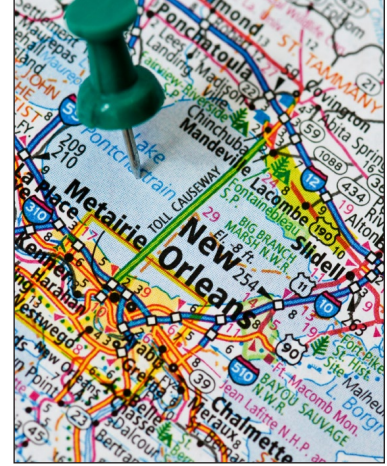
The saints at Grace Gospel Chapel, Richmond VA are happy to commend Joshua and Stephanie to the work of the Lord as He leads. Joshua and Stephanie will fellowship at Fleming Chapel in Roanoke, VA while ministering and serving among Virginia and area assemblies. Joshua is gifted in ministering the Word and they both have an exercise for Bible studies, youth work and camp work.

### *Kurian Parayil*

The assembly at Believers Bible Chapel, Coon Rapids MN, announce the commendation of Kurian to the full time work of the Lord. An active and committed elder since the inception of Believer's Bible Chapel, Kurian has been instrumental in the assembly, giving scriptural guidance and counsel. Since his retirement, the Lord has called him to devote his full time to preaching and teaching.

### *Jabe and Louise Nicholson*

The elders at Northwest Gospel Hall, Grand Rapids, MI, commend J.B. and Louise Nicholson and family to the work of the Lord in the Deep South. Jabe has relayed his concern about



establishing assemblies there and has decided to move to Mississippi with his wife Louise, son David and daughter Sara. Jabe has been previously commended to full time work by Northwest. They are not revoking that commendation, but adding to it. Jabe has been greatly used in the past as a Bible teacher, conference speaker and evangelist and has been a great encouragement to many individuals and assemblies. The elders ask that your prayers would continue for Jabe and his family as they take a great step of faith in this new venture.

### *Ray & Emma (Peetsie) Cummings*

The saints, together with the elders at Slidell Bible Chapel in Slidell, LA, join in commending Ray & Peetsie of Belle Chasse, LA, to the work of the Lord in the Deep South and elsewhere as the Lord leads. They are in fellowship at Lake Park Chapel in Belle Chasse, where Ray is an elder, and have served the Lord faithfully in a full-time capacity since 1995. This commendation of the Cummings is in addition to that already existing from the saints at Lake Park Chapel.

### *Robert Lee and Sharon Sandifer*

The saints, together with the elders at Slidell Bible Chapel in Slidell, LA, commend Lee and Sharon of Slidell to the work of the Lord in the Deep South and elsewhere as the Lord leads. Lee is an elder who left secular employment two years ago and they have been in fellowship as well as active ministry at Slidell Bible Chapel for many years. 📍



## Prepared to Give an Answer

*"Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you..."*

Practical hints on letting your little light shine in an increasingly dark world.

**W**itnessing for Christ is a way of life. The question is not when to witness or where to witness. If we are Christians, we *are* witnesses. I may or may not be a good witness, but I am a witness nevertheless. Jesus said, "...you will be witnesses unto Me..." (Acts 1:8). Our witnessing is important; we can have a considerable impact on those who do not know Christ. We live in a day of methods. By and large, evangelism has become method-centered. Many have attended seminars on better methods of evangelism. Yet, at the same time, the church has become weaker in her understanding of the content of the message and in her ability to communicate it. How can we prepare ourselves to be more effective communicators of the gospel? The key lies more in going and doing than in technique and style. The apostle Peter exhorts us, "*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear*" (1 Pet. 3:15).

**1. Use the Word of God.** In answering the temptations of Satan in the wilderness, Christ used the Scriptures. In the preaching of the apostles in the book of Acts, the Old Testament was used. Jeremiah says, "*Is not My word like a fire?*" saith the Lord; and *like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces*" (Jer. 23:29). When witnessing, have the person read the text himself and explain to you his understanding of its meaning. Many times, this has been the turning point in the presentation of the gospel. It prevents tangents and arguments, and confronts the unbeliever with God's final authority. Memorize verses and

their references so you can give the appropriate portion of God's Word to that person. Many have used established methods of presenting God's salvation plan with great success. One of the best known is called "The Romans Road," consisting of several key gospel verses in Romans (3:10; 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 10:9). Such an outline can help keep us on track; then other verses can be added to suit the individual's need. It can also help us avoid the fatal mistake of being accusative: "You need to know that you are a sinner." At this point, the individual will usually become defensive rather than receptive. Instead, have him read, "*There is none righteous, no, not one*" (Rom. 3:10); "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23). Then say, "We've all sinned, haven't we?" More will admit to being a sinner when we include ourselves. Otherwise, they conclude that we think we are holier than they are and that we are being unfairly judgmental.

**2. Pray.** Our message may seem foolish to the non-Christian, but if we really believe that only the Holy Spirit can make them respond, we will pray—before, during, and after our presentation of Christ.

**3. Work hard and keep at it.** "*Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not*" (Gal. 6:9). Many Christians give up too quickly at gospel work. They go out a few times and knock on doors during a week-end. When only a few contacts are made, they tell themselves, "This isn't for me. I'm just not cut out for it." No one is cut out for it; it's hard work! Satan will fight it at every turn. Keep at it, keep praying and scattering seed, and God will give the increase.



**4. Be authoritative.** They said of Jesus, *“He taught them as One that had authority, and not as the scribes”* (Mk. 1:22). A witness must be authoritative but not arrogant. Some Christians witness with almost an apologetic manner. Generally, this approach does not see many results. The unsaved will not have confidence in a message that is given in an unsure, indecisive manner. They need to hear a strong, *“Thus saith the Lord.”*

**5. Leave the door open.** If the person being witnessed to is not receptive, don’t push. If the person makes smart remarks, never give an unkind remark in return. This can damage all the progress you have had thus far or bar opportunities others may have in the future. Never argue. *“The servant of the Lord must not strive”* (2 Tim. 2:24). You may win an argument, but lose a soul for Christ. If a witnessing situation is beginning to heat up, stop! Apologize. Let the person know you don’t want to argue and that you are sorry for anything you might have said or done that was offensive. If the gospel is offensive, so be it. But if I’m offensive, that must be corrected.

**6. Communicate.** Communicate important biblical concepts clearly so that the person does not read his or her own ideas into them. Be careful to explain that you are speaking about biblical truth, not just giving your opinion. Your message should be faithful to the Word of God in content and emphasis.

**7. Don’t use difficult theological terms.** A witness must learn to think as the unsaved think. Put yourself in their shoes. Many have heard the term “born again” but don’t know what it means. To talk about propitiation and justification may only confuse the issue. Keep it simple.

**8. Learn to give invitations.** Truth not only informs but transforms. Many people will take up the offer when it is given. Learn to give people the opportunity to respond. Don’t manipulate or force decisions, but do give the unsaved a chance to say yes to God. You never

know the heart. An individual may be bursting with conviction inside without any indication or outward emotion. After you have explained the gospel and answered objections and questions, you might want to simply say, “Would you like to receive Christ tonight?” The biblical pattern is to call men and women to response after presenting the gospel. Paul said, *“We...preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God”* (Acts 14:15).

**9. Avoid detours.** Don’t get off on a tangent. If Satan can’t defeat you, he’ll try a detour. If a person asks a question that may be a distraction, suggest that you first finish presenting the plan of salvation and then you will answer the question. Don’t get into a discussion about the doctrine of other churches or the errors of prominent television preachers, Bible translations, etc. The main thing is that the main thing remains the main thing—presenting Christ.

**10. Present the issue of sin.** We must clearly and boldly press the issue of sin in their lives (Rom. 6:23). We should present the love, grace, and mercy of God, but we must also present the judgment and consequences of sin. This is the biblical method.

**11. Give personal testimony.** Learn how to give a brief yet clear account of how you were saved. Emphasize your need of salvation because of sin and the change in your life afterward. You may want to open the conversation by saying, “May I tell you the most amazing thing that ever happened to me?” After a brief account, you can say, “I found it so wonderful to know that all my sins were forgiven and that I’m going to heaven, I had to tell others about it.” Afterwards you can add, “Do you know for sure you are going to heaven?” May we be ready always to defend the gospel, preach the gospel, and explain the gospel to those the Lord brings into our lives. 📌



**Both mercy and judgment must be preached: Note Peter preaching, “Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life” (Acts 3:14-15).**

## Prepared to Preach the Word

The sword of the Spirit should be used with care.

**The Blessed Book is sufficient to equip us for every good work. It is both unnecessary and unwise to use it to promote our own ideas.**

**P**reaching the Word is serious business. *“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; Preach the Word ... For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine”* (2 Tim. 4:1-3). Teachers *“receive the greater condemnation”* (Jas. 3:1). Those with a speaking gift are to speak as *“the oracles of God”* (1 Pet. 4:11).

To prepare ourselves correctly, we must be concerned about doctrine and dividing.

