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On the Sanctity of Human Life  
A Disciple Collection

Each January since the harsh wake-up call of Roe v. Wade in 1973, American Christians have set aside time to pray and speak against the evil of abortion in our nation. This Friday, January 22, 2016, will see the public face of this movement come to the nation’s capital through the annual March for Life.

As we reflect on our national sin (one, sadly, among many), we want also to shine the light of the Gospel brightly—there is forgiveness at the foot of the cross for everyone who has had an abortion, every doctor or nurse that has taken an innocent child’s life, but only through the spilled blood of God’s own Son.

Below are excerpts from pieces Disciple has run in recent years to honor God’s gift of life and speak truth to the powers destroying it in our land.

At the Turning of the Tide—Justin Lonas, August 2015

“Seeing in cold light the evil of this selfish practice brings me to mourn again for the bloodguilt of my people in celebrating it. Having walked through three pregnancies together, my wife and I appreciate the gravity of abortion in ways we couldn’t when we were younger. To see the familiar features of little children brutally snatched from the womb and cut to pieces sparks a fire to fight for their lives.

“For many of us, being ‘pro-life’ has been a part of our identity, but [the Planned Parenthood videos are] the shot in the arm we needed to press the battle to its end. For those who have silently nurtured doubts about the morality of abortion, these videos are confirming their worst suspicions. God’s creation speaks His truth; these are not ‘clumps of cells’ but image bearers of the Most High. There are no reasonable doubts. We are called to care for orphans and widows, and who is more fatherless than a child scheduled for dilation and extraction?

“For those who have supported abortion in carefree ignorance, there can be no more simple excuses. To defend Planned Parenthood has always been to celebrate horrendous sin, but no euphemisms remain to hide behind. Sin, as always, has overreached. The complacency and triumphalism of these profiteers of murder gives the lie to every sly evasion. Lives are being ended, and those doing the killing know it full well.”

What about the Twins? The Deadly Logic of Abortion—R. Albert Mohler, January 2011

“These two cases illustrate the pattern of moral confusion found among the public. News of the ‘house of horrors’ in Pennsylvania brings prompt moral outrage, and understandably so. But is the abortion clinic on the corner, established for the purpose of killing unborn children, any less a house of horrors?

“The couple in Australia openly admitted aborting their twin boys because they want a daughter. Millions around the world seem outraged by their decision, but having accepted the basic logic of abortion, they are hard-pressed to define when any abortion demanded by a woman might be unjustified and thus illegal.

“The Christian revulsion over abortion and the destruction of human life is based in the knowledge that God is the Author of all life and of every life, without exception. Abortion is the business of death, and it is the great wound that runs through our nation’s conscience. These shocking accounts may sear their way into the nation’s collective conscience, but unless the basic logic of abortion rights is overturned, such accounts will erupt again and again.

“Once we buy into the logic of abortion, there is no end to the trail of tears.”

Early Christians and Abortion—David T. Brattston, January 2013

“After Christianity was legalized, congregations in various regions held conferences to regulate the affairs of the Church. One objective was to standardize the practices of excommunication. About the time of Constantine’s conversion, or perhaps a few years before, the Council of Elvira in Spain decreed that anyone who committed abortion was to be given Holy Communion only when in danger of death (Canon 63). This was the same penalty as for repeated adultery and child-molesting (Canons 47 and
The more lenient Council of Ancyræa in Turkey (A.D. 314) enacted a ten-year suspension for women who caused abortion and for makers of drugs that induced miscarriage (Canon 21). The first ecumenical council, held at Nicaæa in A.D. 325, did not itself condemn abortion but the third ecumenical council (Chalcedon, A.D. 451) adopted the decrees of Ancyræa, including those against abortion. The Scriptures contain only one passage on directly related to abortion: Exodus 21:22-25. The only early Christian commentary on it was by a preacher and Bible scholar named Origen. He had succeeded Clement as president of the famous seminary at Alexandria and later established his own in Palestine. Around A.D. 240 he preached a series of sermons on Exodus, including Exodus 21. As was his custom, he did not comment on the obvious meaning of the passage but treated its contents as a series of symbols about higher spiritual truths and about other aspects of the Christian life (Homilies on Exodus 10.2). “In short, in the first three centuries after Jesus all Christian authors who mentioned abortion considered it a grave sin. Although Origen mentioned it without discussing its sinfulness, no Christian author in the three hundred years after Christ condemned it. This opposition was not merely local: Christian sources in Spain, Italy, Tunisia, Greece, Egypt, Turkey and Syria recognized abortion as forbidden by God and in the same category as any other murder. The condemnation was universal and unanimous.”

**Eternity in Our Hearts: Christ and Time**

By Justin Lonas

“When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes” (Matt. 7:28-29).

Although there are many, many instances of Christ’s teaching to which this description applies, a striking example is this retort to the crowds (specifically the Pharisees) seeking a “sign” that He was indeed the Messiah. All the miracles He had performed (healings, feedings, raising the dead, etc.) were not enough, apparently, to convince them. Jesus, knowing their hearts, answered: “This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. The Queen of the South will rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold something greater that Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold something greater than Jonah is here” (Luke 11:29-32).

What audacity! To us who know Christ as the risen Lord, this reads as a bold and powerful statement of truth. Those present, however, would have heard the Nazarene’s statement as a colossal affront, and smacking more than a little of insanity. “How could this carpenter’s son possibly know how God will judge us? Where does He come off thinking He is greater than our kings and prophets?”

Though Jesus’ reference to Jonah is far more than rhetoric (the prophet from Galilee, etc.), the real power of His words here is that they come from a place unbounded by time. There are no conditions, no subjunctive verbs; only blunt indicatives. He speaks not as though He merely envisions these things, but as though He is there (with the Queen of Sheba in Solomon’s court, in Nineveh, at God’s judgment seat) at the same instant He is with them in first-century Judea. That is authority. Jesus talks as if He were, in fact, the author of the story—the one who declares “the
end from the beginning” (Isa. 46:10), the one without whom “was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3).

For the Lord, time is clearly different than what we know of it. Time itself could be an often-overlooked aspect of man’s fall into sin. As it happens, this seems to be a concept borne out in Scripture. Though not enumerated among the curses issued by God in Genesis 3, awareness of the passage of time in their finite lives must have hit Adam and Eve, as the reality of death began to set in. We all now live under that curse, and our remaining hours on earth tick from the moment of conception.

Whereas Christ sees all and knows all, “now we see through a glass, darkly” (1 Cor. 13:12). To be separated from Him is to be cast into time. Even so, we are made to yearn for the restoration of God’s design: “He has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end” (Ecc. 3:11). We instinctively know that this life is not to be the sum total of our days, but in God’s wisdom, He has also shielded us from seeing it fully in our sin.

Because the Lord is faithful, it was never His plan to allow us to run our days and stay apart from Him. Christ stepped into this world, into space and time, to accept the curse and take the punishment—yet without sin—“that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death” (Heb. 2:14).

Death, a hard and fast end to our sin, through Christ becomes as much a means of grace as a curse. With it comes a promise of resurrection, whether to life or punishment (Matt. 25:46); an outcome tied to these fleeting years on earth. Because of the curse of time and the reality of eternity, we can pray with Moses, “teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom” (Ps. 90:12). The curse motivates diligence, for our days are too few to waste; the reality tells us what to strive for; God’s grace gives us the wisdom to see and obey.

Thinking about time in this way gives a new dimension to faith. It is, in essence, acting on God’s Lordship over time, submitting our fear of death to the reality of eternal life in Him. In this, we say with Job, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19:25-26). Because Christ “is before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17), our trust in Him is nothing less than grasping the hand He extends from beyond the realm of time, allowing Him to hold us fast as the world gives way.

Thus anchored to eternity, Christians are able to endure whatever comes and to serve faithfully in our sojourn here. He never leaves or forsakes those whom He calls, at whatever point in the grand story their life falls. In His grace, our experience of time is enriched by this history and shored up by tradition, so that we have all the more reason to trust Him. Psalm 90 concludes with the refrain “confirm the work of our hands”; a plea that God allow us to build well upon what the godly before us started and support that which comes after.

With the eyes of faith we see the Day of the Lord; clothed in the righteousness of Christ, we even long for His appearing without fear. In fact, the Eschaton is not an event in time (though it looks like it from here), but the literal end of time, as the curse is reversed. Christ has declared: “Behold, I am making all things new.... It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end” (Rev. 21:5-6).

It has often been observed that the biblical idea of hope is not wishful thinking, but resting in certainty. The brokenness of time can cause us to despair, but the eternal Christ bids us hope in Him. Nothing is beyond His concern, for the past is present to Him. Nothing can surprise Him, for nothing is future.

These are deep things. Paul wrote (in the same passage quoted above), “Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known” (1 Cor. 13:12). It is only with the eyes of faith (themselves gifts of God) that we discern these things at all.

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**Dear Preachers’ Kids...**  
By Joe McKeever

“Now, it came to pass that when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel.... But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice” (1 Sam. 8:1-3).

Let’s talk about the offspring of the Lord’s shepherd, those sweet little lambs birthed into his beloved family in order to enrich their lives, to bless the church and to provide a fresh palette on which the preacher and his wife can demonstrate all it means to grow up in the fear and nurture of the Lord.

Or—those little monsters who terrorize the congregation with their out-of-control behavior.

