

U PLOOK

JAN-FEB 2009

Assess the Need • Catch the Vision • Take the Challenge

**NOT TO
DESTROY
MEN'S LIVES,
BUT TO
SAVE THEM**

Mike Kelly

**THE
ABUNDANT
LIFE**

Steve Beaton

**GNOM4 MAJOR
OUTREACH**

**NOTE the
IMPORTANT
Information**

p.15



**WHEN
GOD
WALKED ON
EARTH**

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THE LIFE OF MEANING



"Therefore also we have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him." (2 Cor. 5:9)

When God Walked on Earth

The life of meaning

The next time Christ's feet touch the earth, the Mount of Olives will split from east to west (Zech. 14:4). Nevertheless, it was His first coming that was truly earth-shaking, for it divided not a mountain, but time, eternity, heaven and hell, the saved and the lost. No man, no celebrity, no leader has changed the world like He has. But why should we expect anything else? This was no mere man walking the streets of Israel. This was Immanuel—"God with us"!

We will never exhaust the reasons His life was so effective, but Galatians 4:4 lists a few.

The time of His coming. "*But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son...*"

All of history had been orchestrated in order to bring about this very event: the incarnation of the Son of God. He came at precisely the right time.

The manner of His coming. "*...God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law...*"

Here we see both the divine and human natures of our Lord Jesus. Further, we learn something of the place He took: "under the Law." He fulfilled the Law so that we could live under grace.

The purpose of His coming. "*...to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*" His was no accidental greatness. The Lord Jesus came with purpose, and He was completely aware of it at every point during His earthly ministry—at His conception (Heb. 10:5), in His youth (Lk. 2:49), during His ministry (Jn. 4:34), and in His death (Heb. 12:2). That purpose fulfilled, He could say, "*I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do*" (Jn. 17:4).

What of us? Our heavenly Father has "*blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*" (Eph. 1:3). One of those blessings is a life worth living—the life of Christ. In stark contrast to the lost around us, we have the privilege of living lives of purpose. We sometimes ask: Will what I'm doing right now matter in 100 years? But we might ask an even more pointed question: Will what I'm doing right now even matter tomorrow? Wouldn't it be a shame if the citizens of heaven had the same goals in life as those who have no hope beyond the grave: a good education, a decent job, a blissful family life, a comfortable home? Those might be understandable desires, but shouldn't we also strive for something further? Something deeper? Something higher?

It is too easy for us to coast through life, occupied with passing needs and pleasures but giving only scattered thought to why we're here and what we're accomplishing for eternity. When was the last time we stopped to consider whether our intentions to serve Him are, one day after another, being forgotten or postponed? Shouldn't we be humbly asking that question every day?

Why *are* we here? What *do* we want to accomplish for the Lord in whatever time we have left? It won't happen accidentally. Let us learn the discipline, joy, and reward of the life of purpose. Let us devote daily, deliberate, persistent thought, prayer, and effort to living for the One who never lost sight of why He had come. Let us walk in the footsteps of the Master that we might glorify God on the earth and finish the work He has given us to do.

U P L O O K

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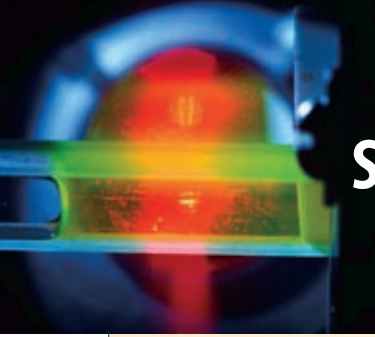
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Reader's Guide to the Origins Debate (part 1)

A good meal has several courses.

In his 1999 book *How the News Makes us Dumb*¹, historian C. John Sommerville observes that the greatest problem with today's news coverage is not so much that it is biased (which it is), as that it is daily. As a consequence, news is reduced to the lowest common denominator, often without context, and shortened into quickly digestible "sound bytes." Accessing news and information today is not difficult. But coming to a reasoned understanding of issues such as the global warming controversy or the creation/evolution/intelligent design debate using information from standard media outlets is essentially impossible. There is just no substitute for in-depth knowledge gained by reading several book-length arguments on a topic and chewing on the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments before forming a personal conclusion.

As a scientist and avid reader, I am sometimes asked to recommend books about the creation/evolution/design debate for those without a background in science but with a hunger to understand. Just as a good meal has several courses, so, too, will a study of the debate. As an appetizer, read Phillip E. Johnson's book *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*². Written by a law professor, this easy-to-read book lays out a framework for thinking about the debate and for understanding each side's definition of key words like "science" and "evolution." Johnson points out how the issues and participants have been so stereotyped since the popular play and movie *Inherit the Wind*—a dramatized version of the 1925 Scopes "monkey trial" in Dayton, Tennessee—that valid criticisms of the scientific problems and biases of Darwinism are drowned out. Love and reason triumph over prejudice and religious bigotry, so the story goes. But this is not what actually happened in Dayton. For the real story of the trial, read Marvin Olasky's excellent book, *Monkey Business*³.

The main course requires one to bite into the meat of the criticisms of Darwinian evolution and may require some determined chewing to digest. Phillip E. Johnson's *Darwin on Trial*⁴ is worth the effort. It is the most con-

cise and thoughtful book in print on the key issues. A lighter, more personal-discovery style course is found in Lee Strobel's *The Case for a Creator*⁵. This readable book follows the author in a journey of discovery as he interviews many of the leading critics of modern Darwinian evolution and presents their views. Phillip E. Johnson serves up another meaty course designed to distinguish scientific fact from philosophy-laden interpretation in *The Wedge of Truth*⁶. Because interpretations influenced by philosophy often become "facts" through the media sound bite megaphone, learning to distinguish between the two may eventually split apart the intellectual foundation of Darwinism.

While I prefer to focus on written material because "reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body,"⁷ there are two DVDs that make a wonderful two-layer dessert for the mind. These are *The Privileged Planet* and *Unlocking The Mystery Of Life*, both from Illustra Media⁸. Bon appétit! —MICHAEL G. WINDHEUSER, PH.D. ↑



Digest a few good books on this timely subject.

- 1 C. John Sommerville, *How the News Makes Us Dumb* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999).
- 2 Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism By Opening Minds* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997).
- 3 Marvin Olasky & John Perry, *Monkey Business* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005).
- 4 Phillip E. Johnson, *Darwin On Trial* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993).
- 5 Lee Strobel, *The Case For A Creator* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004).
- 6 Phillip E. Johnson, *The Wedge of Truth* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).
- 7 Sir Richard Steele (1672 – 1729).
www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Sir_Richard_Steele/
- 8 www.illustramedia.com



WWW.TEAMWORKERSUSA.COM

TeamWorkers USA

A vision to help complete existing building projects for assembly missionaries

Are you interested in building upon the foundation laid down by the apostles (1 Cor. 3:9-15)? How about using saws, hammers, and nails to do so! There is good news for believers interested in serving assembly missionaries with construction or craftsman skills. *TeamWorkers USA* was started in 2008 to organize teams of believers to work on building projects begun by assembly missionaries. While U.S. assemblies have sent out teams individually, several brethren have been burdened for years to see a group started in the USA that would organize such teams on a regular basis. In April of 2008, these men sat down with *TeamWorkers (Canada)*, a group doing this same work with *MSC Canada* since 1992. The American group received invaluable help from the Canadians, including an invitation to use a similar name. During February 2009, some of the brethren from *TeamWorkers USA* will be participating in a trip to Mexico sponsored by *TeamWorkers (Canada)*. With help from *TeamWorkers (Canada)* and *Assembly Care Ministries*, *TeamWorkers USA* is moving forward and praying about sending out its first teams during the 2009 year.

Believers, missionaries, and assemblies interested in learning more about *TeamWorkers USA* are invited to go to the www.teamworkersusa.com web site which contains sign-up forms for those interested in participating in trips or being included on a mailing list. For information about teams being sent from Canada, please visit www.teamworkers.org

MENS RETREAT AT CAMP IROQUOINA

It's time again for a men's getaway in the Endless Mountains of Pennsylvania. The retreat will take place Saturday, Mar 7 with Keith Keiser (PA) as the speaker. Enjoy a relaxed atmosphere with good fellowship around the Word of God. Friday night accommodations available. **Contact:** Mark Thomas ph: 570-967-2577 e-mail: camp-mgr@epix.net

CONFERENCE IN ALABAMA

Hope Bible Chapel in Birmingham will host its annual spring conference Mar 13-15 with Thomas Wheeler (TX) as the speaker. **Contact:** Buddy Hughes ph: 205-467-2601 email: chalktalkbuddy@gmail.com

A SACRED TRUST

Larry Price (FL) will be the speaker at a men's conference Mar 14. The theme is "A Sacred Trust: Valuing & Utilizing the Resources God has given us." It will be held, Lord willing, at

Fifth Avenue Chapel in Belmar, NJ from 9:30 AM to noon followed by lunch. **Contact:** Mark Kolchin email: knowtheword@comcast.net

VANCOUVER EASTER CONFERENCE

Sponsored by 6 local assemblies, the conference will be held Apr 10-12 at Granville Chapel, 5901 Granville St. Vancouver, BC. The scheduled speakers are Dr. Joe Mikhael (AZ) and Dr. Steve Price (KS). Children's programs Friday and Saturday. **Contact:** Norman Chandler ph: 604-271-1083 email: ejannormr@yahoo.ca

SPRING CONFERENCE IN INDIANA

The annual spring conference at the Gospel Chapel, 321 Cliff Drive, Logansport, IN is to be held Apr 18-19, Lord willing. The speaker will be Kenneth Fleming (IA). Refreshments at 9:30 AM with the first session at 10. Lunch will be provided. **Contact:** Ralph Garver ph: 574-722-1012 email: leegar@verizon.net

CONFERENCE IN COLORADO

Limon Bible Chapel, 385 J Ave, Limon, CO will have its annual conference Apr 18-19. Speakers: Charles Fizer (IA) and Dave Michaux (CO). Accommodations and meals. **Contact:** ph: 719-775-9788 or 719-346-7675 email: Judystandley@gmail.com

CHICAGO AREA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Palos Hills Christian Assembly is hosting its conference Apr 24-26. Scheduled speakers are Boushra Mikhael (ON), Joe Reese (ON), Jesse Gentile (FL), and Brian Veenstra (MI) – children's program. **Contact:** Rich Battaglin ph: 708-599-9407 e-mail: paloschristians@hotmail.com

