



# **GRACE & TRUTH**

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- ***Why Did Jesus Come***
- ***"Life" And "Death"***

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## “The Enemies ... Whose End Is Destruction”

**D**ictionary.com defines “opposition” as “the action of opposing, resisting, or combating; antagonism or hostility.” This implies something that is the work of an enemy. Certainly, there are many enemies of God, the Lord Jesus Christ and His people. They follow the direction of their leader: Satan. Sadly, many of the individuals whom he uses for his purposes are deceived: ignorant of the truth and what honors God – all of which is readily found in the Bible for those who take the time to read it.

We are thankful when we hear stories of any who come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Up to that point they have all been in opposition to Christ, for Jesus said, “He who is not with Me is against Me” (Mt. 12:30 NKJV). Often, what God used to bring them, and us, to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus was the faithfulness of one or two Christians. Is God using you – or are you allowing God to use you – for the eternal blessing of another?

The Lord Jesus taught, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who

curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust ... Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Mt. 5:43-45,48). In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote: “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse ... Repay no one evil for evil ... As much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore ‘if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (12:14,17-21).

Obviously our attitude today is not to destroy the enemies, but it is to weep for those who “are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction” (Phil. 3:18-19).

*Paul*

# “But I Say Unto You”

by Bill Kulkens

*“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”*

— Matthew 5:43-44 KJV

The Lord Jesus exposed the false teachings that the religious leaders were preaching in His day. Among the many false teachers were the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes and lawyers. They focused on outward conformity to the law of Moses. The Lord Jesus brought us God’s perspective, which includes the heart – the inward moral reality of mankind.

The verses above show us the last of six quotes by the Lord from the Old Testament and His explanation for them. Right away, if we are honest with ourselves, we realize that while outwardly we may be able to show obedience to some or all of these commands, inwardly we know we come up short. When we review the kings of Israel and Judah we see the same failures on many of the six commands that the Lord reviewed. In fact, all of mankind is disobedient inwardly in some way.

Only the Lord Jesus was completely obedient to the law of Moses, both inwardly and outwardly. He not only taught us that we need to love our enemies and not hate them, He also lived that way. When the Lord considered Jerusalem’s rejection of Him, He shared His desire to bless and not curse; but the people “would not” receive Him and His blessing (Mt. 23:37). At the time when the Lord revealed to Peter that he would deny knowing Him, the Lord told His disciple that He had prayed for him (Lk. 22:31-32). The very moment Judas Iscariot arrived to betray the Lord, He greeted the betrayer with the term “friend” (Mt. 26:50). Dying on the cross by the hands of wicked men, the Lord Jesus asked His Father to “forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk. 23:34).

What a wonderful, faithful Savior! He alone deserves our worship and praise. **GT**



# The Promise Of Persecution

by Martin Girard

After being released from prison, a Christian human rights lawyer was able to phone his family. His wife was delighted to hear from him, but she could hardly make sense of what he was saying. The reason was not a poor telephone signal; rather, the isolation and torture he had experienced while in prison had left the man unable to speak coherently. What was his “crime”? He had assisted fellow believers.

For more than 50 days his captors had given him shock treatments by holding an electric baton to his face and piercing his skin with toothpicks. At another time propaganda had been broadcast continuously into his prison cell by means of a loudspeaker for 68 weeks. During his imprisonment the man had no access

to reading material or electronic media, and he had no genuine human contact at any time. His one meal each day consisted of a single slice of bread and a piece of cabbage. As a result he lost about 50 pounds in weight as well as many of his teeth because of malnutrition. He has been under house arrest since his release from prison. Although his wife and family members have escaped to the west, the man refuses to leave his home country. He believes God has a work for him to do there.

This one man’s experience is typical of so many others. All across the world, there are individuals who are persecuted for their faith in Christ and are suffering. Those of us who enjoy freedom should be concerned.



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Hebrews 13:3 exhorts us to “remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them” (KJV). Do we think of those who are being persecuted, and do we *pray* for them? Are our hearts moved for them in their trials? We should, in a sense, know what it means to be “bound with them” as we take their distressing experiences to heart.

Did you know that the Bible has a lot to say about persecution? I decided to do a little research by looking up such words as “persecute,” “persecution,” “suffer,” “suffering,” “oppressed,” “oppression,” “trouble” and “tribulation” in my concordance. I found a lot of references! “Persecution” is just one word; the others help us to understand what persecution *means*. It is not an isolated concept, for it leads to suffering, oppression and trouble. The psalmist was experiencing it and asked God how long it would continue before his tormentors were judged (Ps.119:84). Eliphaz, one of Job’s friends, declared, “Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). You will understand what he meant if you have ever stood near a fire and watched the sparks flying up into the night sky. Troubles can be plentiful. As part of the human race we are “born unto” them. Persecution is just one of those “troubles.”

Other Scriptures add breadth to the subject. Persecution is often meted out by the proud upon those who are poor (Ps. 10:2). It can result in the persecuted soul being brought very low, for those who do the oppressing are characterized by being stronger than the victims they oppress (142:6). Another fact to consider is this: Those who love God’s Word can often be persecuted on account of it. The psalmist alluded to this when he wrote: “All Thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully: help Thou me. They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not Thy precepts” (119:86,87). He found it difficult to understand why he had to suffer for his belief in God’s Word and his love for it.

### **A Real Experience**

There is a saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” This, however, is not always true. Unkind words can wound deeply. Paul faced reproach for his trust in the living God (1 Tim. 4:10). Nehemiah and his fellow-workers were mocked mercilessly as they rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. They were called “feeble Jews” by their opponents, who ridiculed their efforts. Tobiah the Ammonite taunted the builders by saying the wall was so fragile that

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the weight of a fox would cause it to collapse (Neh. 4:2-3).

Others have faced false accusations. Charles Spurgeon, the well-known British preacher of the nineteenth century, and his wife kept some hens. Critics accused them of being mean because they always sold the eggs and never gave any away to family members or friends. It was only after the deaths of both Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon that the truth became known. All profits from the sale of the hens' eggs were used to support two needy elderly widows. The accusations had therefore been very unkind and must have hurt the Spurgeons.

However, if taunts do not succeed in damaging the Lord's work, Satan will resort to other tactics. We find this in the experience of Nehemiah. When the accusations of the enemy did not cause the work to cease, Sanballat, Tobiah and their associates "conspired ... to come and to fight against Jerusalem" (4:8). Nehemiah now faced the physical presence of the enemy.

### **Examples Abound From Scripture**

Persecution can have a profoundly detrimental effect upon those who

experience it, and a believer who is under pressure might sometimes question the ways of God. It is a great comfort to know that the Lord Jesus was severely tested when here on earth and is "touched" by our trials and sufferings at this present time (Heb. 4:15). He was accused of using Satan's power to perform miracles, and His parentage was questioned by His hostile accusers who labeled Him "a Samaritan" (Mt. 12:24; Jn. 8:41,48). How it must

***It is a great comfort to know that the Lord Jesus was severely tested when here on earth and is "touched" by our trials and sufferings at this present time (Heb. 4:15).***

have hurt the holy Son of God to hear their vile taunts! But there were other ways in which He suffered. Before His crucifixion He was scourged and cruelly treated by Pilate's soldiers. Indeed, Isaiah had prophesied that His face would be marred more than any other man's (Isa.

52:14). Truly, He was hated without a cause (Ps. 69:4).