Those darling babies and toddlers who are smothered by the loving attention of the entire congregation, and for whom teenage girls compete as babysitters.
Or—those juvenile delinquents who run up and down the aisles of the church, and treat the sacred buildings as their own personal playroom.

Those teenagers who look so angelic on Sunday and test their parents’ patience during the week, the subject of ten thousand stories in deacons’ homes, who exasperate the seniors in the church hoping for a little peace and quiet this Sunday.

They put the gray hairs in their preacher-dad’s head and the great stories into his sermons. They put the lines in their mom’s brow and the thrill into her heart. They occupy the major portion of their parents’ prayers day and night. God bless ’em. We love our PKs—Preachers’ Kids. As Paul said, “And such were some of you” (1 Cor. 6:11).

Biblically, PKs didn’t do so well. Scripture mentions very few PKs (“prophets’ kids”?) who turned out well. I can’t think of any who succeeded their fathers in the ministry.

When the toddler Samuel was growing up in the tabernacle, the sons of High Priest Eli were breaking his heart. “Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the Lord” (1 Sam. 2:12). Those with the stomach for this sort of thing can read for yourself what they were doing in that chapter. “Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord” (2:17). Eli is not spared his share of the blame for their actions, for the Lord said the high priest was honoring “your sons more than Me” (2:29). Eli’s sons met an untimely death and brought great sorrow to Israel for generations.

Think of David’s children, particularly Amnon, Absalom, and Solomon. Not exactly role models. Then again, with his multiple wives and concubines, David’s home life was not exactly conducive to rearing godly offspring.

As for the Old Testament prophets, we are not given enough information on their children to make any generalizations or draw conclusions. Same with the apostles. Based on the three mentioned above, though—the children of Eli, Samuel, and David—we might conclude:

A) There are no guarantees. Even the finest parent can see his child become a prodigal.

B) It’s an uphill battle for one called of God to do His work in the world while also being the husband and father his family needs. Books have been written by these angry adult PKs, as they indict their fathers and blame the ministries which drove them to greater and greater sacrifices, resulting in a practical abandonment of their families.

C) The occasions when the children become as solid and faithful as the parents are rare indeed. If we think of Anne Graham Lotz and Franklin Graham as exceptions, anyone familiar with that household would give Ruth Bell Graham, the matriarch, the lioness’ share of the credit.

The same applies today. In this fallen world, bringing children up in the fear and nurture of the Lord to become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ will not happen easily, naturally, or accidentally. A pastor’s wife wrote me: “You’ve written on what to say and what not to say to pastors and their spouses. But what about the pastors’ children? Say something to them.” This is a more complex subject. It’s much harder to get a handle on.

I need to confess that I was never a PK. I’m a CMK—a coal miner’s kid. That’s about as far to the other end of the spectrum as one can get. The privileges are fewer, the circumstances vastly different, and the expectations considerably lower. But my three children are PKs. They know. God bless ’em.

So, with those reservations in mind, here are my ten words to the sons and daughters of God-called ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I. You Are Blessed Indeed

You will have privileges and opportunities most children never have. You will be raised in church by the finest teachers and nurturers. You will go on trips with your family and church groups, and sometimes will stay in vacation homes your family could not afford in a lifetime but which are provided without cost by people who love you and your folks. So, I suggest you start by counting your blessings.

II. You Are Indeed on Display

Sorry about that, but it’s just one of those facts of life. Your dad is going to use the story of something funny you said in a sermon, whether you find it embarrassing or not; it’s a preacher-thing. The adults will think it’s cute and they will turn in your direction and smile. Your friends will be embarrassed for you and will tease you.

It’s been this way since year one. People are watching you. But that’s not all bad. Remember “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is completely His” (2 Chron. 16:9). So, He’s watching too, but not with an evil intent. He’s looking around to see whom to bless. Likewise, church members who keep an eye on you almost all want you to do well. They are pulling for you (and the ones who are not, well, they don’t count).

III. You Have an Incredible Team of Supporters

Now, I’m not naïve about these things. Not every church is healthy, and not every congregation treats the pastor’s family honorably. But most really do want to get this right.

My three children had a host of adult leaders and encouragers to bless them, starting with the other staff
ministers and including Sunday School teachers, choir leaders, and chaperones. And they didn’t charge a dime for their services! Just like everyone else in church, they were there to bless in the name of Jesus.

IV. You Are a Sinner and Will Make Mistakes, Some More Serious Than Others

Romans 3:10 and 3:23 apply to you as well as the rest of us. No one (to my knowledge) expects you to be perfect. Even if they do, they’re unrealistic, and you should smile at them and go on. They’ll grow up. Cut yourself some slack, and don’t beat up on yourself.

V. You Must Come to Know Jesus Christ as Your Personal Lord and Savior. You Must Be Born Again

Beware of having a second-hand religion. That is, trying to get to Heaven by the faith of your parents. You must be born again. God has no grandchildren, the saying goes, and no one is “grandfathered” into the Kingdom. You must be born again. Just as dad and mom cannot chew your food and think your thoughts, they cannot believe on the Lord Jesus for you. You must do this yourself. You must be born again.

VI. As a Christian, You Must Cultivate a Daily Relationship with Christ

This means reading the Word daily and praying, confessing your sins, and bringing every area of your life under His Lordship. The emphasis is on “daily”—carve out a definite time and a specific place where you can pull aside and read the Word and pray quietly. And don’t be in too big a hurry. Learn to read and pray, then sit quietly for a bit. Have something to write on in case the Lord calls something to mind. Then read some more and pray more.

VII. Pray For Your Parents and Expect Them to Be Unreasonable Sometimes

Your friends find their parents to be exasperating at times, and there’s no reason to expect yours will be different. But the great test of your faithfulness is whether you will submit to them (see Ephesians 5:21) when you disagree. It’s tough being a parent at any time. But for the pastor and his wife, the complexity and expectations are much higher. So pray the Lord will give them wisdom and courage.

VIII. Expect Some in the Congregation to Be Unloving or Unkind

By lowering your expectations, two things happen: a) You won’t be disappointed when someone is harsh or unloving, and b) you will appreciate those who are loving and generous and kind toward you and the family. But if you always expect everyone in church to be Christ-like and understanding, you are setting yourself up for disappointment.

Always remember that anyone who wants to follow Christ can join a church, no matter their mental health or maturity level. Churches attract all kinds of people. A wise parent will work to protect his/her children, but they cannot always do that. So be prepared, and don’t let the harshness of a few hurt you or hinder your own faithfulness. Learn to love the unloving, and you will honor Christ, bless your own life, please your parents, and bear a strong witness.

IX. Seize the Opportunities Coming Your Way

Let me tell you something I’ve noticed over the years. On various college campuses when I would do ministry to student groups, often the most talented singers and most confident leaders were PKs who had been brought up in small churches. Because their youth groups were small and their dads were the preachers, they inherited leadership roles more by default than by talent. But as they served, they grew in ability and confidence, and now when they find themselves on a large stage—even on a campus with thousands of peers—they’re ready to lead.

My oldest son was a soloist in childhood musicals. As a teen he sang in the church youth choir. In college, he became a member of an elite vocal ensemble that traveled and represented the school. In adulthood, he has often been a soloist in church pageants. The first training he received in singing took place in the family automobile as we traveled to grandmas.

X. Encourage Other PKs You Will Meet along the Way

You will occasionally come across the offspring of ministers who are angry at churches where their fathers served and who have not been to church in years. “I still believe in God,” some will say, “but not in Christians.” You can help them. After all, you’ve been there, to one extent or other. You know some of what they are feeling.

Encourage them to keep their eyes on Jesus and to “do church,” not because people deserve it but because a) Christ commanded it and b) we need it. Pray for them, and don’t expect them to automatically change because of your words. But give them time and give the Lord room to work.

God bless you for your faithfulness.

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Exegetically Speaking—by Spiros Zodhiates
Do You Really Love Your Neighbor?
James 2:8


“If ye fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,’ ye do well” (James 2:8).

The Apostle James has condemned the usher who gives preferential treatment to the rich Jew who visits the assembly of believers. He has stated his case squarely, but he foresees an objection on the part of those who read his epistle. This objection is inherent in the word méntoi, meaning “however” or “nevertheless, though, to be sure, indeed,” which unfortunately the King James Version has missed in its translation.

This objection would stem from the fact that James has touched on the motives that lead to such preferential treatment in the house of God, as we have already seen in our previous studies. “How do you know,” one would say, “that what I have done I have not done out of love instead of out of expediency?” And so James hastens to say that, if the motive was really love, well and good, but if not, a sin has been committed against the Law of God. If your motive in giving the rich a special and preferred seat in the house of God was that you hoped to receive some personal favor someday, or if you have treated the poor harshly because you knew you had nothing to gain from him, then you are guilty of preferential treatment, of respect of persons, which God abhors and will not let go unpunished.

Here is James 2:8-9 translated as accurately as possible: “If you, however, are carrying out a royal law according to the Scripture—you shall love thy neighbor as thyself—you are doing well, but if you have respect to persons [or judge people by their outward appearance], you are committing sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors.”

One of the greatest commandments which the Lord Jesus Christ gave to His disciples and to us, James calls a law. There is no article before the noun “law,” which would make us come to the conclusion that James is not speaking of the Mosaic Law as we know it in the Old Testament. He considers what he is about to say as a law, a principle, a rule set down by God Himself.