ONTARIO MISSIONARY BREAKFAST

The Sixteenth Annual Southern Ontario Missionary Breakfast will be held at 8:30 AM Saturday, Apr 25 at the Best Western Beacon Harbour-side, Jordan, ON. **Contact:** Dale Hanlin email: dhanlin@vaxxine.com

FRONT LINES *continued*

Eric Smith



CONFERENCE IN DEARBORN MI

Dearborn Chapel will hold its conference Apr 25-26. Mike Atwood (GA) is the expected speaker. The conference begins Saturday at 4:00 PM with the final meeting Sunday at 1:30 PM. Dearborn Chapel, 4180 Monroe Blvd, Dearborn Heights, MI **Contact:** Ross Rainey ph: 734-453-8585 David Donnelly ph: 313-618-4791 email: dgdonnelly@wowway.com

LADIES' MISSIONARY CONFERENCE

Hosted by Turner Road and Oakwood Bible Chapels, the 32nd Annual Conference is planned for May 2 from 9:30 AM to 3:00 PM at Turner Road Bible Chapel, 2100 Turner Rd, Windsor, ON. Lunch provided. Child care for 2 yrs. old & under. Speakers: Kathy VanEssen – MSC and Susan Blok – New Life Prison Ministries. **Contact:** Jan Gillis ph: 519-967-1075 email: ngillis@cogeco.ca

64th ANNUAL LA CONFERENCE

Lake Park Chapel, 201 Schlieff Dr, Belle Chasse will hold its conference May 2-3, beginning at 3:30 PM. Enjoy a spiritually refreshing weekend in God's Word with Ted Gliske (MN) speaking. **Contact:** Ray Cummings, 103 Dickson Dr, Belle Chasse, LA 70037 ph: 504-239-7068 email: lakeparkchapel@cmaaccess.com

CONFERENCE IN CLAREMONT CA

The brethren at Claremont Bible Chapel, Claremont CA will host their 19th annual conference May 15-17. Joe Mikhael (AZ) and Craig Shakarji (MD) are the invited speakers. Accommodations and meals provided. **Contact:** J. Harry Elliott ph: 909-621-1064 Rick Markley ph: 909-625-7463

CAMP HOPE IN GEORGIA

Camp Hope will hold their Home School Camp for ages 7-19, in the will of the Lord, May 25-30. The speakers will be Andy Scott (Junior camp) and John Gordon (Teen camp). The week begins Monday with



registration at 3:00 PM and ends Saturday after breakfast. Visit Camp Hope's website

www.camphopega.org

for a complete listing of their summer camp schedule and registration.

Contact: Steve Roys, 7011 Pony Lake Rd, Dahlonge, GA 30533 ph: 770-536-4787 email: camphopega@arilion.com

TURKEY HILL RANCH BIBLE CAMP

For the complete 2009 camp and conference schedule, visit the camp website at www.turkeyhillranch.com **Contact:** Sonny Williams, Director 13781 Maries Road 301, Vienna, MO 65582 ph: 573-744-5843 email: sonny@turkeyhillranch.com

UPWARD BOUND 2009

Upward Bound will be held again at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, ON. Running from Sunday, Aug 16 to Sunday the 23rd, the focus of week one is intensive Bible study and practical teaching from the Scriptures, but there are also times of social and recreational activities. Week two is a canoe trip into Algonquin Park running from Sunday Aug 23 to Friday the 28th. Speakers: Brian Cretney (ON), Charlie Tempest (ON), Craig Shakarji (MD), Dennis Leblanc (NB) Sandy McEachern (ON). Attendees are welcome to attend either or both weeks. **Contact:** armceachern@gmail.com

COMMENDATION

We were happy to receive notice from the elders of Bellevue Gospel Chapel, Schenectady, NY, informing us that the assembly has commended brother *Eric Smith* to the work of the Lord as God might lead him. Many Christians across the continent have been encouraged in evangelism by Eric's example and ministry. We have also been blessed with Eric's leadership for the past three years with *Good News on the Move*. The assembly writes: "Eric has shown, over the years, a very earnest and persistent desire to be a good witness for the Saviour both at home and afar... Since his conversion, he has devoted himself to the study of God's Word both individually and formally in order to equip himself for his witness." Please pray for our brother as he continues on the front lines. Eric can be contacted at savedbygracett@yahoo.com or by writing him at P. O. Box 496, Altamont, NY 12009-0496.

NEW WORK IN SYRACUSE, NY

A new assembly has begun in Syracuse, NY, meeting in homes for worship and Bible study. Meeting times are Tuesday nights for Bible Study and Sunday mornings for the Lord's Supper and Family Bible Hour. Fellow believers are welcome to join for worship and fellowship. **Contact:** Abey Abraham ph: 315-708-3839 email: abey_a@yahoo.com Ray Shetley ph: 315-218-5958 email: rlshetley@gmail.com

UNIFIED IN HARRISBURG

Derry Street Gospel Chapel and New Life Bible Chapel, both of Harrisburg, PA have united into one assembly. Believers are now meeting at

Harrisburg Bible Chapel, 5503 Union Deposit Rd, Harrisburg, PA 17111 ph: 717-652-8214 **Contact:** Robert Walker, 520 Frog Hollow Rd, Harrisburg PA 17112 ph: 717-599-5953

NEW MEETING PLACE IN GEORGETOWN

As of Jan 2009 the saints at Halton Hills Bible Chapel began meeting at the Georgetown District Seniors Centre, 318 Guelph Street, Unit 9, Georgetown, ON L7G 4B5 **Contact:** Hanniel Ghezzi ph: 905-873-1005 info@haltonhillsbiblechapel.com

VOICES FOR CHRIST

The *Voices for Christ* website features over forty thousand audio sermons from brethren dating back to the 1950's, all conveniently in mp3 format for easy download to a personal computer or an mp3 player. They are actively searching for audio messages on reel-to-reel, cassette or CD, both classic and modern, to restore, digitize and distribute. Their work is free of charge, and they are willing to return the original material along with the messages on CD or optional hard drive which could be utilized on a chapel's website in addition to the VFC website. **Contact:** Dwight Beavers ph: 919-477-2827 email: dbeavers2@nc.rr.com web: www.voicesforchrist.org

COLLECTING DUST?

Did your parents or grandparents leave a library collection of Bible teaching? Please consider making these valuable books accessible to other believers who would put them to good use. Assistance with the shipping cost is available. **Contact:** Doug Engle ph: 620-200-2045 email: dougengle76@gmail.com

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Agape Valley Bible Day Camp, located in the Niagara Peninsula in Southern Ontario, is looking for a Camp/Property Manager who would live year round in a house provided on the property. The children's day camp season is during the months of July and August with a weekly attendance of 50 campers and a minimum of 10 staff volunteers. There is also a maple syrup operation and a honey production ministry that requires seasonal attention and work. The applicant would need to be recommended by his local assembly, have some practical administrative and hands-on skills with a willingness to be involved in directing other volunteers throughout the year. **Contact:** Tim Hartwick, 2601 Hwy 20E, Unit 2, Fonthill ON L0S 1E6 ph: 905-732-8051 email: agapevalley@agapevalley.ca web: www.agapevalley.ca

Emmanuel Bible Camp in PEI, Canada is looking to the Lord for a camp manager for the upcoming season. Fifty-five years in presenting the gospel to boys and girls in the area, Emmanuel continues to emphasize Christ in all its ministry. **Contact:** Grant Canfield email: gandscanfield@pei.sympatico.ca web: www.emmanuelbiblecamp.ca

Horton Haven Christian Camp, Chapel Hill, TN is looking for applicants with an R. N. degree for the position of Health Care Director. Camp runs for 10 weeks from May 24 – Jul 31. **Contact:** Matt Phelan ph: 931-364-7656 email: Matt@Hortonhaven.org Horton Haven Christian Camp, P. O. Box 276, Chapel Hill, TN 37034 web: www.hortonhaven.org

Bethel Bible Camp, Woolwine, VA requires a Maintenance Manager with mechanical aptitude. He will need to be commended by his home assembly. A home is provided. **Contact:** John Hand, Bethel Bible Camp, P. O. Box 71, Woolwine, VA 24185 e-mail: keptbyhim1936@va.net ph: 276-930-4289

Parkside Ranch in Orford, Quebec has need of a couple to be involved full time. It would be ideal if they were commended and have a desire for camp ministry. Responsibilities include maintenance, farm management, administration and involvement in the camping program. **Contact:** diron.w@sympatico.ca web: www.parksideranch.com

HOMECALLS

Dr. James Naismith, born in India in 1923 to missionary parents Archie and Alice, went Home to be with his Lord on Feb 9. At age 5, James was entrusted to the care of a family in Scotland. He graduated high school at age 16 and university at age 21, becoming the youngest doctor in Scotland. James was a founder of Kawartha Lakes Bible College and one of its most loved teachers. He retired at age 60 to devote himself more fully to the Lord's work. James traveled throughout many countries, preaching, teaching, and encouraging God's people. He authored many magazine articles and several books.

Helen Lindsted, 87, went to be with the Lord Dec 2, 2008. Predeceased by husband Leonard, assembly evangelist. Memorial contributions to Milk and Honey Ministries, P. O. Box 8550, Wichita, KS 67208.

A LETTER OF THANKS *from Halton Hills Bible Chapel to Uplook readers*

"....As his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike" (1 Sam. 30:24f)



Dear fellow-soldiers,

We thank the Lord for your love and support! In October, over 100 people came to the battleground in Georgetown, Ontario to minister in the gospel. Nevertheless, as grateful as we are for those who were able to be with us, equally vital to victory were the fervent prayers of the hundreds of saints that stayed behind. As a result, you're partakers with us in the Lord's spoil!

What were the spoils of victory?

- No fewer than ten people were saved in Georgetown and Erin.
- We've had opportunity to follow up with 100 more people since the outreach.
- A family of believers began attending our meeting.
- In November, we started a "Christianity Explored" course with nine members of the community attending. We've already been asked by certain attendees, "What happens next?"

Please pray for these souls to be saved as we seek the Lord's leading in starting a second course as well as Bible studies for professing believers in the community in need of restoration. We are also burdened about further follow-up resulting from the recent Christmas door-to-door calendar distribution to over 1,000 residences in South Georgetown, an area untouched during the October outreach. Your continued prayers and fellowship in the gospel are both needed and appreciated!

