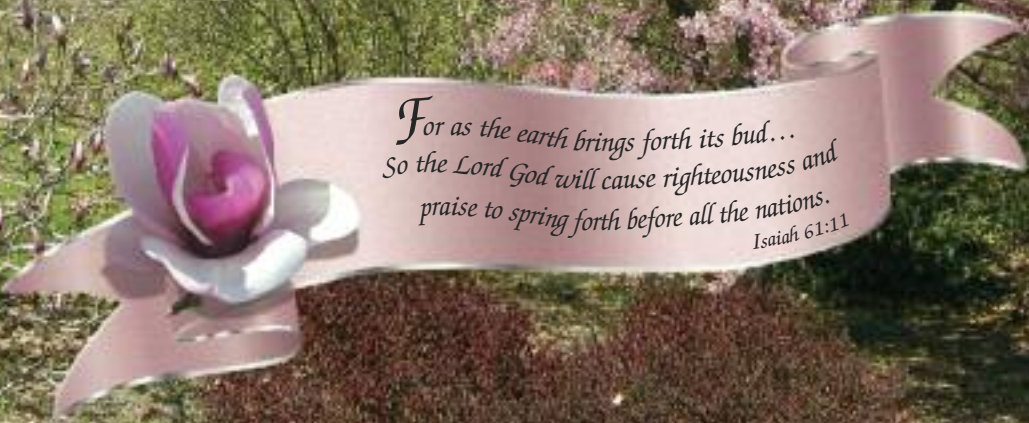
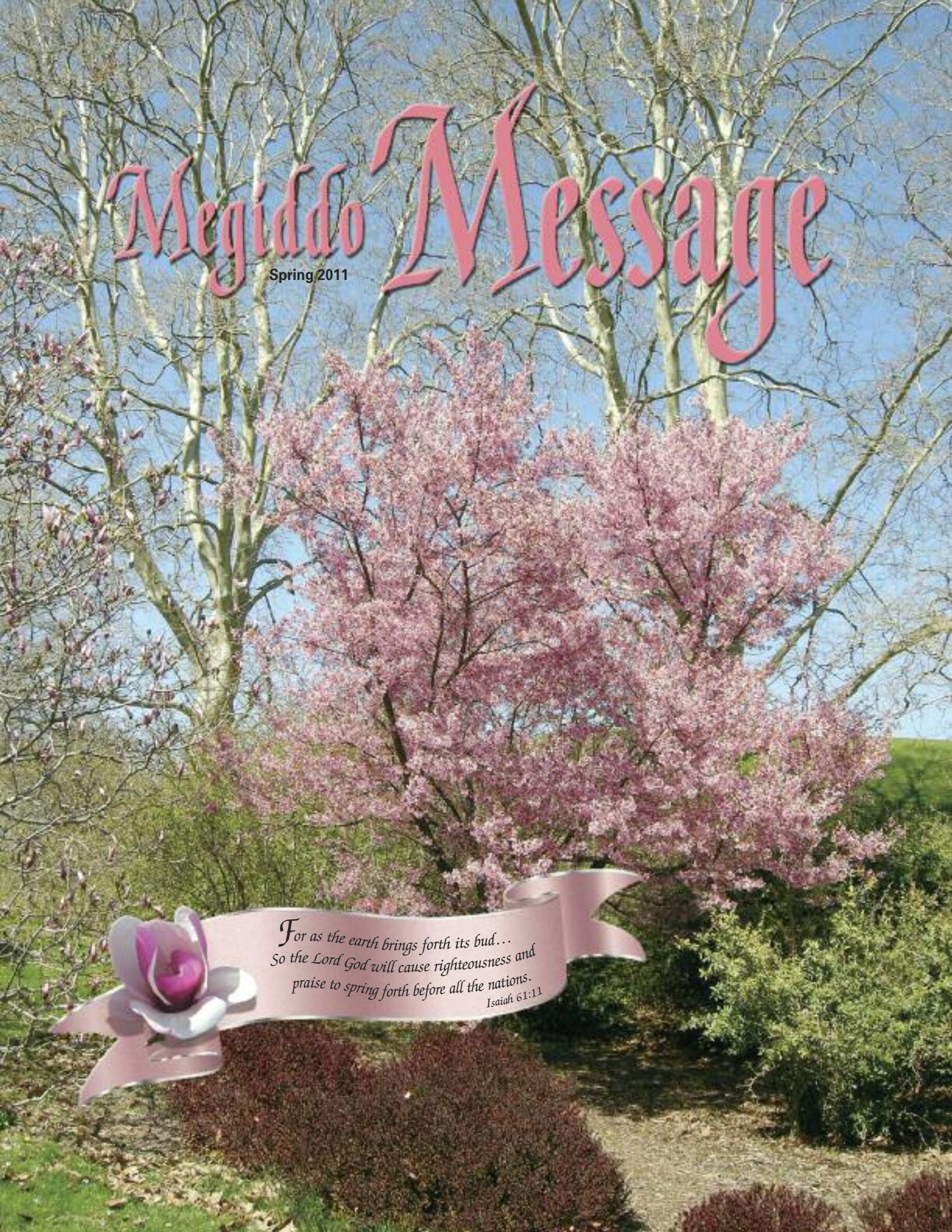


Megiddo Message

Spring 2011



*For as the earth brings forth its bud...
So the Lord God will cause righteousness and
praise to spring forth before all the nations.*

Isaiah 61:11



Who Needs ^{Bible} A DOCTRINE?

Doctrine. The very word is negative in tone. Witness the popular slogans:

"Doctrine divides, love unites."

"Christianity is all about relationships, not rules."

"True for you, not true for me."

What about biblical doctrine and a fixed set of beliefs based wholly and solely on the Bible? The response from the contemporary church will be even more negative. "You're being exclusive." "One person's belief is as valid as another's." "Let's get past the antiquated idea of having exact Scripture teaching. All we need to reach people is the love of Jesus."

Is this true? And is that what God wants us to do, to reach people? The only way to find out is to go to the Bible and learn what God expects of His human family, and what He plans to do with planet Earth. And—!!—we are into a study and a personal venture that is lifelong and totally committing. What do we find? No "Gentle Jesus meek and mild." No Jesus who wants to cover me with His righteousness. No Jesus who loves me so much that He came to die for my sins. Instead, we encounter a Jesus who tells us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, all our strength (Mark 12:30-31); a Jesus who tells us we are His friends if we do whatever He commands (John 15:14); a Jesus who tells us to take up our cross daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23); a Jesus who tells us we must lose our life to save it (Mark 8:35).

What is under the current feeling against doctrine? One factor is the general perception that the role of the church is cultural, not spiritual. Religion is to comfort and pacify and support, not tell us how to believe or behave. And so the modern church has become therapeutic, ministering to people's immediate, short-term needs, not telling them how to reform and rebuild their lives based on the Word of God so as to receive God's blessing of eternal life in Christ's Kingdom. This modern idea of therapeutic ministry is totally apart from anything God ever commanded or communicated to mortals. It just is not taught in the Bible.

The result of therapeutic ministry? Thousands who call themselves "Christian" do not even know what they believe. A recent survey of religion among some 3300 American teenagers found that most did not seem to know or care what they believed about their faith. It was not that they were naturally inarticulate. They could talk readily about the latest electronic media, money, sex, and their family relationships. But they were biblically illiterate. Only a few could recite the Ten Commandments, or identify the books of the Bible, or name the four Gospels. They viewed Christianity as a "gospel of niceness," where "faith is simply doing good and not ruffling feathers" and God is the "'divine therapist' whose chief goal is to boost people's self-esteem."

This self-serving strain of Christianity is the result of abandoning

WE BELIEVE...

- ★ **in God, the Creator** and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- ★ **in the Bible** as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- ★ **in Jesus Christ**, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.
- ★ **in the Holy Spirit**, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- ★ **in life as the gift of God**, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- ★ **in humankind** as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- ★ **in ourselves** as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.
- ★ **in the promise of God**, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide Kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

If ETERNAL LIFE is your goal, a thorough knowledge of Bible doctrine is an *absolute must*, because it is impossible to believe wrong and live right.

Megiddo Message

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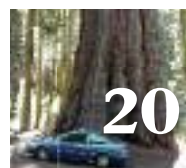
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BDAG—Arndt, W., Gingrich, F. W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (1996). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature; **BDB**—Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A.; **DBL**—Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains; **EDNT**—Balz, H. R., & Schneider, G. (1990). Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament; **GES**—Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldean lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures; **HAL**—Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M., & Stamm, J. J. (1999). The Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament; **LJS**—Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996). A Greek-English lexicon; **LN**—Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : Based on semantic domains; **SHG**—Strong, J. (1997). The new Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words.