It is enlightening to go back to the connotation of the Greek word nómós, meaning “law.” It is derived from the verb nemô, meaning “to distribute,” and the noun form means “anything assigned or apportioned, that which one has in use or possession.” God has given each one a very special and divine attribute, and that is love. No one can see it; no one can touch it, but it is nevertheless real, and a quality without which human life is hardly conceivable. We should treasure it and use it rightly. The Lord Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matt. 22:37-39).

Thomas Curtis Clark wrote a beautiful poem expressing how essential a gift from God this love is:

“Keep love in your life, my friend,
If you would have perfect joy;
Keep love, never let her depart—
For who would his life destroy?
For life’s no longer than love, my friend,
When love is no more, ‘tis the journey’s end
And regret and fear shall your way attend.

Keep love in your life always,
Though tempted to bid her go;
Keep love the bride of your heart,
If you would a true life know.
For life’s no longer than love, I say;
With the end of love comes the close of day,
And the chill of death mid the shadows gray.
Keep love in your life always.”

He means that it is the chief of God’s gifts to man. We call the lion the king of the animals. A king is the first citizen of a nation. And so with love. She is the queen of all that God has bestowed on man. Faith is wonderful, hope is essential, but love surpasses them both.

What are we going to do with this great gift which God has given us? “If ye fulfill...” this particular law, James says. That word translated “fulfill” in the original Greek is a very significant one. The verb is teleíte, from the root of which is derived the adjective téleios, which means “perfect, complete, accomplished.” Thus teleíte means “to do,” but with the idea of bringing to perfection, to completion. What a beautiful thought is incorporated here. As children of God we are supposed to bring to perfection the love of God in this world in which we live. God has entrusted His love to us, and others can only see it manifested in its perfection as we show it day by day in our lives. What a tremendous responsibility is ours—what a great trust God has given us!

During one of William McKinley’s congressional campaigns he was followed from place to place by a reporter for a paper of the opposite political party who was described as being one of those shrewd, persistent fellows who are always at work, quick to see an opportunity, and...
skilled in making the most of it. While McKinley was
annoyed by the misrepresentation to which he was almost
daily subjected, he could not help admiring the skill and
persistency with which he was assailed. His admiration, too,
was not unmixed with compassion, for the reporter was ill,
poorly clad, and had an annoying cough. One night
McKinley took a closed carriage for a nearby town at which
he was announced to speak. The weather was wretchedly
raw and cold. He had not gone far when he heard that cough
and knew that the reporter was riding with the driver in the
exposed seat. McKinley called to the driver to stop and
alighted. “Get down off that seat, young man,” he said.

The reporter obeyed, thinking the time for the
candidate’s vengeance had come. “Here,” said Mr.
McKinley, taking off his overcoat, “you put on this
overcoat and get into the carriage.” “But, Major McKinley,”
said the reporter, “I guess you don’t know who I am. I have
been with you the whole campaign, giving it to you every
time you spoke, and I am going over tonight to rip you to
pieces if I can.” “I know,” said Mr. McKinley, “but you put
on this coat, and get inside and get warm, so that you can do
a good job.”

If we really are perfecting God’s love in our actions
according to the Scripture, James says, here is what it
involves: “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” This is
the royal law. This is perfecting God’s gift to us—love. It is
strange, indeed, that James fails here to put things in their
right place. Is not love for God the primary thing? Of
course it is. But what he is interested in here is the
demonstration of that love for God.

It is difficult, yes impossible, to look into a great
boiler to see how much water it contains. But running up
beside it is a tiny glass tube which serves as a gauge. As the
water stands in the little tube, so it stands in the great boiler.
When the tube is half full, the boiler is half full; when the
tube is empty, the boiler is empty.

James is a very practical man. He does not bother to
ask us for a confession of faith. He does not judge us by the
wonderful hallelujahs, the oratorical sermons, and the
flowery prayers we offer, but by the way we treat those who
live and work with us. There is a gauge to the boiler of our
hearts and that gauge is the demonstration of love to our
neighbors. Now, says James, can you really and truthfully
tell me that, when you gave the first seat to the rich man,
you did it because you loved him, or was it because you
loved yourself? If it is the first, you have done well, James
adds ironically. Then why did you not love the poor and
shabbily clothed man just as much?

Have you ever seen a tailor place a piece of
absorbent paper over a spot of grease and press down on it
with a hot iron? Why does he do it? The warmth melts the
grease and the paper absorbs it. That is what real love
should have done in the case of our usher. Real love
absorbs the spots in the lives of others, making them feel
the warmth of our hearts for them.

There was a criminal who was awaiting execution.
A minister went to visit him, but there was not much
response to his exhortation. On his way back home, the
minister met one of his elders and told him about his
experience. He asked the elder to go and see him. The elder
came back with great joy in his heart for what had been
accomplished with the criminal. The minister was very
anxious to know why he had failed and the elder succeeded.
Well, as soon as the elder saw the criminal, he sat beside
him, took his hand in his, and said with much fervor and
simplicity, “Wasn’t it great love in God to send His Son
into the world to die for sinners like you and me?”

In a moment the fountain of the man’s heart was
broken up and he wept bitter tears and afterward said,
“When the minister spoke to me, it seemed like one
standing far above me, but when that good man came in and
sat down by my side, and classed himself with me, I
couldn’t stand it any longer.”

The attitude of the usher whom James describes
was nothing like that. What does James have in mind when
he repeats this commandment of God from Leviticus 19:
18? We are supposed to love ourselves. If we did not, we
could not stay alive for very long. We would not be able to
exercise the God-given instinct of self-preservation. What
he actually commands is that we should measure our love
toward others by the measure of love we have for ourselves.
If we love others any less than we love ourselves, then we
fall short of the royal law of God’s love. If we love others
less than we love ourselves, then we love God less than we
love ourselves and therefore fall short of the first and
greatest commandment of which the Lord Jesus Christ
spoke, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,
and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

We surely need the lesson in Christian grammar
which the Bishop of Cambridge once taught a class. He
said, “We have all learned to say in school: ‘First Person—
I; Second Person—Thou; Third Person—He.’ But that is
wrong in Christian grammar, so wrong that, to put it right,
one has to turn it upside down. The Christian grammar is:
‘First Person—He; Second Person—Thou; Third Person—I.’
And ‘He’ means God, the First Person in the first place.
Then ‘Thou’ means one’s fellowman, and I myself comes
last.”

God grant that we learn this lesson in Christian
grammar and then we shall really perfect in our lives the
love of Christ.

Spiros Zodhiates (1922-2009) served as president of AMG
International for over 40 years, was the founding editor
of Pulpit Helps Magazine (Disciple’s predecessor), and
authored dozens of exegetical books.
Words to Stand You on Your Feet—by Joe McKeever

It’s Supposed to Be Tough

So you’re a pastor and you’ve found the work tough? No sympathy here, friend. Why do you think God has to call people into this work? If it were easy, they’d be lining up to volunteer.

The Christian life is tough to start with. “In this world you will have tribulations,” our Lord said. Then, He added, “But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Then, the Lord calls certain ones of the redeemed to stand apart from the flock and to become “point men.” His “undershepherds.” Overseers of the flock. Examples to the rest. And frequently, His spokesmen. Targets. In the crosshairs of the enemy.

He does not sugarcoat the call. When Jesus called Saul of Tarsus, He said to one, “I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake” (Acts 9:16). Jesus told His disciples, “I send you forth like sheep in the midst of wolves…. Men will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake…. A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master” (Matt. 10). You see how they treated Jesus; you should expect nothing different. Don’t say you weren’t warned.

Accept this call and the world draws a target on your back. You must not say, “Why me, Lord?” Accept this call and understand you have chosen to swim upstream in a downstream world. You must not complain, “It’s hard, Lord.” It certainly is. Accept this call and throw out all plans for the soft life with the cushioned retirement. You cannot accuse the Lord of misrepresenting things in order to sucker you in.

Accept this call and know that your troubles will come as much from within the congregation as from without. Paul told the Ephesian pastors, “After my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, from among yourselves, men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore, watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears” (Acts 20:29-31).

Want to do something fun? Read the account of Moses as he led Israel from Egypt up to the back door of Canaan. Read about the harassment he took and the bellyaching he endured. Then notice one thing more: Do not miss all the griping and complaining (“lamenting”, if you want to be more charitable) that Moses himself did.

It would be easy to say Moses’ chief difficulties came from a group known as “the rabble,” certain non-Jews who joined the exodus out of Egypt as though it were a jail-break and they were willing to do anything and go anywhere to get out. (In both Exodus 12:38 and Numbers 11:4, they are called “a mixed multitude,” unbelievers who went up with Israel out of Egypt.) Unbelievers in the midst of a people of faith will always cause problems, and Moses had his share. As will you.

This, incidentally, is why the Lord’s people must be careful to choose only people of faith when selecting teachers and leaders (See Luke 18:8). It’s why Jesus said, before delivering some of His strongest lessons, “I say to you who hear.” Only people of faith will “hear,” will “get it.” Paul said, “The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit because they are foolishness to him” (1 Cor. 2:14).

You think you have it tough? Moses was living off the land with a flock of a million or so. I suspect you have a house with a stove and refrigerator and a bed with a mattress. Moses had none of those things. They probably give you a check every couple of weeks, and might even deposit something in your retirement account. You are blessed indeed.

That is not to say Moses did not get in his share of complaining. My favorite is Numbers 11:15 where he prayed, “Lord, if I have found favor in Thy sight, please kill me now.” Many a pastor understands the feeling.