Love in Christ,

the saints at Halton Hills Bible Chapel,
Georgetown, Ontario

As of January 2009,
we are now meeting at the
Georgetown District
Seniors Centre,
318 Guelph Street, Unit 9,
Georgetown, ON L7G 4B5
Contact: 905-873-1005
info@haltonhillsbiblechapel.com

Not to Abolish the Law, But to Fulfill It

The schoolmaster gracefully retires.

The prophets wrote of things to come. Christ fulfilled them.

What did our Lord mean in Matthew 5:17-20 when He said He had not come to destroy the Law but to fulfill it? The reader will do well to realize that this is no simple question. In two sentences (v.17), the Saviour summarizes the relationship between the whole of the Old Testament and His messianic ministry. This passage has been so diversely used by every group in Christendom, that one writer said of it, “Matthew 5:17-20 is an exegetical minefield!”

While this article will not address controversial issues connected to this passage (e.g. whether or not the Law continues as a rule of life for the believer), it will help the reader understand what it meant for Christ to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. But, before doing so, we give seven thoughts for those wishing to study Matthew 5:17-20 themselves.

1. Our Lord says He came to fulfill “the Law *and* the Prophets” not just the Law. More than the Law is in view here. This wording is one way of referring to the whole of the Old Testament.

2. The contrast is not between “destroying” and “upholding” the Law but between “destroying” and “fulfilling.” Our Lord did not come to merely obey the Law (as taught by the rabbis) and leave it untouched. Nor did Christ come to abolish or revoke it, as some feared as they listened to the Sermon on the Mount. He came to *fulfill it*.

3. Contrary to many who use this passage to prove that the Law is forever binding on the believer (because it will not pass away until the earth does), this passage *does* state the one condition under which a law or prophecy might “pass away”: when it is fulfilled.

4. The word “fulfill” ending verse 17 is *pleroō* (to realize, accomplish, fulfill) whereas “fulfill” at the end of verse 18 is *ginomai* (to come to pass, take place).

5. Not all of the prophecies of the prophets have “come to pass” or been “fulfilled” by the Lord yet, thus some still remain in force for those to whom they were spoken.

6. Fulfillment of the Law does not imply that Law-related portions of Scripture are to be ignored or neglected. All Scripture is profitable (2 Tim. 3:16) and, thus, the Law—like every portion of God’s Word—is richly profitable for study. The entire book of Hebrews illustrates this point.

7. To say that the Law is fulfilled is *by no means* to say the believer is free to live lawlessly. Part of the meaning of the fulfillment of the Law is the fact that it has been overshadowed or swallowed up by the higher standard given to the believer in the words and works of Christ throughout the New Testament. The believer has left his childhood guardian (Gal. 4:1-11) and embarked on a mature walk after Christ (Rom. 7:4-7; 1 Cor. 2:6-11).

Now let us consider some of the ways that Christ fulfilled the Law.

Christ fulfilled the Law and the Prophets prophetically

This is perhaps the simplest of all aspects of fulfillment. The prophets wrote of things to come. Christ fulfilled them. Today, a reader can easily find a website or book indexing the hundreds of messianic prophecies our Lord fulfilled in His birth, ministry, and death. Matthew’s gospel alone provides several examples. (See Matthew 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:54; etc.)





Christ fulfilled the Law personally

As one born under the Law (Gal. 4:4), our Lord obeyed it perfectly. He did not need to offer sacrifices for Himself (Heb. 7:27). The Pharisees could not convict Him of sin (Jn. 8:46). False witnesses were needed to put Him to death (Mk. 14:55-57). Positively, Christ was all that Adam should have been and more. The Father bore testimony of our Lord's character from heaven itself (Mt. 3:17; 17:5). In Christ, the earth finally saw a Man who loved the Lord God with all His heart, soul, strength, and mind, and His neighbor as Himself (Mt. 22:40). Watching the Lord obey the Law was a matter of watching righteousness blossom, rather than watching sin being repressed.

Christ fulfilled the Law doctrinally

Our Lord did not advocate abandonment of the Law and good works. Rather, He taught the true meaning of the Law in contrast to the externals and traditions of the Pharisees. He stripped the Law of the teachings of men ("*ye have heard it was said by them of old*") and brought out the truth, mercy, and justice intended by its divine author ("*but I say unto you*"). Study Matthew 5-7. When, in the course of Israel's history, the Law was not taught properly by the Levites, God raised up prophets to call Israel back into obedience to it. Moses promised that a great prophet would come to teach the Law rightly (Deut. 18:15-18). Our Saviour was that coming prophet (Jn. 6:14). He fulfilled the law in His perfect teaching of it (e.g. Mt. 12:3, 5; 19:4; 22:31; Mk. 12:10; Lk. 10:25f) and even pushed beyond it (compare Matthew 22:39 to John 13:34).

Christ fulfilled the Law typically

Our Lord was the reality from which the majority of types, shadows, and illustrations in the Law and the Prophets took their pattern (Lk. 24:27; Jn. 5:46). Hebrews 10:1 tells us the Law itself was a shadow. The furniture of the tabernacle, the sacrifices of Leviticus 1-7, and the feast days of Leviticus 23 (to name but a few examples) correspond to His person and work. We see illustrations of Christ in Isaac, Joseph, Joshua, Boaz, David, etc.

Christ fulfilled the Law dispensationally

The Law had a beginning at Sinai and an ending at the coming of Christ. Noah and Abraham did not live by the Law given to Moses, neither do we. The Law was clearly temporary, bridging the gap between the giving of the promises and the Seed who would fulfill them (Gal. 3:17-26). In the interim, the Law provided knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20), knowledge of God (Ps. 119), a pattern for holy living among sinful nations, and a national path to blessing for Israel (Deut. 27-28). It provided repeated, temporary covering of individual sins (Heb. 9:25; 10:1), external purification (Heb. 9:13), but no lasting internal solution. Just as training wheels have fulfilled their purpose once a child can ride without them, so the Law had fulfilled its purpose once Christ came. Training wheels do not become evil once their purpose is fulfilled. They are simply removed. The basic principle of not leaning too far to the left or to the right is just as true for Olympic racers as it is for children in the driveway. But the skilled rider has a greater principle than training wheels to prevent his falling over.

Christ fulfilled the law judicially

Due to "*the weakness of sinful flesh*" (Rom. 8:3-4), the Law routinely condemned with a curse anyone trying to live under it (Gal. 3:10). Our Lord dealt with the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13; Jas. 2:10) by doing what the Law could not: dealing with our guilt, sin in the flesh, and our dead spiritual state. Christ became a curse for us (Gal. 3:13b), enabling God to nail our bill of guilt and debt to Christ's cross (Col. 2:14). Sin and guilt being permanently taken away (Heb. 10:11b-12, 17, 18; Rom. 5:18; 8:1), Christ tore open the veil (pictured in the Law) separating man from God (Lk. 23:45; Heb. 10:17-22), and we were reconciled to God. The death brought about by the Law (Rom. 7:9-12) was replaced by everlasting life (2 Tim. 1:10; Gal. 3:21; Rom. 5:21; 6:23). In the end, it was Christ who brought life and quieted the Law's cries against us.

In Christ, we see the perfect fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. 📌

Watching the Lord ... was a matter of watching righteousness blossom, rather than sin being repressed.

Not to Bring Peace, But a Sword

Neutrality is not an option.

**“Christ is the great Peacemaker; but before peace, He brings war.”
– C.H. Spurgeon**

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Mt. 10:34). At first glance, this statement seems incongruous with the popular conception of Jesus Christ. No doubt guided by Hollywood’s unhistorical and imaginative depictions, He is often pictured as insipid, blandly noncontroversial, or benignly accepting of anyone and anything. Modern thinking reduces Him to a supremely tolerant ethicist: one who condemns those people and things that society’s conventional wisdom deems bad, while simultaneously excusing individuals from their personal guilt. In short, Jesus is modern man’s psychoanalyst, guru, confidant, and all around “buddy,” who will by no means challenge or offend contemporary sensibilities. Needless to say, this is a caricature of the true Messiah, whom the Scripture describes as a “*stumbling block*” (1 Cor. 1:23; cf. Rom. 9:32-33). The Lord Jesus’ own words reveal His controversial claims and actions which, even today, offend the natural man.

Isn’t God a peacemaker?

However, Christians may also be confused by this stark verse, bearing in mind that Isaiah calls Messiah “the Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6) and the epistles speak of Him as a great peacemaker (Col. 1:20). What is more, Christ Himself called peacemakers “the sons of God,” thereby implying their likeness to the Father who delights in peace and will eventually cause it to prevail in the new heavens and new earth (Mt. 5:9). Walter Kaiser agrees, saying:

“One thing is certain: Jesus did not advocate conflict. He taught His followers to offer no resistance or retaliation when they were attacked or ill-treated. *‘Blessed are the peacemakers,’* He said, *‘for they will be called sons*

of God’ (Mt. 5:9), meaning that God is the God of peace, so that those who seek peace and pursue it reflect his character...Individuals and groups formerly estranged from one another found themselves reconciled through their common devotion to Christ... if Simon the Zealot and Matthew the tax collector were able to live together as two of the twelve apostles, the rest of the company must have looked on this as a miracle of grace.”¹

The gospel offers “*peace with God*” to those who receive justification by faith (Rom. 5:1). Likewise, Paul’s habitual greeting in his epistles is “*grace and peace*,” thereby combining the two common Greek and Hebrew salutations into a theologically cogent expression of Christianity’s essence (1 Cor. 1:3). In what sense, then, does Christ bring the sword rather than peace?

Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war

The Lord Jesus’ word choice evokes images of combat, and rightly so, for people in this fallen world are at war with their Creator. When He sent His disciples forth as heralds of the kingdom, He warned them of the adversity that they would face: They would experience the same opposition that their Lord faced. He assured them: “*The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?*” (Mt. 10:24-25; cf. Jn. 15:20-21). Spiritual conflict often leads to physical persecution. Alexander MacLaren noted this regarding the world’s response to Christ: “He is first King of righteousness, and after that also King of peace. But, if His kingdom be righteousness, purity, and love, then unrighteousness, filthiness, and selfishness will fight against it for their lives.”² To serve Christ



WAR AND PEACE *continued*

will inevitably lead one into spiritual warfare; thus, the Lord metaphorically speaks of weaponry. Similarly, Ephesians 6:17 and Hebrews 4:12 describe the Christian's armaments, likening God's Word to a sword. Likewise, Revelation 2:12 pictures the Lord Jesus wielding His blade against the false teachers in Pergamos. Evil and falsehood must be met with severe countermeasures rather than compromise.