Making our way through the pages of Scripture, it is possible to compile an extensive list of individuals who experienced persecution. The first was Abel (Gen. 4), who was killed by his jealous brother, Cain. Joseph, in a similar way, faced the hostility of his own brothers. Hated by them, he was sold as a slave and transported to Egypt. There, false-

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ly accused, he found himself in prison with his feet painfully fastened in iron fetters (Ps. 105:18). Surely he was tempted to think he had been abandoned by God! The nation of Israel suffered slavery in Egypt and were a persecuted people (Ex. 1). Moses, their deliverer, deliberately chose to “suffer affliction with the people of God” (Heb. 11:25). Others, like him, found that there is a price to pay for faithfulness. Daniel’s three friends faced the burning fiery furnace (Dan. 3), and Daniel himself was cast into the den of lions (Dan. 6). Jeremiah, like so many prophets of old, was persecuted (Jer. 17:18; Jas. 5:10). David, too, in many of his psalms described his feelings as he faced the relentless persecution of a cruel enemy and pleaded for God’s deliverance (Ps. 31:15).

The same theme runs through the New Testament. John the Baptist died as a martyr for his faithfulness in speaking the truth (Mt. 14), and others trod the same path. Stephen was stoned; James was beheaded, and according to tradition both Peter and Paul experienced martyrdom. The list is extensive and proves beyond question that many of God’s servants suffered

severely at the hands of ungodly men, as Hebrews 11:36-38 teaches.

### **For Us Today**

The prospect of persecution is one from which we cannot escape. In His discourse adjacent to the temple in Jerusalem shortly before His death, the Lord Jesus outlined future events associated with His return. He made it clear that *before* the “fearful sights and great signs ... from heaven” His followers would face persecution and be “brought before kings and rulers” (Lk. 21:11-12). He also taught His disciples in John 16:33 that they would face difficulties in the world. His words should leave us in no doubt: “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” The final part

***We rejoice that our Savior has overcome the world, but we are not so keen to be reminded that we will face tribulation in the world!***

of the verse – “be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” – is perhaps quoted more often. We rejoice that our Savior has overcome the world, but we are not so keen to be reminded that we *will* face tribulation *in* the world!

When Paul and Barnabas visited the places where they had preached the gospel in order to encourage the new believers, they exhorted them “to continue in the faith” and made it clear that “we



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must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Like their Master, these two servants did not want any new disciple to be deluded. The pathway ahead is difficult, and persecution is to be expected from the world. They believed the words spoken by the Lord Jesus: “If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (Jn. 15:20). Early on, the new believers in Thessalonica had been warned by Paul that they would face opposition from a hostile world. When it arose, Paul was concerned that they should not “be moved” by the afflictions, for “we are appointed thereunto,” he declared (1 Th. 3:1-4).

In fact, although we may find it difficult to understand this, the Lord has a purpose in allowing us to be persecuted. Philippians 1:29 states: “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” The word translated as “given” actually means “graciously bestowed.” Have we grasped this? Not only has He graciously enabled us to believe in Christ; He also has graciously bestowed upon us, or given to us, the privilege of suffering persecution for His name’s sake! Although we may not like the prospect, per-

secution is divinely permitted and is a means by which we can be drawn nearer to our dear Savior who suffered for us.

## Conclusion

In drawing these thoughts to a conclusion, two final points must be considered. What can we do when we face persecution for the sake of our Master? Psalm 119 supplies the answer: We must draw upon the Word of God. The persecuted writer of this psalm:

- Placed his hope in the Word (v.81),
- Looked expectantly for it (v.82),
- Refused to forget it (v.83),
- Acknowledged that it was faithful (v.86),
- Did not forsake its teaching (v.87), and
- Vowed that he would obey it (v.88).

We need that Word too! In the trials of life we must cling to its promises and feed upon its truth. Only in this way can we be strengthened and brought through.

If our present pathway is fairly easy, let us never forget those elsewhere who are facing the persecution of a hostile world. As they experience the heat of the furnace, let us constantly remember them in our prayers. **GT**

*“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” — John 16:33 KJV*

# A Very Long War

by Roger Penney



## Battle For The Minds

**S**atan has long-term aims. These are mainly to destroy everything and everyone who stands up for God and the truth of the Bible. As he has done with Israel, the Evil One targets Christians to destroy, undermine and subvert them by any means possible; while he directs the thoughts of the world away from what is good, right and true. It is the Devil's intention to bring everyone in the world, after he has destroyed the last vestige of godliness, into complete subjection to himself by means of his Antichrist.

The war against the truth has been going on from the very beginning. Satan lied to Eve (Gen. 3:1). The letters to the angels of the churches in Revelation 2-3 tell how the war has been brought into this age. The turning away from the love of God to religious practices and rituals is one ploy of the evil powers. Other tactics in churches have been in the rise

of clericalism, mystical arts, dead pride and unholy formalism.

It is in modern times that a new form of warfare emerged. This appeared roughly from the time of Tyndale and Erasmus (around 1500 AD), when hundreds of papyrus manuscripts became available to translators, freeing Bible translations from the dead hand of Christendom.

The religious wars which followed the Protestant Reformation brought about an intellectual turning away from religion, at least in Europe. "Thinkers" forsook the spiritual to concentrate on the material, and on politics rather than religion. Clearly this took people's attention away from God and His Word.

In the providence of God, a large number of working and lower middle class people clung to the Bible, family life and godliness. They tended to think for themselves. The Bible-based thinking among these classes spread to all

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the English-speaking nations and beyond. Many of these individuals were self-educated, and they were therefore strongly influenced by God's Word.

From the eighteenth century through the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, there continued a spread of Christianity worldwide. But Satan was already stirring opposition and undermining the truth of the gospel. Birds snatched away the good seed, or it fell on stony ground (Mt. 13:1-9). In particular the weeds of unbelief and falsehood choked much of the healthy growth.

### **Efforts To Choke The Spread Of The Gospel**

Science, encouraged though it was by Christian interest in God's creation, was subverted by the philosophical refusal to look beyond the material universe. This did not affect many of the lower classes, but Satan had hit upon another ploy to stir up the discontented: extreme patriotism and violence. This again involved the dismissal of the spiritual in favor of the material.

Soon science turned to humanistic atheism and secularism. All that there was in the eyes of shortsighted man was the material. Man's natural enmity against God readily, with increasing eagerness, took on humanistic val-

ues and rejected what was seen as old and worn out Christianity. The ungodly theory of evolution turned men and women away from the Bible and God in droves. They were deceived into believing that science had disproved the Bible. Meanwhile two more sinister movements also arose which inflamed human pride and unbelief.

### **A Direct Attack On The Bible**

Religion weakened, and faith was seen as "a leap in the dark" (Kierkegaard). Romanticism and rationalism took over, and materialistic science came to be the means of interpreting the Word of God. A number of vocal individuals, in what became known as the Higher Criticism, attempted to rid the Bible of the supernatural. Of course if you do that, you do not have much left. This was exactly what Satan wanted. The Bible was no longer believed to be the Word of God, but a collection of human documents, few of which were written at the times claimed in Scripture, nor by the writers who the Bible said were "holy men of God [who] spake as they were moved by the Holy [Spirit]" (2 Pet. 1:21 *KJV*). Indeed, there was no Holy Spirit according to these proponents of unbelief.

It can only be by satanic delusion that academia all over the western world capitulated to this

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deluded way of thinking. Now the majority of Bible colleges and seminaries for the training of evangelists and pastors are infected by unbelief. Students come out brainwashed and unable to teach the truth of God, only spewing a watered-down religiosity.