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I Will Come

MEGIDDO MEANS...

"a place of troops" (*Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon*); "a place of God" (*Young's Analytical Concordance*). Megiddo was and is a town in Palestine, strategically located, and the scene of frequent warfare. In the spiritual parallel, it is a place where soldiers engaged in spiritual warfare gather to renew their strength and courage (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

Front cover photo: Beautiful spring at Highland Park, Rochester, New York. Taken by Margaret Tremblay



Jesus Christ

The TRUTH in LIFE

When God sent His Son into the world, He had a great purpose in view. Jesus Christ was no ordinary man. Though He was *“made in all points like His brothers,”* yet His life was vastly superior to any other that had ever lived on this planet. He came as the *Master* of men, a “model” of the life God desires.

After Christ, things could never be the same again, for Christ was the perfect Pattern. God had planned that from that time forward all who would be saved should, in the words of Paul, be *“copies of the likeness of His Son,...And [these]... he also invited; and whom he invited, those he also justified; and whom he justified, those he also glorified”* (Rom. 8:29–30, Wilson’s Diaglott). Christ is the model, and we copy Him. Then, based on the **quality of our copy**, He will justify and finally glorify us! Who would not like to follow such a path to glory!

The apostle Paul writing to the Ephesians stated the same profound fact as he exclaimed, *“How we praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we belong to Christ. Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes”* (Eph. 1:3–4 NLT). Again, the standard is fixed: the copy we make must be *“holy and without fault in his eyes.”*

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul restated this fact. Only *“in Christ”* and His high standard of righteousness could Paul satisfy his burning desire for life. *“What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead”* (Phil. 3:8–11 NIV). Christ had set the standard for righteousness, and it could not be fixed up or improved.

There was nothing for anyone to do but duplicate it in their own lives.

Are we inclined to think of Christ as a moral giant whose goodness is unattainable? Because He alone could say *"I am the truth,"* does that mean that His holiness, His humility, His dedication and lifelong self-sacrifice are towering heights far beyond anything we can reach? That is why He came, to *show* us the way, the truth, the life. That is why it is written that everyone who shares the hope of being made physically like Christ will *"purify himself even as He [Christ] is pure"* (1 John 3:3). This is the way to cherish His hope. He is *the way*.

Others have lived by God's law; how was Christ different? Christ lived it so perfectly that He was said to be that law in real life. This is what Christ did in copying His Father. He gave flesh and blood likeness to all the godly qualities of the character—by practicing them. He brought the heavenly virtues down to earth and showed them in the loveliness of a sinless life. He didn't just talk about truth, He was the truth in every action, feeling and thought. He didn't just talk about mercy, He was Himself merciful and taught others how to show mercy to each other. He didn't just talk about love, He showed true, selfless *love*—to His heavenly Father, His disciples, and any who would take up their cross and follow Him. He didn't just talk about holiness, He was holy, consecrated, set apart for the service of His Father. *"I do always the things that please Him,"* He could say. Not *sometimes* but *always*. This left not even a tiny gap to be filled by backbiting, bitterness or revenge; no room for any surliness or faultfinding or contention. He was committed to pleasing His heavenly Father *always* (John 8:29).

In Jesus the principles of truth became living, warm, glowing. In Him the power of God became a force that grips you, love that warns, courage that heartens. In Him the ideals of patience were turned into steady endurance; hope grew out of obedience, and humility glowed with the supreme happiness that comes by submitting to the Father's will.

Do we say, "But that was Jesus"? Hear His message: *"I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done ... The disciple is not above his teacher: but every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher"* (John 13:15; Luke 6:40 RSV).

Even the best exhortation is worthless if we contradict it by our action; if, like the proverbial Pharisees, we *"say and do not"* (Matt.

23:1–3). For even while we are *saying*, we are also *showing*—and the picture is worth a thousand words.

When Jesus said, *"I am the truth,"* He meant that every part of His being was affected by the truth He professed. Jesus embodied the truth. He modeled the truth, and so must we. We are all models to one another. Like it or not, someone is watching our response, our attitude. Our children are watching us. Our friends are watching us. People we never saw before and may never see again are watching us. What interpretation of *"the truth"* are they seeing in us? Unfortunately, a poor example is often emulated far more readily than a good one.

Does Christ's goodness seem to elude our faltering steps, we who stumble and rise only to stumble again? Praise God! we *"do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin"* (Heb. 4:15 NIV). Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are. He could resist, so must we.

But should we ever wonder, along comes one to lift us from our despair. Here is a man of like passions with us, a man named Paul who experienced the same struggle between flesh and spirit we experience and in all the intensity that ever raged in a human breast. So desperate was the struggle at times, he writes, that *"we thought we would never live through it"* (2 Cor. 1:8 NLT). But through it all come the lessons of Christ. Christ is the pattern, but in Paul we see a proper translation of that pattern into a language we can read. In Paul we see how the life of Christ may be copied even as Christ patterned His goodness after His Father's.

MODELS TO COPY

When Jesus said, *"I am the truth,"* what was He doing? He was modeling God's truth. Everything He said or did was just more *"truth"* according to His Father's standard.

And that is what we are called to do: to be living models of truth—and not truth that every person can define differently but absolute heavenly truth.

That is what a model is—a copy suitable for imitation. If it isn't accurate, if it isn't made to a standard, it isn't a model.

Engineers build models of products they are designing. The model has value in proportion to its accuracy. A model that distorts or misrepresents the original is useless.

The apostle Paul saw his role before the brethren as one of a model. He wrote to the

Because a lesson seen is far more likely to be remembered than a lesson read. A real-life demonstration of the Gospel is the best way to convince others of its true worth.

That is what a model is—a copy suitable for imitation. If it isn't accurate, if it isn't a standard, if it isn't made to a standard, it isn't a model.

Thessalonians, *"Since we were with you we worked night and day so that we might not be a burden to any of you....We did that to make ourselves a model for you to follow"* (2 Thess. 3:7–9 NIV).

At the same time the Thessalonians were models for other believers. Paul wrote: *"You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with joy...and so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia"* (1 Thess. 1:6–7 NIV). They were modeling the Gospel to those newer in the faith.

God sent Jesus with the express task of modeling the Gospel. The truth He proclaimed was not only words to be spoken, or knowledge to be acquired, or even facts to be believed. Over and above all it was **a life to be lived**.

Every one of us is an influence on others, and every one of us is influenced by others. As bearers of the holy faith once delivered to the saints, it is our duty to be models of the life it produces. To do this we must scrutinize our conduct and rearrange our priorities. People are always looking for fresh models to follow. They have been disappointed in the past, and need something they can trust. That is why Paul charged his son-in-the-faith Timothy: *"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity"* (1 Tim. 4:12 NIV).

The same noble Apostle told his church at Corinth, *"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ"* (1 Cor. 11:1 NIV). In other words, watch me, and you will be able to see the truth!

What is the advantage of watching a model? Because a lesson seen is far more likely to be remembered than a lesson **read** or **heard**. A real-life demonstration of the Gospel is the best way to convince others of its true worth.

How well are we modeling the Gospel of Christ? Do others, observing us, recognize the cause we represent? How careful are we with our conduct? How like Christ?

We read in the book of Acts that when the people *"saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus"* (Acts 4:13 NIV). What made them different? The truth of Christ working in their lives. They were modeling the Gospel.

Paul said it another way in his letter to the Romans: *"Put on the character of the Lord Jesus"* (Rom. 13:14 Moffatt). And to the Colossians, *"As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him"* [literally, "behave like Him"] (Col. 2:6).

As followers of Christ, every one of us has the obligation to display the truth in absolute terms, the truth as Jesus modeled it, as it applies to our lives. Wherever we go, whatever we do, we must show the higher life, the ideal of Christ-like speech and deportment. Yes, being a model for God's great cause is serious business.

Are we ready to follow the One who said, *"I am the truth"*—when we realize that *"truth"* is absolute, when we realize that it means crossing out our own ideas of right and wrong and putting Christ's in their place? Are we ready to represent Christ's cause of truth in our own lives? It is the call of the higher life. It is the call of God. Let us answer it! Let us answer it *now*, because the Christ who said *"I am the truth"* said also, *"I am the way,"* and *"I am the life"*—and we want that life...abundant, eternal, glorious life for evermore!