Means and ends

The Lord's bellicose-sounding terminology also reflects the division that His controversial claims engender among men even to the present time. One is either for Him or against Him—neutrality is not an option! Two well-known apologists express it this way:

“...the immediate consequence of Christ's coming was to divide those who were for Him and those who were against Him—the children of God from the children of this world. But, just as the goal of an amputation is to relieve pain, so the immediate effect is to inflict pain. Likewise, Christ's ultimate mission is to bring peace, both to the human heart and to earth. Nonetheless, the immediate effect of His message was to divide those in the kingdom of God from those in the kingdom of Satan.”³

Therefore, His coming drew a clear line of demarcation between His adherents and opponents. The ire of the latter group was aroused by the unwavering purity and truth of the One Who is described as “*the light*” (Jn. 1:7-9).

Conflict resulting in perfect peace

At Christ's second coming, His sword will be the prominent accoutrement on His person. His weapon is linked with His word, as in Hebrews 4:12. Revelation 19:15 asserts that “a sharp sword” will proceed from His mouth, showing that peace will only come on earth after the Lord subdues His enemies. C. H. Spurgeon aptly described the battle in this way: “Christ is the great Peacemaker; but before peace, He brings war. Where the light cometh, the darkness must retire. Where truth is, the lie must flee; or, if it abideth, there must be a stern conflict, for the truth cannot and will not lower its standard, and the lie must be trodden under foot.”⁴ Elsewhere in Scripture, the evocative metaphor of Christ's enemies being made His footstool is used (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:27; Heb. 1:13). Like Joshua instructing the Israelite leaders to put their feet on the necks of the vanquished Canaanite kings, so the Lord will put down all opposition beneath His feet (Josh. 10:24).



After thousands of years of inviting people to be reconciled to Him, the Lord will come to forcibly establish His kingdom. If some have not received Christ's gracious salvation by then, it will not be because they had no opportunity nor because God was not willing for them to be delivered from wrath. From the first century to the present time, He has been entreating men to come to Him, offering pardon in exchange for unconditional surrender. Sadly, some will never willingly bow the knee to the King of kings.

Peace with honor

The modern age celebrates tolerance as the greatest virtue. Christians are urged to embrace other belief systems and “alternative lifestyles” (a euphemism for sinful behavior). While it is true that the Lord Jesus loves humans and wants to save them, His approach is no “peace at any price” tactic. He never achieves peace at the expense of righteousness. To declare peace without removing the underlying cause for hostility—human sin—is a delusion. The New Testament makes it clear that Christ never advocated physical compulsion or temporal combat to advance His kingdom (Jn. 18:36). Nonetheless, the Lord's exclusive and admittedly controversial claims are non-negotiable. Jesus clearly taught: “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by Me*” (Jn. 14:6; see also Acts 4:12). True peace comes from being in a right relationship with God the Creator through His Son, which leads to a lifestyle that pleases Him. No matter what the spirit of the age proclaims, believers must adhere to Christ and His teaching. Now, more than ever, we need to wield the spiritual sword of God's Word in the great conflict in which we are engaged, both in gospel witness and in the doctrine held up by the church. 🔴

Endnotes

- 1 Walter C. Kaiser, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, electronic edition, Logos Software (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), s. 378.
- 2 Alexander MacLaren, *Exposition of the Scriptures: Matthew*, electronic edition, Logos Software (Rio, WI: Ages Software), 387 n.d.
- 3 Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties*, electronic edition (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992).
- 4 C.H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening: Daily Readings*, electronic edition, Logos Software (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), December 28 evening meditation.



ELDER HELPS *To feed, to take heed, and to lead*

The Ultimate Shepherd

Caring, protective leaders is one of the greatest needs today.

As elders, we are simply under-shepherds of the Chief Shepherd. There is no greater example of shepherding than that which the Lord provides in His capacity as *“the good shepherd [that] lays down His life for the sheep.”* In John 10, the Lord describes His model of how to shepherd the flock. His relationship to the sheep is characterized in three ways.

Intimacy

In John 10:3, the shepherd *“calls His own sheep by name.”* How is this possible? Clearly, in order to call sheep in such a personal manner, the shepherd has spent much time with his flock. He has seen these little lambs struggle, cry, feed, and grow into mature sheep. Do the saints in our local assembly enjoy this kind of intimate relationship with the elders? As shepherds, do we know the sheep, their homes, their marriages, their children, the challenges of their work place, their spiritual gifts? This personal acquaintance with believers cannot be left to a passing exchange on Sunday morning. It is cultivated by time spent with the sheep, whether over coffee at a local restaurant, a meal in a home, a conversation over the phone, or an impromptu get-together to pray.

By the way, elders whose time is consumed in the pursuit of personal enterprise or in the administrative affairs of their assembly will have a great deal of difficulty achieving this standard of intimacy with the other believers. Sadly, there are many sheep that have never even been in the home of an elder. The Lord could say, *“I know My own.”*

Leadership

Leadership is another aspect of the work of the shepherd of John 10: *“...He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out.”* The sheep look to the shepherd for direction. Notice that his ability to lead is closely tied to how intimately the shepherd knows the sheep: *“...the sheep follow Him because they know His voice”* (Jn. 10:4). Just as the sheep listen for the familiar voice of the shepherd and follow his leading, so, too, believers are looking to their



elders to give direction both by example and by word. This speaks to the conduct of the elder and the emphasis of spiritual priorities in his life. His life is being closely scrutinized by the believers, and they will take their cues from him. It also speaks to the thoughtful provision of sound, systematic teaching in the life of the local church. Leadership that is in tune with the issues and challenges facing the flock will be able to bring the Word of God to bear on these matters in a sensitive and thoughtful manner. Elders who lead in this way will set the spiritual tone for the local saints.

Protection

Having called and led the sheep out of the fold, the shepherd in John 10 is now described as *“going ahead of them.”* The idea is distinct from that of his leading them. The shepherd goes ahead, anticipating dangers inherent with the rugged landscape his sheep will have to traverse. He is constantly vigilant for the many predators that lurk about seeking a stray or weak member of the flock.

ELDER HELPS *continued*

Elders are to protect God's people. Paul, in addressing the elders gathered at Mellitus, speaks of the necessity of guarding the flock against those "savage wolves who would come from without." An obvious false teacher is not difficult to spot. But even greater discernment is required to protect the flock from dangers within: unwholesome conduct, a word of gossip, human jealousy, unforgiving spirits, etc. These act like leaven and sow discord between believers, hindering fellowship. Elders might do a great job taking on the savage wolves without, but lack a willingness to forthrightly address these issues within.

Another aspect of this protection is seen in the example of the shepherd in Christ's parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15. We read there that "he goes after the one which is lost until he finds it." It is a great sense of responsibility to protect the sheep that leads him to leave the 99 (obviously in

capable hands) and go after the one lost one.

It is true in the local assembly that "out of sight, out of mind." Many a believer who feels unconnected, isolated, and lonely slowly drifts away from the fellowship of the Christians and into the welcoming arms of worldly associations. As shepherds, we not only have to protect the entire flock but also look out for the spiritual welfare of the individual sheep.

Let the principles from the master Shepherd and His relationship to the sheep guide us in our service. 📌

We appreciate the comments and questions we receive. They help us deal with current needs. Please keep them coming to elders@uplook.org

Many a believer who feels unconnected, isolated, and lonely slowly drifts away...



...into the welcoming arms of worldly associations.

Why Jesus Didn't Come

"I DID NOT COME TO ABOLISH [THE LAW], BUT TO FULFILL" – MT. 5:17

"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners [to repentance]" – Mt. 9:13; Mk. 2:17; Lk. 5:32

"I did not come to bring peace [on the earth], but a sword" – Mt. 10:34

"the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" – Lk. 9:56

"I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world" – Jn. 12:47

"THE SON OF MAN DID NOT COME TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE" – MT. 20:28; MK. 10:45

"I have come ... not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" – Jn. 6:38

Richmond, Kentucky

A gospel surge planned in this needy area

As *Good News on the Move* makes its way toward the northwest U.S., it will not be long, Lord willing, until the team reaches Richmond, KY, for its final gospel surge, toward the end of May. Richmond is the location of Bluegrass Bible Fellowship and home to three of the GNOM team. It seemed appropriate to join with these believers for this year's finale.

We hope to try something a little different this year. Instead of inviting everyone for one week, we're suggesting one (or more) of three distinctive weeks.

WEEK ONE will be for those willing and able to be door hangers. Gift packs (including a CD, a fridge magnet, a text, an invite to the following week's gospel events, a reply card, and a piece of gospel literature) will hopefully be hung on all residences in the city (population: 32,333; houses: 11,840). There will also be a need for those willing to stuff the bags as required. Also events posters will be placed during this first week.



WEEK TWO will be for those willing to do door knocking (or those wanting to learn how from someone with more experience). This week will also provide various venues for gospel work (after-school kid's clubs, car washes, evening gospel events). As well, there will be opportunity to be part of the prayer team during door knocking times.



WEEK THREE will be for those willing to help the local believers with follow-up. It is usual that these gospel surges provide a substantial number of contacts for follow-up, and it is essential that they have a return visit in a timely manner. We are grateful that the three team members from this local area will also be on hand for this important work.



So here are the dates for your calendar:

- **Door Hanger Week: May 23-29**
- **Door Knocker Week: May 30-Jun 5**
- **Follow-up Week: Jun 6-12**

Please pray, and plan to be involved. Help this state with just two NT assemblies, as far as we know. Find out more as info becomes available at: www.goodnewsoutreach.info

FOR YOUR STUDY



WHY JESUS CAME

If we think of Christ as a light piercing the moral darkness of sin's dungeon, then the Word of God is a stained glass window splitting that light into a colorful spectrum of grace and truth. Let us consider one example by asking a single question:

“Why did Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory, come into this tired world?”