There are a few faithful men and women who teach the truth – the Bible and nothing but the Bible. Perhaps this is how God allows it to be, for He takes “the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, and things which are not to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

### **The Power Of Evil Has Risen, Is Rising And Will Have A Brief Triumph**

There are newer and more infectious strategies of the enemy with which to deal. Let us, therefore, remind ourselves of what God tells us through the apostle Paul, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) casting down imaginations [reasonings], and every high thing that ex-

alteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

### **Thoughts And Thinking**

We must deal with our own thought life first, which can only be done by reading the Bible daily and meditating on it (see Phil. 4:8-9). We need to be prepared for the difficult task before us, for now Satan is even changing the meaning of words. “Walls,” for example, has become a dirty word, and we are told we need to break these down. This, we are told, includes the differences which God has built into His creation. God at the “beginning made them male and female” (Mt. 19:4).

Sadly, a nation’s “values” may be mistaken for the absolute moral values of the Bible – but they are different! Governments today seek to establish their own values in society as if God were dead. It has been said that humans rule the world, and we can choose to do exactly as we like. Anything is to be tolerated except, of course, the perceived intolerance of Biblical Christianity.

However, God and His values are eternal, for “the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Pet. 1:25)! May we be faithful to Him. **GT**

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me in the opening of my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”*

— Ephesians 6:10-20 KJV

# GOD'S ARMOR FOR HIS SAINTS

by J. Muckle

**I**t is of the utmost importance for the saints of God to be equipped and protected with the armor He has provided for them if they would engage in the conflict of good and evil according to His will. This was never more necessary than at the present time, close to the end of the Church's history on earth, when Satan is using every effort to wipe out the testimony committed to the people of God. The enemy thought he had finished God's testimony when he moved men to crucify the Son of God, but he soon found that the testimony continued. This was through the saints and servants of the Lord, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

## Targets Of The Enemy

Those who have God's testimony in this world are the saints whom Christ loves. This fact, however,

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makes them the object of Satan's malice, or intent to harm, and enmity. During the past centuries many saints have passed through untold sufferings in faithfulness to the name of the Lord Jesus. Now in these lands the wily foe has adopted different means in his opposition to Christ and those He loves. The roaring lion has transformed himself into an angel of light, and his endeavors are aimed at flattering the people of God that they might be unfaithful to Christ. He entices them with worldly advantages through which they can gratify the flesh, and in this way their affections are drawn away from Him. It is undeniable that the world is in the Church, and that the Church is in the world.

### **Divine Resources**

Amid all the departure of these last days, God's resources for His saints are undiminished, and His armor is available for us. We have three outstanding Scriptures that bring before us this divine armor. The first is Romans 13:12, where we read: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (κλν). We are passing through a world of darkness. It is under the authority of Satan where men do not have the knowledge of God.

To protect us in such a world, we need the true knowledge of God in our hearts: His "word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105). The powers of darkness are repelled by the light of the armor that God has provided for us in His Word – if that Word is livingly operative in our souls.

In 2 Corinthians 6:7, the apostle Paul, while speaking of how he and Timothy commended themselves as God's ministers, mentioned "the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." With this in view, no matter what the circumstances may be, nothing could ever excuse any saint of God for acting unrighteously. Anything unrighteous would falsify the testimony of the righteous God whom we serve, and it would bring His glorious testimony into disrepute before the world. Therefore at all times and in all circumstances, righteousness must mark God's servant.

"The whole armour of God" is brought before us in Ephesians 6. It is given to the saints of this dispensation, or period of time, to protect them in conflict with the powers of darkness, as believers seeking to stand firm for God during this evil day. God has richly blessed His saints with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, but Satan wants to keep them from entering



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into this wonderful portion. We have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world and marked out for sonship, according to the good pleasure of God's will. The mystery of His will has been made known to us, and according to His eternal purpose we have received an inheritance. At present, we have access to the Father and belong to the household of God (see Eph. 1:3-12). The Church has been united to Christ as His body and it soon will be presented to Him as His bride. "The mystery," which unfolds to us the great secret of the ages, has been revealed in all its parts; and God desires that we should enter into this in its breadth and length and depth and height.

Knowing Satan's malice and continual opposition to all that is of God, is it any wonder that he is against those who have been so highly favored with such amazing revelations and wonderful blessings? The saints have become the objects of his assaults, and especially when they endeavor to hold fast the great truths connected with the counsels and purpose of God. The enemy presents many things to attract the minds and hearts of the saints, and he will try to mar their testimony to Christ. However, God has given to us His full armor to enable us to prevail in the conflict.

It is essential for us to realize that we have no strength of our own for this conflict, as the arm of flesh cannot match principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places. To meet such foes we must be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." The wiles of the devil can only be met by divine armor; we could never stand without it. Nor can we do without it even for a moment – not until we have left this world behind and the "evil day" is over for us.

### **The Armor**

The first part of the armor is the girdle of truth. This speaks of truth in the inward parts, the state formed in us through the Word of God as learned in communion with Christ. When addressing the Father, the Lord Jesus prayed for His own, "Sanctify them by the truth: Thy word is truth" (Jn. 17:17). As truth enters into the soul by the Word, the moral state is produced which sets us apart for God in this world. That gives us power to resist all that is not according to truth.

The breastplate of righteousness protects the seat of the affections. Anything unrighteous in the life of the Christian will give him a bad conscience, and the enemy will not be slow to take

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advantage of it. We cannot have communion with God if the conscience is bad. No one could successfully stand against evil with a defiled conscience. How different it is when conscience is good and the heart rests in the enjoyment of divine love – Christ dwelling there by faith.

Our feet are to be shod with the peace that is proclaimed in the gospel. How very inconsistent for anyone who speaks of the gospel of peace to be marked by traits that bring unrest and disquiet among the saints of God. Those who cause division and strife do not have their feet shod with peace; such are not able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. This does not mean that we should seek peace at any price. Rather, we should be marked by peace even when in conflict for the truth. One contending for the truth should not take up the sword in fleshly conflict or strike a single blow with the arm of flesh, for our weapons are not carnal, but spiritual.

We need the shield of faith when the enemy suggests that God is not interested in us, or at those times when he presents to the heart the least doubt regarding God's unfailing care. Whatever the circumstances in which we are found, the shield of faith brings God in for our help and

protection. There may be the need for "the trial of your faith" (1 Pet. 1:7). Those who have passed through such trials and have proved the reality of God's help in them can use the shield of faith in the conflict of the "evil day ... to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

For the head we have "the helmet of salvation" to protect all our thoughts and mind. Salvation has come to us from God through grace, and not a doubt regarding this enters into the thoughts of those who have the helmet of salvation. If we had any doubts about our salvation, how could we meet our wily adversary? If we are engaged with the truth brought out in Ephesians 2, we will have taken the helmet of salvation. In that second chapter we learn that we have been made alive with Christ, and even now we sit in the heavenly places "that in the ages to come He might [show] the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (v.7).

To wield the sword of the Spirit we must be acquainted with the Word of God. The Word becomes the sword of the Spirit when it is used under the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit. It is very important then to feed upon the Word of God, which is to become in us the engrafted Word. How essential is it that we should always

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live in communion with the Lord so the Holy Spirit can use the Word through us – that Word by which we have been formed after Christ.

The last part of the armor is prayer – “prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” We must ever remain in the attitude of dependence and confidence in God, being guided in all our prayers and supplications by the Holy Spirit. Jude exhorted, “Praying in the Holy Ghost” (v.20). Our ever-watchful foe will seek to keep us from prayer, but we are to be “watching thereunto with all perseverance.” Many things come in to prevent us from taking time to pray, therefore we must be watchful lest our time become absorbed with other things.