There is only one way to find LIFE and that is to go His way, and live the gospel He called *"the truth."* ♦

Who Needs Bible Doctrine?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

the Bible and its plain doctrinal teachings, and substituting basic psychology plus a philosophy of “feel good/do good.”

Advice from the Apostle Paul

Contrast the above with the witness of the New Testament, where the apostle Paul exhorted the young Timothy to “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” and “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:1, 3). As a Christian leader he had a duty to behave himself properly “in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15), at the same time being an example to all the believers “in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).

“Until I get there,” the Apostle wrote further, “focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them.... Keep a close watch on how you live and on your teaching. Stay true to what is right for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those who hear you” (1 Tim. 4:13, 16 NLT).

Can we in the 21st century expect to improve on this advice? Was Paul advising Timothy to comfort and console? Was he telling Timothy to reason with his people and listen to any ideas they might have? No, he told him plainly, “Preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2). Timothy was to teach the eternal truths about God, and His plan, and what God calls right or wrong. He was to use as his model, “What has God said?” not “What is your idea?” or “What do you think?”

What is the difference? It is the difference between a “feel good” religion and a religion that directs one’s total beliefs and behavior toward a goal. It is the difference between veneration of self and self-expression, and the knowledge and worship of the one true God.

Was Timothy building his people’s self-

esteem by following Paul’s advice? No, he was showing them how to build a character that God would accept (Rom. 12:1–3).

Can I do whatever I perceive as showing Jesus’ love to people—without instructions from God’s Word—and expect God’s blessing? It would be just as reasonable for me to assume that I can work successfully as an accountant, or an astronaut, or a pharmacist, or a computer programmer, or a research scientist—without studying that field of knowledge.

Christianity that is genuinely following Christ is not doing what feels right to me or anyone else. It is not about fellowship, or love, or goodwill. It is not about opinion or strong sentiment. It is not “I think,” or “I prefer,” or “it seems to me,” or even “I believe.” It is a fixed set of beliefs about God, His plans and purposes that has its source—not in the mind of any man or woman but—in the Bible, the Word of God. Attempting to live successfully from God’s point of view without a knowledge of His Word is like trying to pilot a spaceship without any instruction. Or attempting to teach a language we haven’t learned. It won’t succeed.

Anyone can (should) love and serve humanity. The need is humungous, and the field is open to all—no religious commitment needed. But ministering to the human family is not necessarily serving God. If our goal is the eternal life that God is offering and a share in His coming Kingdom (that will ultimately benefit everyone who lives), we must follow God’s instructions, and that means acquiring a thorough knowledge of His book, the Bible. God’s promises are reserved for those who live according to His standard and do what He calls right (Rev. 1:3; 22:12, 14).

If eternal life is your goal, a thorough knowledge of Bible doctrine is an absolute must, because it is impossible to believe wrong and live right. ♦

Promote the kind of living that reflects wholesome teaching.

—The Apostle Paul
Titus 2:1

ANSWERS FOR PAGE 19

MORE ABOUT THE APOSTLE PAUL

1. The Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Eph. 3:1, 6, 8)
2. Barnabas (Acts 9:27; 11:25–26)
3. Mark (Barnabas’ cousin). Mark had deserted them on a previous missionary journey. When Barnabas wanted to take him with them on the next missionary journey, Paul objected. (Acts 15:36–38)
4. They thought Barnabas was Zeus and Paul was Hermes because they healed the cripple. (Acts 14:8–18)
5. Silas (Acts 15:39–41)
6. For casting an evil spirit out of a slave girl (Acts 16:16–24)
7. Athens (Acts 17:16–19)
8. Eutychus, at Troas (Acts 20:7–9)
9. Malta (Acts 27:12–28:1)
10. Onesimus (Philemon 1:9–10)
11. Three years (Galatians 1:11–12, 15–18).
12. Priscilla and Aquila, tentmakers (Acts 18:3)

PURITY

1. word of God (Prov. 30:5)
2. wisdom (Jas. 3:17)
3. king shall be his friend (Prov. 22:11)
4. commandment of the LORD (Ps. 19:8)
5. stand in his holy place (Ps. 24:3–4)
6. pleasant words (Prov. 15:26)
7. their filthiness (Prov. 30:12)
8. shall see God (Matt. 5:8)
9. charity out of (1 Tim. 1:5)
10. obeying the truth (1 Pet. 1:22)



Jacob Blesses Pharaoh

Then Joseph went to see Pharaoh and told him, "My father and my brothers have arrived from the land of Canaan. ..."

Then Joseph brought in his father, Jacob, and presented him to Pharaoh. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

"How old are you?" Pharaoh asked him.

Jacob replied, "I have traveled this earth for 130 hard years...." —Genesis 47:1–10

How Old Are You?

A NEW YEAR message for those committed to Christ

The capital of Egypt was the focus of the world's wealth. Into its harbors came the best that money could buy to please the eye, or charm the ear, or gratify the taste. From India came frankincense, cinnamon, ivory, and diamonds; from the north, marble and iron; from Syria, purple and silk; from Arabia, the finest horses; from Greece, brilliant chariots of iron. No luxury was too costly for Egypt to afford.

Egyptian temples were aflame with red sandstone, their gateways guarded by pillars adorned with carefully sculptured winged creatures, their eyes and beaks and pinions glitter-

ing with every kind of precious stone. Along avenues lined with sphinx and fans and obelisks, Egyptian princes rode in carriages pulled by snow-white horses, golden bitted and six abreast, dashing at full run.

The glories of the Pharaohs were spelled on broad palace floors in letters of beryl and flame. There were footstools cut from a single precious stone and chairs spotted with the sleek hides of leopards.

To this capital and palace came Jacob, the sun tanned shepherd from Israel, to meet his son Joseph, who was then prime minister. Try to picture that meeting: of the multi-splendored Pharaoh of Egypt and Jacob the peasant Patriarch; of celebrity and rustic; of the grace of the court and the plain manners of the field. The king, wanting to make the old countryman feel at ease, thinks quickly to come upon some topic of common interest. Observing his white beard and his halting step, Pharaoh

looks kindly into Jacob's aged face and says, "How old are you?"

Here is an appropriate question for us to ask ourselves as we begin another sacred new year: How old are you? How old am I? And not with regard to the year of our birth year. I am thinking about our spiritual maturity.

BY WHAT MEASURE?

By what device does one measure spiritual age?

There is a right way to measure a door, or a wall, or an arch, or a tower. Just so there is a right way to measure our lives. What do you measure by?

Our progress is measured by **quality over time**. Two questions then arise: What quality, and what time? We find the answer to the first question in Ephesians: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). Jesus set the standard for all time in these words: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). Not that we have never sinned, but we must actually reach the standard where, when tested, we will not sin.

What about the issue of time? How much time do we or will we have? The Bible gives one promise relevant here: "...Godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Tim. 4:8 NRSV). The length of time we have to achieve our goal is our present life, no more, no less. If we pursue godliness with all our power, we can claim this promise. If we do not, we do not have the promise of this life: it can be snuffed out in a moment without prior notice.

Life measured by time

Some measure only by time. This may be simply a number of years, as 23, or 56, or 68. While this may be useful for some purposes, it is largely irrelevant here, because the simple

passing of time is beyond our control and in itself does not foster virtue or add any value to our lives. When we stand before the great Judge, He will not be looking at *how long* we lived, but rather *how well*. Thirty years dedicated to serving God is worth incomparably more than ninety years focused on self. Jesus taught this when He said, *"Among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist"* (Luke 7:28)—whose life time was not much over 30 years.

Another measurement of our life is the time since we learned the way of Christ. From this perspective, our age becomes much more than a question of days and years. It becomes a matter of values, and the question that follows: What **real value** have I added to my life? How much have I advanced in Christ? How old am I?

Life measured by satisfactions

Then there are those who measure their life by satisfactions gained or lost. When Lord Dundas was wished a happy new year one time, he said: "It will **have** to be a happier year than the past, for I haven't had one happy moment in all the twelve months that have gone."

We have all had our tests and trials, but with our hope in God we should have also found some satisfaction and even real joy—because we could look beyond the trial to the glorious "afterward."

But whether our joys have been many or few, they still are not the measure of our life.