1. To reveal the nature and glory of the invisible God (Jn. 1:14, 18; 12:45; 14:9); to manifest God's name (i.e. character) to man (Jn. 17:6); to reveal the nature of the eternal life within the Godhead (1 Jn. 1:2-5; cf. Jn. 17:3).
2. To practically and tangibly demonstrate God's love towards us (Rom. 5:7f).
3. To glorify God on the earth by being perfectly obedient to Him (Jn. 17:4; cf. 14:31).
4. To bear witness to the truth of God (Jn. 18:37).
5. To pass on the words of the Father to chosen disciples and to commission them to pass those words on to every nation (Jn. 17:8; Mt. 28:19f).
6. To start and finish the will of the Father who sent Him as eagerly as we would seek our own daily food (Jn. 4:34; Mt. 4:4; Jn. 5:30; 6:38).
7. To be a light to those that sat in darkness, first in Israel, but ultimately to the Gentiles (Lk. 1:78f; Jn. 9:5; 12:46; Isa. 49:6).
8. To give sight to those who confessed to Him that they could not see and to blind those who claimed to see without Him (Jn. 9:39-41; and also the purpose of parables — Mt. 13:10-17).
9. To be a ruler, king, and shepherd of the lost sheep of Israel (Mt. 2:2, 6).
10. To preach the nature and nearness of the Kingdom of God to Israel (Mk. 1:38; Lk. 4:43; Mt. 4:17).
11. To baptize with the Holy Spirit those who believed in Him (Mk. 1:8).
12. To cleanse His threshing floor and baptize unrepentant (compare Mt. 3:8 and 3:10) men in the fire of judgment (Mt. 3:11f).
13. To fulfill one of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant by turning Israel from iniquity (Acts 3:25f).
14. To preach and do the promised work of the Messiah in lifting Israel from her broken moral condition (Lk. 4:18f).
15. To save His people Israel from their sins (Mt. 1:21).
16. To fulfill the Law and the prophecies of the prophets (Mt. 5:17).
17. To bring division in society by requiring an allegiance to Himself above all others (Mt. 10:34-35; Lk. 12:49-53).
18. To seek those who were lost (Mt. 18:11; Lk. 19:10).
19. To call sinners, especially those who admit their sinfulness, to repentance (Mt. 9:13; Mk. 2:17; Lk. 5:30-32).

20. To be the Saviour of the world (1 Jn. 4:14); to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15; Jn. 3:17; Lk. 9:56).
21. Not to be served, but to serve, and to do so ultimately by giving His life a ransom for many (Mt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45).
22. To satisfy the just anger of God against our sin by becoming a propitiation for our sins (1 Jn. 4:10; Rom. 3:25).
23. To put away sin by sacrificing Himself (Heb. 9:26).
24. To take away our sins (1 Jn. 3:5).
25. To nail our legal debt of sin to the cross (Col. 2:13).
26. To undergo His appointed hour of suffering upon the cross rather than receive glory on the shoulders of the crowd (Jn. 12:27).
27. To bring the distant alien near (Eph. 2:12f) and reconcile us to God (2 Cor. 5:18-19).
28. To become poor so that we might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9; Php. 2:5-8).
29. To enable slaves to receive the adoption of sons (Gal. 4:4f).
30. To give His sheep abundant life (Jn. 10:10).
31. To destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8); to disarm and triumph over spiritual principalities and powers (Col. 2:15).
32. To do what the flesh prevented us from doing: fulfilling the righteous standards of God as contained in the Law (Rom. 8:3f).
33. To redeem us from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13).
34. To show us the way to the Father (Jn. 14:6).
35. To tear open the veil separating the unholy from the holy, enabling us to come into God's presence with confidence (Heb. 10:19-20; Mt. 27:51).
36. To create one new man from racially opposed Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:14-16); to take those stained in sin and make them into a bride washed spotless and pure (Eph. 5:25-27); to take those who were nothing and mold them into a special people of His own (Titus 2:14).
37. To institute the New Covenant (1 Cor. 11:25; Mk. 14:24).
38. To cause us to live for God rather than for ourselves (2 Cor. 5:15; Rom. 7:4).
39. To enable us to live through Him (1 Jn. 4:9).
40. To enable us to live with Him (1 Thes. 5:10), to be with Him forever, and to see the glory given to Him by the Father (Jn. 17:24).

Now it's your turn. This list is by no means complete. What colors of grace and truth do you see through the window of God's precious Word? —Jesse Gentile

NOTES:



To Do or To Be?

Our service is a product of our character

As I woke up to a new year, I decided to do something I had never done before. I took pen and paper, sat down, and duly wrote out the things that I would like to do with my life in 2009: places I would like to go, things I would like to do, achievements I would like to make, goals I would like to meet. True, it is not a list I am absolutely resolved to keeping, but, as much as possible, I would like to be able to check each item off by year end.

Included in this list were topics I would like to study, outreaches I would like to be involved in, and initiatives I would be interested in starting. As I sat and looked over my list, I recalled something my brother-in-law had said in a recent visit: "It's not about what the Lord would have me do, but who He would have me be."

I have applied for several new jobs in the past few months. Each one has a list of qualifications that the candidate must possess in order to be considered. These are to ensure that the person hired is best suited to the role they will be playing. I could not help but think that the same is true regarding service for the Master.

There are many things that I would like to be involved in for the Lord and ways I would like to be used if that is His will, but what if there were something more than that? What if 2009 is to be the year I will one day look back on and see that, above all, the Lord was shaping me into a person who could be more useful for Him?

Every believer is an ambassador to this world on the Lord's behalf (2 Cor. 5:20) and, as such, will have a sphere of service. These will vary from individual to individual, but each is to work the will of God. For the Lord to use us most effectively, He must mold us to fit His purpose.

This may come about through trials and testing, joy and victory, but each event that occurs in our lives has some impact on whom the Lord is shaping us to be. Paul, writing to Timothy, tells him that we are vessels for the Master's use. We are all shaped in different ways and have different dimensions, but each is perfect for the required role (2 Tim. 2:20-21).

"Allow 2009 to be a year of becoming, rather than just achieving."



This molding process is often neither easy nor pleasant. It can involve experiences that are startling and shocking. In the heat of the moment, it is easy to be distracted by those pressing concerns. The challenge is to see past the immediate to what the Lord is trying to teach us about ourselves and our actions.

In Philippians 1:6, Paul writes that he is "*confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" This is true for me, and it is true for you. God is using our present circumstances to transform us into the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29).

Take heart! The Lord has a purpose in what He is doing in your life right now and He will see it through to the end. Stick close to Him, follow His leading, and allow 2009 to a year of becoming, rather than just achieving.

—NATHAN GRIFFITHS

Not to be Served, But to Serve

He made Himself of no reputation.

Our purpose is not to be those who sit at the table but to imitate the attitude of the Lord Himself.

Six times in Exodus 7-10 the Lord says, “let My people go that they may serve Me.” He wanted His people out of Egypt (the world) so that they would be free to serve their God. It is still the desire of our loving, heavenly Father that we serve the living God (Heb. 9:14b). When the disciples argued over which of them was the greatest, the Lord Jesus said, “For who is greater, he who sits at the table or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet, I am among you as the One who serves” (Lk. 22:27). Christ’s answer reminds us that, as Christians, our purpose is not to be those who sit at the table but to imitate the attitude of the Lord Himself and be those who serve.



What a perfect example we see in Him who, “being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant” (Php. 2:6f). Imagine what it cost Him to lower Himself to the likeness of men! It drives us ask, “What am I willing

to sacrifice in order to serve the living God?” His sacrifice was motivated by His desire to be obedient to the will of His Father. “He became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (v. 8). This example of obedience is one of the key motivating factors for us as we ask ourselves, “Why serve?”

Obedience

In Deuteronomy 13, there is a warning to Israel to watch out for prophets who would lead them astray to serve other gods. The Lord was testing them to know whether they loved Him with all their hearts and souls. Then, in verse 4, we read, “You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him.” It is a simple truth that even my children understand. When they desire to obey me, it shows me that they love me. It is the same with our heavenly Father. If we truly love Him, we will keep His commandments (Jn. 14:15) and be among His people as those who serve.

Gratitude

Thankfulness is a great motivation for serving the living God! Has the Lord been good to you? Has He been good to those that you love? What good thing do you enjoy or have you ever enjoyed that is not ultimately from Him because of His goodness toward us? 1 Samuel 12:24 says, “...consider what great things He has done for you.” Perhaps this would be a good time to sit down with those you love, remember the goodness of God, give Him the praise and thankfulness He is so worthy of, and serve Him with renewed appreciation!

Gladness

Do you ever feel as if serving God’s people is a burden? Are there times where you feel as if nobody notices or appreciates what you are doing? Sometimes we need to stop and remind ourselves that we are serving Him! Psalm 100:2 tells us to “Serve the Lord with gladness!” There is joy in serving Him.

SEND ME *continued*

We don't seek praise from men. Rather, we look forward to the day when Christ will say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant." No, it is not a burden to serve the Lord because "His commandments are not burdensome" (1 Jn. 5:3).

Remember the sons of Korah and the tragedy they brought upon themselves when they were ungrateful. What a mighty lesson they learned! How much better was their attitude in Psalm 84 when they said, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (v. 10).

Forgiveness

Sometimes our guilt will make us feel like we need to do more for the Lord in an effort to repay Him. It is true that we must continue to serve Him even when we have sinned, but we are missing the truth of what He has accomplished on our behalf when we don't fully accept His forgiveness. 1 John 1:9 tells us that, when we confess our sins, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." What a blessing to have a God of forgiveness who does not hold grudges against us!

Isaiah 6 gives us a beautiful picture when Isaiah sees the Lord on His throne, high and lifted up, with the train of His robe filling the temple. When he comes before the holiness of the Lord, Isaiah sees his own uncleanness and realizes that he is undone. But a coal is taken from the altar and touched to his lips; his iniquity is taken away, and his sin is purged. Then the Lord speaks to him and says, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Isaiah's response? "Here am I, send me!" (Isaiah 6:6-8) We go forward in our service for the Lord not because of guilt, but because we have been forgiven and cleansed! Praise the Lord for a restored relationship and a clean conscience so that we can walk with Him and serve Him from a loving heart!

Love


All of these other motivations for service have been God-ward but notice that in Galatians 5:13b, the Scripture tells us, "through love, serve one another." At times, we can be very eager to serve the Lord Jesus, perhaps thinking of the tremendous privilege of washing His feet. We

"Christians are gifted to serve, expected to serve, exhorted to serve."

can also be reluctant to serve one another and to wash each other's feet. John 13 and this verse in Galatians serve as good reminders to carry on serving out of love for our brothers and sisters!