I suspect the source of much of our unhappiness in the ministry results from comparing ourselves with two groups. 1) Comparing our status in life (income, houses, cars, luxuries) with our neighbors, we become envious. We must help our children not to fall into this trap. 2) Comparing our situation with certain others in the ministry, we can become restless and even a little resentful. “Why isn’t the Lord blessing my ministry the way He blesses theirs?” Some pastors pull down over a hundred grand a year; why am I struggling to get by with a third of that?

The best answer to the first is to wake up and repent. Envyng the world is a disease calculated to poison your heart and destroy your effectiveness forever. Psalm 73 was given as the Lord’s permanent reply to those who would envy the world: “You don’t want to be in their shoes. Not now and not ever.”

The best answer to the second (envying a colleague in ministry) is what our Lord said to Simon Peter when he grew fidgety and uncomfortable from hearing the difficult news of what lay ahead for him. He pointed to the Apostle John. “What about him, Lord?” Jesus answered, “What is that to you? You follow me” (John 21:22).
I know a woman married to a preacher who does not understand why he makes the sacrifices he does. When he comes in from a long stress-filled day of serving the Lord, she says, “If it makes you so tired, why do you do it?” In her mind, she’s being sympathetic. But to him, she simply does not understand the call of God.

He tells her, “Honey, what did your father do for a living?”

He knows the answer. “He was a bus driver.”

“And did he ever come in exhausted at the end of a long day?”

“Sure. All the time.”

“But did he quit because the work was hard and the hours were long?”

“Of course not. He had a family to feed.”

“So, the fact that he was tired at the end of the day was beside the point, right? He was doing his job.”

“I guess so.”

The typical pastor will not be able to live up to the standards of many of his own members, but he must not envy them, even the most faithful and godly. If the Lord chooses to bless some works and give the ministers higher salaries and better houses, rejoice with them. But to envy them is to second-guess the Holy Spirit who put you where He wants you.

The typical pastor will be terminated at least once in his ministry by church leadership that cares little for his situation but is determined to run the church their way. He must not let that embitter him or hinder his ability to serve the next church. If he does, the enemy has won a victory.

The typical pastor will be the subject of unrealistic expectations from members and the object of un-Christ-like demands from some of his people. He must stand strong and teach them and pray for them, and then love them when they refuse to do the right thing. He must pray for understanding and patience.

The typical pastor may expect to pay a heavy price for his strong stand for the Lord Jesus from time to time. He must not think he is being singled out or treated unfairly. Worst of all, he must not conclude the Lord misrepresented things to him in his original call. “You see how they treated me,” Jesus said. “You should expect the same” (Matthew 10 and other places).

Your day is coming, pastor. And what a glorious day that will be. Keep your eyes on the prize, my friend.

Joe McKeever is a retired Southern Baptist pastor from New Orleans, Louisiana. He blogs regularly at www.joemckeever.com.

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### Living out the Living Word—by Justin Lonas

### In Christ Alone
1 Corinthians 1:4-17

Christians have a long history of using the church in first-century Corinth as an example of how not to behave as believers. This is not an inaccurate way to read 1 Corinthians, but it does not tell the whole story. As we saw in our introduction to this letter last month, though Paul will have plenty to say about their sins, struggles, excesses, and misunderstandings, he starts out by reminding them of their identity: “saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:2).

The same idea is in view in the benediction Paul writes to them after his greeting. “I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:4-7).

Before his exhortation and correction, Paul expresses his thanks to God for the Corinthians’ salvation. Even more than that great gift, he says that the Lord has blessed them with spiritual gifts and a growing knowledge of truth. These blessings, of course, owe nothing to the Corinthians themselves—it is the grace of God, given in Christ Jesus, so that His Gospel could be confirmed in them. Their testimony through all these gifts was to be for the glory of God, but, as the bulk of the letter will show, they needed to return again to the foundation of Christ-like character (most particularly, love) in how they exercised their faith. Because they did not love one another as Christ had loved them, their greatest strengths had become their greatest weaknesses.

Even at that, Paul starts out with the end in mind, knowing that just as Christ has called them and blessed them, it is He “who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1:8-9). God’s faithfulness to the Corinthians through His Son will preserve them, and it is through this framework that Paul speaks to them. Throughout the letter, he treats them as his brothers and sisters, steadfastly addressing his teaching to them as though they will respond to his reproof and grow in maturity through the work of the Spirit. Though they fall short, they are not forsaken; though they sin, they are
forgiven; though they have mistreated him, they are not his enemies.

With that in mind, we see his first word of correction: “Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s people, that there are quarrels among you” (1:10-11). He rebukes them for the divisions among them, of which he has received a report, commanding them instead to be of one mind together in Christ.

This lack of unity is the first of many failures of love Paul calls out within this fledgling church. It seems, from what he says next, that the disputes were not matters of doctrine, but rather a posturing for social position—creating artificial distinctions for the express purpose of puffing oneself up and tearing others down. Paul spells it out: “Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, ‘I am of Paul,’ and ‘I of Apollos,’ and ‘I of Cephas,’ and ‘I of Christ.’ Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1:12-13). His retort puts the focus immediately back on Christ, and he spends much of the rest of the chapter elucidating the Gospel message again for them.

In an aside, Paul recalls his time ministering among them. His tone conveys worry that, even in carrying out the command of Christ to baptize those who follow Him as disciples, he may have somehow misled them: “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other” (1:14-16). Their baptism was in the name of Christ, an outward symbol of the effectual baptism of the Holy Spirit, but Paul feared that they had invested it with a temporal status to lord over others.

He answers this offense with a strong and certain word: “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the Gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void” (1:17). “Paul is nothing,” he says, “but the Gospel is everything.” Without the truth of the Gospel, everything the Corinthians thought they possessed would amount to filthy rags. Paul, Peter, Apollos, or every other teacher that came along had no power to save; they could only point to Christ.

As we look into the rest of chapter 1 next month, we will see the glory of the Gospel on full display. It is altogether fitting that this is where Paul begins his word to this church. The worldly power and position the Corinthians craved would not help them in the present or for eternity—they needed to see the sacrifice of Christ as their only hope, so Paul works hard to demolish their pretensions. May we be given the grace to see this truth and thank the Lord again for His grace to us.

Justin Lonas is editor of Disciple Magazine for AMG International in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

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**Following God**—by Erik Christensen

**The Mystery Made Known**

Ephesians 3:1-10

Editor’s note: Erik was unable to finish the next article in his Ephesians series this month due to a full ministry schedule, so we are republishing his introduction to the book. Originally published in Disciple, January 2014.

Paul begins chapter 3 of Ephesians with the statement, “For this reason.” In writing to the Ephesian believers, who are Gentiles, Paul has reminded them that they were “far off” but had been “brought near,” not by their efforts but rather through the blood of Christ. Faith, the willingness to believe and be persuaded in Christ, is foundational to our salvation. The Church of Christ, His Body, is made up of both Jews and Gentiles who have access to the Father through the blood of Christ. Paul emphasizes over and over that this takes place through faith, not works. The Church is established as a new entity.

Paul, as a Jew, is encouraging the Gentile believers of their oneness with the saints in spite of having once been estranged or “far off.” All of this takes place through faith in Christ and His work at the cross, namely the shedding of His blood as a perfect sacrifice for man’s sins.

Paul now begins to explain his insight into the mystery of Christ. Both Jew and Gentile are one in Christ through faith. The Gentiles are fellow heirs, members, and partakers in Christ Jesus through the Gospel (vs. 6). The promises that had been given to the Jewish people are now available to the Gentiles as well as salvation through the work of Christ. The Church, the called out ones, is a result of the work of Christ and God’s revealing of the mystery of Christ.

There are a couple of words used through the first ten verses of chapter three that are worth noting. What does “mystery” mean? When we speak of a mystery, the implied idea is that it can be figured out. If we have enough clues,
then it is simply a matter of putting our mind to the problem and solving the equation. Not in this matter. The word “mystery” here has the idea of something that has been divinely hidden. Man has no ability to “figure out” what God has not revealed. Here Paul is writing to the Ephesian believers encouraging them that they are part of a glorious revelation. This mystery has now been revealed to the apostles and prophets “in the Spirit.” The word “in” here literally means “by the means of the Spirit.” The Church of God is the revelation of a mystery. Only God could make this known and accomplish this.

A second word worth noting is actually a preposition. The word “fellow”, meaning “with”, is used several times regarding the Gentiles’ position within the Church and “in Christ” (see vs. 6). This preposition indicates a bringing together that which is inseparable. There are times we are “with” one another but then leave to participate in other activities. The use of the word “with” in this sense is the “with” of association. However, the “with” that Paul uses in this verse indicates an inseparable relationship and has the idea of permanence. It is incredible to realize that as Gentiles, we are “in Christ.” We are now fellow heirs, members and partakers ( sharers) in the body of Christ, the Church. “Fellow” indicating what is inseparable, or permanently together—Amen!

This mystery of Christ and His body is one that the Lord alone is able to reveal, and He has done so by the means of the Spirit. Paul makes it clear that he has been called to preach this mystery of the riches of Christ to the Gentiles. This mystery, which has been hidden “in God” (vs. 9) but is now brought to light through Christ, is now being made known through the Church into all of the created realms. This includes the demonic realms and extends even into the heavenly places (vs. 10).

The fact is truly a majestic revelation: that all peoples, specifically the Gentiles, were once enslaved to these demonic powers (see chapter 2:1 ff.), under the prince of the power of the air, but now in Christ have been freed, becoming through the power of God members of His body, the Church. No wonder Paul is awed and humbled that this grace has been given to him, the least of all the saints (vs. 8) to proclaim to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.