Life measured by money accumulated

Some estimate the value of their life by the amount of money they have accumulated. They say, "This year or that year was wasted"—because they made no money.

Now money has value. Money can represent the necessities and comforts of life. Money is often our means of doing good. Money is necessary to carry on the work of the Lord. We could not publish the gospel of the soon coming Kingdom if it were not for money.

But money's *only* value is in what it can do; and one day the glittering treasure will slip from our grasp when we must leave this world without a cent. Money is not a true measure of life.

"Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him... that he should continue to live eternally, and not see the pit" (Psalm 49:6–7,9).

Better measuring: by inner growth

Is there a better rule by which to measure life?

When we ask, "How old are you?" we look back for the purpose of going forward in the task of building a godly character. We compare what we are with what God says we must be, and the question becomes: **How like Christ have I grown?** Have I the stature, the maturity, the perception, the grasp of spiritual concerns that I should have considering the time and the advantages God has granted me?

If our answer is none or very little, if we do not feel that we are "old enough" for the opportunities we have had, this is no time to be discouraged. This is the time to look ahead, to make straight paths for our feet and then walk in those paths (1 John 2:4–6). This is the time to look squarely at ourselves and say, I am not what I ought to be, but God helping me, I will change that. I want to be found mature in Christ when He returns.

Spiritual deficiencies are not to be glossed over or belittled. The apostle Paul saw them as a matter of serious concern. He taught that one's age in Christ is a measure of one's spiritual achievement. Hear the reprimand he directed at some who thought themselves of ripe spiritual age when they were not: "You who are, *"so to speak, proud of your God. You know his plan, and are able through your knowledge of the Law truly to appreciate moral values.... You can instruct those who... spiritually speaking, are only just out of the cradle.... But, prepared as you are to instruct others, do you ever teach yourself anything? You preach against stealing, for example, but are you sure of your own honesty? You denounce the practice of adultery, but are you sure of your own purity?"* (Rom. 2:17–24, Phillips). They were not what they should have been—or could have been.

If, on the other hand, an honest appraisal of ourselves shows that we have made progress, if we can look at our record and see progress, let us thank God and say, In the coming year, I will do even better.

It is not egotism to encourage ourselves. It is not egotism to look honestly at ourselves and say, I am more sure of my hope than I used to be. I am more consecrated to Christ than I used to be. I have left some bad habits I used to indulge in. My hope of the Kingdom is brighter than it was a year ago, I have become a better person.

We need to be honest with ourselves. And

What real (spiritual) value have I added to my life? How much have I advanced in Christ?

the fact that we have made some headway is proof that we can make more.

Those who have lived thirty, or forty, or sixty years may not have, in reality, lived ten. They may still be babes in Christ. The true measure of our life is the measure of our likeness to Christ. That is the goal we must attain, *"till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"* (Eph. 4:13).

How much kindness, sincerity, love, patience, godliness can we pack into our time? How much holiness, future mindedness, and deep earnest conviction? How much more keen sensitivity to good and out-and-out hatred of evil?

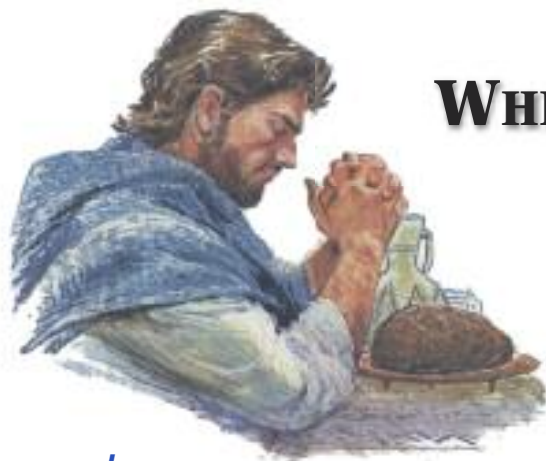
Better measuring: by convictions

Another yardstick by which we may meas-

ure our life is by the strength of our convictions. As we go over and over the strong evidence that undergirds our faith; as we fix our minds on God, as we read the experiences of those who have gone before, our convictions grow in strength.

Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17), by reviewing again and again the mountains of evidence written for our learning in that Word and testified to by the stalwarts of faith who have gone before us.

Thank God for the rich experiences we have shared by reading in the Bible about those who have gone before us. We have stood, as it were, on Mount Sinai, and heard the thunder. We have climbed Mount Pisgah with Moses, and viewed the Land of Promise. We have stood with John, as it were, on lonely Patmos, and looked up to see heaven opening and shared a tiny glimpse into the glory that will come with



*Just as we pray we will worship; and
just as we worship we will live.*

WHEN YOU PRAY...

by Gerald R. Payne

Does your prayer meet the measure of Christ's standard?

The investor keeps an eye on the stocks to measure the growth of the investment. If one is doing poorly it is time to make a change. The farmer watches his crops, fertilizing, watering and weeding for optimum growth. Growth is measured by value over time. The farmer measures his success in terms of bushels, tons, bales, etc. per acre, depending on the kind of crop. The success of every business venture is measured by its growth. How do we measure our spiritual growth?

The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Our prayers are one measure of our growth rate. How well do

our prayers measure up to the prayer Jesus taught His disciples? (Matt. 6:9-13). Let us examine this prayer.

The first words were *"Our Father which art in heaven."* Does this address humble us, to call God *"our Father"*? Do we feel more like His son or daughter now than we once did? Or do we make Him out to be more our servant and we His master, asking for things for ourselves with little thought of how we can best serve Him? And when we do ask for things for ourselves, is our real motive self-serving or is our purpose to use these things in His service?

"Hallowed be thy name." Do we give Him the respect He is due, or are we repeating our prayers with little thought? Are we praying as if we know He hears, or is it just routine, a something we do once in a while? If we really respect Him and regard Him as dear friend and Father, we should want to speak with Him often. Do we find that we are praying more frequently, thinking more often about Him? Are we doing a better job checking our decisions, our words, our thoughts, and our motives against what would be most desirable to Him?

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Do we earnestly desire the King to come and put down all evil, to insist that all live in perfect obedience—including us? Do we really want all worldly pleasures to be forbidden everyone—including us?

the return of Jesus. We have sat with Paul in the prison cell, as it were, and shared his rapture—living messages of hope. We do not have to wonder. It is all the sure word of the Lord. If we are stronger in this assurance, if we can look up with greater confidence than ever before, let us thank God!

For as surely as God was working in ages past, just so surely is He working today. For the God that lived in Moses' day, or Noah's, or Daniel's, or Joseph's, or Jesus', or Paul's, or Peter's—is *just the same today*.

Looking Ahead

Day by day our life is going by. Is our age in Christ keeping pace with our years? Rather, let it outrun our age. Into each fleeting day let us pack more and more of genuine worth, let us seize every opportunity to put down the old nature and build up the new.

With every passing year, we are coming nearer, nearer, nearer home. Let our countenance light up with the thought! We are coming nearer home!

Someday soon we will hear the trumpet sound. The dead in Christ will rise, and out of the azure blue will burst our King, with all His shining retinue of a myriad angels. How the music will swell, as the harmonies of earth blend with the symphonies of heaven in one grand triumphal march. It will be a time to celebrate the triumph of the victors as they receive the reward of immortality. Praise God! We are coming nearer home.

And *"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen"* (Jude 24–25). ♦

What is your destination, and how fast are you getting there?

"Give us this day our daily bread." Do we see the import of these words? It is the bread from heaven we want. Is our desire growing stronger for this bread? Are we really thankful for this bread, thankful for every crumb, including the chastening, the tests, and the losses? After being beaten and thrown in prison, would you feel like singing praises to God as did Paul and Silas? Yes, when was the last time we thanked God for some difficult time?—God forbid that we should ever complain!

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." We cannot expect God to forgive us our trespasses if we are not willing to forgive others. Do we hold some secret grudge against someone? Are we quick to forgive and plenteous in mercy? This is a godly attribute extended to us from our Father, which we must extend to others.

"And leave us not in temptation, but deliver us from evil." Do we trust God to be our guide and our salvation? Do we really believe we can overcome all temptation with the help of God? Are we glad for the tools He has given us, and for His assurance that we can overcome if we work with Him? In other words, do we trust God now more than ever before? Is that trust growing stronger day by day?

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever." Do we acknowledge God as supreme over all, the sustainer of our lives and the rewarder of eternal life to all them that truly love Him? Do we seek our own self-glory? Or do we seek to glorify God in all we do or say or even think?