Prayer is not to be confined to our own part in the conflict or to the things that immediately en-

gage us, but we need to think of all saints. The apostle Paul had a very special place in the conflict of good and evil, being set for the defense of the gospel and “an ambassador bound with a chain” (JND) because he was minister of “the mystery of the gospel.” Desiring to continue with this precious ministry, Paul sought the prayers of the saints, well knowing that the enemy would eagerly silence the announcing of this wonderful truth.

In these last days, when the truth of the mystery is so little known among the saints of God, should there not be constant prayer to God that this precious truth might be announced with boldness in the power of the Spirit? **GT**

*(This article was adapted from “An Outline Of Sound Words,” StemPublishing.com)*

*“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the LORD.*

*—Isaiah 54:17 KJV*



# The Righteousness Of God In Romans

by Alfred Bouter

**A**fter beginning the letter with a brief introduction (Rom. 1:1-15), the apostle Paul presented his major thesis to his readers in Rome. It is about God's message of good news and His power for salvation (vv.16-17). Paul wrote: "The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'" (v.17 NKJV). This short but important statement says something about God, His spoken and written Word, and how individuals receive them.

The message Paul was called to pass along implies that God is always right,<sup>1</sup> or just, whether in His person – what He is in Himself, the triune God – or in what He says and does. In other words,

in God's plans, actions, governmental dealings and communications, He is 100% right. Therefore when God declares the sinner guilty and to be condemned, He is right. As the Creator, He set the rules and is perfectly just in His demands; and He is uniquely qualified to judge.

In his speech to the Greek leaders in Athens (Acts 17:22-31), the apostle showed that the only true God is:

- The Creator,
- Sustainer,
- Ruler of the universe (even in control of human history),
- The Savior-God, and
- The supreme Judge.

This passage, which I suggest that you read, addresses man's need to

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believe in response to what God says. It implies the necessity of faith and confidence in Him. All these matters, and more, are discussed in detail in the book of Romans, an epistle that can be called “a treatise<sup>2</sup> about God and His righteousness.”

### Some Background

The first book of the Bible, Genesis, describes God’s magnificent creation and man’s special relationship with God (Gen. 1-2). Soon afterwards, much was destroyed by Satan’s successful attack with subtle lies, as well as through Adam and Eve’s disobedience and subsequent fall into sin (Gen. 3). This had consequences for the entire human race and its immediate and ultimate history, but God was not without resources. He brought a sacrifice, an innocent substitute that took Adam and Eve’s place. They both believed God, who, before driving them out of the garden in His righteous judgment (v.24), clothed them with the skins of the innocent animal sacrifice (v.21), which was a picture of “the garments of salvation ... [and] robe of righteousness” (Isa. 61:10).

### Summary Of Romans

Writing over 4,000 years after the fall, Paul showed that God is

right in His verdict that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). However, when someone of fallen humankind turns to God in true repentance and God declares him or her “just,” or “righteous,” God is still right!

Paul developed the theme of righteousness as follows. The entire human race descended from Noah’s three sons, Ham, Japheth and Shem (Gen. 9), and Paul showed that they knew the truth but soon suppressed it in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18-20). This was

***The more one  
has received,  
the more  
responsible he  
is before God.***

not long after God had revealed Himself as the righteous Judge in Noah’s flood. The descendents of Ham (Gen. 10:6-20) are described in Romans 1:21-32, of Japheth (Gen. 10:2-5) in Romans 2:1-

16, and of Shem (Gen. 10:21-30; 11:10-32) in Romans 2:17-3:20.

The more one has received, the more responsible he is before God. This principle is demonstrated in the indictment that all are under God’s judgment and condemned, but the harshest terms are used for the Jews, who had descended from Shem. The Jews, as we know from Scripture, were given, or had, the most light.

Here is a brief outline of Romans, besides the preface (1:1-17), the postscript (16:17-24), and the doxology (16:25-27):

1. Sinful humans need God's righteousness (1:18-3:20).
2. God has provided righteousness through Christ's sacrifice (3:21-26).
3. Righteousness is received through faith (3:27-4:25).
4. Righteousness is experienced in the soul (5:1-8:17).
5. Righteousness is guaranteed in bringing permanent blessing (8:18-39).
6. Righteousness is seen in God's sovereignty and ways, without setting aside Israel and human responsibility. This includes God's dispensational dealings, with important lessons for us (Rom. 9-11).
7. Righteousness is displayed in transformed lives (Rom. 12-16).

***In all these details we see God's saving, sanctifying and transforming power as displayed in those who were "in Adam" and who are now "in Christ."***

### **Despite Opposition – A Response Towards God**

God's thoughts are contested by man, and for this reason the apostle introduced rhetorical questions with the words, "What shall we say then?" The answer is obvious each of the seven times (Rom. 3:5, 4:1, 6:1, 7:7, 8:31, 9:14,30).

Paul described the ministry he received from God as an apostle (Rom. 11), but he was also a bondman, an evangelist, a teacher and a priest with respect to those who accept the gospel and

get saved. Through him, sinners were led back to God and saved, becoming true worshipers now and for eternity (15:8-21).

This amazing epistle shows God's righteousness in condemning guilty humans and providing salvation for those who repent, including a work of God to ensure such a response. We should note that God works:

- **For** the *salvation* of the lost in setting them free from the guilt of sin through the blood of Christ (3:20-5:11); from the power of sin and death through Christ's death and resurrection, through a work of the Holy Spirit (5:12-8:10); and from the presence of sin (8:11-39);

- **In** those saved and restored to God – there is a *formation* and *sanctification* of those set apart for Him. This is illustrated in Israel's story, past, present and future (9:1-11:36); and

- **With** the redeemed ones that they would be instruments of blessing now and forever (Rom. 12-16). The redeemed ones are *transformed* through the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their relationship to God, themselves, each other, earthly governments, believers with different convictions and unbelievers.



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In all these details we see God's saving, sanctifying and transforming power as displayed in those who were "in Adam" and who are now "in Christ." They become instruments to be used by God for His glory and the benefit of others, always according to God's righteousness. Those who reject God's offer of salvation are under condemnation and will suffer eternal damnation, forced to bow the knee (Phil. 2:10); whereas the redeemed ones bow the knee as willing worshipers.

### **Romans 8**

We should pay special attention to this chapter. In seven points we recognize for the believer:

1. A new position, freedom from judgment – no condemnation (vv.1-4);
2. A new life, freedom from defeat – victory (vv.5-12);
3. A new relationship, freedom from fear – liberty of sons (vv.13-17);
4. A new hope, freedom from despair – living in hope (vv.18-25);
5. A new help, freedom from helplessness – helped by the Holy Spirit (vv.26-27);
6. A new knowledge, freedom from adversity – confidence in God (vv.28-30); and
7. A new assurance, freedom from

worry – no separation (vv.31-39). These verses contain very much. Meditation of every verse brings us to admire the wisdom of our God, His love and compassion – especially the gift of His beloved Son (8:32).

In Romans, Paul was an evangelist, missionary, teacher, prophet and priest. As a prophet, he spoke on God's behalf to bring people back to Him. Paul's ministry still brings fruit for God, as many souls are accepting God's message of salvation

***Paul's ministry still brings fruit for God, as many souls are accepting God's message of salvation even today.***

even today (15:15-29). In priestly service, through his letter, Paul leads believers to glorify God (Rom. 8:31-39, 11:33-36, 15:9-13, 16:25-27). Are you glorifying Him? **GT**

### **Endnote:**

1. Romans has many references to God's "righteousness." Various terms such as "justification," the "declaration of righteousness," "to justify," "righteous" or "just," and "justly," plus words with the opposite meaning like "unrighteous," "unjust," and similar ones – are all from the same Greek root. We count 77 occurrences (or references) of words derived from this root in Romans, much more than in any other book of the New Testament.
2. Treatise is defined as "a formal and systematic exposition in writing of the principles of a subject, generally longer and more detailed than an essay" (Dictionary.com).