The Church, those saved by faith in Christ, is now the means by which the manifold wisdom of God is “made known” to the heavenly places. Are we, as His Church, proclaiming and making known God’s wisdom through the transforming ability of Christ? Are we following the Lord in every way, revealing His life in and through us? A life that is fully surrendered to Him is the only life in which this revelation is made known. What a joy to know that we have entered into a permanent relationship with Christ and one another, by the means of His work. Is the revelation of the mystery of Christ being revealed in you and through you as you follow Him today?

Erik Christensen is senior pastor of Hoffmantown Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

**Points to Ponder**—by David L. Olford

**An Introduction to the Gospel of God**

**Text:** “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an Apostle...to all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 1:1-7).

**Thought:** The Apostle Paul’s Epistle to the Romans is devoted to presenting and defending the Gospel of God. The word for “Gospel” itself is used three times in first seventeen verses as Paul begins this letter. But Paul is not simply defending his Gospel, he is defending his Gospel in the light of his plan to travel to Rome and to preach there (1:10-15). Furthermore, the Apostle is seeking the help of the believers in Rome, as he intends to take the Gospel all the way to Spain after his visit (15:23-24).

As Paul opens his letter (1:1-7), he introduces himself as a messenger of the Gospel, he then summarizes the message of the Gospel, and within these same verses he describes the ministry of the Gospel. Let’s consider.

**I. The Messenger of the Gospel (Rom. 1:1)**

**II. The Message of the Gospel (Rom. 1:2-4)**

The Gospel of God is what Paul has been set apart to proclaim. This Gospel was promised beforehand through God’s prophets “in the holy Scriptures.” This reference to the Old Testament’s witness to the Gospel is not only in
keeping with the way the Gospel is presented in the Book of Acts, it alerts us to an important aspect of Paul’s presentation and defense of the Gospel in this epistle. Having tied his Gospel directly to the Old Testament, Paul presents the subject of the Gospel: God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Much of Romans proclaims what God has done through His Son to bring about salvation, but here in Paul’s introduction, he clearly states that the Gospel is ultimately about a person.

In this brief description of God’s Son, Paul does not refer to the atoning death of Jesus Christ specifically. Rather, he speaks of Jesus’ “Sonship” in two ways. According to the flesh, as a man, Jesus was of the lineage of King David. This again points back to the Old Testament and to the fulfillment of God’s promises. But, Jesus was “declared” to be the Son of God “in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.” The resurrection is at the heart of the Gospel, and leads to the understanding of Jesus’ Lordship. As a side note, we see the Trinitarian aspect of the Gospel revealed, as the Father, His Son, and the Holy Spirit are all referred to in these opening verses.

The Apostle is writing to the city (Rome) that represents the most political power in Paul’s day and world. Before Paul even greets his readers, he is proclaiming Jesus Christ, his master, is the Son of God “in [or with] power.” Furthermore, the Son of God is “our Lord,” the one worthy of worship. These are strong words to open this remarkable letter, especially given the context of his readers.

III. The Ministry of the Gospel (Rom. 1:5-7)

After exalting the subject of the Gospel, Paul returns to his role and briefly describes the ministry he exercises as an apostle. He clearly states that his ministry is a “received” or “grace-given” ministry. The risen Lord is the one who has granted and authorized Paul to be an Apostle. So, the ministry that Paul has received comes from the ultimate authority source, the Lord Himself. The Apostle is making clear that his ministry and this very letter are under the authority of the Lord. The ministry is then described in terms of its goal, its scope, and its motivation.

The goal or result of apostolic ministry is to be “the obedience of faith.” Some see this phrase to mean the obedience that is faith, and others interpret the phrase to mean the obedience that comes from or is tied to faith. Ultimately both of these interpretations could be the meaning in context. If the letter were to end at the end of chapter four, you probably would lean in the direction of the “obedience that is faith;” faith as the right response to the Gospel. But, as we view Paul’s presentation from chapters 5-15, the second meaning seems appropriate as well. In either case, Paul states that his apostolic ministry is not simply one of Gospel presentation, it is Gospel presentation with a goal. Ultimately, Paul’s ministry leads to salvation by faith (1:16) and the believers presentation of their bodies as a living sacrifice (12:1). Romans 15:18 points to “obedience” as the result of Christ’s work through the Apostle’s ministry. Regardless of the specific emphasis in 1:5, it is clear that faith and obedience are closely related.

The scope of this ministry is “among all the nations.” The Apostle is clearly affirming his apostolic ministry and authority to write to Rome and to preach in Rome. Paul goes on to view these readers as within his sphere or scope of ministry, “including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.” Both Rome and Spain were within Paul’s scope of ministry, not to mention the regions that were his focus in previous ministry (15:19).

The motivation or the ultimate reason for Paul’s ministry was “for the sake of His name” (1:5). What a simple and yet all-inclusive motivation. Paul is speaking of the honor and glory of the name of God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. It was Paul’s mission to see that name served, proclaimed, honored, and glorified. Other names were in the headlines of the Roman world. Others may have desired or demanded allegiance in Rome. But Paul’s ministry among the nations was for the sake of Jesus Christ and his honor alone.

Thrust: Due to short attention spans and the nature of social media, it is helpful in our day to “get to the point” quickly. In this greeting at the beginning of Paul’s letter to Rome, he does just that. Before he even greets his readers with “grace and peace,” he has described himself, his Gospel, and his ministry. And if there was any question concerning who was at the center of Paul’s life, message and ministry, that question was answered, “Jesus Christ.” May we be as clear in our allegiance to God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Jewels from Past Giants

Joy and Peace in Believing
By G.H. Morrison

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing” (Rom. 15:13).

It is a question we ought to ask ourselves, in our quiet hours of meditation, whether we really know the joy and peace which are the benediction of our text. It is a great thing to be resigned amid the various buffetings of life. Resignation is better than rebellion. But resignation, however fair it be, is not peculiarly a Christian virtue; it marks the Stoic rather than the Christian.

The Christian attitude toward the ills of life is something more triumphant than acceptance. It has an exultant note that resignation lacks. It is acceptance with a song in it. It is such a reaction on experience as suggests the certainty of victory—the victory that overcomes the world.

It is a searching question for us all, then, whether we truly know this joy and peace. Does it characterize our spiritual life? Is it evident in our discipleship? And that not only on the Sabbath Day and in the sanctuary and at the Sacrament, but in our common converse with the world.

Contrast, for instance, joy and peace in believing with joy and peace in working. Many who read this are happily familiar with joy and peace in working. It is true that work may be very un congenial; there are those who hate the work they are engaged in. There are seasons, too, for many of us, when strength may be unequal to the task. But, speaking generally, what a deal of joy and peace flow into the lives of men and women in prosecuting their appointed task.

Again, think of joy and peace in loving; how evident is that in many a home. What a peaceful and happy place a home becomes when love lives at the basis of it all. The splendid carelessness of children, their gladness that makes others glad, spring not only from the heart of childhood, but from the love that encircles them at home.

Now, Paul does not speak of joy and peace in working, nor does he speak of joy and peace in loving. His theme here is different from these: it is joy and peace in believing. And the question is, do we, who know these other things, know this in our experience of life and amid the jangling of our days?

“Ordinary” Christians

Think for a moment of the men and women to whom these words were originally written. Their cares and sorrows were just as real to them as our cares and sorrows are to us. They were called to be saints, and yet they were not saints [in the popular sense]. Some were slaves, and some were city shopkeepers, and some were mothers in undistinguished homes. Yet Paul, when he writes to them, makes no exceptions. This blessing was for every one of them. It never occurs to him that there might be anybody incapacitated for this joy and peace. We are so apt to think that an inward frame like this can never be possible for us.

We have anxieties we cannot banish; we have temperaments we cannot alter.

But just as Paul never dreamed there were exceptions in the various temperaments he was addressing, so the Holy Spirit, who inspired the words, never dreams there are exceptions now. This is for me. It is for you. It is for everybody who knows and loves the Lord. Not rebellion—not even resignation, when life is hard and difficult and sorrowful—but something with the note of triumph in it; a song like that which Paul and Silas sang; a peace that the world can never give—and cannot take away.

Joy and Peace

Lest anyone should misread this inward frame that is the peculiar possession of believers, note how here, as elsewhere in Scripture, joy and peace are linked together. There is a joy that has no peace in it. It is feverish, tumultuous, unsettled. It is too eager to be the friend of rest; too wild to have any kinship with repose. Its true companionship is with excitement, and, like other passions, it grows by what it feeds on, ever demanding a more powerful stimulus, and at last demanding it in vain.

There is a peace that has no joy in it. “They make a solitude and call it peace.” It is like a dull and sluggish river moving through an uninteresting country. But the beautiful thing is that on the page of Scripture, as in the experience of the trusting soul, joy and peace are linked in close union. The Kingdom of Heaven is not meat and drink; it is righteousness and joy and peace. The fruit of the Spirit is not love and joy alone; it love and joy and peace.

And our Lord, in His last great discourse, when He declares His legacy of peace, closes with the triumphant note of joy: “These things have I spoken unto you” (and He had been speaking of His peace) “that your joy might be full.” Whom God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. There is a joy that has no peace in it.

There is a peace that is dull and dead and joyless. But the mark of the followers of the Lord is the mystical marriage union of the two. It is joy and peace in believing.