"Amen." Our Amen is our signature. By it we say that we truly mean the words that we have spoken. We are

saying, in reality, *"Father, Your will be done."* Can we truly close this prayer with an earnest "Amen"?

If we want our heavenly Father to hear our prayers, we must pray according to His will for us. Why? Because the Bible tells us that *"If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us"* (1 John 5:14). *"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight"* (1 John 3:22).

Just as we pray we will worship; and just as we worship we will live.

Is our worship a meaningless routine, or is it making us more and more like Christ in our thoughts and ways? Do we value each moment as a golden opportunity to grow more like Christ? Is our time of worship reserved for one hour a week, or does its spirit pervade each and every moment of each day?

Are our minds more alert to the sometimes thin line between right and wrong? Is it becoming easier to resist compromise? What of the temptations of days gone by? Do they still taunt us, or have we set a firm boundary between them and us?

Do we sometimes disregard God's Word and forget to study it? Or is it so important to us that we can't turn off the lights, no matter how tired we are, until we have refreshed our minds with a message from heaven? Is prayer as natural to us as breathing?

One of these days Jesus will come, and how will He find us? Will He find us praying His prayer and living His life? Will He recognize us as another child of the heavenly Father, and accept us into His heavenly Kingdom on earth—because we lived according to our prayers? ♦

*From: Paul, prisoner for the sake of Jesus Christ, and brother Timothy
To: Philemon our much-loved fellow-worker, Apphia our sister and
Archippus who is with us in the fight; to the Church that
meets in your house:*

*Grace and peace be to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus
Christ.*

*I always thank God for you, Philemon, in my constant prayers for you
all, for I have heard how you love and trust both the Lord Jesus himself
and those who believe in him. . . .*

*And although I could rely on my authority in Christ and dare to order
you to do what I consider right, I am not doing that. No, I am appealing
to that love of yours, a simple personal appeal from Paul the old man, in
prison for Jesus Christ's sake.*

*I am appealing for my child. Yes I have become a father though I have
been under lock and key, and the child's name is - Onesimus! Oh, I know
you have found him pretty useless in the past but he is going to be useful now,
to both of us.*

*I am sending him back to you: will you receive him as my son, part of me?
I should have dearly loved to have kept him with me: he could have done what
you would have done - looked after me here in prison for the Gospel's sake. But
I would do nothing without consulting you first, for if you have a favour
to give me, let it be spontaneous and not forced from you by circumstances!*

*It occurs to me that there has been a purpose in your losing him. You lost
him, a slave, for a time; now you are having him back for good, not merely
as a slave, but as a brother-Christian. He is already especially loved by
me—how much more will you be able to love him, both as a man and as a
fellow-Christian! You and I have so much in common haven't we? Then
do welcome him as you would welcome me. If you feel he has wronged or
cheated you put it down to my account.*

*I've written this with my own hand: I, Paul, hereby promise to repay you.
(Of course I'm not stressing the fact that you might be said to owe me your very
soul!) Now do grant me this favour, my brother - such an act of love
will do my old heart good. As I send you this letter I know you'll do what
I ask—I believe, in fact, you'll do more. . . . Amen.*

*From the Book of Philemon
as translated by J. B. Phillips*

When the apostle Paul wrote this short letter, he was in prison in Rome. Yet he calls himself Christ's prisoner.

The letter is from the heart of Paul to the heart of Philemon, "our dearly beloved, and fellow laborer" in the church in Colosse. Philemon was another of Paul's sons-in-the-faith.

Some of the people in this book are only names and unknown to us. But we know human nature, and we serve the same God. When these two facts are taken into account, we feel that we know considerable about them. When a person submits to being remade and reshaped by the law of God, he or she has much in common with others who are undergoing the same process. We speak the same "language," as it were, face the same struggles, confront the same enemies, and know the same joys of victory. We can even guess how they may react in some of the very difficult situations life presents—those character-building situations so needful to all. Slavery is not our problem, but how one person treats another is still relevant.

The result is not character alone, it is Christ-like character—the beautiful lives God is seeking for His eternal Kingdom on this earth.

One of the remarkable things about developing a Christian character is that neither wealth, genius, great cathedrals, multitudes, nor even freedom, is required. A correct knowledge of God's will for man and a rock solid determination to live by it are the only requirements. This challenge is open to any level or station of life, from the heights of wealth to the depths of slavery. God is not partial; He regards only character. All whom He calls share the same opportunity. Whatever one's situation, no one can harness another's mind; and that is where the new nature is formed, slowly, carefully, thought by thought. As one "thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

The Book of Philemon has only twenty-five verses. Not much for size, but the life principles it teaches in a harsh and violent world are unsurpassable.

The Runaway's Return

SCENE TWO: The Flight

CHARACTERS:

ONESIMUS: young household servant of Philemon

ANDROCLES: middle-aged servant of Philemon

SETTING:

Onesimus leaving home. Androcles pleads, trying to persuade him to change his mind, but Onesimus will not listen. This action continues slowly across the stage. After Onesimus disappears. Androcles watches helplessly for a while, shakes his head sadly, then droops in abject despair.

SCENE THREE: A Street in Rome

CHARACTERS:

ONESIMUS: young runaway servant of Philemon

MARIUS: underworld "gang" leader in Rome

2 Crooks

4 Bearers

2 Mourners

1 Beggar

SETTING:

A street in Rome. Onesimus, shabbily dressed, is talking to a disreputable-looking character named Marius. The latter is bearded, has a patch over one eye, and wears a conspicuous dagger.

MARIUS: But I tell you, Onesimus, you can't run out on us this way. What's the matter with you, anyway?

ONESIMUS: Marius, I've told you, and I mean it. I'm through. I can't do it.

MARIUS: What do you mean, you can't? You're learning fast. I never saw a young fellow learn faster. Why, with those delicate hands of yours, you could be one of the best pickpockets in Rome.

ONESIMUS: That's just the trouble. I've been learning the wrong things. I've told you a hundred times. I'm not interested in your way of life. There must be a way to earn an honest living, and I'm going to find it. I never thought I'd come to living with thieves and extortioners.

MARIUS: Say, don't set yourself above us. Why don't you go back to Colosse? Answer that one.

ONESIMUS: Never mind that: I'm going to make a new start. I was honest once, and I can be again.

MARIUS: Who'd hire you, a runaway slave?

ONESIMUS: I can try. I'd rather dig ditches than go on like this.

MARIUS: Ditch digging is for slaves. Only fools work.

ONESIMUS: Maybe so. but I'd rather do it.

MARIUS: (*disgustedly*) You can't change 'em. Once a slave, always a slave. It's a state of mind.

ONESIMUS: Is that so? You've got an earring mark yourself. How did you get your freedom? Answer that one.

MARIUS: (*ignoring the question*) Look. Onesimus, isn't this an easy living?

ONESIMUS: It isn't living. I've got to live with myself. I've got to make a change, Marius. It's no use for you to talk.

MARIUS: (*stealthily*) Now see here, lad, we need you. Everybody can't read and write, and some of the boys are pretty stupid. You're bright. You've got education. You can figure things out. Now we've got a job planned that will be just your kind. Nobody's going to be hurt, it's just a matter of signing a few names, and that's what we need you for. What do you care

whose name you sign? These people can afford to lose it. You see, we take from the rich and give it to the poor—we're the poor!

ONESIMUS: No.

MARIUS: What's the matter? It's better than digging ditches, ain't it? We'll cut you in for a full share, and it won't be a small sum, neither.

ONESIMUS: No. I'm not interested. There are things more important than money. You can get someone else to do your dirty work.

MARIUS: But I can't trust anyone else.

ONESIMUS: I don't want you to trust me. I want out. I have enough on my conscience now, thanks to you and my own weakness. I wish I'd never met you, Marius.

MARIUS: I know what's the matter with you. You've been talking to that old Jew down the street, that Paul. Must be you like to associate with convicts, even if you do think you're better than we are.

ONESIMUS: Paul is all right. Yes. I've been listening to him and I'm glad of it. And he's no convict. He hasn't been convicted of any crime, or even had a trial. He's done nothing wrong.

MARIUS: Then why is he locked up? Answer that!

ONESIMUS: Because the Jews in Jerusalem are jealous of him. He used to be one of them, a leader—but he changed his religion, and they don't like it. To save his own life, he appealed to Nero and was sent here a year ago. You ought to hear him, Marius. It might do you good—even you.