### Doctrine

*“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine”* (Acts 2:42). Doctrine (teaching)

is God’s thinking on something—an event, action, or statement. Observation tells one what happened. Doctrine gives one the why of the action—what it means. For example, one may observe a boy washing his father’s car. But why? You could reason that it is because the boy is obedient. But only when you have the explanation of the action do you know its true meaning. The father might tell you the

reason is because he disobeyed last night and came home late. Therefore, his washing of the car was the evidence of disobedience, not obedience. It was revelation, not observation, that gave you the true understanding. This is what doctrine does. It reveals the character of God, His wisdom and ways. Doctrine is objective truth that stands independent of one’s experience, and it forms the basis for proper actions.

Romans to Revelation, letters of instruction from the risen Lord Jesus to His church,

give us God’s interpretation of the statements and actions in the four Gospels and Acts. For example, the Gospels witness that Jesus died. But they really don’t tell us why. Did He die as a martyr to draw attention to a good cause? Did He die just to make an “I love you” statement? It is the Epistles that give us the doctrinal understanding of why He died. The Lord Jesus died as a redemptive payment for our sin. He was offered as a propitiatory sacrifice to God. We only learn this from the apostles’ doctrine—the epistles (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 3:23-26).

Biblical events need to be understood through the epistles.

### Dividing rightly

One arrives at true doctrine by *“rightly dividing the Word of truth”* or accurately handling it, as Paul exhorted Timothy. Anyone’s words can be twisted out of context, including the Lord’s. Rightly dividing involves understanding that the church is not under the Old Testament like Israel was; we are connected with the New Testament (2 Cor. 3). To avoid legalism, it is imperative to understand that while all Scripture is for us, it is not all to us.

What then is the value of the Old to those people living in the times of the New? Even though we are not under its practices and terms, the Old Testament gives us prophetic promises, pictures, principles, and perspectives of the Lord and His ways. The New Testament was written to Christians (Heb. 10:15), with explicit instructions to obey. The Old Testament was written for Christians (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6, 11), as examples of learning.

For example, under the terms of the New Covenant, we are not to bring a lamb sacrifice for our sins to the temple like in the Old Covenant. Today, the one and only sacrifice is His beloved



## PREPARED TO PREACH THE WORD *continued*

Son. But the Old Testament does reveal for us the consistent character of God that requires a proper blood sacrifice for forgiveness of sins. This helps us understand why Christ Jesus had to die.

### **Pitfalls to avoid**

*“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine”* (2 Tim. 4:3). Using the Word in speaking is not necessarily the same as preaching the Word. The following are some popular ways of using the Word but without a careful doctrinal basis.

**Motivational—preaching inspiration.** This approach does not concern itself with the meaning of the passage. Instead, it focuses on some positive statement (regardless of context) and uses it to motivate personal achievement that will benefit either the person or the ministry preaching it. It virtually ignores the sin or error of a situation. (This is not to say that truth cannot motivate one into God-pleasing ways).

**Psychological—preaching behavioral modification.** The goal of this type of preaching is to bring success to one’s life and form positive relationships. That, by itself, is not wrong. However, it observes behavior in the Bible and then draws conclusions on the basis of the personal thoughts of the speaker rather than Scripture. It is not necessarily the point the passage is making. The emphasis is what will benefit me in life, not what pleases and glorifies God. For example, one might say David committed adultery (true biblically) because he had “low self esteem” of his manhood (not taught biblically), and, therefore, the solution to correcting his bad behavior is to obtain “high self esteem” (not taught biblically). Psychology observes behavior, but, often, its understanding of the behavior and its solutions to correct it are at odds with the Bible.

**Methodology—preaching how to.** In this case, the emphasis is not on what God says He wants done (doctrinal instruction) but how to get it done, according to the speaker. It is subjective.

An example would be: “How to deliver a good sermon. Reality: be yourself – Simple and Clear – Voice Inflection – Animation – Humor – Passion and Energy – Authority – Use Visual Aids – Power of Spirit and Prayer”

One cannot find this formula in God’s Word. What we do find is the command to preach the Word in dependence upon the Lord.

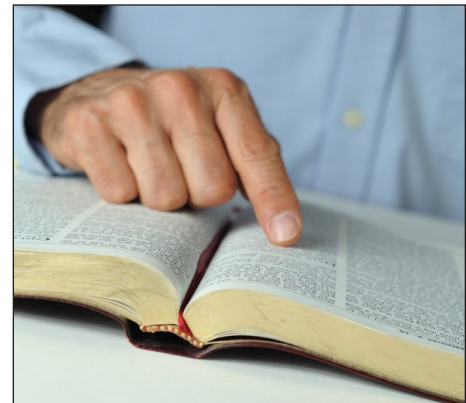
**Proof-texting—preaching an idea inconsistent with all of Scripture.** The preacher employing this method comes up with an idea and then hunts through the Bible to find one or more passages that can be used—however loosely—to prove that his idea is biblical.

For example, suppose a speaker wanted to prove that if believers come together on a mountain, they get more inspiration from God. He might point out:

- God called Abraham to go to a mountain and a blessing followed (Gen. 22);
- Moses got revelation for Israel on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19);
- Our Lord’s first message to His disciples was on a mountain (Mt. 5:1-2);
- Christ was transfigured on a mountain (Mt. 17:1);
- After Christ instituted the Lord’s Supper, they all went to the Mount of Olives (Mt. 26:20);
- The Great Commission was given from a mountain (Mt. 28:16);
- The revelation of the return of Christ was given to disciples while on a mountain (Acts 1:10-12);
- John received the revelation of the New Jerusalem from a high mountain (Rev. 21:10).

Of course, no such command or promise is given to the church. But Scripture itself was used to make the idea appear right and biblical. This approach uses the Bible to back up the speaker’s thoughts and practice rather than using the Bible to reveal God’s thoughts and determine our practice.

If we are to rightly represent the worthy Lord Jesus Christ, there is no substitute for preaching the Word and rightly dividing it. 📖



**Rightly dividing the Word is the only way to rightly represent the Lord.**

## Finding My Messiah

“It is strange to be jealous over a God that you refuse to acknowledge exists.”

I was born in Israel and grew up in Kibbutz Adamit, a small commune-type village in the Galilee. While I was born a Jew, I never thought much of the God of Israel. I was raised with many socialistic ideas, which included the Marxist view that “religion is the opium of the masses.” That is, the rich invented God and religion to keep the poor happy being poor, while the rich took advantage of them.

I managed to keep that view through my life’s many changes, including moving to the US and becoming a student at UC Berkeley. It was there that I met a Christian girl named Sharyn, who would eventually become my wife. As I tried to deepen the relationship, I became aware that Sharyn had a very different way of life. I decided that it would be prudent to find out more about this life and visit her church.

### PROVOKED BY JEALOUSY

What I did not expect was the jealousy that hit me as I saw these Gentiles studying the book that God gave to my people. I knew about the Bible, or at least the Old Testament. We used it as one of our history textbooks in my school in Israel. Yet it was just a textbook to us—dry and uninteresting. These Christians somehow were getting something else from it. They saw God in every page and applied His words to their everyday lives. They had a relationship with Him.

It is strange to be jealous over a God that you refuse to acknowledge exists. Yet, somehow, that jealousy drove me to seek after Him. I was like a child that is interested in an unused toy only when someone else picks it up. Was I missing out on something that should be mine? While part of me wanted what these people had, the other part kept insisting that God could not possibly exist. Yet, as I began considering my objections more seriously, I started realizing that they didn’t hold water.

I remember when my last two arguments finally fell apart in the face of a single verse from the Bible. It was as if a barrier were removed from blocking my view of the real world. Suddenly, I could somehow sense the reality of God.



### CHALLENGED BY DESIRE

It was then that I started seeking God in earnest. I could sense that He was there, but I did not yet know Him. I started praying that He would reveal Himself and His will to me. It was then that Rick, an elder from Sharyn’s church, offered to meet with me and share with me from the Scriptures. He mainly used the Old Testament, a book that, with my Jewish background and newly found faith in the existence of God, I was now willing to accept as being the Word of God.

He first asked me to read Isaiah 53. He asked me who it sounded like. I had to admit that the description fit what I had heard of Jesus. Yet, since my youth, I had heard the name Jesus associated with anti-Semitism and the persecution of my people. I also knew that accepting Jesus as the Messiah would be betraying the position my people had held to for centuries. I would be considered a traitor.

Rick then asked me to turn to Daniel Chapter 9. He showed me how the math of the seventy weeks prophecy pointed to the time when Jesus was born. While the timeline was important, my attention was arrested by something else. I was looking at the Hebrew text itself: “the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing.” (v. 26, NASB)

To this day, the Jewish concept of the Messiah is that he will be someone who will bring peace and prosperity. He is supposed to be a triumphant figure—certainly not

## FINDING MY MESSIAH *continued*

someone who would be nailed to a cross. To me, this was the strongest argument against Jesus as Messiah. Why would God let His champion be killed? It made no sense. Yet here it was black on white in my Hebrew Bible: God said the Messiah would die. At this point, I realized that I was losing the battle. Jesus would turn out to be the Messiah. God would require me to believe in Him. I would become a traitor.

As my conviction that Jesus was the Messiah grew, I accepted an invitation by David, a Jew for Jesus missionary, to a Bible study. We were studying the third chapter of Romans and I was grappling with the meaning of verse 25: “*whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God.*” I couldn’t make heads or tails of this verse. I thought that I was so smart that, given enough time, I could figure anything out. Yet all I was getting out of this verse was a headache. I remember leaning back in my chair in resignation.