# Why Did Jesus Come?

## – Part 1

by Shereen Ghobrial

### The Origin Of His Mission

They said, “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” —John 6:42 ESV

“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me.” —John 6:38

“I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him.” —John 5:43

A big portion of the population in the country in which I live is made up of immigrants. Some boast about their country of origin while others try to hide that fact, depending on that nation’s history and fame. Think about your friends at school or your colleagues at work. How would you feel if one of them came and told you he did not immigrate from Sudan, Italy or any other country, but from heaven? Would you believe him; or would you reject his claim, thinking he was lying or insane?

What would it take to make you believe such an assertion from a friend whom you know

very well? You would probably need two conditions met:

1. Witnesses – that person must be very special, and there must be trustworthy witnesses who testify of his being special (or confirm his claim).
2. Faith – you would want to hear some of those testimonies, and by believing them you could put your trust in that person and his claims for being special.

In John 6:35-40, Jesus presented Himself as the bread of life that came from heaven. This was a big shock to the Jews who were acquainted with His whole family, including Mary, His mother, and Joseph, His legal father.

The Lord Jesus did not come without witnesses, but He had many witnesses confirming He is the Son of God who came from heaven. The testimonies of those witnesses are recorded in the Bible and spread all over the world. What is left for you and me is to believe what was written: Jesus is *the* Christ, *the* Son of God, and through believing we may have life in *His* name (20:31).

1. God's responsibility: The Lord said, "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I should lose nothing of all that He has given Me, but raise it up on the last day" (v.39). The Father gave the Son specific people, and the Lord will ensure their safety and salvation.

2. Man's responsibility – the expected response: The Lord said in the following verse: "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone

### Witnesses That Jesus Is The Son Of God

<b>The Father</b>	Mt. 3:17, 17:5; Mk. 1:11, 9:7; Lk. 3:22, 9:35; 2 Pet. 1:17
<b>The Holy Spirit</b>	Mk. 1:1
<b>Jesus Himself</b>	Jn. 9:35-38, 10:36; Rev. 2:18
<b>Scripture</b>	Jn. 5:39
<b>His works</b>	Jn. 10:37-38
<b>His disciples</b>	Mt. 14:33, 16:16; Jn. 1:34,49, 11:27
<b>His enemies</b>	Mk. 5:7, 15:39; Mt. 27:54

As a heavenly Man, Jesus came with a heavenly mission, commissioned by the Father Himself. The plan of this mission was made in eternity past and executed in the fullness of time. As a Man on a mission, the Lord Jesus was in complete compliance, following the orders of His Top Commander, the Father; that is why it was right for Him to say, "not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me." (6:38). His mission, the will of the Father, has two aspects:

who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (v.40). The Father's will is for the Son to be presented to everyone and that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life.<sup>1</sup>

These aspects must not be separated into two different missions, as to do so may lead us to wrong conclusions. For example, if we stress only God's responsibility we can reach the conclusion that because God has chosen people to be saved,

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He has chosen others to go to hell. The Bible teaches us that all men have sinned and they *deserve* hell, but God has chosen some for great salvation and glories (2 Th. 2:13; Rom. 9:23). The Bible does not teach us that God has chosen anyone for hell; rather, individuals have prepared themselves to destruction through their sinful life (v.22).

On the other side, if we stress man's responsibility we can reach the wrong conclusion that we are saved only because of something *we* have done, which would eliminate the value of God's grace. The Bible, however, stresses the goal of our calling and salvation is "to the praise of His glorious grace" (Eph. 1:5-6,12).

When we consider this two-fold mission in its entirety, it has great value for us. It is a mission planned in heaven, in eternity past, to send a heavenly Man to earth to save sinful humans and change them by giving them eternal life to be heavenly beings. **GT**

*Look for part 2 in next month's edition!*

### **Endnotes**

1. The expression "eternal life" in the Bible is not just describing a life that would last forever; in fact, all human spirits will last forever. In essence, the expression "eternal life" refers to God's life, which was revealed and displayed in the Lord Jesus. This eternal life is granted by the Holy Spirit to those who believe in the Lord Jesus, at the time of their new birth.

**Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour Thou, with joy we worship Thee,  
We know Thou hast redeemed us, by dying on the tree.**

**We know the love that brought Thee down, down from that bliss on high;  
To meet our ruined souls in need, on Calvary's cross to die.**

**Our Saviour Jesus – Lord Thou art, eternal is Thy love;  
Eternal, too, our songs of praise, when with Thee, Lord, above.**

**–Thomas E. Purdom (1852-1942)**

# THE TEMPTED STONE

by Michael and  
Dolly Makary

**T**he Lord Jesus Christ was often tempted, and that by many different people: scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, lawyers and others. Once, a lawyer asked Him, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” (Mt. 22:36 NKJV). Shortly before that question, a Pharisee said to the Lord, “Tell us ... what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, ‘Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?’” (vv.17-18).

## **The Lord Revealed When Tempted By The Devil**

About three years earlier, the Lord Jesus was tempted by the Devil. After Jesus had been without food for 40 days and nights and was very hungry, the Devil challenged Him, “If You are the

Son of God, command that these stones become bread” (4:3). What we know, however, is that the Lord Jesus is both the “Bread of Life” and the “living Stone” (Jn. 6:35; 1 Pet. 2:4). The Devil would have known this as well, for what the LORD “spoke ... was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Ps. 33:9). Therefore the Lord answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’” (Mt. 4:4).

The Devil then took Jesus to the Holy City, Jerusalem, “and said to Him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: “He shall give His angels charge over you,” and, “In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone”’” (v.6). However, the Devil knew very well that the Lord is the Rock: “Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock” (Isa. 44:8). The Lord Jesus is also the “Head of the corner” (Mt. 21:42 KJV), of whom is it written: “Whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder” (v.44 NKJV). In response to this temptation, Jesus said, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God’” (4:7).

“Again, the Devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms

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of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You if You fall down and worship me’” (vv.8-9). The Devil is the ruler of this world (Jn. 16:11), but it will soon pass away (1 Jn. 2:17). For our comfort, remember what the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33). Therefore, “God ... has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth” (Phil. 2:9-10). The Lord’s response to this third temptation was: “Away with you Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve’” (Mt. 4:10).

### **The Lord Revealed As The Last Adam**

The Devil had succeeded when tempting the first Adam (Gen. 3), but he had no success when tempting the last Adam, who is described as “a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45). Of Christ, it is written: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone

for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily” (Isa. 28:16, see Mt. 21:42). The Stone is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Daniel 2:45 we read of Him as “the Stone ... cut out of the mountain without hands, and that broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold.” This was the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about the kingdoms which would rule the world. The materials of the image he saw in his dream were “crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors: the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the Stone that

***Our Lord and Savior at times in His life on earth was hungry, thirsty, poor and tired. He faced high winds and powerful waves; and He can help you in the difficult circumstances of life.***

struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” (v.35). In Revelation 19:16, we read of this Stone as having “on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

He could truly say, “All authority [power, *κλυ*] has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Mt. 28:18). Of Him it is written: “The God of our Lord Jesus Christ,



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the Father of glory ... put all things under His feet” (Eph. 1:17-22). Jesus, the Stone “in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15), “is able to aid those who are tempted” (2:18).