MARIUS: Ah-h-h. nonsense! Religion may be all right in its way, but you've got to make a living somehow or be a slave. You can have it if you want it, but it's not for me. It's making a fool out of you. The priests are a lot of crooks. They steal one way, and we steal another—what's the difference?

ONESIMUS: Paul has helped me in many ways. He may yet make a man out of me. I know I am weak by nature. If I were not, I wouldn't have stayed with you as long as I have. Ever since I left home I have

gone down, down, down. Now Paul has showed me the way back, and I'm going to take it.

MARIUS: Do you think religion will put food in your stomach or clothes on your back? Be sensible, boy.

ONESIMUS: I believe that will be taken care of if I do my part. Paul has given me hope, when I had just about lost it, along with my self-respect. And not only that, but the gospel he teaches offers hope of life beyond death, and that's what I want. Come and hear him, Marius.

MARIUS: *(with a gesture of disgust)* Go on, you're not talking to me! Look, boy, that's what you're asking for. *(He points, where the sounds of a whip striking viciously are heard, followed by moans, and a rough voice.)*

VOICES OFFSTAGE: Come on, get up! Get up, I tell you, and get that load on your back. Think I'm going to carry it myself? Come on, move! *(more blows and screams, fade)*

MARIUS: That's the life of a slave for you. That's what you'd rather have. *(scomfully)* Rather dig ditches! Look over there, boy: that's what happens when you have money. *(He points where a noisy procession is heard approaching. Cries of "Julius! Hurrah for Julius! Good old Julius! He's our man!")* Now those fellows are really living. They go to the games, and to the baths. And work? Not much! And what does it? Money. That's all the difference. Money. And you say you don't want it? What is the matter with you?

ONESIMUS: I didn't say...

(Enter an old beggar dressed in rags, and limps on a crude crutch. Approaching Marius, he extends his hand for alms.)

BEGGAR: Please, sir, a penny for a piece of bread. I haven't eaten today.

MARIUS: *(roughly, giving him a shove)* Get out of here!

(The beggar pauses in front of Onesimus, who pulls a small bag from his belt and shakes out two coins—his last. One of them he gives to the beggar, who thanks him profusely.)

ONESIMUS: I've been hungry, too, but how about it my friend—were you always like this?

BEGGAR: Oh, no, young man. I've had money. I've been popular. I've had them singing my praises, just like Julius that just went by. Oh, I had lots of friends then. But the money went, and my health went, and my friends went, and now here I am, old and sick, just waiting for the end. (*stumbles off*)

MARIUS: (*triumphantly*) There! What did I tell you? It's money that makes the difference!

ONESIMUS: Yes, and there's your answer. Money takes wings and flies away, and then where are you? By the way, what is all your money doing for you? Where's all you made on the last job? I don't want the kind of friends or the kind of pleasure that depends on anything as uncertain as money, especially your kind of money.

(*A funeral approaches. Four men silently carry a bier on which rests a shrouded corpse. Two mourners walk behind with bowed heads and folded hands. When they have passed, Onesimus turns on Marius with decision.*)

ONESIMUS: And there's your final answer, Marius. That's the end of all men—rich or poor, great or small. And it's not what I want.

MARIUS: Well, what are you going to do about

it? Death comes to everybody. You can't beat it.

ONESIMUS: You *can* beat it. There is a way out—the resurrection of the dead and eternal life in the Kingdom of God. That's my choice. I wish it were yours, too.

MARIUS: Don't preach to me, young man! That Paul certainly has got you wound up. But let me tell you one thing: if you go with him you can't stay with us. You can take your things and get out of our lodgings, right now! You can go your way and we'll go ours. And let me tell you, if you ever say anything to the police, don't forget that your life won't be worth much. Forget that you ever knew us.

ONESIMUS: That's just what I want to do, forget the past and build a new future. And I'm going to do it. My things are already out. I moved them early this morning.

MARIUS: (*mockingly*) You'll... you'll be back. I've seen your kind before. I've seen 'em go up, and I've seen 'em come down. When you get hungry enough we'll see you coming around begging for bread. You'll find your Jew friend won't help you—and I don't know if we will either! ♦

(TO BE CONTINUED)



Abib CALENDAR

The sacred New Year is coming—this year with the evening of Sunday, April 3, Bible time being counted from evening to evening (Lev. 23:32).

At this time, members and friends of the Megiddo Church will set aside a special day in honor of Christ, our coming King and Ruler, to give recognition to His past, present, and future work in our behalf. The heavenly Father chose to honor Christ at the time of His birth by sending angels to the shepherds—shouldn't we do our part?

Abib First is also another landmark in our journey, the beginning of the Sacred New Year and an appropriate time to re-consecrate ourselves to God.

Thirteen days later (Abib 13, this year on Friday evening, April 15) we will commemorate the anniversary of our Lord's Supper, and the morning of April 18 (Abib 15) will be the anniversary of Christ's triumph over death and the grave.

Pentecost this year is June 6.



IT WAS

My Upper Room

What is my name? And why do you ask? The New Testament does not disclose it: why should I? Let me continue to be known simply for what I did for Jesus. I lay no claim to greatness or fame. I possessed no extraordinary talent, nor had I ever before been confronted by any unusual opportunity. One of the more or less unpretentious and obscure friends of Jesus, I nevertheless loved Him with a full heart and counted it my highest joy to do for Him what I could.

Jesus, like every great leader of men, had His public and intimate company of friends—the Twelve Disciples personally selected by Him and called to office as a president forms his cabinet. With them He traveled through Galilee, preached to the multitudes, comforted the poor, and healed the sick. To them He gave private instruction and issued special orders. They were the officers of His Church, the leaders of His cause.

But, as you read the Gospels, other figures emerge, like pictures from shadowed corners in a gallery. There was the unnamed woman who slipped quietly into the house where Jesus was being entertained at supper and anointed Him with the precious ointment. There was Simon of Cyrene of whom the only record is that he lifted the cross from His smarting, bleeding back, and carried it to Calvary. There were the women that watched helplessly as they put their Lord in the tomb and then rolled the stone in place. Then getting up early on the first day of the week to anoint His body.

It is to this quiet group that I belong—and to which, no doubt, many of you belong. When or how you became acquainted with

Jesus does not matter—whether it was through the reading of a book, the hearing of a sermon, or the entreaty of a friend. The important thing is that you were persuaded by His teaching. The result, I hope, has since been a genuine friendship stirred by many deep impressions, nourished by many an hour of communion, and strengthened by many a prayer and song of praise.

Looking backward over my life, I see more clearly than ever, as the New Testament writers imply by their silence that my name did not matter, or my address, or my occupation. What did matter was the one act of service I was privileged to perform in behalf of my Master and the spirit in which I rendered it. I did it, not to be remembered, but because I loved Him! That is the way it is told in the Gospels; that is the way I would have it still.

At the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in your nation's capital is a monument, not to one individual patriot but to all who loved their country to the point of giving the last full measure of their devotion; so, let my deed be a symbol of the service rendered by Christ's humble followers in every generation who may not make the newspaper headlines but whose names are written in God's book of eternal remembrance! And let my example be a perpetual reminder that one does not have to be great or gifted or famous to serve Him acceptably.

Have you considered the difference between dutifulness and thoughtfulness? Dutifulness waits for a spoken command. Thoughtfulness anticipates commands by divining the desires of the heart. Dutifulness goes the first mile because ordered to do so. Thoughtfulness goes the first mile unasked and the second likewise for love's sake. The dutiful son or daughter fin-

ishes the household tasks assigned, then hurries away to play. The thoughtful one stops to ask, "Mother, is there anything else I can do?" Dutifulness is the cup of obedience filled to the brim. Thoughtfulness is the same cup running over.

Is your Christian service characterized by the extra that cheerfully goes beyond the call of duty? Obedience? Yes, of course! Jesus expects and commands that. But is your heart behind your obedience? Do you possess that love which always outruns duty?

I speak from experience. The deed which is recorded of me in the New Testament was not something I did in the line of duty. I did not wait to be elected to an office or appointed to a committee. I was not commanded by Jesus to do what I did, or even requested. I volunteered to do it, and I did it for love's sake.