Service

Are you willing to ask the Lord about your service and what He might have you do? Are you willing to give up things in order to be of better service for Him? Whether in the home, at school, at work, or in the local assembly, let us press on to know and serve Him in greater ways.

Christians are gifted to serve, expected to serve, exhorted to serve, and should have a heart to reflect the beauty of the Lord Jesus by serving. Does your service become tiresome at times? Do not grow weary in doing good! Does your service cost you something? Think of the heart of David: "I will not give to the Lord that which costs me nothing." Let us press on to serve and honor the living God in greater ways than we have so far! 



Not to Destroy Men's Lives, but to Save Them

His kindness leads us to repentance.

"All the resources necessary to live godly lives are provided."

"For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Lk. 9:56).

In the paragraph where the Lord speaks these words, we are told that the time had come for Him to be "received up" to glory. But He had one more stop to make before He could arrive at His final destination. They had journeyed from Galilee and were approaching a village in Samaria. Christ sent some of His disciples ahead to make arrangements for overnight accommodations. But, before long, the disciples returned to inform Him that the villagers had refused to shelter Him or His disciples. The justification for their decision should not have been a shock to the disciples. The Samaritans would not receive Him because *"His face was set to go to Jerusa-*

lem." These people had a long-standing difference of opinion with their neighbors the Jews about true worship. They had been steeped in years of religious prejudice and false ideas, which blinded them to true religion.

This experience was—and would continue to be—a common occurrence for these disciples. They needed to learn to accept the world's hostility

without the desire to respond in kind. (This is a lesson that all of Christ's disciples need to learn early on.) However, in this case, their reaction was quite a bit worse than desiring to merely respond in kind. Somehow, James and John felt that the proper response to this lack of hospitality would be to destroy these offenders with fire from heaven.

The Lord rebuked them for their carnal spirit. How little they knew the heart of God! Here, in their very presence, was the One who had come forth from the Father. Out of a perfect bond of love, the Father sent and the Son came. This love was the motivating force behind the work the Son had come to do. *"The Son of Man,"* as He preferred to be known, was *"come to seek and to save that which is lost"* (Lk. 19:10). He did not come to doom men to an eternity without God but to rescue them from their hopeless plight!

The nature of salvation

The concept of salvation is, of course, a central theme of the Old and New Testaments. At the incarnation of the Son of God, Joseph was directed by an angel of the Lord to *"call His name Jesus* [which means 'Jehovah is the Saviour'] *for He will save His people from their sins"* (Mt. 1:20f). Throughout His ministry, the Lord Jesus clearly demonstrated this purpose. Consider, for example, the woman who anointed His feet with fragrant oil in repentance and faith. *"Then He said to the women, 'Your faith has saved you'"* (Lk. 7:50). He healed a woman of disease and stated, *"Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well"* (Lk. 8:48). *Sōzō* is the Greek word that is generally translated "save" but here it is translated "made well." And immediately afterwards, *"While He was still speaking, someone came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, 'Your daughter is dead. Do not trouble the Teacher.' But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, 'Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well.'"* He then proceeded to raise her from the dead (Lk. 8:49-56). These and many other acts of physical healing and deliverance served as illustra-



A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION *continued*

tions of salvation at the spiritual level.

The concept of salvation in the New Testament is comprehensive. The New Testament informs us of the work that was accomplished at the cross and its effects. It speaks in the past tense concerning the believer's forgiveness of sin (Col. 1:14), new spiritual life (Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:22f), and reconciliation with God (Col. 1:20). It also speaks in the present tense concerning deliverance from the power of sin in our daily lives (Rom. 6:6), transformation into the image of the One who created us (Col. 3:10), and the intercession and advocacy of Christ in our lives (Rom. 8:31-39; 1 Jn. 1:7-2:2). All the resources necessary to live godly lives are provided (2 Pet. 1:3-4). Salvation also has a future tense. We are saved from the wrath to come (Rom. 5:9), our bodies will be redeemed (Php. 3:20f), and we will enter into glory with Him (Col. 3:4). The New Testament also includes terms which instruct us about the various aspects of salvation: terms such as justification, forgiveness, ransom, redemption, assurance, regeneration, sanctification, propitiation, glorification, etc. Just a few moments of contemplation should cause us to cry out to Him in gratitude and praise for His abundant mercy and grace.

The cost of salvation

But, further, we must consider Him who obtained such a glorious salvation for us. Our Saviour did not refuse to endure such opposition and hostility from sinful men. Rather, He saw the work in light of the joy that was set before Him (Heb. 12:2)—the joy of having us with Him to see and enjoy the glory that the Father has given Him for all eternity (Jn. 17:24). Therefore, He endured the cross and took little account of the mocking, abuse, and dishonor that was unjustly heaped upon Him. *“Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we having died to sins, might live for righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed”* (1 Pet. 2:23f).

This Man is now risen and sits at the right hand of the throne of God, controlling the universe. One day, we also shall sit with Him and govern with Him (Rev. 3:21; 2 Tim. 2:12).

These unruly, blind Samaritans did not know the Son of Man, or the purpose of His journey, or His unwillingness to be diverted from the cross. But it wouldn't be too long before the news of what had happened to Him would travel back to their little village. It would be His goodness, not fire from heaven, that would lead them to repentance, the same way it led us.



Had the Lord Jesus refused the cross, all of us would have perished in our sins. But such is His grace that He lovingly endured unspeakable sufferings so that we might be saved. He could have left us to our deserved destruction, but He had come to save lives, not destroy them. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”* (Jn. 3:16f) This is our glorious Saviour. He has no equal. 🕊

Such is His grace that He lovingly endured unspeakable sufferings so that we might be saved.

Not to do My own Will

The Saviour's standard

His Father's will was the Lord Jesus Christ's food, goal, purpose, and delight. What is it to you?

Our Lord spoke of His Father's will several times in chapters 4 to 6 of John's gospel. His statements reveal that will to be of paramount importance.

His food

First, He told His disciples in chapter 4 that God's will was, metaphorically speaking, His food. When the disciples queried, "*Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?*", Jesus responded, "*My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work*" (vv. 33-34). And so, having spoken earlier to the Samaritan woman about water which she could never draw from the well at Sychar (vv. 10-14), Jesus spoke to His disciples about food which they could never buy in the city of Sychar (vv. 8, 31-34). He had drawn His nourishment and satisfaction from a higher source—that of performing His Father's will by ministering spiritual help to the needy Samaritan woman.¹

His goal

But His Father's will was not only His food. It was, He told the Jews of Jerusalem in chapter 5, His goal and His object in life. Having spoken to them of His God-given right to judge all men (vv. 22-27), He asserted, "*As I hear [from God, that is], I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but*

the will of the Father who sent Me" (v. 30). No assessment or judgment He pronounced was ever warped or tainted by self-interest or any personal considerations. Every judgment He pronounced He had first heard passed by the Father, and His perfect submission to His

Father's will was therefore the guarantee of the fairness and equity of His judgment.

His purpose

But His Father's will was not only His food and His goal. It was, He informed the Jews of Galilee in chapter 6, His very purpose for leaving heaven (v. 38). He had just told them, "*You have seen Me and yet do not believe*" (v. 36). Did this mean that His ministry and mission would therefore prove fruitless and fail? Far from it! For He added, "*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me [‘will reach Me’, ‘will arrive with Me’], and the one who comes to Me [‘the one on the way to Me’] I will by no means cast out*" (v. 37). He then gave the reason why He could never reject those who came: "*For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day*" (vv. 38-39).

The very fact that He had come to carry out God's will ruled out any possibility that He could ever discard even one of those whom the Father had given to Him for safekeeping. Here lay the absolute guarantee of their eternal security—and of ours!

His delight

Given that it was when "entering the world" that our Lord said, "*I have come...to do Your will, O God,*" we are not surprised to find that His first recorded utterance on the earth (spoken at the age of twelve to His mother in the temple court at Jerusalem) was "*Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business? [literally ‘that I must be in the things of My Father’; occupied with His affairs]*" (Lk. 2:49).



A riverside oasis in the the Judean Wilderness

CONSIDER THE SOURCE *continued*

On four occasions, the Lord Jesus spoke of His Father's will for Him in terms of His Father's commandment (Jn. 10:18; 12:49; 14:30; 15:10). He made it clear that it was in obedience to His Father's commandment that He laid down His life (Jn. 10:17-18). It was, as the writer to the Hebrews noted, "By that will," which our Lord had come to do, that "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:7-10).

Not My will, but Yours


In the Garden of Gethsemane, our Lord anticipated His horrific suffering. Matthew tells us that He "fell on His face, and prayed, saying, 'O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.'^a Then He came to the disciples...Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, 'O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done'" (Mt. 26:39-42).

The olive trees of Gethsemane knew Him well. John tells us in his gospel that our Lord "often met there with His disciples" (Jn. 18:2). But those gnarled, twisted trees had never heard such prayers as these before, nor would they ever again.

The Saviour had used the very same words, "Your will be done," on a previous occasion. "In this manner, therefore, pray," He had said, "Our Father in heaven...Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6:9-10). Oh yes, the One who had come down from heaven knew how perfectly His Father's will was done *in heaven*. But He also knew that the fulfilling of that will (by Him or by any other, whether on earth or in heaven) had never proved so costly as it would then. And yet, knowing all this, our glorious Lord aligned Himself with the Father's will.

It is not difficult to contrast our Lord's submission to God's will in Gethsemane with the first man's rejection of God's will in another garden. We have the highest authority for doing so. The apostle Paul drew out the contrast clearly: "As through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one

Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:18-19).

In effect, Adam said to God, "Not what You will, but what I will", and proceeded to ratify his decision at a tree (that of the knowledge of good and evil), with devastating consequences, not only for himself, but for all linked with him, bringing condemnation and death to the entire human race. But our Lord Jesus reversed that decision, saying, "Not what I will, but what You will" (Mk. 14:36). He also proceeded to ratify His decision at a tree, walking the path of obedience all the way to death, even death on a cross, thereby securing the most blessed consequences for all linked by faith with Him, bringing justification and life to them all...to us all! 

Endnotes

1 "To listen to the Father's voice and to do His will were the joy and the strength of His life," F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel and Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), p. 113.

2 The verb *heko* means "to arrive," "to be present."

"In the papyri it means 'to come to,' 'to reach,'" *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, volume 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), p. 926.