### CONQUERED BY LOVE

I believe God was waiting for me to do exactly that—give up on thinking I could do it by myself—before He gave me an understanding of the gospel. It was as if I were in a courtroom. I was the accused and God was the judge. Before Him lay a book of my life. I knew at that moment, perhaps for the first time in my life, that I was guilty, and my heart sank within me. But then someone from the back of the courtroom said, “I am willing to accept the penalty for this man’s sin.” I was amazed at the offer and looked at the judge to see if it would be accepted, but he just looked back at me, waiting to see my reaction.

Then, it hit me: Jesus was not forcing Himself upon me. He was offering to forgive my sins. Was I willing to accept what He did on my behalf? With that understanding, peace, joy, and love flooded my soul: peace and joy in knowing that God had saved me, and love for Jesus for what He had done for me.

How my life changed! I remember making fun of Christians in my fraternity house for their

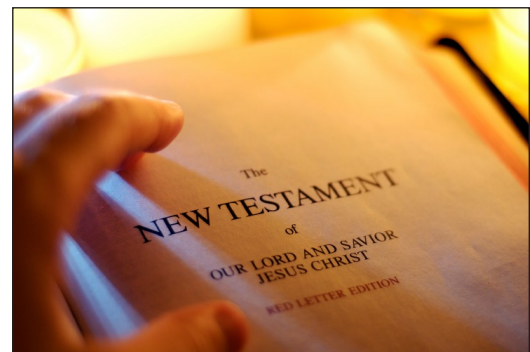
belief that God created life. After being saved for a year, I started a Bible study in that same fraternity house. Several people were saved as a result of the study, and it wasn’t long before I started experiencing the same type of persecution I once inflicted on others.

People often ask me how my family reacted to the news of my becoming a Christian. I was perhaps blessed by being raised in a very secular family. As a result, they didn’t disown me for becoming a Christian, as often happens in orthodox Jewish families. My family was hoping that this was a phase that I would eventually grow out of. I guess the phase lasted a bit longer than they expected—I have been a believer for 12 years now.

About a year after I was saved, I went on a short term mission with Jews for Jesus to New York. Jews for Jesus believes in making the Messiahship of Jesus an unavoidable issue for the Jews. Our literature and other evangelistic strategies target mainly the large Jewish community in New York. However, typically we have found that ten Gentiles are reached for every Jew that responds to the gospel invitation.

This showed me the truth of the Bible verse: “*blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in*” (Rom. 11:25). I rejoice that God is faithful in preserving a remnant of Israel, as He did in the days of Elijah. Yet I see that God is still bringing in the fullness of the Gentiles. They need to be saved no less than the Jews. I want to go or stay wherever God desires.

Presently, I am serving as a deacon in Calvary Bible Chapel, Fremont, California. I seek to use the gifts God has given me in preaching, teaching, and reaching out to my neighbors and the local community. God has given Sharyn and me three wonderful children: Ellianna, Nessya, and Joseph. Our hearts’ desire is to be used by God for His glory. 🕊



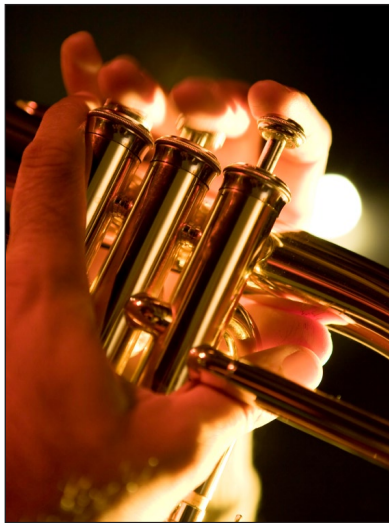
**Jesus was not forcing Himself upon me. He was offering to forgive my sins. Was I willing to accept what He did on my behalf?**

## Prepared for Battle

*"If the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?" (1 Cor. 14:8)*

Paul warns, then warns, then warns again. "To write the same things" to us, to him was "not grievous," and for us "it is safe" (Php. 3:1).

Our text forms part of Paul's argument against the public use of tongues when there was no interpreter present. The point he makes in verses 7-11 was that unclear and unintelligible sounds achieve nothing. If the musician fails to make distinct sounds on his instruments, the hearer will not recognize any tune (v. 7). If the bugler fails to make distinct sounds on his trumpet, the hearer will not recognize any military command (v. 8). And if two parties talking together share no common language, neither party will recognize what the other is saying (vv. 9-11). The apostle's point is simple: tongues without interpretation in the church had no greater value or meaning than tuneless noises made by a musical instrument, a war-trumpet, or the words of a foreigner.



The Christian life certainly qualifies as a "battle." For, whether we like it or not, the present world is very much a combat zone in which we are caught up in the clash between two diametrically opposed kingdoms. While the battle still rages, we need to be ever alert and to enlist in God's resistance movement, of which Peter wrote, "Be sober, be vigilant. Your adversary the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist..." (1 Pet. 5:8-9, Lit.).

Thankfully, the New Testament gives no "uncertain sound" when preparing us for battle. And it is just as well that it speaks so plainly; for, otherwise, we would be in grave danger of underestimating our arch-foe.

It is clear that the early church took the devil and his activities very seriously indeed. Towards the close of His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus warned His apostles that Satan had come to focus his attention on them: "The Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has earnestly desired to have you [plural], to sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you [singular], that your faith fail not" (Lk. 22:31, Lit.). And previously, the disciples had learned from the Lord's own lips that Satan headed a whole empire of hostile spirit intelligences, united into a highly-organized and well-ordered kingdom under the supreme mastermind of evil (Mt. 12:22-26; 25:41).

The apostle Paul speaks of the cosmic powers and spirit-forces arrayed against us, warning us in words calculated to send shivers down our spines that "our conflict is not against blood and flesh, but against the principalities, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of evil in the heavenlies" (Eph. 6:12, Lit.).

During the battle, the assault by the enemy (Mt. 13:39; Lk. 10:19) takes three main forms: persecution, deception, and temptation.

### Persecution

Peter wrote of the devil's opposition by way of persecution: "the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour ... knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brotherhood that are throughout the world" (1 Pet. 5:8-9, Lit.). For his part, Paul explained to the church at Thessalonica that he had sent Timothy to them because the affliction which he had predicted had broken out on them: "when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labour

## PREPARED FOR BATTLE *continued*

*might be in vain*" (1 Thes. 3:5). Paul was clearly concerned that the devil would exploit the Thesalonians' sufferings for Christ to discourage and defeat them. Many years later, the apostle John conveyed our Lord's words to the church at Smyrna: "*the devil is about to throw some of you into prison*" (Rev. 2:10).

### Deception

But the devil's attack often takes the form of deception and false teaching, when he appears, not so much as a lion, but as a serpent. "*I am jealous over you with a god-like jealousy,*" Paul told the Corinthians, "*for I betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by some means, as the serpent deceived Eve through his cunning, your thoughts should be seduced from the simplicity that is in Christ*" (2 Cor. 11:2-3, Lit.). The apostle wrote later concerning those who would "*depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons*" (1 Tim. 4:1).

He knew that Satan was a master of disguise, well able to masquerade as the champion of what was good and right: "*Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness*" (2 Cor. 11:14-15).

### Temptation

Satan's attack can take the form of straightforward temptation to sin, as it did, for example, in the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. For just as in Genesis 3 the devil had successfully used a man and his wife to mar the first creation, so now it seems that he attempted to do the same with the new creation. But Peter challenged Ananias, "*Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?*" (Acts 5:3).

Paul knew that the enemy stands ready to exploit any situation to his own advantage. The apostle could see the red light flashing, for example, in a believer's anger. "*Do not let the sun go down on your wrath* [your exasperation, irritation], *nor give place* [room, scope, opportunity]

*to the devil*" (Eph. 4:26-27). Paul clearly regarded anger nursed in the heart as sending Satan an open invitation to exploit the situation.

When telling the Corinthians that sexual intercourse within marriage is the mutual right of both husband and wife, Paul made it clear that, if they chose to abstain to make time for prayer, this should be only for a short time "*lest Satan tempt you through your lack of self-control*" (1 Cor. 7:5). He was well aware that sensual attractions were rife at Corinth and that if the saints didn't adopt the God-appointed means of satisfying their desires, they might easily succumb to Satan's!

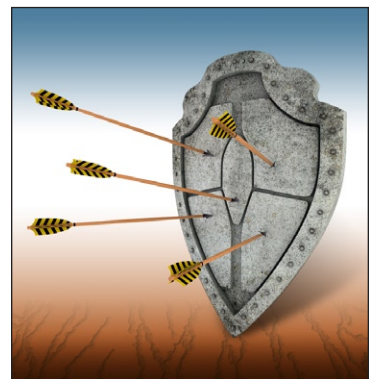
Indeed, Paul knew that Satan was able to take advantage even of the saints' zeal for the purity of the local assembly. Writing of the once-guilty-now-repentant brother at Corinth, Paul said, "*I urge you to reaffirm your love to him ... lest Satan should take advantage of us* [should make a gain at our expense, should defraud us]; *for we are not ignorant of his devices*" (2 Cor. 2:8-11). Paul could see that the assembly, which was now as reluctant to restore the man as once they had been to discipline him, was in real danger of being outmaneuvered and outwitted by the devil.