It was during His last week in Jerusalem before He was crucified. While the rulers and chief priests were trying to ensnare Him in His talk, while the gossips were arguing about His claims, while His disciples were wondering when His Kingdom would appear and contending about who would be the greatest, I was turning over in my mind how I might befriend Him. I could not preach or debate. I could not dissuade His enemies from their evil purpose. I could not lead an army to His rescue. But it was clear that He was not seeking to escape them, and I was sure He was not afraid. What would help Him most in facing the great ordeal?

Then it came to me—a place of retirement, a quiet retreat where He could be alone with His disciples and keep the Passover. "I will offer Him my home," I decided. "He shall have the choicest room in my house."

Could I ever forget the warm glow in His eyes when I told Him of my plan and invited Him to be my Passover guest with His disciples? To my joy I had understood His wish. The desire of His heart had been anticipated and was to be satisfied. We set a time and place where two of His disciples might meet one of my servants. We agreed upon a secret sign, "a man carrying a pitcher of water," so His enemies would not know. Thus, in due time, on what turned out to be His last night, He was my guest, in the Upper Room of my house.

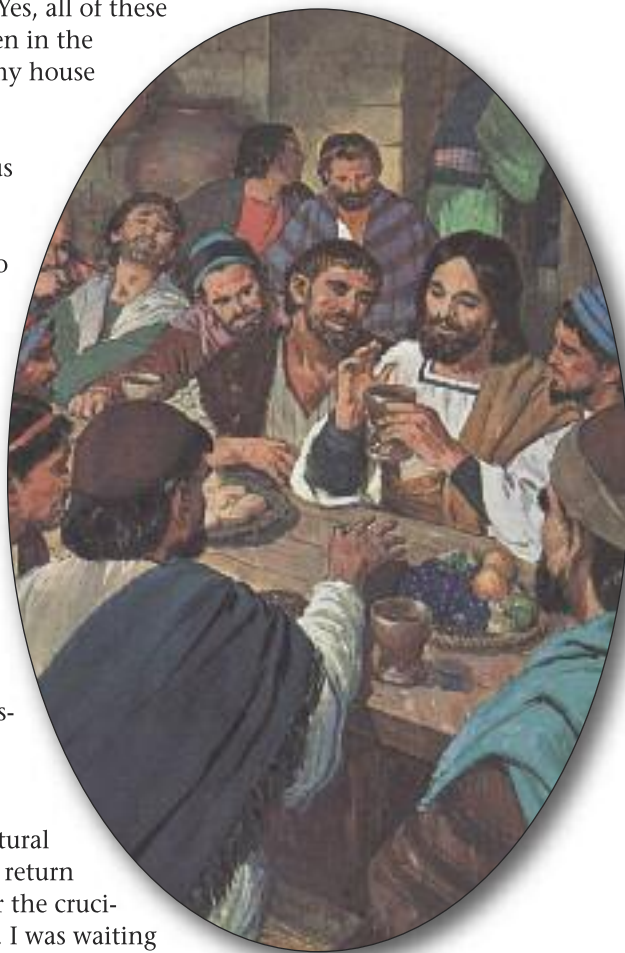
I can see it, as though it were yesterday: Jesus and His disciples reclining upon the couches which I had arranged around the table. John's head upon his Master's breast. I

can still hear the tone of His voice as He took into His hand the bread which I had given Him. *"This is My body which is broken for you."* And lifting the cup my hand had filled, He said. *"This cup is the New Covenant in My blood."* Afterward there were other words no less unforgettable: *"Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me....I am the vine, ye are the branches....Abide in me and I in you.... Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am that they may behold my glory."* Yes, all of these words were spoken in the Upper Room of my house that evening.

I joined in the hymn which Jesus and His disciples sang as they prepared to go out to the Mount of Olives, said goodnight to them at the door, watched their figures disappear in the darkness, then turned to rearrange the room. It was midnight, but I was in no mood to hurry. The presence of Jesus seemed still to linger.

It was only natural that His disciples return to my house after the crucifixion and burial. I was waiting for them at the door, and without a word; for I understood their feelings. I led them to the Upper Room. They knew they were welcome to stay as long as they wished. As they left one by one later, I told them to come often, for it would always be His room.

You are not surprised then, when I tell you that it was to that room that the women came running, early the first day of the week, with the first news of the Resurrection. It was to that room that Cleopas and his companion rushed that same night, coming all the way from Emmaus to make known that the Lord had been revealed to them in the breaking of



*"This cup is the
NEW COVENANT in
my blood."*

bread. It was there that the risen Lord appeared Himself a few moments later saying, *"Peace be unto you: As my Father hath sent me, so send I you."* It was there that He appeared a week later showing His hands and side to Thomas and saying, *"Be not faithless, but believing."*

And that is not all! It was there, in my Upper Room, that the Church of the New Testament was born with just one hundred and twenty members. It was there that the disciples "tarried," as the Lord had commanded, until they should receive power. It was there that His promise was fulfilled, and, after forty days, there came from Heaven a sound as of a rushing mighty wind and all were filled with the Holy Spirit!

Do not misunderstand me. I am not boasting, but deliberately trying to provoke you to a holy jealousy. For there is a sense in which each of you may do what I did. Still the one appropriate provision is a large upper room, furnished and prepared. See to it, then. I beseech

you, that you give Him a large

room. At His birth there was no room for Him in the inn. Later He faced cold winds of hostility and rejection. And still the majority of hearts are too filled with pleasure and things to welcome what He has to offer.

Then there are those who open the door a little way when He knocks, but keep Him standing on the outside while they argue about His claims. Others want Him to enter by the back door, and to use the servant's quarters. Their interest is limited to what He may do for them.

But, thank God, there are others whose primary interest is in what they can do for Him. They joyfully welcome Him to their best and largest room. To them He is the most honored of all guests. Their whole house and all that they possess are placed instantly and unreservedly at His disposal. I beseech you, give Him a large room! Give Him your very best!

Also, I pray you, give Him an upper room.

In ancient times, the upper room was often like a veranda or patio. Being on the upper floor, it was a secluded place, away from the noise and din of the street; it was a cool place, where refreshing breezes gently fanned away the heat of the day.

Is there such a room in your life? And is Jesus always welcome there?

Once more, may I remind you to give Him a furnished room. In my upper room, I provided a pitcher of clean water at the door. Beside it were fresh towels and a basin. Inside was a table upon which I had placed the food and drink required for the Passover feast. Around the table were couches upon which Jesus and His disciples might recline in comfort as they ate the Passover and talked with one another. My room was not furnished lavishly, but it was adequate. And that is all He expects of anyone.

What is the room of your heart like on the inside? Is it characterized by attitudes and emotions in harmony with His? Is that mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus? Has all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander been put away from you with all malice? Are you kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you? Your room, thus furnished, cannot but be pleasing to Him.

And is your room ready now? When the disciples called at my door, they were not told to wait. I did not begin at once to make excuses. They did not hear me say, "Oh, yes, I did intend to provide a room for Jesus. In fact, I meant to give Him my very best room. But it is not ready yet. I have not put it in order. Tomorrow it will be ready." But tomorrow He was on the cross! Tomorrow would have been forever too late! What folly if I had procrastinated! But I did not. When His disciples *arrived* saying, *"The Master saith, 'Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?'"* my room was waiting. It was a large room. It was an upper room. It was furnished. And it was ready.

And so I beseech you, if you are His true friends, you will have a room for Him. What kind will it be? Open wide the door of your heart and give Him a large upper room, furnished and ready. ♦

They are never alone who are accompanied by noble thoughts.

MORE ABOUT THE APOSTLE PAUL

1. Paul was sent to preach to what group of people?
2. Who was Paul's first ministry partner?
3. Who was the subject of a contention between Paul and Barnabas? Why?
4. What names did the people at Lystra give Paul and Barnabas? Why?
5. Who did Paul choose to go with him to strengthen the churches on his second missionary journey?
6. Why were Paul and Silas thrown into a Philippian prison?
7. In what city did Paul speak on the Areopagus, or "Mars Hill"?
8. Who fell out of a window when Paul was preaching? Where did this happen?
9. Onto what island was Paul shipwrecked on his voyage to Rome?
10. Paul's letter to Philemon was written on behalf of a slave. What was the name of the slave?
11. How many years did Paul spend in Arabia following his conversion experience?
12. A certain Jew and his wife were of the same craft as Paul. Who were they, and what was their occupation?
6. The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord: but the words of the pure are _____.
7. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from _____.
8. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they _____.
9. Now the end of the commandment is _____ a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:
10. Seeing ye have purified your souls in _____ through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently;

ANSWERS ON PAGE 7

PURITY

1. Every _____ is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him.
2. The _____ that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.
3. He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the _____.
4. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the _____ is pure, enlightening the eyes.
5. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall _____? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.