3 The present participle of *erchomai*.

4 It is possible to see something of the sin offering in the opening clause, and something of the burnt offering in the second. "Jesus bent to accept the chalice of suffering from which [He] could not but shrink," H.P. Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing), p. 263.

Olive trees in the area of the Garden of Gethsemane



The One who had come down from heaven knew how perfectly His Father's will was done in heaven.

Of Whom the World Was Not Worthy

Persecution of Christians in 2008

Compass Direct News listed what they consider to be some of the top stories of Christian persecution worldwide. However, this list could be made considerably longer by adding reports from countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, North Korea, Burma, China, and many others. *“Remember the prisoners as if chained with them; those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also”* (Heb. 13:3).

HINDU EXTREMISTS TERRORIZE CHRISTIANS IN INDIA

In August, the murder of a Hindu leader by Maoist militants was the pretext for weeks of terror against Christians in India’s state of Orissa. At least 500 people, mostly Christians, were estimated to have been killed, according to a Communist Party fact-finding team. More than 4,500 houses and church buildings in the district were destroyed, and 50,000 people were rendered home-

less due to the rampage. By year’s end, thousands of impoverished Christians remained in squalid conditions in refugee camps, as Hindu extremists threatened them with an ultimatum to convert to Hinduism or be killed.



Burned building in Orissa, India

MUSLIMS ATTACK IN JOS, NIGERIA

Murderous rioting sparked by Muslim attacks on Christians and their property in Jos, Nigeria, on November 28-29 left at least 500 people killed and 40 churches destroyed. More than 25,000 persons were displaced in the two days of violence. What began as outrage over suspected vote fraud in local elections quickly shifted to religious fury as Muslims took aim at Christian sites rather than political targets. Police and troops reportedly killed about 400 rampaging Muslims in an effort to quell the unrest, and Islamists shot, slashed, or stabbed to death more than 100 Christians.

MORE SUFFER IN ERITREAN PRISONS

In 2002, Eritrea closed down all independent religious groups not operating under the government-sanctioned Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, or Muslim faiths. People caught worshipping outside these suffer arrest, torture, and severe pressure to deny their faith. Authorities continued round-ups of Christians throughout 2008. The U.S. Department of State has designated Eritrea one of the worst violators of religious freedom. More than 2,000 Christians are now under arrest across Eritrea. Although many have been incarcerated for months or even years, none have been charged officially or given access to judicial process.



A woman and her children in a shelter they built at a camp in West Darfur, Somalia.

David Snyder

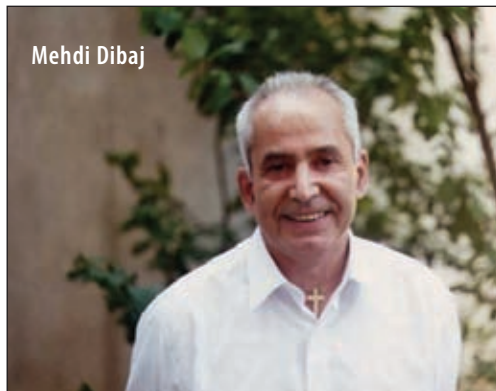
SOMALI CHRISTIANS KILLED & MISTREATED

Many Christians in Somalia found with Bibles or who make confession of Christ are publicly executed. Muslim gangs rape and kill converts, deny them access to water, and burn their homes. One refugee, Binti Ali Bilal, a 40-year-old mother of 10, was fetching firewood with her daughter on April 15 when a group asked if they were Christians. “We openly said that we were Christians,” she said. “They began beating us. My son who is 10 years old ran away screaming. My daughter then was six months pregnant. They raped us repeatedly and held us captive for five days.” They then left them to die

but the women were eventually found by a relative. They still suffer from the treatment received and are worried that they may have contracted HIV.

MASS ARRESTS IN LAOS

Authorities have arrested hundreds of Christians in the past year. In one incident on July 21, officials detained 80 Christians in Katin village. On July 25, according to Human Rights Watch, officials rounded up 80 men, women, and children and detained them in a school compound, denying them food for three days in an attempt to force the adults to renounce their faith. Officials had arrested 15 Christian families on February 22, a day before a court sentenced nine church leaders to 15 years in prison for conducting Christian ministry and meetings that had grown beyond acceptable levels. The day before, authorities arrived in Ban Sai Jarern village with six trucks in which they took away eight Christian families. Authorities also arrested seven families from Fai village. "What will happen to them is greatly feared and unknown," said one believer.



Mehdi Dibaj
www.elam.com

apostasy, but the defendants said the ruling was based on the court's false claim that they confessed to having never converted to Christianity. One of the arrested believers said, "Two things I will never say. First, I will not lie; second, I will not deny Jesus my Lord and my Saviour." There is a concern that the government is relying on forces outside the law to punish them. The last case of an apostasy conviction was that of Mehdi Dibaj in 1994. Following his release, Dibaj and four other Christians were brutally murdered.

ALGERIA VS. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

In 2008, Algeria stepped up enforcement of a 2006 presidential decree that restricts religious worship to government-approved buildings and outlaws any attempt to convert Muslims to another faith. Known as Ordinance 06-03, the law resulted in the closures of churches, and charges against Christians. Algeria's constitution guarantees freedom of religion, but there is loose terminology in its penal code, such as Article 144, which calls for up to five years of prison for "anyone who offends the Prophet and denigrates the tenets of Islam." The 2006 law appears to contradict Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Algeria signed and which provides the right to manifest one's religion. Many Christians have been swept up in a wave of trials this year against the country's tiny evangelical church.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:35-39)



MANDATORY DEATH FOR "APOSTATES"

There has been international condemnation for Iran's proposed death penalty for those who leave Islam. On September 9, the Iranian Parliament approved it by a vote of 196-7, but the section of the penal code containing the apostasy bill had yet to be passed into law. Christian converts detained in waves of arrests await their fates with heightened anxiety. In September, a judge ordered the release of two believers charged with

Muellek Josef

Not to Call the Righteous, But Sinners

Who can forgive sins but God alone?

The one way to ensure a treatment doesn't work is to forego it.

The synoptic gospels all record an event in the early public ministry of Christ that would, in many ways, define His ministry. Matthew, the tax collector, had just been called to be a follower of Christ. He immediately hosted a dinner, inviting his friends (many of whom were tax-collectors and other obvious sinners) so that they, too, might meet the Saviour.

Self-righteousness and the unbeliever

There were also some less obvious sinners there: the Pharisees. Demonstrating their usual level of grace, humility, insight, and cheerfulness, they demanded, “*Why is your Teacher eating with the tax-gatherers and sinners?*” (Mt. 9:11). The response of the Lord Jesus was as devastating as it was simple: “*It is*

not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means, ‘I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,’ for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners” (Mt. 9:12f). First, He logically shredded their complaint by pointing out that it was as foolish as saying, “What is that doctor doing with those

sick people? Doesn't he know they're sick?!” Then, He theologically refuted their argument by quoting the Old Testament.

The Lord's example of a doctor is, of course, perfectly appropriate. It illustrates the folly of self-righteousness by pointing out that only those who know they are sick go to a doctor for help. The one way to ensure a treatment doesn't work is to forego it; and why undergo

treatment for a disease you don't believe you have? So the Pharisees turned their backs on the only cure for their terminal illness because they refused to admit they were sick. To the extent that they perceived their sin at all, they were confident—self-confident—that they had dealt with it themselves.

The irony is that, theologically, the Pharisees understood that only God could deal with sin. When the Lord Jesus pronounced the paralytic's sins forgiven (Lk. 5:20), they recognized that He was claiming deity, and so they insisted that He was blaspheming because, “*Who can forgive sins but God alone?*” (Lk. 5:21). Yet, on a personal and practical level, the Pharisees were convinced that they could deal with sin themselves. “*For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God*” (Rom. 10:3).

Alas, this self-righteousness isn't limited to the Pharisees. History is full of sinners who, too arrogant and stubborn to admit they needed a Saviour, rejected the love of God right to the bitter, dark, eternal end. It is deadly vanity. Spurgeon wrote, “Rely on self! Let night rely on her darkness to find a light; let emptiness rely on its insufficiency to find its fullness; let death rely on the worms to give it immortality; let hell rely upon its fire to make it into heaven—such trusts as these would be equally strong with those of the sinner who relies upon himself for salvation.”

The Lord Jesus reserved his strongest criticisms for the self-righteous; partly because self-righteousness is an insult to the person and work of Christ, but also because self-righteousness accomplishes an evil that not even the devil can achieve on his own: it prevents the sinner from being saved.



Self-righteousness and the Old Testament believer

But even though the interpretation and primary application of this passage are for unbelievers, isn't there a vital lesson here for Christians, as well? Self-righteousness doesn't become helpful (or attractive) the moment someone gets saved.

In his great exposition of the gospel, Paul quotes David to show that the Christian message is completely consistent with the Old Testament (cf. Rom. 4:6-8 and Ps. 32:1f). But when we consider the context of David's words, we see that David was speaking of his sin *as a believer*. David is describing his inner life in the months following his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. Yet the Holy Spirit uses that experience to express a principle concerning sin in general, not the sin solely of believers or unbelievers.


At the time of writing Psalm 32, David was rejoicing in the forgiveness of sin. *"How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!"* (vv. 1f). But, before this blessed state, David had endured months of suffering and anguish, all because he was too proud to admit his sin and turn to the Lord in brokenness. *"When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer"* (vv. 3f).

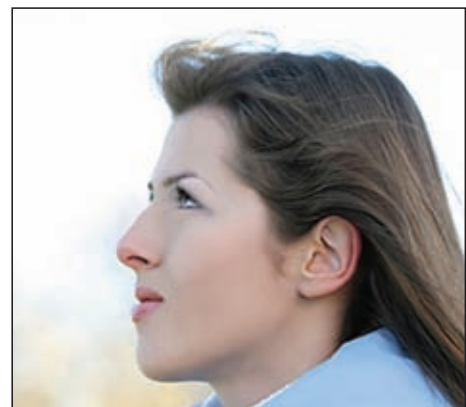
What changed? How did David move from misery to joy? The answer is simple: *"I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'; and You forgave the guilt of my sin"* (v. 5). His pride and self-righteousness smothered all ability for him to enjoy the Lord and the blessings of salvation. He hadn't lost his salvation, but he had certainly lost the joy of his salvation. Crushed, he realized that denying his sin was not the answer. Nor was any religious rite. *"For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise"* (Ps. 51:16f). Turning to the Lord in humility and acknowledging his sin and guilt, David found restoration through the limitless grace of God.