### The Lord Revealed To You

Our Lord and Savior at times in His life on earth was hungry, thirsty, poor and tired. He faced high winds and powerful waves; and He can help you in the difficult circumstances of life. He can sympathize and help, having been the One of whom it is written: “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Lk. 9:58).

Jesus rejoiced with them that rejoiced, as at the wedding at Cana in Galilee (Jn. 2:1-10); and He wept with those who wept, such as when Lazarus died (Jn. 11:32-36). He it is who gave living water to the woman of Samaria – the woman who “had five husbands” and was then with another man (Jn. 4:4-30,39-42).

The hour came as appointed by God when the Lord gave Himself as the supreme Sacrifice on the cross. It was then when He could say, “I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint;

My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me” (Ps. 22:14). “Christ ... suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet. 3:18).

The Lord Jesus is still calling, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt. 11:28). By contrast, anyone who does not do so, whose name is “not found written in the Book of Life [will be] cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15).

“Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the LORD: Look to the Rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug” (Isa. 51:1).

However, let us not be described as what we read in Deuteronomy 32:18, which says, “Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful, and have forgotten the God who fathered you.”

May we remember the many ways in which this Rock has been revealed and the blessed love and care we enjoy through Him, who has been tested in all things. He, the tempted Stone, is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. **GT**

*(Adapted from “The Lord Is My Rock,”  
Rivers of Waters Literature Ministry)*

**Christ ... suffered  
once for sins, the  
just for the unjust,  
that He might  
bring us to God.”  
1 Pet. 3:18**



*The purpose of this column is to help you study the Bible on your own. Look up the Bible references and think about them before writing your answers. Do not send this study to us, as this is not a correspondence course.*

A background graphic for the title page showing a map of the world with a dotted line path and a compass rose in the bottom right corner.

# **The Unsearchable Riches Of Christ – The Theme Of The Bible**

by Alan Groth

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**F**or the next few months, our studies will be on some of the riches in Scriptures that speak about Christ. Speaking to the Jews, Jesus said, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me” (Jn. 5:39). In this study, let’s look at Christ as the Savior.

### **Read Matthew 1:18-21**

1. Who spoke to Joseph in a dream? \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Why did he speak to Joseph? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. What did he reveal about the baby Mary was carrying? \_\_\_\_\_
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### **Read Luke 2:8-13**

1. Who came to the shepherds? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What did he say to them about the one who was born in the city of David? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Read Luke 2:25-35**

1. Who held Jesus in his arms? \_\_\_\_\_
  2. What did his eyes see? \_\_\_\_\_
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**Read John 4:39-43**

1. Who came to Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_
  2. What did the Samaritans say of Jesus after hearing Him? \_\_\_\_\_
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**Read Acts 16:16-32**

1. What did the girl say of Paul and those with him? \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Where did Paul and Silas end up? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. What happened at midnight? \_\_\_\_\_
  4. What was the keeper of the prison going to do? \_\_\_\_\_
  5. Who stopped him? \_\_\_\_\_
  6. What did the keeper ask Paul and Silas? \_\_\_\_\_
  7. Write down their response. \_\_\_\_\_
  8. What did Paul and Silas share with the keeper and his house? \_\_\_\_\_
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**Read Ephesians 5:23**

1. Who is the “head of the church”? \_\_\_\_\_
2. “He is the \_\_\_\_\_ of the body.”

**Read John 11:46-52**

1. Who were the chief priests and Pharisees afraid of? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who prophesied of Jesus’ death? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Why did the rulers want to put him to death? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read Acts 4:8-12**

1. How are we to be saved? \_\_\_\_\_

**Read Philippians 3:20-21; Hebrews 9:27-28**

1. Who are we to be waiting for? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What are we waiting for? \_\_\_\_\_

In our next month’s *Discover Column* look for more riches of Christ.

# In The Hands Of The LORD Of Hosts In Shiloh!

by Scott Cassell

*“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” —2 Timothy 2:15 KJV*

One key to understanding any section of the Bible is to clearly grasp how our Lord related to His people in the particular passage. In 1 Samuel 1:3, God’s title is given as “The LORD of hosts in Shiloh.” “Hosts” means “armies of heaven.” As the LORD of Hosts, God seeks to bless His own – us – with portions from Himself. He delights to use heavenly resources to bring us into practical possession of spiritual things. The Lord desires that we conquer spiritual ground and occupy it by what we do – and He will use the entire complement of His hosts that we might be blessed in this way.

Our enemies seek to occupy that heavenly ground, but it is intended for the saints. When Elisha’s servant was distressed by the surrounding army from Syria, the prophet prayed that his servant’s eyes would be opened to see the LORD’s hosts standing nearby (2 Ki.

6:15-19). Elisha’s prayer was answered, and the servant then saw “the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about.”

## A Few Points From Joshua

The whole book of Joshua is very encouraging. In chapter 18 we read of the children of Israel assembling at Shiloh. Shiloh means “peaceful tranquility.” It was the proper place for His people, having journeyed out of Egypt, to begin their battles; and it was the place to return for solace later. There, Israel set up the tent of meeting, and we read the land of Canaan “was subdued before them” (v.1).

At this juncture in Israel’s journey, seven of the twelve tribes had yet to have their inheritance allocated. The New Testament book of Colossians was written to saints in much the same position. The passage in Joshua pictures believers who have been delivered from the

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world and placed in the presence of God's victories. Yet, there was still more land to occupy than what had been already gained. It may be well to recognize that we are always in such a position of having more spiritual ground yet to be occupied than what has been already gained.

### **Lessons From Scripture**

First and Second Samuel encourage us by telling about the LORD's people's passing through deep exercise while He, the LORD of Hosts, blessed them richly. The blessings are from the LORD's own hand, matching the specific needs of the individual. Hannah, for example, initially was sorely troubled and deeply vexed, but then she gave birth to the prophet Samuel, who would be a blessing for God's people. She described herself as "a woman of sorrowful spirit ... [that] out of the abundance of my grief and provocation have I spoken hitherto" (1 Sam. 1:15-16 JND). Hannah was deeply hurt and richly blessed. We still read these many years later of her faith and the godly grace that our God worked in her life. Let's consider a few Old Testament individuals with a little more detail.

**Elkanah:** During the time in which these saints lived it would seem obvious that many considered it a reproach, or point of shame, for a married couple to be childless. Perhaps it was regarded as a sign that God was not blessing them. Elkanah, Hannah's husband, seemed to do several things correctly, including taking his entire family each year to the proper location to worship and sacrifice. However, his family was divided by strife. Hannah's response to this conflict was prayer. Elkanah,

*It is clearly stated that Elkanah loved Hannah, but it would appear that he fell short in the daily giving of himself for her benefit.*

by taking a second wife so he could have children, missed the rich blessing that Hannah experienced later.

It is not God's plan for a man to have more than one wife, yet Elkanah used natural means to

remove a reproach and solve his perceived problem. By contrast, Isaac prayed for his wife, Rebekah, and God gave them children (see Gen. 25:21). Ephesians 5:25 says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (KJV). It is clearly stated that Elkanah loved Hannah, but it would appear that he fell short in the daily giving of himself for her benefit. This is where the rich and honest feelings of being a husband are experienced.