And how eminently fitted is the Gospel message to sustain this fine reaction on experience. The Gospel is good news; it is the gladdest news that ever broke upon the ear of man. Sweet is the message of returning spring after the cold and dreariness of winter. Sweet is the message of the morning light after a night of restlessness or pain. But a thousand times sweeter, a thousand times more wonderful, is the message which has been ours since we were children, and which will be ours when the last shadows fall.

Do we believe it? That is the vital question. Do we hold to it through the shadows and the buffetings. Do we swing it, like a lamp which God has lighted, over the darkest mile our feet have got to tread?
Then, like joy and peace in working and in loving (with which we are all perfectly familiar), we shall experience with all the saints, joy and peace in believing.

George Herbert Morrison (1866-1928), was one of Glasgow’s most prominent pastors. While working on his theological studies, he took time out to assist in the creation of the Oxford New English Dictionary under the supervision of Sir James Murray, and this undoubtedly influenced the eloquent, rich vocabulary he used in preaching and writing. After completing his education, Morrison assisted the famed Alexander Whyte in supervising Sir James Murray, and this undoubtedly influenced the eloquent, rich vocabulary he used in preaching and writing. After completing his education, Morrison assisted the famed Alexander Whyte in

Edinburgh, then led his own churches in Thurso and Dundee for a short time before accepting a call from Wellington United Free (Presbyterian) Church in Glasgow. During his 26-year ministry at Wellington, he preached to thousands and wrote numerous volumes of sermons and meditations. He refused many offers to serve on committees and in leadership positions that might have distracted him from his preaching and writing. “It is essential that I have leisure to brood and meditate,” said Morrison, and this is evident in the gentle, quiet, free-flowing style of his sermons.

Another Year Is Here

Nothing magical happens at the stroke of midnight on New Year’s Eve! Many things do occur, of course, like fireworks, resolutions, midnight church services, the ball drop from Times Square and much more. Some may sing, “Auld Lang Syne,” a Scottish song first published by poet Robert Burns, but made popular by bandleader Guy Lombardo.

On New Year’s Day many families gather around the table to enjoy their particular meal tradition—at our house it is black-eye peas, collards, pork, and other desserts and side dishes. This goes back several generations in my family. The black eye peas are supposed to represent coins and the collards symbolize folding money. The idea is to eat as much as you can of those two things so you will have plenty of money in the New Year. In the interest of full disclosure, I have tried it since I was a boy—it doesn’t work.

There are many different traditions for celebrating or ushering in the New Year around the world. In Spain, the custom is to eat 12 grapes at midnight in order to have 12 good or happy months. Drawing the first bucket of water from the well in the New Year, called the cream of the well, was an old English custom with an unusual emphasis. The myth was if a woman bathed in that water she would become beautiful.

There are numerous practices and superstitions that abound for New Year’s Day. Traditions aside, we have a natural tendency to measure time by years. How old will you be this year? How long have you lived where you live? How long have you been married? There are so many other examples of how we measure time in years, but the really significant thing is that a new year brings with it opportunities, surprises, and many unknowns.

Stuart Hamblen, who was converted to Christ in the 1949 Billy Graham crusade in Los Angeles, wrote a song, “It Is No Secret.” The first line of that song says, “The chimes of time ring out the news; another day is through. Someone slipped and fell. Was that someone you? You may have longed for added strength, your courage to renew. Do not be disheartened, for I bring hope to you. It is no secret what God can do…”

This New Year, someone may fall or be discouraged. Some will die and others will find an unexpected blessing. In this year, somebody will come to know Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior. Someone else may be helped by what you said or what you did—you may be blessed by someone else. If we can capture the sentiment of Hamblen’s song, we will be encouraged by what our God can do in this world and in our lives.

Each day we live is another opportunity. I want to recommend a verse for you to consider for 2016, “Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). What Jesus is telling us is not to worry—trust Him. Join me in making that our focus for this year.

James Rudy Gray is certified as a professional counselor by the National Board for Certified Counselors, and is a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors. He serves as the editor of The Baptist Courier, the official newspaper of the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

The Story behind the Song—by Lindsay Terry

They Didn’t Want Gory Songs

Song: “I Will Glory in the Cross”
“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14).

Dottie Rambo excelled as a woman who has greatly influenced the world of Christian music. It all started in the rural town of Madisonville, Ky., when she was only eight years of age. She came home one day and began to quote a poem to her mother, who was cooking in the kitchen. She had just come from the creek bank, where she had composed the verses. Her mother began to weep with joy as she realized that her little girl, one of her eleven children, had a wonderful gift from the Lord.

By age eleven she had begun to write songs, one of which was sung by the Happy Goodman Family and recorded by Jimmy Davis, then governor of Louisiana.

As the years went by God gave her hundreds of songs, many of which are sung by people around the world and have been recorded by thousands of artists. Scattered among those triumphs were periods of heartaches and disappointment. Yet, out of these dark days came some of her most blessed songs. During an interview she revealed that she and her family were going through some rough times in the mid-1970s. She related it in this fashion:

“We were doing a lot of concerts, competitive concerts, making a lot of money. Suddenly I realized that I was not living close to the Lord. I was not writing under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. I also realized that I had never done anything to merit all of this goodness, recognition, and fame.

“I then began to study the Scriptures where Paul said that he didn’t glory in himself (Gal. 6:14). I came back to the realization that all I have is because of the grace of God and the cross of Christ.

“During this time we went to Holland to do a number of concerts. When we got off the plane, people met us and took us to this little quaint hotel. As we rode along they informed us that while we were there, singing in the concerts, we were not to sing about the cross of Christ. I looked at the young man who was escorting us and asked, ‘Do you mean that we are not allowed to sing about the cross to these Christians?’ He said, ‘No. They consider it gory. They don’t want to hear about the blood or the cross.’ I then looked at him—I was old enough to be his mother—and said, ‘Son, if you won’t tell them you told me this, then I will pretend I don’t know it. Because, I will be singing about the cross and about the blood of Christ.’

“We sang in the concert that very night, “He Looked Beyond My Fault and Saw My Need.” People were weeping all over the audience, even the man who sent the message that we were not to sing about the cross of Christ. The Lord really seemed to move in the hearts of the people.

“We went back to the little hotel that evening and to bed. I lay there in the darkness and began to weep. I said, ‘God, I apologize that we wouldn’t want to hear about the blood of Christ, His cross, and His grace. I really apologize.’ As I lay there the Lord began to give me a song. I kept it all in my heart until the next morning when I awoke to write it down.”

The song that she wrote as she laid there in the darkened room has a thought, not expressed in any other musical composition that I have ever heard. “I will weep no more for the cross that He bore, but I will glory in the cross.”

What an amazing story and what a glorious song! She realized, as you and I should, that the gift of God, for a lost world, is something for which to thank Him, something for which to give Him glory and praise.

In the song, she put everything in the right perspective, as she recalled her feeling while studying Galatians chapter six. So she began her song, “I boast not of works, or tell of good deeds. We have nothing that would gain for us a place at the ‘table of Life.’ Only His love will make provision for us to partake.”

Dottie Rambo, following great periods of sickness and surgeries, continued to travel across our nation, singing her songs and blessing the hearts of Christians up until her death in a car accident in 2008. She told me, “I asked the Lord to let me, at least once each year, write a song that will speak to the hearts of Christians everywhere.” Her songs might not have come with that frequency, but in the Lord’s time He gave to all of us, through her, so many wonderful musical treasures.

© Lindsay Terry. Used by permission. Lindsay Terry has been a song historian for more than 40 years, and has written widely on the background of great hymns and worship songs including the books I Could Sing of Your Love Forever (2008) and The Sacrifice of Praise (2002).
As pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., R. G. Lee compiled this outstanding record:
- 24,071 joined the church during his tenure, including 7,649 by baptism.
- The church grew from 1,430 members to 9,421.
- Lee taught his 400-member Bible class an average of 44 Sundays a year for nearly 38 years.

Dr. W. A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, paid this eloquent tribute: “Once in a while in each generation, God raises up a true prophet, a prince of preachers...that famed evangelist is the world famous pastor of the Bellevue Baptist Church...[who] is a veritable paragon of excellence in the preparation and delivery of sermons” (quoted by John E. Huss in Robert G. Lee, the Authorized Biography).

Lee was born Nov. 11, 1886, in a South Carolina sharecropper’s cabin. A distant relative of famed Gen. Robert E. Lee, he grew up picking cotton, gathering corn, milking cows, and plowing with mules. Usually he walked three miles to the primitive one-room school. But in that godly home, where regular Sunday school and church attendance prevailed, he early came to know the Lord and was influenced to seek God’s will for his life.

After a brief stint working on the Panama Canal, he entered Furman University. Following graduation with honors in 1913, he married Bula Gentry. He was offered a teaching position at Furman, but chose the pastorate instead, beginning his ministry at Lima, S.C.

As he became more widely known, larger opportunities inevitably beckoned. Curiously, he never preached a “trial sermon” anywhere. He was always called on the basis of a recommendation and his reputation.

In 1927 came the historic call to Bellevue. Since Lee had occupied a number of brief pastorate, for very good reasons, some speculated that “he won’t stay long.” How wrong they were! He survived the Depression, wars, and enormous social upheaval to build a lasting legacy for a third of a century.

Lee’s practice was to write out his messages in longhand on legal pads. Thus he was able to concentrate his thoughts and create. He gave special attention to his opening statement to make it as effective as possible.