Self-righteousness and the New Testament believer

The New Testament makes precisely this same point with reference to the way sin is dealt with in a Christian's life. John, writing to believers, says, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 Jn. 1:9). This isn't a careless blurring of the saved and the lost. Rather, it is a recognition that the Scriptures present an overarching principle: only God can deal with sin. Practically, this happens when a person humbly admits his sin without excuse, dispenses with any notion that he can deal with that sin himself, and turns to the Lord in faith, recognizing that He, and He alone, can cleanse from sin. This is how an unbeliever's sin is judicially forgiven for salvation, and this is how a believer's sin is parentally forgiven for the enjoyment of salvation.

How, then, do we behave when we have sinned? Do we downplay our sin? Do we ignore it and hope it will be forgotten? Do we excuse it ("Everyone's doing it!") or justify it ("Well, you don't know what he did to me first!")? If we choose to do so, we will discover the hard way what David has already warned us about: self-righteousness and unconfessed sin will sap our life, destroy our joy, and poison our souls. Also, it eventually makes us a pariah in the assembly and among our (ex-) friends, because it turns out that self-righteousness isn't any more fetching in us that it was in the Pharisees. Instead, let us learn to humbly admit and confess our sins—without excuse!—the moment we're conscious of them.

Christians, of all people, should understand the horrible cost of sin—the death of the Son of God—and our utter inability to save ourselves—*"for if righteousness come by the Law, then Christ died in vain"* (Gal. 2:21). We should never forget that we are the sinners that Jesus came to call. 



Turn to the Lord in humility and by acknowledging sin and guilt, find restoration through the limitless grace of God.

The Abundant Life

Wanting for nothing

**"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."
(Jn. 10:10)**

Before the Lord Jesus, we were all lost in our trespasses and sins. Ephesians 2:1 refers to this as being dead. Our sin had separated us from God, and, in that state, we were unable to commune with Him. This spiritual darkness has defined every human being since Adam and still grips the world in which we live. This is why the Lord Jesus came. Without His intervention, the lost condition of mankind would be inescapable. But Christ came to be the propitiation for our sins and to pay the awful price that was infinitely beyond our ability to pay.

All who choose to accept Him and His atoning work are no longer counted among those described above—those who are forever lost. By submitting to death on the

cross of Calvary, Christ has freed us from it. In exchange, He has given us His life. What wondrous grace!

Life! Is this not enough? Is this alone not sufficient cause for us to give Him praise and worship for all of eternity? Although it is, He demonstrated His transcendent

love by not only dying to give us life, but to give us *abundant* life. Satan is a thief and a robber who takes, steals, and depletes us in every way. The Lord only gives. He takes nothing and gives everything. And, beyond giving

us a gift that we in no way deserve, He gives to us in abundance.

Receiving the new life that Christ offers is a complete transaction that takes place at the very moment we believe but entering into the full abundance of that life is an ongoing process. Upon receiving the salvation of the Lord, we are immediately adopted into the family of God and are given access to all the riches of heaven. And yet, sad to say, there are so many believers who are not experiencing the joy of their salvation. There are so many who are wallowing in a miserable state, living as paupers while having access to infinite riches.

What is abundance?

The word *abundance* can be defined in any number of ways but every definition will carry with it the idea of wealth in both quality and quantity. Abundance is wanting for nothing. It is being completely satisfied. It is knowing that all your needs will be met both now and into the future.

The more abundant life that the Lord speaks of is the eternal life which begins at conversion. It is life without death or even the fear of death. It is life and much more. To the natural man, there is the tendency to think of abundance in a material form only. But to do so would be to miss out on the depth of blessing which the Lord desires for us. The Lord is not restricted by our short-sightedness and vanity. It is the eternal that the Lord has in view, not merely the temporal.

It is neither reasonable nor scriptural to believe that the level of a man's wealth or health are indicators of his standing before the Lord. This truth is demonstrated in the gospel accounts of the rich young ruler and John the Baptist. The ruler had much of the



Claudia Dewald

OVERFLOW *continued*

abundance of this life and yet walked away from the Lord empty. John, the one sent from God to prepare the way for the Lord, lived in the wilderness, was clothed in camel hair, and ate wild honey and locusts. Not what we might consider to be an abundant life!

Although the Lord, in His grace, may see fit to allow a certain measure of temporal health and wealth, the Lord Jesus has immeasurably more for us than that which corrupts or passes away. The abundance that the Lord speaks of is something outside of human reason; it is not measurable by human standards; it is not limited to space and time. Indeed, it is far better than what we could think of or ask for. The abundance of the Christian life is a spiritual blessing that flows from the living God to His people and can be glimpsed by others through the peace of the saints: in the face of adversity, in the joy of God's people in times of persecution, in the comfort of believers while others are inconsolable.

We enter into this abundant life at the moment of our conversion, and we can begin to experience it immediately. We enjoy more of it as we grow spiritually and learn to walk by faith. In our present state, we only experience a small degree of what is ours in the Lord. We continue to struggle against the old. However, the day is coming when the Lord will return to take us out of this scene of time and sin, and then we will fully know the life of abundance that the Lord purchased for us. We will see how far short all of our words came in attempting to describe what He has done for us and what He has given to us!

What is the source of this abundant life?

"In Him was life; and the life was the light of men" (Jn. 1:4). When He said, *"I am the way the truth and the life"* (Jn. 14:6), the Lord Jesus made it very clear that life comes from Him. He is the source. How much plainer could it be? *"I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish"* (Jn. 10:28).

His desire is that we accept the life He offers and that we live that life to its full. And so it is that He pours life into us to the degree that we allow Him.

The Lord is the vine. As branches, we draw our life from Him when we abide in Him and allow Him to abide in us. This is accomplished by practicing faith, trusting Him and His word, and conducting ourselves in accordance with His word; that is to say, by leaning not unto our own understanding but trusting in Him alone. In the words of John the Baptist, *"He must increase, but I must decrease"* (Jn. 3:30).



Stephen Walls

This is the key to the more abundant life. To the degree that we abide in Him, walk in obedience to Him, and surrender our lives to Him, we will have life more abundantly.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Eph. 3:17-21) 🕊

The Lord Jesus made it very clear that life comes from Him. He is the source. How much plainer could it be?

Getting it Right

Know your adversary. But know your Advocate as well.



Kevin Wakefield

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.

—C.S. Lewis

In seeking to reclaim territory for the Rightful Heir, we will encounter the Enemy at every turn. Called Satan, the Dragon, the Devil, Lucifer, the Serpent, and the Accuser among other names, he is relentless in his opposition to all that glorifies the Lord, honors His Word, blesses God’s people, or rescues lost souls. But when we are tempted to think too highly of the devil and his power, here is some *infernal info* to keep in mind:

1. The devil is not equal and opposite to God: People sometimes get the idea that there are two teams, so to speak, with God at the head of the one and the devil leading the other. But the devil is a mere creature—albeit a powerful creature—who is dependent every moment of his existence on God. He is not omnipresent, nor is he omniscient, but must go “*to and fro in the earth, and...[walk] up and down in it*” (Job 1:7) to assess world affairs.

2. The devil is limited in what he can do to God’s people: We are sometimes asked why a good God would create the devil. Of course he was not a devil when created; his devilish ways began with his civil war against God. But we must still ask why God allows the devil to carry on. Make no mistake, the devil is limited in what he is able to do, as seen by his seeking permission to afflict Job (see Job 1:12; 2:6). It is clear he has access to ask such permission, as we also observe in the case of Peter: “*Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat*” (Lk. 22:31). Amazingly, in Peter’s case, as in Job’s, he received that permission. But our Lord sustained Peter’s faith through it all by His mighty intercessions.

3. The devil ends up doing what is best for God’s people: Though Job knew the fierceness of the devil’s attacks, the arch-fiend is not mentioned in the book after chapter 2. It is “*the end of the Lord*” (Jas. 5:11) we see at the conclusion of the story when, as predicted, Job comes forth “*as gold*” (Job 23:10). The same is promised for Israel’s remnant (Zech. 13:9). Peter takes the idea further when he writes about you, dear suffering saint: “*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ*” (1 Pet. 1:7). The devil still wants to inflict suffering on the Lord through His people. But the Lord overrules the results so the saints are purified, beautified, and glorified through it (see Lk. 22:31).

4. God’s people will triumph through Christ in the end: We should respect the Fiend’s power, as Michael did (Jude 9) since it originates with God. But the believer who knows that “*greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world*” (1 Jn. 4:4) will not be demoralized by his threats. Nor will we allow him to shrink our vision or minimize our objectives. And when the Liar whispers why we shouldn’t be so confident, we remind ourselves of the day when the Lord will crush him under our feet (Rom. 16:20). I love the sweet defiance in Luther’s hymn: “One little word shall fell him.” Amen! “*And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone...and shall be tormented day and night forever*” (Rev. 20:10). 🔴

WHY HE CAME

Mk. 10:45; Lk. 5:32; Mt. 10:34; Jn. 12:47

THE SAVIOUR revealed why He came to this earth
Attended by strangers and the poor at His birth:
He came **not** to be served, but to serve you and me,
And to give, as a ransom, His life on the tree;
He came **not** to call those who thought they were good
But for sinners who longed for His soul-cleansing blood.
And the lesson is clear for His people to see:
If the Master's a servant, then what should we be?

But the Lord also said, "I came **not** to send peace"
Though His sword with two edges may captives release,
He will also divide between husband and wife
If one chooses death and one chooses life.
And the cross, like the pillar of fire, we know,
Will be light to His friends but night to His foe;
And still Jesus weeps over all those who choose
His death to despise and His life to refuse.

And how grateful we are that the first time He came
It was **not** as the Judge to condemn or to blame;
Not our death but His, not a throne but a tree,
Not for glory but grief, not for Him but for me!
A reed for a scepter, a thorn-woven crown,
Anointed with spittle, an old coat for His gown;
Lifted up not in honor but in sorrow and shame—
The Saviour! My Saviour! O blest be His name!

So now, like the shepherds, we worship God's Lamb,
Like the angels, we praise the eternal I AM;
Like wise men, we yield to Him all that we have
And herald the news of One mighty to save;
Some day in His palace we'll bow at His feet,
Remember that night and the story repeat
When the rich became poor, when God became man,
When Giver was gift, and Lion was Lamb. —J.B.N. Jr.