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In 1 Samuel 1:8 Elkanah asked Hannah, “Am not I better to thee than ten sons?” Perhaps he believed, just like many men today, that the love he felt for his wife was the solution to her problems. It is clear in this chapter that such was not the case, as Hannah continued to suffer. This married couple should have passed *together* through the deep exercise of not having children. Such a trial would have drawn the two closer to one another. If they had acted in unity regarding Hannah’s being childless, then today we would see the prophet Samuel as the son of this godly couple rather than the son for which Hannah alone prayed. Elkanah’s actions, however, in taking a second wife greatly contributed to Hannah’s suffering. This is a sobering message to all married men. How good it is to keep the great example of our Lord and how much He gave for His bride always before us.

**Eli the priest:** This man is set before us as the complete anti-type to the grace that the LORD of Hosts worked in Hannah. Eli lacked discernment, as his eyes were dim. We may recall others from Scripture who were blind, Samson (Jud. 16:21) physically, and Hezekiah (Isa. 38:14) and the church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:17) spiritually.

In 1 Samuel 2, a man of God came to Eli and told him that he, Eli, honored his sons more than he did the LORD. Eli wanted to enjoy the things of this world through his two young sons. They were sinfully taking food from those who came to sacrifice and using it to enrich themselves. Eli took part in the same and became fat – heavy, sitting on a stool. Sadly, it appears this father simply saw his children as ones through whom he could benefit for his own pleasure.

By the contrasts presented, a lesson the Lord teaches us in these early verses of 1 Samuel 1-2 is how He would have us to view our dear children. After the LORD had worked deeply in Hannah’s soul, she came to see her child as a “vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim. 2:21). This is the crux, the best way to view having offspring. **Eve:** Perhaps an often-overlooked teaching on parenting and the home is the topic of the wife ruling the house. Let me first introduce a measure of background truth. The man Adam was placed into the garden of Eden, and “thus the heavens and the earth ... were finished” (Gen. 2:1). All the animals of the air, sea and land had already been created. But unlike the animals, man initially had no mate. Adam must have



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known he was the only human on earth and that this whole creation was new. Then we read what the LORD God said: “It is not good that the man should be alone” (v.18). God was preparing Adam for what he was about to receive. Remember Adam was in innocence. The LORD God made Eve from a rib of Adam, having said, “I will make him an help meet for him” (v.18). The “help” is the answer to the problem of his being alone – a provision of greater worth than simply what is sufficient. The next phrase is what I am seeking to bring before us and consider: “meet for him.” It means his equal.

God had created an entire universe. Of the creatures he had made for earth, Adam was at the top. Eve occupied that same place in the order of creation. It is a pleasant thing to accept the simplicity of what God has established. The wife was God’s answer to man’s loneliness, and this required that she be like him. Keep in mind that, as students of Scripture, we know that the order of the home and the public place taken by men and by women is very specific, placing men as the head of the wife (1 Cor. 11:3). Yet they both take their role so as to exhib-

it God’s order, that their lives will say, “We believe God is right.”

Now consider 1 Timothy 5:14: “So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households ...” (ESV). In the Darby translation the phrase “manage their households” is translated as “rule the house.” This is not rule over her husband, but over the children and the everyday tasks of keeping things in order. Managing a household takes much work, especially one including children. It is a grand task and the stakes are enormous. Therefore, it is folly for a man to expect his wife to have a job outside the home and still effectively manage their house-

***Satan certainly reserves his most subtle wiles, or tricks, for when we plan to attend a Bible study or prayer meeting.***

hold. The society we live in may not value the role of a young married woman staying home to manage the house and its many associated tasks, but in God’s eyes it is of utmost importance.

**Hannah:** The persecution that Hannah suffered was most intense at the time of going to Shiloh to offer sacrifice. It was then that her adversary provoked her year after year. Likewise, Satan certainly reserves his most subtle wiles, or tricks, for when we plan to attend a Bible study or prayer meeting.

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Hannah needed a change in her perspective. Initially she simply wanted children, but the LORD had shut up her womb – yes, this was the LORD’s doing. The LORD performed a deep work in her life, such that she came to see the needs of God’s people. Hannah saw the circumstances in Israel as personified by Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. She then asked the LORD for a man child – not just a baby, but a prophet who could turn the hearts of His people toward God. His children need to be in submission and obedience – the great healing principle of humanity.

As to her son, Hannah initially said that she would “give him unto the LORD all the days of his life” (1 Sam. 1:11 KJV). Later she changed this to “as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD” (v.28). In both statements it was for his entire life. Once her son was born to her, she came to understand that you always have your children; and when they hurt, you hurt. For grandchildren, you hurt double: first for your grandchild and second for your son or daughter. It never ends. She came to realize that she would always be attached to him.

This believing mother expected her son to grow in the LORD.

She made him a little coat each year (2:19), bigger than the year before. Looking at Hannah I am reminded: What would we do without our mothers?

### Conclusion

“And Jehovah appeared again at Shiloh; for Jehovah revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of Jehovah ... And what Samuel had said happened to all Israel” (1 Sam. 3:21, 4:1 JND). It appears from these two verses that Hannah’s suffering was greatly rewarded. Once the LORD had Samuel walking before Him, then the LORD of Hosts could support his growth with all of His heavenly resources.

Consider one other example. When David was fleeing from King Saul he could count on these same resources. A large number of miraculous things happened along the way *as David acted in faith*. On the other hand, *when he greatly sinned*, everything worked against him (2 Sam. 24); and *his own attempt* to bless Mephibosheth ran into confusion thanks to the lies and trickery of Ziba (16:1-4, 19:24-29).

May we learn to live in full dependence on our Lord and Savior – the LORD of Hosts! We will rest in a peaceful tranquility as we trust Him and lean on His grace. **GT**



# Colossians

by Leslie M. Grant

*“Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.”*

—Colossians 1:12-13 *NKJV*

**C**olossians, meaning “monstrosities,” has much in common with Ephesians. However, it does not present the saints as seated in heavenly places, but considers them as still walking through a wilderness world. Provision for the journey is heavenly, and the blessed fullness of this provision in the person of Christ is beautifully seen. “In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (2:9).

In connection with this fullness, the word “all” is constantly used. This was needful in warning them against the dangers of philosophy on the one hand and religious mysticism on the other. The first appeals merely to intellect; the other insults the intellect. Though often found cu-

riously intermixed, the dangers presented a monstrosity indeed – with two heads in contradiction. The preeminent headship of Christ is the blessed answer to this situation.

Christ is seen as Head of all creation and as Head of the body, the Church. He *will* reconcile all things in earth and heaven, but He has *now* reconciled all believers. He has provided both the ministry of the gospel and of the Church through the apostle Paul. In all of this there is double provision: what is toward the world and that which is for His saints.

Nourishing, heavenly food is found in this book. Such food will preserve us from evil even in its most refined forms. **GT**

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*This column is adapted from the book “The Bible, Its 66 Books In Brief.” It is available for purchase from: Believer’s Bookshelf USA ([www.bbusha.org](http://www.bbusha.org)) and Believers Bookshelf Canada ([www.bbcan.org](http://www.bbcan.org)).*

# His Own Servants

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by Robert J. Costen

*“If any one serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also shall be My servant.”*

—John 12:26 JND

Everyone who has experienced a personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ is His servant, and if we desire to serve Him, we must follow Him! He was God’s perfect Servant, and if we wish to serve acceptably then let us trace His service in the Gospels as He went about doing good. Consider some of His traits:

1. He waited on God’s time (Mk. 1:14-15).
2. He started serving where He had been brought up (Lk. 4:16).
3. He identified Himself with others (Mk. 1:16-20).
4. He taught with authority (vv.21-27).
5. He spoke gracious words, yet with power (Lk. 4:22,32).