After his secretary typed these pages, he read the manuscript frequently, not to memorize, but to master its content. He preached extemporaneously, up to an hour and a half (!), always wearing a white suit, regardless of season.

His gift for oratory, rich sense of humor, and love for people helped endear him to his flock. And how the church grew, along with Sunday school, youth ministry, and missionary outreach.

In 1952, a new building was dedicated. Its main auditorium contained 3,000 seats, but it could accommodate 4,000 by using folding chairs and opening an adjacent area.

In time Lee was offered the presidency of a seminary and a university, as well as prestigious pulpits like Calvary Baptist, New York City, yet he would not consider leaving his beloved Bellevue.

However, he did branch out into other areas, serving an unprecedented four terms as president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, and three terms as head of the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S. This gave him opportunities for fellowship with other leaders of like precious faith; he was always warmly and enthusiastically received.

His most famous sermon, “Pay Day, Some Day,” began as a Wednesday night devotional. He preached it 1,275 times in many churches and other places, ranging from state legislatures to foreign countries. An estimated three million heard this great classic, resulting in some 8,000 professions of faith.

Based on highlights from the story of wicked Ahab and Jezebel, it is about 75 minutes long. Here are excerpts: “Even though the mill of God grinds slowly, it grinds to powder. The judgments of God often...travel slowly, but they always have iron hands and crush completely. [The only way to escape] the sinner’s pay day on earth...is through Christ Jesus, who took the sinner’s place on the cross....”

Finally the time came when Lee had to turn over administration of the nearly 10,000-member church to others, so he became pastor emeritus in 1960. But he was hardly inactive, traveling some 100,000 miles a year, ministering from Alaska to Australia to Asia, “night and day to bring the Gospel to as many people as possible.”

Today none of his 56 books are listed in Books in Print, but some are available in libraries or second hand stores. At 91, in 1978, the aged warrior at last laid down his sword. During the memorial service, outstanding leaders paid tribute to him as pastor, writer and author, preacher, and helper of young ministers. R.G. Lee had kept the faith; what a crown of righteousness is laid up for him.

Bernard R. DeRemer chronicled the lives of dozens of heroes of the faith in more than a decade of writing for Pulpit Helps Magazine, and continued to serve in this capacity as a volunteer contributor to Disciple. He joined those he had written about so faithfully in the Lord’s presence in 2014.
Reaching Muslims with the Good News of the Gospel
By AMG International Staff

When we see brutal terror attacks around the world and political unrest concerning refugees from the Middle East and North Africa, we may be tempted to live in fear rather than faith.

We know, though, a power greater than our fear; One so great that even the author of evil fears Him—the Lord Jesus Christ. By His transforming grace, sinners are made clean. Even many from the Muslim world are forsaking the false worship of Allah to follow Christ and become “new creations” in Him.

We know from Scripture that God works through His Word and His people to lead the lost to Christ: “For, ‘Whoever will call on the name of the lord will be saved.’ How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!’” (Rom. 10:13-15).

God is using you, as a partner with AMG, to shine the light of God’s Word for Muslims (and many others) so that they may hear and believe.

Decades ago, longtime AMG president Dr. Spiros Zodhiates had the vision to circumvent local restrictions against evangelism by buying local media in closed countries to reach the unreached with the life-transforming Gospel of Christ.

Specifically, he encouraged and empowered local indigenous Christian leaders to publish intriguing notices as paid advertising in newspapers and magazines, and to purchase time on targeted radio, inviting seekers to learn more about Jesus and His saving power.

The results over the years have been phenomenal, especially in countries where access to the Gospel is otherwise restricted.

People like Kamal (whose name has been changed for safety), a young graduate of an Islamic Study Center, who saw an advertisement in a newspaper in his country for a Bible correspondence course offered by some of AMG’s ministry partners. He wrote to us:

“I began to study the course and learn about the life of people who follow Isa [Jesus]. And there is something very attractive about studying this course. It gave me a strange feeling that made me very curious, so I also requested a book from which I could learn His [Jesus’] words. After reading them, I made a decision to choose the way that leads to eternal life.”

Of course, taking that step has tremendous consequences in Muslim communities. At best, their families struggle to accept them; at worst, they join the thousands of martyrs from Islamic lands who have kept faith in Christ even unto death. Kamal continues: “Please support me in prayer, because my family does not know about what I have experienced. I am taking this way secretly. I go to church without their knowing it.”

In recent years, our partners around the world have begun effectively using the internet to break down barriers to evangelism. Banner ads and social media campaigns geared to a Muslim audience encourage readers to click through and learn about how their sins can be forgiven through Christ’s sacrifice, and how they can receive assurance of their hope in Him (something absolutely unknown in Islam).

When they respond through these ads, readers are put in touch with individuals and resources to answer their questions about Jesus and the Bible. When they are ready to profess faith, they are connected with local churches wherever possible. This follow-up is key to the lasting fruit we see from AMG’s media evangelism efforts. Our partners on the ground in difficult-to-reach countries answer phone calls, reply to e-mails, provide Bibles, visit, encourage, and care for people taking their first steps as seekers or new Christians to ensure that they are not left to wonder how to follow Christ on their own.

It is an amazing privilege to be a part of such a spectacular movement of the Holy Spirit as we are seeing today! This is truly an opportunity to change the world, putting the life-transforming Gospel message directly in front of many who may have never heard.

Rather than letting the news of the day drive you to fear, look at it as a reminder from the Lord that the harvest is plentiful and that now is the time to send laborers! The Gospel is strongest message of love we can send to those trapped in darkness—you are showing them the way to the light.

To learn more about AMG’s media ministries around the world and how you can partner with us, please visit www.amginternational.org or call 1-800-251-7206.

Advancing the Ministries of the Gospel (AMG) International is a non-denominational, international missions agency based in Chattanooga, Tenn. AMG’s distinctive has always been its reliance on national workers to carry the Gospel in their own cultures. Today, they operate ministries in more than 30 countries around the world through partnership with national believers.
Book Review—January 2016

Recent Releases


Christian doctrine is a vital part of the Gospel message, but certain doctrinal beliefs have divided the church for centuries. Lutzer examines various controversies that exist within the broad spectrum of Christianity, presenting the historical background of the issue and the biblical understanding of the doctrine. Chapters include “Predestination or Free Will?”, “Justification by Faith”; and many more.


For many people, “fundraising” has become a dirty word. Conjuring images of guilt-inducing gimmickry, the predominant model saps the joy from both the donor and the receiver. But what if fundraising has the potential to be good for the giver, not just the recipient? What if it’s about love and service, not just “What’s in it for me?” Based upon the authors’ own relationship and experiences, *The Giver and the Gift* outlines a Kingdom perspective on fundraising. Instead of guilt, there is gratitude. Instead of obligation, joy.


Christians should evaluate philosophy by biblical criteria. This will shed greater light on the developments in the history of philosophy and better prepare us for the intellectual challenges of our time. The fall of Adam brought intellectual as well as moral corruption on the human race, and the effects of the fall can be seen in the work of philosophers, most of whom try to understand the world autonomously—through reasoning apart from God’s revelation. Some philosophers have appealed to God’s revelation, but their work has often been compromised with the wisdom of the world. Revelation should inform reason, and not the other way round. In the past, even Christian theology was corrupted by the movement toward intellectual autonomy, creating the tradition of liberalism, which has unhappily dominated academic theology down to the present day. But there is hope—a new generation of Christian thinkers take God’s Word seriously. Frame’s unique new contribution augments that process.


Jesus walked on water. He healed a blind man. He turned water into wine. More than just displays of his divine power, Jesus’s miracles signify something deeper—they’re windows into God’s grand story of redemption, foreshadowing the great miracle of Christ’s death and resurrection. By explaining the meaning and significance of all 26 miracles recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, New Testament scholar Vern Poythress shows us their relevance for our lives today. Poythress unpacks how understanding the meaning of Christ’s miracles will help us better grasp the salvation God has brought into the world.


Since the days of the early church, Christians have wrestled with the relationship between the law and gospel. If, as the apostle Paul says, salvation is by grace and the law cannot save, what relevance does the law have for Christians today? By revisiting the Marrow Controversy—a famous but largely forgotten eighteenth-century debate related to the proper relationship between God’s grace and our works—Sinclair B. Ferguson sheds light on this central issue and why it still matters today. In doing so, he explains how our understanding of the relationship between law and gospel determines our approach to evangelism, our pursuit of sanctification, and even our understanding of God himself. Ferguson shows us that the antidote to the poison of legalism on the one hand and antinomianism on the other is one and the same: the life-giving gospel of Jesus Christ, in whom we are simultaneously justified by faith, freed for good works, and assured of salvation.
Iran Releases Iranian-American Pastor Saeed Abedini in Prisoner Swap

Iran released U.S.-Iranian pastor Saeed Abedini today, more than three years after authorities arrested him on charges of “threatening national security” by planting churches, according to several sources.

Abedini was released along with three other dual-citizens, including Washington Post journalist Jason Rezaian, in a prisoner swap, Iran’s official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported January 14. U.S. officials reportedly confirmed that the release was part of a prisoner swap involving seven Iranians held on charges of violating sanctions and came after more than a year of closely guarded talks.

The pastor’s wife, Naghmeh Abedini, told Morning Star News that she heard about the release from friends in Iran who saw reports about it on state TV. U.S. officials confirmed the release to her this morning. Her two children have been jumping up and down with excitement since then, she said by phone from her home in Boise, Idaho, where she said the atmosphere was joyfully chaotic.