We can hardly miss Paul's repetition of the word "lest":

- "*lest by some means the tempter had tempted you*" (1 Thes. 3:5)
- "*lest Satan tempt you through your lack of self control*" (1 Cor. 7:5)
- "*lest Satan should take advantage of us*" (2 Cor. 2:11)
- "*lest by some means, as the serpent deceived Eve through his cunning*" (2 Cor. 11:3)

Clearly, the apostle was forever peering over his spiritual shoulder lest, in some way or other, the devil managed to steal a march either on him or on other believers. Well then did Peter counsel, "*Be sober, be vigilant.*"

May God help us to put on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:11-17) and to see that His Word abides in us (1 Jn. 2:14), so that we might "*be prepared for battle.*" 🕊



**We are always in "danger of being outmaneuvered and outwitted by the devil."**



## Prepared for the Lord's Return

*"You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Lk. 12:40)*

As with the Year of Jubilee, everything's value should be measured as it will look in the light of that New Beginning.

About twenty years ago, as a new believer reading through the Bible for the first time, I came across a passage that puzzled me. Leviticus 25 speaks of the Year of Jubilee, with each person returning to his own property (v. 13), the land being sold on the basis of the number of years until the next Year of Jubilee (v. 15), and the land not being sold permanently (v. 23). I thought to myself that I must have been mistaken in my understanding of what I was reading. This was too different from the practice in twentieth century Canada. But the Bible meant exactly what it said, and I not only learned about the Year of Jubilee but also learned that Scripture is the judge of my society and not the other way around.



As a means of alleviating poverty, the Year of Jubilee has much to commend it. But even to a new believer, the applicability with regards to the Lord's return was immediately obvious. All of us need to buy and sell. We need jobs, places to live, clothes to wear, and food to

eat. Some of us will have our own businesses and some of us will be employed by others. The Scripture raises no objection to any of these things. But just as the land lost value as Israel got closer to the Year of Jubilee, so too the things of this world lose value as we get closer to the Lord's return. All the things we might strive for and want, all the things that pull our hearts, all worldly achievements and

honors, all these become totally insignificant the moment the Lord Jesus Christ returns. This thinking should influence our lives from the moment of new birth onwards.

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ must be considered in two aspects: His return to the air to bring His people home (1 Thes. 4:15-17) and His return to the earth (Zech. 14:4) to reign in righteousness. The command given in Luke 12:40, *"You also, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect,"* is referring to the Lord's return to the air. This event is given the theological title of the rapture. It will be unanticipated and instantaneous (1 Cor. 15:52). The return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth is a wonderful subject, and all Christians look forward to the culmination of the divine plan. But with regards to this article, it is the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the air which will occupy our thoughts.

### A forgotten truth

It would seem that this is now a forgotten doctrine. Some churches choose to ignore this doctrine in favor of teaching on the practical Christian life, though, as we will see, this doctrine is vital to practical Christian living. Other churches seek to curry favor with denominations by down-playing something as "controversial" as a pre-tribulation rapture. There is not much that most of us can do when a church goes down this path, except to make a personal appeal to the Head of the church. Yet I am much more concerned about the way most of us seem to have personally forgotten about this doctrine. Whether or not it is preached from our pulpits, I believe many of us live as if we have forgotten that the Lord Jesus Christ is returning.

## THE LORD'S RETURN *continued*

A previous generation remembered this doctrine. I remember a number of men telling me that when they were children they knew that they were not saved and they knew that the Lord Jesus was coming back. At times, they would sneak down the hall in the middle of the night, stop at their parents' door, and strain their ears to see if they could still hear their parents breathing. Today, many people would find this story odd. Others would even find it objectionable. But we are dealing with divine truth, and it is better that a child be aware of such realities than to grow up without Christ and enter a lost eternity.

### Forgetting has consequences

So what are the consequences of forgetting this doctrine? Let's consider two aspects of Luke 12:40, "*You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*" The first aspect is evangelistic. Just as the children of the previous generation wanted to be reassured that the rapture had not happened without them, so too the Lord's return being both certain and imminent is a powerful reminder that we must not delay or trifle with the offer of salvation. If we know that the Lord Jesus Christ is returning, and if we are warned to be ready, then we must make certain that we are ready for eternity. The return of the Lord Jesus Christ is also a powerful motivator for personal evangelism. Knowing that today could be the day gives us great encouragement to seize the moment and to share our faith. Today could be our last opportunity.

The second aspect of the Lord's return is with regards to Christian living. Though some would ignore the rapture as an esoteric point of theology, it is in fact vital to our concept of holy living. We are feeble creatures of dust, and often forgetful. We live most days just as we lived the previous day. There is temptation to get caught up in the world, or at least to stay in a routine. But there is a day coming which will be unlike any other day. We will awaken with a list of chores and duties; we will go about our daily tasks (even our spiritual tasks); but then, in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, our experience of this life

will be concluded; and we will go to be with the Lord. Knowing this, what sort of people ought we to be? How ought we to live? Certainly we should avoid the outright sins of the world, the flesh, and the devil!

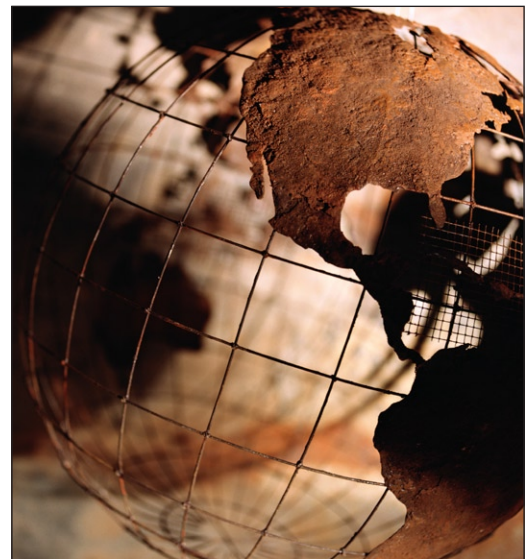
### Love not the world

Furthermore, the practical Christian living that the Lord's return inspires should also keep our hearts from being attracted to the things of this world. While certain possessions are not explicitly sinful, it is sinful to have the wrong attitude towards possessions. This can be illustrated by thinking of old jewelry in a museum. You can look at a three-thousand-year-old necklace and admire the craftsmanship. You can wonder how they crafted it without the benefit of machine tools. You can

respect the patience required to make such an item. But in the end, can you imagine wearing it? Of course not! It is moldy and corroded and, if not for the fact that it is old, you would never bother to stoop to have a look.

But there was a time when this old necklace was sought after. Women coveted it and men worked hard so that they could buy it for their wives. Yet, fundamentally, it is something which has no value in the light of time, let alone the light of eternity. And the same could be said for the things we covet today.

Jesus Christ is returning to take His people home. This is the teaching of the Bible. In light of this truth, we should be a saved and holy people who reach out with the gospel and have little regard for the treasures of this world. 📌



**Though some would ignore the rapture as an esoteric point of theology, it is in fact vital to our concept of holy living.**



## The CSI Test and the Bible

The tests for reliability where it matters most.

There is an interesting phenomenon in our culture—we are fascinated by crime stories. For years, many of the top-rated programs on television have been criminal dramas. Check out the Nielsen Ratings that measure program viewership and you'll see what I mean.

Consider NBC's *Law & Order* franchise. It is the longest-running crime series and second-longest-running drama series in the history of American broadcast television.<sup>1</sup> The program started running nineteen years ago and has spun-off several other programs (*Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, *Crime & Punishment*, and *Law & Order: Trial by Jury*). Just about all of these are filmed in and around New York City.

Even more popular today is the *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* franchise. Using Las Vegas as a backdrop, CBS launched this program in 2000, and it has been going strong ever since. This, too, has launched an array of spin-offs (*CSI: Miami* and *CSI: NY*). Closely related in style and form is another CBS hit series, *NCIS (Naval Criminal Investigative Service)*. This show centers on crimes involving US Navy and Marine personnel and was itself actually a spin-off from another military-flavored criminal drama entitled *JAG*.<sup>2</sup>

So what gives? Why am I writing in *Uplook* magazine about American and Canadian television viewing habits? It is because there is a lesson to be learned and a manner of approach to be gleaned for defending our faith when it comes to the reliability of the Bible. You see, each episode of those various series has some simple key elements:

1. A case needs to be solved.
2. To get at the truth, investigators will interview individuals (those who saw or heard something relevant) and collect physical evidence (e.g. finger prints, DNA samples, bullet casings).
3. The reliability of a particular theory or witness is established by performing a comparison with the accumulated testimony and evidence.
4. This collection and evaluation of evidence ultimately


helps the detectives get to the truth and solve the case.

This forensic approach is not just the purview of Hollywood writers and producers; it is the method used by every good law enforcement agency to get to the truth. More to the point, we can use this same technique to test the reliability of the Bible.

We, too, can examine physical evidence (such as artifacts or ancient ruins) and review eyewitness testimony (as found in ancient manuscripts or clay tablets) dating to the time of the Scriptures. The findings of archeology down through the centuries allow us to test whether or not the Bible is an accurate witness to history. Sure enough, the evidence is overwhelming in support of the historicity of the Biblical text!