6. He made Himself accessible to all people (Mk. 1:32-34).

7. He moved in the circle of those who loved Him (vv.29-31).

8. He was dependent upon God in prayer (v.35).

9. He refused popularity and did not seek His own glory (vv.37-38).

10. He had compassion and personal contact with those who were in need (vv.40-42).

How good that Christ has left us an example; we should follow in His steps (1 Pet. 2:21). Once we were servants of sin, but now, being His own, we are His servants and servants of God, devoted to do His will. The Lord is coming soon. Let us be good and faithful servants! **GT**

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*“Be Thou the object bright and fair to fill and satisfy the heart;  
My hope to meet Thee in the air, and nevermore from Thee to part;  
That I may undistracted be to follow, serve, and wait for Thee.*

—George W. Frazer (1830-1896)

## If Jesus Christ is the eternal God and He is perfect before the foundation of the world, how can He be “made perfect” (Heb 5:9 KJV)?

**A**s God, the Lord Jesus Christ is, and ever was, perfect. Scripture does not, however, speak of Him as the Lord Jesus Christ before He came into this world, was born as a baby and laid in a manger in Bethlehem. In the early verses of John’s gospel He is called “the Word.” Indeed, this gospel opens with the words, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn. 1:1 NKJV). Several verses later we read: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory” (v.14).

In Luke 1:31 the angel Gabriel told the Virgin Mary, “Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.” Sometime later the angel of the Lord spoke to Mary’s intended spouse<sup>1</sup> in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins” (Mt. 1:20-21).

We conclude from these passages that the holy Son of God was given the name “Jesus” when He entered manhood. “Christ” is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew word “Messiah.” The angel told the shepherds that this baby was “a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Lk. 2:11).

Before Jesus grew up, He was first called a “Babe” (v.12), then a “Child” (v.17). Just as Scripture makes absolutely clear that He is God – God the Son – it is equally clear that having been born into this world of a woman, He is true Man. God’s Word gives Him many marvelous titles, but the most prevalent term He used to refer to Himself was “Son of Man.” We are on holy ground when we speak of the wonderful mystery of His unique person.

In Hebrews 5 we are still in the portion of this book that sets forth our Lord Jesus as High Priest. As God in eternity past, He was not High Priest. He “did not glorify Himself to become High Priest (v.5), but was given this high honor by God. It was “in the

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days of His flesh” that “He learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (vv.7-8). He was, and is, always morally perfect, for being who He is, the Holy One of God, He could not be otherwise. But obedience was something new for Him here on earth. He “humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8 JND).

Hebrews 2:10 says that “it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (NKJV). A helpful footnote in the Darby translation<sup>2</sup> points out that the expression “to make perfect” in the book of Hebrews is used in the sense of fitting one for an office. After the Lord Jesus had suffered and died, God glorified Him so that “He became author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest according to the order

of Melchizedek” (5:9-10 NKJV).

Thus the expression “made perfect” (KJV) in Hebrews 5:9 in no way refers to or conflicts with the divine perfection which is intrinsic to our Lord Jesus Christ as God. It indicates, rather, how His sufferings while here on earth fitted Him for the glorious position of High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek to which God has now called Him.

—Answered by Eugene P. Vedder, Jr.

### Endnotes

1. We would speak of Joseph and Mary as engaged; but by Jewish custom they are referred to as husband and wife, although the marriage had not yet been consummated. An engagement was held to be sacred just as if it was a marriage.
2. Footnote “g” on the expression “to make perfect” in Hebrews 2:10 reads: “‘Make perfect’ in Hebrews has the force of doing all required to initiate into an office, to make a person fit to be installed in the office. It is sometimes translated ‘consecrate.’”



**Thank you for renewing my subscription.** I particularly enjoyed the article in the July/August 2017 issue about being an idol worshiper. The 12 questions were very thought provoking and made me really think about some of the choices I have been making. – *Illinois, USA*



lady who was 90 years old said, as she breathed her last, “Peace, perfect peace.” The Bible declares, “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God” (v.1). Death has no terror for the person who is saved. Last words are often considered to be of special importance, and those of another were, “I am going to see mother and sister, but I want to see Jesus first of all.” Could you say that? If you have taken the Lord Jesus as your Savior, you can.

Each sinner is an enemy of God by wicked works. My sin was against a holy God, but He loved me and gave His Son to die for me.

Two men behind bars were asked, “Do you know anyone who loves you enough to die for you?”

They said, “No.” But I am here to tell you that there is One. It is the One who created the universe and now upholds it by the word of His power: Jesus. He died for you. I can say that He died for me and I have everlasting life, because the Bible says so (Jn. 3:36, 5:24).

Death is called the “king of terrors,” but for the believer it is not a fearful thing. “We know we have passed from death unto life” (5:24). Life – life everlasting – belongs to the believer. We will be forever with the Lord (1 Th. 4:17-18). He said, “I will not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands” (Isa. 49:15-16).

The Christian can say, as expressed by Augustus M. Toplady (1740-1778):

*Things future, nor things that are now, nor all things below or above, Can make Him His purpose forego, or sever our souls from His love. Our names from the palms of His hands eternity will not erase: Impressed on His heart they remain in marks of indelible grace.*

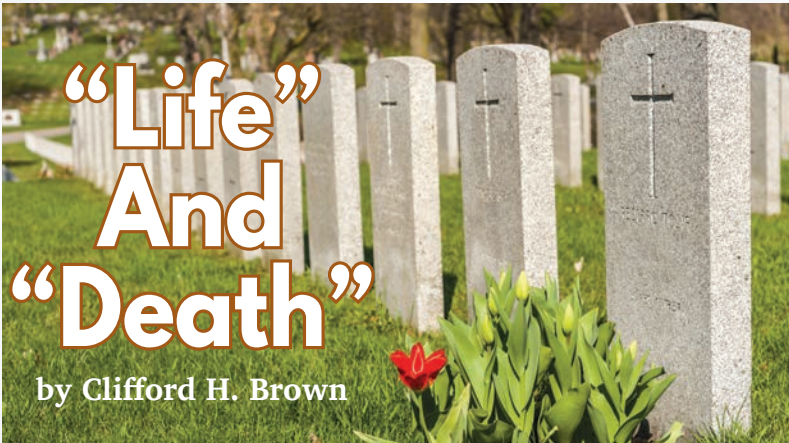
What about you? “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). **GT**

*(Adapted from a message shared at the editor’s great-grandmother’s funeral on June 3, 1952.)*

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**H**ere are two words: “life” and “death.” One is heart-rending and stirring the world everywhere – that is “death.” Wherever we go we find those who have been face to face with death, as death has been there before us. The Bible says that death came because our forefather Adam disobeyed God and sinned (Rom. 5:12).

Unbelieving men and women “through fear of death [are] all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:15 KJV). This is felt the world over. Death is a fearful thing. People try to explain it; doctors work to stop it.

The very breath that we draw is from the hand of God, yet we find people everywhere rebelling against the One who gave them their breath! Every man and woman will have to meet God, against whom they have sinned, for after death comes judgment (9:27).

The one who has the power of death (2:14), Satan, uses it to fill the hearts of mankind with dread and fear; but God offers everlasting life. The Lord Jesus came, sent by the Father, and spoke words of life. He said, “He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life” (Jn. 5:24). The blessed Lord Jesus came down from heaven and bore our penalty that we might have eternal life rather than eternal death. Christ died for sinners (Rom. 5:8); He died for me.

The last audible words of one believer, who spoke many other words during her 86 years, were, “I am going to Jesus!” A Christian

*- continued on inside back cover*