“Over the past three years I have felt a huge weight, not only as a wife, but as a mom, seeing my kids in so much pain,” she said. “Birthdays, Christmases – we just passed another Christmas, so I feel like a huge weight has been lifted.” She said Abedini will undergo medical tests in Switzerland, be transferred to Germany and then flown to Switzerland, be transferred to Germany and then flown to another Christmas, so I feel like a huge weight has been lifted.” She said Abedini will undergo medical tests in Switzerland, be transferred to Germany and then flown to where she said the atmosphere was joyfully chaotic.

Naghmeh Abedini, who in her advocacy for her husband’s release has given heart-rending accounts of the effects of the imprisonment on her and the couple’s children, told Morning Star News she had learned to trust God with her husband’s fate while in the middle of a 21-day fast that she began on Jan. 5. “I don’t know what I was expecting, but I felt the Lord saying, ‘Let it go – don’t touch the situation with Saeed, and I will take care of it,’” she said. “So I let go. I stopped my travels. I stopped speaking. Interestingly enough, it happened when I let it go.”

Christian Headlines

Episcopal Church Suspended from Anglican Communion

The Anglican Communion voted to censure its American branch, the Episcopal Church, during a meeting in Canterbury, England, called to reflect on the future of the communion. The vote Thursday (Jan. 14) to suspend the Episcopal Church from voting and decision-making for a period of three years was leaked a day ahead of a press conference that had been scheduled for Friday.

Details of the suspension were first reported by Anglican Ink, which said they came from a leaked communiqué. The vote passed by a two-thirds margin, according to the publication, which is based in Milford, Conn., and included prominent voices among African bishops who have loudly condemned the American church for its liberal stance on homosexuality in the church.

The dramatic demotion follows a string of Episcopal Church decisions stretching back to 2003, when it elected Gene Robinson, an openly gay man, as a bishop of New Hampshire. That decision led dozens of U.S. churches to break away from the Episcopal Church and declare their allegiance to a series of rival groups, including the Anglican Church in North America.

In July, the Episcopal Church voted to allow its clergy to perform same-sex marriages, a move not taken by the majority of churches in the Anglican Communion.

“Given the seriousness of these matters we formally acknowledge this distance by requiring that for a period of three years The Episcopal Church no longer represent us on ecumenical and interfaith bodies...” a statement issued by the Anglican Communion reads. “They will not take part in decision making on any issues pertaining to doctrine or polity. The traditional doctrine of the church in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds marriage as between a man and a woman in faithful, lifelong union,” the statement also notes. “The majority of those gathered reaffirm this teaching.”

The Anglican Communion consists of 44 member churches from around the world, representing about 85 million Christians.

Jeffrey Walton, the Anglican program director at the Institute on Religion and Democracy in Washington, D.C., said the suspension of the Episcopal Church is significant but does not, at this point, represent a schism, or irreparable rupture, within the Anglican Communion. “This is not kicking the Episcopal Church out of the Anglican Communion, but it is saying is that by making these decisions for the past 12 or so years the Episcopal Church has created this distance and there will be consequences to those decisions.”

Christian Headlines

John Piper Condemns the Lottery, Encourages Christians to Pursue God Instead

As lottery fever swept the nation in light of last week’s $1.5 billion Powerball drawing, Christian
leader John Piper has encouraged Christians to look to God for satisfaction.

According to The Christian Institute, Piper noted on his Desiring God website that seeking after riches will lead to “temptation and a trap.”

“Managers don’t gamble with their Master’s money. All you have belongs to God. All of it,” Piper noted, alluding to the Christian’s position as stewards of what God has given. In addition, Piper pointed out that the chances of winning the lottery are very small. In the U.S., the odds are around one in 292 million.

Instead of putting trust in wealth and getting rich quickly, Piper encouraged Christians to “Pray that Christ’s people will be so satisfied in him that they will be freed from the greed that makes us crave to get rich.”

Various news sources have also reported on the destructive nature of being so invested in the lottery, which one newspaper commentator called one of “society’s modern cancers.” Piper also quotes from the International Business Times in his article which states that the lottery is “just another form of gambling” in which the players “will all eventually lose.”

Christian Headlines

Christians in the Philippines are facing persecution on the level of their brothers and sisters in the Middle East, says a missionary priest.

According to Christian Today, Father Sebastiano D’Ambra said in an interview with Aid to the Church in Need that 14 people were murdered on Christmas day and a grenade was thrown at a chapel.

Nine Christians were also killed on Christmas Eve. The violence was perpetrated by members of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters who have pledged allegiance to the Islamic State. “In some areas of Mindanao we are experiencing exactly the same thing as is happening in Iraq,” said Father D’Ambra, who has been in the Philippines nearly 50 years and is an experienced missionary.

“The situation is a worrying one. It is difficult to establish for certain whether the violence was directed specifically against Christians, even though everything points to the fact that this was the case. Without doubt our brothers and sisters in the faith are at least one of the targets of these fundamentalist groups,” he said. He added that although persecution makes his mission more difficult, it is “more necessary than ever at the present time.”

Christian Headlines

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Sermon Helps—from www.sermonhall.com

Starting this month, we will no longer include a selection of Sermon outlines, illustrations, and quotes/inserts in this document. Please visit the searchable archive at www.sermonhall.com, where all the sermon helps appearing in this space have been selected from.

Thank you!

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Puzzles and ‘Toons

Church ‘Toons by Joe McKeever
Answers to last issue’s puzzles:

**Hidden Wisdom and Father Abraham**

By Mark Oshman

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**Hidden Wisdom Bible Acrostic Answers**

Job (35:14): “Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, yet judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him.”

A. Thurifer
B. Hole
C. Uthai
D. System
E. Theorem
F. Jeremoth
G. Outlandish
H. Bethshittah
I. Testify
J. Humongous
K. Tongue

**Father Abraham’s Answer Box**

Father Abraham’s Answers from p. 22

1. The light (John 9:5).
2. Sinners; worshipper of God; doeth his will (John 10:9).
3. The door; enter in; go in and out; find pasture (John 10:9).
4. Lay down my life; take it again (John 10:17).
5. Hear my voice; know; follow (John 10:27).
6. The resurrection; the life; dead; live (John 11:25).
7. Believe; the glory of God (John 11:40).
8. The poor; me (John 12:8).
9. Serve; follow; serve; honour (John 12:26).
10. Him that sent me (John 12:44).

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**Father Abraham’s Question Box**

By Mark Oshman

**The Gospel of John, Part 3**

Fill in the missing word(s):

1. “As long as I am in the world, I am ______ of the world” (John 9).
2. “Now we know that God heareth not: but if any man be a ______ and ______, he heareth him” (John 9).
3. “I am ______; by me if any man ______, he shall be sowed, and shall ______, and ______?” (John 10).
4. “Therefore dost my Father love me, because I ______, that I might ______.” (John 10).
5. “My sheep ______ and ______ them, and they ______ me” (John 10).
6. “Jesus said unto her, I am ______ and ______; he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live” (John 11).
7. “Jesus saith unto her, Son is not yet sent, that, if thou wouldest ______ thou shouldst see ______” (John 11).
8. “Therefore ______ always ye have with you; but ______ ye have not always” (John 12).
9. “If any man ______ me, let him ______ me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man ______ me, him will my Father ______” (John 12).
10. “Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me but on ______.” (John 12)

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Hidden Wisdom on next page
Hidden Wisdom: Bible Acrostic
by Mark A. Oshman

Solve the acrostic by using the clues to guess the words and by transferring the letter above each number to its appropriate place in the diagram. The result will be a Scripture verse of admonition, comfort, or instruction. Further, the initial letters of the answers will contain the name of the book from which the verse was taken. All quotations are from the King James Version. HAPPY SOLVING!

CLUES

A. Phalacrocorax carbo
   \[48\] \[56\] \[6\] \[21\] \[70\] \[79\] \[1\] \[73\] \[27\]

B. Eng. Poet (1554-1586)
   \[19\] \[52\] \[74\] \[42\] \[7\] \[22\]

C. The Lamb on the throne has seven of them!
   \[82\] \[37\] \[5\] \[43\]

D. A flute, for one
   \[77\] \[11\] \[64\] \[53\] \[35\] \[18\] \[47\] \[71\]

E. Be in accord
   \[72\] \[69\] \[16\] \[32\] \[24\]

F. A town in Judah (1 Sam. 30)
   \[44\] \[4\] \[54\] \[67\] \[33\] \[23\] \[29\] \[78\] \[60\]

G. Age of King Manasseh when he began to reign
   \[75\] \[65\] \[13\] \[34\] \[50\] \[46\]

H. Where King Bera once reigned
   \[61\] \[41\] \[10\] \[51\] \[81\]

I. Title for an aristocrat in an E. Mediterranean country
   \[15\] \[26\] \[57\] \[49\] \[9\] \[68\] \[12\]

J. Artistic school which flourished in the early 20th century
   \[80\] \[36\] \[3\] \[66\]

K. "Ye did communicate with my _______"
   \[39\] \[58\] \[55\] \[25\] \[45\] \[17\] \[63\] \[8\] \[28\] \[83\]

L. Having a surface curved outward
   \[40\] \[76\] \[2\] \[31\] \[59\] \[14\]

M. Amos pronounced a woe in Zion upon those in this condition!
   \[20\] \[30\] \[38\] \[62\]

Answers on page 25