Associates for Biblical Research ([www.biblearchaeology.org](http://www.biblearchaeology.org)) is one ministry dedicated to demonstrating the historical reliability of the Bible through archeological research and related apologetic investigation.<sup>3</sup> And, of course, check out the archeological evidences section of the Christian Evidences website ([www.christianevidences.org](http://www.christianevidences.org)).

In so many criminal dramas, it is a matter of life and death. The same is true in this case. It really is a matter of life and death—eternal life or eternal death! The Bible testifies to history and tells us the story of God's love for a lost and dying world. It also tells us of the lost eternity that awaits those who do not come to faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us take seriously the task of encouraging others to examine the evidence for the Bible. If people fail to heed its witness, they will never arrive at the Truth (Romans 10:17).  — ROB SULLIVAN

1. <http://www.tv.com/law-and-order/show/180/summary.html>
2. <http://silentopinion.wordpress.com/2009/01/30/csi-versus-ncis/>
3. <http://www.biblearchaeology.org/research.aspx>

**"Sure enough, the evidence is overwhelming in support of the historicity of the biblical text!"**



## Scientific Secrets

The “facts” need to be brought into focus.

Science has many secrets. Not deep, dark, conspiratorial secrets, but practical secrets that are well-known to trained scientists yet not often revealed to the public, and for good reason. Scientists like to project an aura of authority and calm, unbiased rationality, which might be in jeopardy if these “secrets” were widely appreciated. This is especially true in a world where scientific proof is expected and where scientific arguments influence everyday life—think global warming or recycling.

Almost all laboratory science at the university and industrial levels happens without reference to evolutionary theory. It is only in the paper writing stage that authors often search for some evolutionary framework in which to set their results, if only to satisfy reviewers.

So the first secret is that evolution is not at all the main driving force in modern science. The rare exceptions are those who claim to specifically study evolution and who must have something that generates research funding so they can keep their jobs. In truth, the vast majority of science is driven by the desire to know how the world works now and not how it supposedly evolved.

Another trade secret is that science usually doesn't work. In fact, an investigator must work hard to fine-tune conditions to make it work. Less time is spent generating results than time spent working out these “optimal” conditions. Once the investigator believes the results are real, then interpretation begins. One key part of interpretation is developing different ideas to explain the results. These then form the basis for the design of new experiments, whose conditions must once again be optimized before the results can be believed. And so it continues.

The third practical secret of science is that it must tell a good story. Science is, in essence, explanatory. If bits of information are woven together in a way that makes sense to the hearer, the more plausible the story is as



an explanation of an observation—even if it later turns out to be wrong. In practice, a coherent story can suggest new experiments to perform and even predict their results. But where scientific storytelling goes wrong is in the popular media where speculation becomes fact and where extrapolation is too easily held forth as truth. If a story is repeated often enough it starts to sound true. Carl Sagan and David Attenborough of *Cosmos* and *Life on Earth* fame, respectively, each made a second career out of weaving plausible-sounding stories which were often more philosophical than fact-based.

There are other secrets in science. For example, statistics can be used to “prove” almost anything the investigator desires, and proof in medical trials is different from that in a laboratory. In the final analysis though, science is an immensely powerful tool, but it is affected by philosophical and political agendas because it is performed by people who bring their own presuppositions to it. My advice is to be skeptical of scientific claims, especially in popular media, until you know the secrets.

—MICHAEL G. WINDHEUSER, PH.D.

## Prepare to Meet Thy God

A fool is a person whose plans end at the grave.

**A warm-hearted appeal to get ready for the Big Event.**

**B**e prepared!" Sound familiar? Those words are the Boy Scout motto. They are also good, simple advice for people in all walks of life. What happens if a student is not prepared for his exams, or if a mother is not prepared to feed her children, or if bills come and you are not prepared to pay them? Do you remember the last time you weren't prepared for something serious?

In Amos 4:12, the prophet warns Israel saying, "Prepare to meet thy God!" Such an admonition is still applicable to people everywhere today. It wasn't a kind invitation, but a stern warning. God had sent judgments on the sinful nation, yet they had not repented or returned to Him. So the warning call sounded out, and the meeting wasn't going to be a

friendly one, but a judgment. Hebrews 9:27 says, "It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment." It's another way of saying, "Prepare to meet thy God."

### Are you ready?

That will be the greatest moment of anyone's existence, when he passes into eternity and finds himself in the presence of God. No one will be an atheist on that day! And

it's an appointment no one postpones, is late for, cancels, or skips. Physical death is like the departing flights terminal at the airport—you're leaving one place for another. What? You don't know where you're going or who will meet you on the other side? No travel plans? No lodging booked? Better get with it!

Someone made this blunt but true statement: "A fool is a person whose plans end at the grave." He lives as if he'll be on earth forever. By that definition, the world is full of fools—busy, hard-working, studious fools who prepare for careers, vacations, and retirement; and perhaps even make out a last will and testament, but don't prepare to meet God. They have no plans for eternity, and it will be too late to prepare once death strikes.

We can be short-sighted sometimes. As long as everything in the immediate here and now seems all right, we're comfortable. But if we plan more for a weekend camping trip than for all eternity, that's crazy! A friend of mine told me that an aunt bought an outfit for her burial—clothes, hosiery, and shoes—stored them in her closet, and told her family to dress her in them when she died. She thought she was readying herself. She prepared for her funeral, but not to meet God. When death closes in, her pair of black shoes in the closet will be the last thing on her mind!

Now is the time to prepare for your appointment with God in eternity. Here's what the Bible says meeting God will be like:

*I watched until the thrones were put in place,  
and the Ancient of Days was seated,  
His garment was white as snow,  
and the hair of His head was like pure wool,  
His throne was a fiery flame,  
its wheels a burning fire;  
A fiery stream issued and came forth  
from before Him.  
A thousand thousands ministered to Him;  
Ten thousand times ten thousand  
stood before Him.  
The court was seated, and the books  
were opened. (Dan. 7:9-10)*



## PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD *continued*

*“All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him”* (Heb. 4:13) He knows everything. Years ago, there was a line in a country-western song that stated, “No one knows what goes on behind closed doors.” Wrong! Doors can’t keep God out nor does darkness hide anything from His view. What’s more, every thought and attitude is known to Him.

You must be prepared because holy justice will be meted out by an omniscient being who knows everything about us. God’s court of judgment deals with sin, and the Judge declares that *“the soul that sinneth, it shall die”* (Ezek. 18:4). There will be no clever lawyers to bargain for you or win your case.

### The only way to be ready

The good news is that God in grace and love has given us a way to be prepared to meet Him. It’s not by good works, church attendance, or praying to the saints, but by faith: believing in and personally accepting the substitute that God provided to take your guilt and pay the penalty for your sins. Do you know who that perfect substitute is? The Lord Jesus Christ! *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”* (1 Tim. 2:5).

Christ died *“once for all”* (Heb. 10:10, 12, 14). On the cross, He paid our debt in full with His own blood. He was buried, but rose from the dead the third day, and afterwards ascended alive into heaven where He now lives. He is personally *“able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him”* (Heb. 7:25, NASB). He’s the only intercessor (mediator) we’ll ever need in order to be prepared to meet God.

But each of us has to accept the offer. It isn’t enough just to know or understand the plan. There must be a personal response, a commitment. The Lord Jesus said, *“Repent ye, and believe the gospel!”* (Mk. 1:15). We must each respond to its message in repentance and faith, that is, turning from our sins and trusting Jesus Christ to forgive us, save us from punishment, and give us a new life under His management.

That’s the only way to be prepared to meet

God. May I ask you, have you ever come to the place where you realized that the nicest funeral, prettiest flowers, sweetest organ music, and most elegant words can never meet the deepest need of your spirit? You will exist forever after physical death, and for that you need to be prepared. The apostle Paul testified of his conversion, saying, *“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day”* (2 Tim. 1:12). He had been religious before that, but religion can’t prepare you to meet God. Only Christ can.



The gospel is completely free of discrimination. It is open to all people of every race. It is guaranteed, and all you stand to lose is—are you ready for this?—your sins and the punishment for them. So act now, while the offer is still valid. An hour from now might be too late. Your moment is approaching at the speed of 60 seconds per minute. Every breath you draw takes you closer to that great meeting; and, when it arrives, it will be too late. “Prepare to meet your God!” 📍

**Meeting God is “an appointment no one postpones, is late for, cancels, or skips.”**

## Prepared to Let Go

*“The Lord hath need of them” (Mt. 21:3).*

The nail-pierced hand is open to receive gifts offered from wise and willing hearts.

**W**hat an amazing statement! The One who made this statement is the same One who said, *“If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof”* (Ps. 50:12). This is the same One who said, *“Let there be light: and there was light”* (Gen. 1:3). This is the same One who spoke the world and the heavens into existence. This is the same One who is the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).

Why would the One who has no need look to us for anything? The truth is that the Lord delights in willing sacrifice that springs from hearts overflowing with love and devotion. As Samuel said, *“Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things He hath done for you”* (1 Sam.

12:24). The Lord delights in giving us a part in His plan. Did you ever ponder the fact that the joys of heaven for the Redeemer and the redeemed alike will be that *“His servants shall serve Him”* (Rev. 22:3)?

Returning to Matthew 21, we know why these animals were needed. Jesus was about to make His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. In preparation for this long-awaited event, He sent two of His disciples ahead

to find a donkey and its colt. The Lord told the disciples to untie the animals and bring them to Him and, if they should be questioned, simply say, *“The Lord hath need of them.”*

The Lord required these animals in order to fulfill the Scripture written of Him 550 years before: *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of*

*Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon a [donkey], and upon a colt the foal of a [donkey]”* (Zech. 9:9).

The fact that the Lord was fulfilling Scripture centuries after it was written is amazing to us! What is perhaps equally amazing is that the Lord said He was in need of men’s involvement. He gave the owners of the donkey and colt a chance to be a part of what He was doing by letting go of what they had. Even though He knew the owners would send the donkey and colt, He was still asking and, thereby, giving men a chance to say yes or no.

### Who’s asking?

Knowing who is asking us to let go of something determines our response. Nabal owned 4,000 sheep and goats, yet when asked to let go of a few to feed the future king of Israel and his men, Nabal selfishly spurned the opportunity and scorned David as just another renegade. Nabal said, *“Who is David?”* (1 Sam. 25:10). There is no question that Nabal knew who David was—everyone in Israel did! But he did not know David personally and did not love him devotedly. Being prepared is a condition of the heart. If we know Jesus Christ personally and love Him devotedly, our hearts will be prepared to hear and respond to His requests.

Jesus could have simply demanded use of the donkey and the colt. He could demand whatever He wants from us, too. But He doesn’t. Instead, He asks us to serve Him, just like He asked the owners of those animals. The Lord moved Paul to write these words, *“I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which*



## PREPARED TO LET GO *continued*

is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1). Instead of demanding from us, the Lord appeals to us, urging us to offer our bodies for His service. Nothing could be more reasonable than that we should glorify the Lord by letting Him have our lives. But He doesn’t coldly demand we let go; instead, He pleads!

Jesus also could easily have created a donkey and colt specifically to ride into Jerusalem. After all, He is the Creator of all things! Instead, the Lord chose to put Himself in the hands of the men who were the owners of these animals. He does the same thing today with you and me. The Lord could use angels to do His will, but He has chosen to commit much of His work to creatures like you and me—creatures who are often far more stubborn than the donkey!

The Lord doesn’t argue with us or bargain with us, as some parents try to get their children to do as they should. Our God is so different! He speaks gently to us through His Word and through the ministry of His Holy Spirit. But He doesn’t force us. His Spirit can be quenched (1 Thes. 5:19). It is crucial for us to be sensitive to the Spirit of the Lord speaking to us through the Word of the Lord. We can be so focused on doing what we want to do that we aren’t attuned

to His voice, and we don’t hear Him softly say, “I have need of you!” We can even be so afraid of what He might ask us to let go that we busy ourselves with other tasks.

### The cost of being useful

There is a very important principle in this story: the owners of the donkey and colt had to let go of what they owned if they wanted to be useful to Him. Is the Lord seeking to loosen your grip on your life, yet you are reluctant to let it go? As you consider all that makes up your life—possessions, health, strength, skills, abilities, plans, pleasures, loved ones, friends, wealth, occupation—can you hear His words, “The Lord hath need of them”?

I love Isaiah’s attitude and response to the Lord’s question, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Even before hearing his assignment, Isaiah replied, “Here am I; send me.” The assignment turned out to be a difficult one, as Isaiah was to tell the people, “Hear ye indeed, but understand not,” but what mattered to the prophet was having a part in what the Lord was doing (Isa. 6:8f).

Are our hearts prepared in loving devotion to hear His voice? Are we prepared to let go? 📌

The Lord could use angels to do His will, but He has chosen to commit much of His work to creatures like you and me—creatures who are often far more stubborn than the donkey!

**“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” – 1 Cor. 2:9**

## FOR YOUR STUDY



## PREPARED FOR US

### \* PAST:

1. salvation – Lk. 2:30f

### \* PRESENT:

2. good works to do – Eph. 2:10

3. a table in the midst of our enemies – Ps. 23:5

### \* FUTURE:

4. a dwelling place for us – Jn. 14:1-3

5. a lavish banquet – Isa. 25:6

6. the kingdom – Mt. 25:34

7. the New Jerusalem – Rev. 21:2



# Is the Lord Enough?

A question for dark days.

**H**e was a dying man. He had been strong and vigorous, a hard worker, always providing for his family. He had come to know the Lord while he was young, had grown in the Lord, had married, and had raised a family. Because of his faithfulness, he had eventually been recognized as an elder and had served the assembly faithfully. Life was good.

But then cancer struck him in the prime of life. None of the treatments helped, and now he was nearing the end of his life. His wife was caring for him lovingly as he lay on a hospital bed in the living room of their modest frame home in northern Minnesota. When I went to see him, he was a broken, depressed man. I had known him for years as an esteemed brother, beloved by many. He said, “Don, I’m losing everything. I have lost my health, and I have lost my job. I am losing my family. I am losing everything. All I have left is the Lord.”

I looked at him with tears and asked, “Is the Lord enough?” He did not answer for a moment and then said, “Don, now you have backed me into a corner.” He died shortly thereafter and I know that, as he entered the dark waters of death, he found the Lord to be enough.

Life is not always easy. Old age and dying can be extremely difficult. An elderly woman of 115 said before she died, “Dying is very hard. I hope I do it well!”

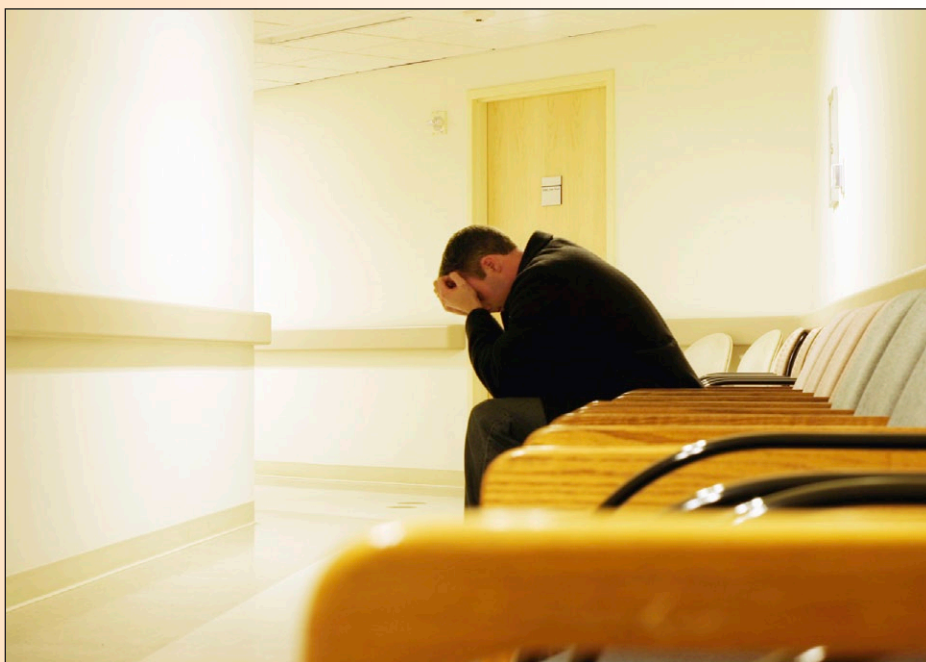
Paul was a prisoner in chains in Rome, awaiting trial, when he wrote to believers in Philippi. He confidently affirmed, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*” (Php. 4:13).

Paul could testify, “Yes, the Lord is enough.”

How about you? Are you facing the loss of a job and the prospect of being unemployed with family obligations? Perhaps you have stood by the graveside of a family member or close friend, and the tears have flowed as you keenly felt their loss. Or maybe you have been diagnosed with cancer or some other fatal disease.

At those times of crisis, is the Lord enough? Is it enough to know that you are forgiven and are a child of God? Is it enough to know that the God of the universe is your Father and is committed to caring for you? Is it enough to know that, on the far side of the river of death, there is joy and comfort and a God who will wipe away all tears? Is the Lord enough? Faith responds, “Yes, Lord, You are enough.”

—DONALD L. NORBIE



**“From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.” (Ps. 61:2)**

## Being Online Matters

Going into all the world includes cyberspace.

**B**y now, we all know that the internet is not just a fad, as some predicted several years ago. In fact, for many people in the world, the internet has become a way of life. People today are chatting, blogging, tweeting, Facebooking, YouTubeing, and a whole list of other “ings” on the internet. Recent studies have shown that, for web users, life means being “plugged in” to the global community. The internet has torn down boundaries of country, race, culture, and religion. Terms like the “global village” and “the internet family”

are often used to describe how people from all over the world have connected with each other. With the integration of audio and video, the web is an endless adventure into places we could never have imagined before.

With this seemingly relentless flow of knowledge and communication, the internet has become a place for sin and evil to abound. It has, unfortunately, opened up unhealthy and damaging experiences which were not available to us 20 years ago. We need to be wise and aware of the pitfalls that exist online. Thankfully, there are tools which provide us with a safer environment and help guard against these temptations and distractions. One must-have web tool is a program like Safe Eyes ([www.mysonlight.com/safeeyes](http://www.mysonlight.com/safeeyes)). Other internet filters exist, but this is one of the best available.


The question is often asked—and rightfully so—“Should Christians and local churches be involved on the internet?” The answer, based on biblical principles, is a resounding “YES!” This new column will seek to explore various aspects of the internet and how we can be safe users who use the internet strategically to accomplish spiritual ends. There is a vast mission field all around us, and we should be a part of the efforts to reach the lost where they are. The internet also makes available to us many safe and useful tools to help our assemblies grow spiritually and stay in touch with our fellow believers.

The great commission is clear: every soul needs to be reached for Christ. The whole world is to be our mission field. The Lord Himself and the apostles followed one simple principle in preaching the gospel: they went to where the people were gathered. The internet allows us to reach people we would otherwise not be able to access. Many in countries that are closed or antagonistic to the gospel are not only accessible now but also open to discussing topics of religion and Christianity.

The internet gives us two very powerful tools to help us reach the lost:

**1. An ear to listen.** People are communicating online with few, if any, barriers or hindrances. They are being real and honest in their search for significance. Never before in the history of the church have we had such open access to the thoughts and emotions of the lost. They are telling us in no uncertain terms the questions they need answered. If we have a listening ear online, we can present Christ in a way that meets the longing of their hearts.

**2. A voice to speak.** The internet is also a platform to speak. We can share Christ widely online and engage in meaningful conversations that point to Him. But we need to know how to speak. Our care and love for the lost need not be compromised just because we might be thousands of miles apart. Even online, our witnessing should be compassionate, understanding, and Christ-like.

In the coming months, we will address the most relevant issues facing us in the online experience and seek to understand how we as Christians and local churches can effectively utilize the internet for Christ. 

*This column is written by the team at mySonlight. They provide guidance and tools to assemblies and ministries looking to use the web for outreach and edification.*

Visit [www.mysonlight.com](http://www.mysonlight.com) to learn more.

“...should Christians and local churches be involved on the internet?”  
The answer is a resounding  
“YES!”

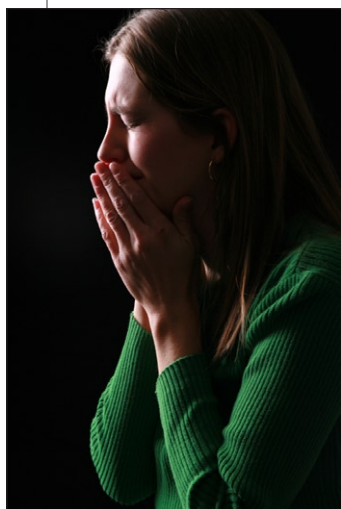
## Sacred Heart Prep School

Lessons from the life and times of Ezra the scribe.

**We cannot expect to see God's people restored to Christ unless we ourselves are prepared to shed many tears on their behalf.**

In 1994, new teacher Erin Gruwell arrived at her Long Beach high-school and was immediately challenged by the racial turmoil within her diverse classroom. Her first strategy was to lecture her students on the wages of Nazi politics in Europe half a century earlier, which had resulted in the deaths of over six million Jews in the Holocaust. The only problem was that, whereas all of her students were familiar with gang warfare, almost none of them had even heard of the Holocaust! Undeterred, Gruwell taught them from the ground up, taking them to museums and inviting Holocaust survivors to share their experiences with the class. Inspired, the students journalized their own experiences growing up in the ghetto, compelling them to leave their violent gang life behind.<sup>1</sup>

encounter a generation of Jews who had all but forgotten the merits of the glorious revival that had taken place half a century earlier under Zerubbabel. That first wave of returned exiles had rebuilt the Temple, restored the Passover, and separated themselves from the filthiness of the people of the land (Ezra 1-6). Nonetheless, those that Ezra encountered, including the priesthood, had not separated themselves from the people of the land as their grandparents had (Ezra 9). The result is a wonderful account of patient leadership by a man who, instead of forsaking his people in their time of crisis, identified himself with them and appealed to God on their behalf. Consequently, Ezra played a key role in not just one, but two more revivals. Such a display of character, though, was the fruit of a heart prepared for the Lord's service.



### Enter Ezra

In the fifth century BC, a new teacher by the name of Ezra<sup>2</sup> arrived in Jerusalem from Babylon, having “*prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments*” (Ezra 7:10). A descendent of Aaron through Zadok, he was a “*ready scribe*” in the Law of Moses (vv. 1-6). It is said that if the Law had not been given by Moses, it would have been given by Ezra.<sup>3</sup> Credited with authoring the Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, Ezra is also responsible for arranging the Psalms in their current order and introducing the square-shaped Hebrew script still in common use today. He was acclaimed by both God and man—including the heathen king who essentially wrote Ezra a blank check for the temple provisions (v. 20)!

Upon arriving, Ezra was shocked to

### A heart prepared to seek the Word

We're told specifically that Ezra had prepared his heart. It's not simply that he prepared his mind—Ezra's agenda went far beyond academic pursuit. The Pharisees in the time of the Lord Jesus could claim to have memorized the Law in detail, but that wasn't enough as far as the Lord was concerned—they were spiritually dead. They may have hidden the Law in their minds, but they did not hide God's Word in their hearts (Ps. 119:11). As the heart pumps the lifeblood of the body, so the spiritual heart of man is first converted by the Word of God and then empowered to live by it (see Rom. 10:8-10).

Like Ezra, we cannot expect to teach others about the Lord unless we are willing to make a tremendous investment in the Word of God. Although we can't trace our lineage back to Aaron, New Testament believers have a godly

heritage as the children of God (Jn. 1:12). Do we take this for granted or are we going to take full advantage of it? Peter exhorts us to “*sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you*” (1 Pet. 3:15). Such a charge requires us to invest in God’s Word daily. We don’t read of Ezra’s hobbies outside of his devotion to Scripture. We may find ourselves having to sacrifice our recreational time in order to become better acquainted with the Bible.

Also, Ezra’s expertise was in the Law which was given by God to Moses (Ezra 7:6). The lesson for us here is that if we want to see revival in our midst, no other pattern will do other than that which the Lord has given. Sadly, in the post-modern age we inhabit, many see the absolute claims of Scripture to be antiquated, out-of-touch, and even offensive. For Ezra, revival was not about introducing new philosophies but going back to God’s pattern. Any claims of revival outside of God’s pattern are not of God but of man.

### A heart prepared to live the Word

Just as one cannot expect to teach truths concerning the Lord without investing time in the Scriptures, we cannot expect our message to be taken seriously if our personal lives are not patterned after the Word.

What would have been the reaction of an Israelite confronted with the defilement of the inhabitants of Jerusalem as Ezra was in Ezra 9? For many, a scathing rebuke would have seemed appropriate and well-deserved. Perhaps a quick U-turn back to Babylon would have been in order for others. Nevertheless, this man who had become intimate with Word of God had also become acquainted with the very heart of God. Upon hearing the devastating news about the sins of the people, Ezra rent his clothes, plucked his hair, fell to his knees, and offered up an intercessory prayer, confessing the sin of the people as his own.

Regarding dealing with the faults of others, R.C. Chapman once said, “We partake in the guilt of an offending member of Christ, until we have confessed his sin as our own, mourned over it, prayed for its forgiveness, and sought in the spirit of love, the restoration of the erring one”.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of Ezra’s prayerful weeping, the people “*wept very sore*” (Ezra 10:1), resulting in their national


repentance as the heavens rained down (vv. 9, 13). We cannot expect to see God’s people restored to Christ unless we ourselves are prepared to shed many tears on their behalf.



### A heart prepared to teach the Word

What’s interesting is that, although Ezra is identified as a teacher from the very beginning, many commentators believe that the duration of time between his arrival in Jerusalem and ascending the pulpit in Nehemiah 8 was approximately twelve years. This might remind young men with an interest in the public teaching of the Scriptures that an invitation to the pulpit should never precede the prep school for the heart—seeking and living the Word of God. When the time came for Ezra’s teaching debut, what a message he had in store!

Nehemiah 8 states no fewer than six times that Ezra’s expository discourse of the Law was intended for the people’s understanding (vv. 2, 3, 7, 8, 12, and 13). The goal for all aspiring teachers of the Word—be it a mother teaching her child or a preacher to thousands—is that their listeners would not only hear, but understand. The repentance of Ezra’s listeners resulted from conviction and gladness (Neh. 8-9). If we truly believe that the Holy Spirit enables every believer in this age, shouldn’t we expect Him to yield even greater results among His people today?

Finally, when we examine the character of Ezra, how can we not be reminded of our blessed Lord Jesus? Luke wrote all about what He did and taught (Acts 1:1). As we’re called to follow in His footsteps, may we not only be hearers of the Word but doers also (Jas. 1:22). Have you enrolled your heart in His prep school? 

1. Scholastic Instructor, “The Freedom Writers” November/December 2004. Retrieved from [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0STR/is\\_4\\_114/ai\\_n9483842/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0STR/is_4_114/ai_n9483842/)
2. The diminutive of Azariah, meaning “YAH has helped.”
3. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), p.7.
4. Frank Holmes, *Robert C. Chapman: 70 Years of Serving the Lord* (Grand Rapids, MI: Gospel Folio Press, 2008), p.110.

## A Life Received

Things God has prepared for His Son

If the coming glory cannot be compared to the suffering, and we know something of His unparalleled suffering, what will His glory be?

First Corinthians 2:9 declares: “*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.*” This is a lofty promise of unimaginable blessing that God has prepared for His children. In order to accurately gauge the importance of such a prospect, one must consider the experience of the Lord Jesus Christ. The pathway of the incarnate Son of God was determined from eternity past. From His lowly birth to His ascension into the glory, His life was marked out in the counsels of the Godhead (e.g. Mic. 5:2; Isa. 9:6-7; 1 Pet. 1:20); it was a prepared pathway. Before Messiah’s presentation to Israel, John the Baptist was sent to “*prepare... the way of the Lord*” and “*make His paths straight*” (Mt. 3:3). Nothing happened to Him accidentally. This assures us of the future things that the Father has prepared for the saints and for His Son, for everything that He determined for Christ in the past took place exactly as He directed.

### At His first coming

The things prepared for Christ in the incarnation extended beyond circumstances. Isaiah 50:4 relates that He was given “*the tongue of the learned,*” thus outfitting Him to comfort the weary. Both His words and works were prepared by His Father (Jn. 5:17-23, 36; 14:10-11). Every statement and action of the Lord Jesus demonstrated the character of God. Because of His deeds

and doctrine that were prepared for Him by God, only the Son could say, “*he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father*” (Jn. 14:9).

His ministry of revealing the Father was not ineffectual, for God gave Him His own children to be His followers (Jn. 17:6; Heb. 2:13). In order to give them the right to be members of God’s family, the Lord Jesus did something else that His Father commanded Him: He died and rose again. As He said: “*Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father*” (Jn. 10:17-18). He described this action with another well-known biblical metaphor for the wrath of God, rhetorically asking: “*the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?*” (Jn. 18:11). He drank the bitter cup of judgment for sin, thus becoming a propitiation (Rom. 3:25). Contrary to what His enemies thought, Calvary was not orchestrated by Jewish machinations or Roman power. Though He was crucified by “*wicked hands,*” it was the “*determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*” that designed and accomplished the work that Christ performed at the cross (Acts 2:42). It was a deliberate sacrifice on the Lord Jesus’ part. He voluntarily laid His life down, and just as voluntarily took it up again by resurrection.

### At His second coming

Peter affirms that on the Mount of Transfiguration the Father gave the Son “*glory and honor*” and testified “*this is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased*” (2 Pet. 1:17). It was a dramatic preview of the glory that Christ received from the Father after the ascension—a glory that He will possess forevermore. He also obtained an excellent name from the Father, as the glorified Son



## A LIFE RECEIVED *continued*

and Lord (Heb. 1:4; Php. 2:9). The resurrection was the beginning of Christ's attainment of ever-increasing glory. He was raised from the tomb, received into heaven by the ascension forty days later, and, one day, will have every enemy subdued beneath His feet (Ps. 110). As Philippians 2:10 expresses it, *"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

Christ shares with His saints the things that He receives from His Father. Hebrews 1:2 says that the Father has *"appointed Him heir of all things."* In addition, Romans 8:17 asserts that believers are co-heirs with Christ. With these promises in mind, Isaiah's statement that *"of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end"* (Isa. 9:7) quickens the believer's pulse with anticipation of the glory that he will share with Him. One day, the saints will help administer the rule over the nations that His Father has given Him (Rev. 2:27).

### To benefit the church

The gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit is one of the most important blessings that Christ has received and shared with His people during the present age (Acts 2:33). In leaving His followers in this world, the Lord did not leave them as orphans (Jn. 14:16-18). The Spirit of truth teaches and empowers the saints to live in a manner that is pleasing to God (Rom. 6-8; Gal. 5:22-25). He comforts (Jn. 14:16), instructs (Jn. 16:13-14), and helps their prayer life (Rom. 8:26). Furthermore, He bears witness to Christ (compare Jn. 16:8-11 with Peter's sermon and its result in Acts 2).

Christ's high priestly ministry is another blessing from which the saints currently benefit. Hebrews 5:4-5 details the Father calling the Son to be our great high priest in these words: *"And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, to day have I begotten Thee."* Christians have an interces-

sor who is merciful and faithful (Heb. 2:17-18), compassionate on their weaknesses (Heb. 4:15), and faithful in prayer for them (Heb. 7:25). It is impossible to overstate the importance of this continuous work of the Lord Jesus Christ, for it provides eternal security, confidence, comfort, and spiritual communion with God to believers. The saints are assured of their individual cases receiving attention from One who ministers in the true holy of holies. Moreover, He never dies, nor fails to do what He undertakes.

### What do you give the One who has everything?

Of course the Lord Jesus also receives something from His Father which brings Him much joy: His bride, the Church (2 Cor. 11:1-4; Eph. 5:25-32). The New Jerusalem—the dwelling-place of the church—is described as a bride prepared for the victorious Lord (Rev. 21:2). Spurgeon caught something of the beauty of this imagery in his classic hymn, "Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands":

*"Thou glorious Bridegroom of our hearts,  
Thy present smile a heav'n imparts;  
O lift the veil, if veil there be,  
Let ev'ry saint Thy beauties see!"*

In Revelation 21, however, the focus is not on the bride's enjoyment of His appearance.<sup>1</sup> Instead, it is Christ who enjoys the church's beauty. This is only possible because He first washed and cleansed the Christians; their glory is a reflection of His ineffable loveliness and is the result of God's work in them. Thus, the things that the Father prepared for His Son intersect with the divinely-ordered destiny of believers. The saints' exaltation will correspond with His entrance into glory. What a gracious plan that prepares such blessings for Christ and His followers! 🕊

1. Doubtless Cousin's classic lyrics encapsulate what the saints will feel: "The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear Bridegroom's face. I will not gaze at glory but on my King of Grace."





An army is not simply a large number of soldiers. It includes a variety of skills, tasks and responsibilities, if victory is the goal. This article is a call for practical support of some unheralded troops.

## Soldiers at the Front

When the main business of business is *His* business.

**T**he front is not an easy place. There are soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan and other trouble spots around the world who will not only be in harm's way, but who are as far away as you can get on the planet from family and friends. Some of them are your brothers and sisters. In an unstable world, we should remember them.

There is another front in another war, the relentless battle for souls. We ought to remember those far from home for the cause of Christ. Some are single, and it can't always be easy. Some are away from aging parents, and are missing them keenly. Missionaries' kids wistfully recall faraway family times. Nor should we forget those *"that are in bonds, as bound with them"* (Heb. 13:3), brothers and sisters in China, North Korea, the Muslim world and elsewhere who, for the sake of the Name, are incarcerated freedom fighters. Our prayer for them (and their wives and families without any visible means of support) might well be borrowed from Asaph, *"Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee; according to the greatness of Thy power preserve Thou those that are appointed to die"* (Ps. 79:11).

When it comes to the soldiers for Christ whom we consider "at the front," we may be quick to assume these to be the men who travel from place to place preaching the gospel. But I perceive that many working people in our communities often have more experience and wisdom in building rapport and finding effective channels of communication with the people who see their daily lives and hear their wise and timely witness day after day.

Many parts of North America are facing very challenging times economically. This is especially true for our Christian brothers and sisters who are seeking to *"provide things honest in the sight of all men"* (Rom. 12:17). They often find themselves pitted against unscrupulous competition that find shady ways to undermine the believers' businesses. Not all of these servants of Christ in the workaday world, but certainly some of them, are definitely at the front in gospel witness.. Let me give you a case in point.

High in the mountains of West Virginia is the little town of Terra Alta. Hugging a hillside is *J and J Choice*, a used car store run by brother Barry Kirk. For years Barry has helped preachers to purchase dependable vehicles at fair prices. Uplook Ministries was able to acquire two trucks there, one for GNOM and one for C3. It's good to find someone whose understanding of Christ's Lordship controls his business practice. Barry's reason for being in business is to *"seek...first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."* Many a customer (or staff member) has heard words whereby they might be saved at J and J.

This is true front line work, and, at the least, our Christian school teachers and public school students, tradesmen, sales people and business owners ought to be prayed for as they seek to shine in an increasingly dark world. Words of encouragement would also be very welcome at times like these. *"Encourage one another daily"* (Heb. 3:13).

We shouldn't be going to people like Barry to get the lowest price possible. We should expect good service, fair prices, and honesty (plus some fellowship whatever the outcome of our business dealings). We should want to *"do good...especially unto them who are of the household of faith"* (Gal. 6:10). Supporting them is also supporting the troops at the front. 📍

# SECRETS OF THE SNOW

IN THE WINTERTIME, bright, sparkling snowdrifts cover the city. The orange glow of the street lights transforms each white flake into a shining diamond. The simple beauty often goes unnoticed until the light catches it and reveals it to the unsuspecting passerby.



Buried in the snow lies a lesson. *“But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God”* (Jn. 3:21). Every follower of Christ seems at first to be an ordinary person; but when the disciple reflects the Light of the World, the beauty of the Lord Jesus shines forth to the bystander who does not expect—or may even want—to see it.

Of the countless crystals that have ever fallen on earth, the molecular structure of each is unique, to the knowledge of modern science. Furthermore, the structure of every snowflake changes often. To the unaided eye, however, all that can be seen is the delicate design, the stunning symmetry, and the creative complexity. Someone has carefully formed each shimmering individual. When blanketed over everything, the glittering snow appears silent and ordinary; but the secret that each snowflake whispers is the glorious message: *“There is a Creator, and He is a God of deepest love and finest detail.”*

—ANASTASIA MARTIN