The GIANT SEQUOIA

Largest, Heaviest, Oldest



General Sherman

On the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California at elevations of 4,600 to 6,600 feet grow some giant trees that are best described in superlatives: largest, heaviest, oldest. The Giant Sequoias have within their numbers the largest living and still growing things on the earth. One tree, named General Sherman, thought to be the largest of these gigantic trees, is 275 feet tall. In comparison, a large Red or Silver Maple may reach a height of 125 feet. The General Sherman has a girth at ground level of 102.6 feet and a diameter of 36.5 feet. At 60 feet above ground level it is 17.5 feet in diameter. The lowest branch is larger around than any tree found east of the Mississippi River. This huge tree is estimated to weigh 2100 tons and to contain 52,508 square feet of wood. To attain these very large dimensions, the General Sherman is estimated to have lived over 3,000 years. Some others of the Giant Sequoias are estimated to be even older. We say "estimated" because the tree would have to be cut down to count the growth rings in order for its age to be known.

How could they have survived so long? God designed these trees with some distinctive features that have allowed them to attain their tremendous size and great age.

These huge trees are awesome, indeed! Yet they are only a tiny part of God's infinite creation. We can, and should, be awed by everything God has created. But let us never forget that we are called to be part of His permanent creation, of which Jesus Christ is the Head and the Church is the body. When that new creation is complete, a new way of life will begin for everyone on this earth. ♦



The **Giant Sequoia** has leaves like the Juniper.

While the **Redwood** has leaves like the Hemlock.

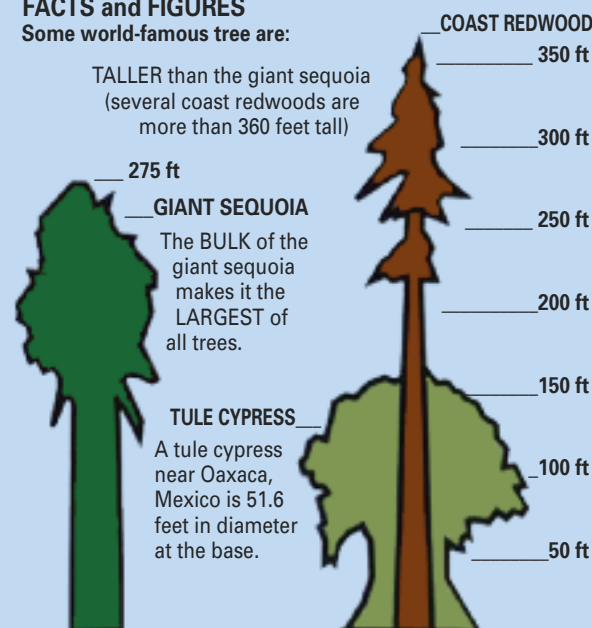
Each **Giant Sequoia** sprouts from a seed as tiny and thin as a flake of oatmeal.

Proliferating seeds

A mature tree may produce as many as 1,500 new cones every year. But the cones can remain on the tree for 5-20 years, so there may be 11,000 cones on a big tree at one time. Each cone bears an average of 230 seeds. In any given year a large tree may disperse 300,000-400,000 seeds.

FACTS and FIGURES

Some world-famous tree are:



Sources:

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<http://library.thinkquest.org/J002415/Facts/facts.html>
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Why Does Giant Sequoia Grow Here by Susan D. Kocher, University of California Cooperative Extension



Seeds designed to grow after a fire

The seed kernel is about the size of a grain of wheat. It has little wings on each side that help it fly out from the tree in a gust of wind.

The seeds stay in the cones until they are released when insects damage the scales, or the Douglas Squirrel eats at the scales. But by far the most seeds are released after the hot air from a forest fire rising into the tree tops dries the cones, causing the seeds to be released just when conditions for growth are best.



Seedlings designed to thrive in ashes

Fires are important to the Giant Sequoias. Not only does the heat from the fire cause the seeds to be released but fire also clears the forest floor of debris and understory trees that would hinder the growth of the seedling. The ash from these fires also provides a surge of nutrients for the little seedlings.

In order for a seedling to grow the seed from which it sprouts must fall on bare mineral rich soil that has a good water supply and plenty of sunlight. If the seedling falls into ground litter and sprouts during the wet season it may die if its roots have not reached good soil before the hot summer arrives. Any seed that does not have ideal conditions in which to grow will not be able to survive for even a short while. That is the reason so many seeds are produced and so few trees actually grow to maturity.



Very thick protective bark

The bark of the Sequoia is a cinnamon red in color; it is fibrous and furrowed. An old tree may have bark that is 3 feet thick at the base. This helps protect it from the damage of fire and insect invaders.

Natural wood preservative

The wood of the tree is very high in tannins. Tannins give the wood a dark purple-red color. They also protect the wood from insect and fungal attacks. Even though the wood is insect and rot-resistant, like the redwood lumber, it is not suited for building material as the wood is brittle and fibrous. It is very difficult to cut such large trees into useful lumber, as well.



Shallow rooted yet resistant to toppling

Sequoias have remarkably shallow roots. One estimate is that 95% of these trees have roots no deeper than 3 feet. Despite their shallow roots, Sequoias are resistant to toppling because roots spread out over large areas, sometimes up to half an acre in well drained soils.

Rapid and continuous growth

Young Sequoia trees grow very fast. In the first 75 to 100 years they may grow one to three feet per year. Then the crown of the tree begins to flatten and the tree's trunk broadens. Even a tree that is 3,000 years old still continues to grow. The Sequoias start to bear cones between 12 and 20 years of age.



Grizzly Giant

THE UNHAPPY BEES

CHARACTERS:

BECKY BEE: *honey bee one*

BEE QUICK: *honey bee two*

FRANKLIN FROG: *friendly frog wanting to help*

WALTER WISEMAN: *owl with good advice*

Setting: Flowery meadow. Log in center stage with frog sunning himself. Owl asleep on branch or stump near back, center stage. Two bees in front of log.

BEE QUICK: (*stomps foot*) I won't do another bit of work until they work, too!

BECKY BEE: (*also crossly*) That's the way I feel. They are just lazy.

BEE QUICK: (*emphatically*) I'm tired of them eating my honey...
(*Franklin Frog who is lying sunning himself on log sits up. The two bees are startled.*)

BECKY BEE: (*jumps back*) Oh it's you. (*laughs*) Franklin Frog, you scared us!

BEE QUICK: (*looks surprised*) Where did you come from?

FRANKLIN FROG: (*yawns sleepily*) Oooh, I've been here most da morn'n—just warm'n up my bones. And what are you doing?

BEE QUICK: (*scowls & firmly*) Nothing!

BECKY BEE: (*emphatically*) It isn't fair.

FRANKLIN FROG: (*looks wise*) Hmm? Trouble in the hive?

BEE QUICK: (*emphatically*) Sure is! But you're a frog. You wouldn't understand.

FRANKLIN FROG: (*curiously*) Humm. Give me a try.

BECKY BEE: (*actually, happy to share*) Well—you see Franklin, at our hive there are some bees who don't work at all, and we think it's unfair.

BEE QUICK: (*emphatically*) And we don't want to work unless they do their share. How can we make them do their part?

BECKY BEE: Maybe get rid of them if they won't work?

BEE QUICK: You know, Franklin Frog, they even eat the honey we bring in.

BECKY BEE: It's not fair. Queen Flora could send them away, if she wanted to.

FRANKLIN FROG: Don't know much about bee business, really. But I have heard about those lazy fellows before. Can't think what they're called... (*scratches his head*)



WALTER WISEMAN: (*from his perch-mysteriously*) Droooones, droooones.

(*All look up surprised.*)

FRANKLIN FROG: (*pleased*) That's it, Mr. Wiseman. Thanks.

BECKY BEE: (*still upset*) Yes, they are the drones. And we are tired of feeding them while they do nothing.

FRANKLIN FROG: It does seem unfair. But tell us a little about yourselves.

BECKY BEE: (*very happy to tell about themselves*) Oh, we have pollen baskets. (*proudly shows the basket on her arm*) See, my basket is full of pollen. (*as she shows basket, owl moves closer*)

WALTER WISEMAN: (*wisely*) Little baskets made of the tiny hairs on your legs—right?

BEE QUICK: (*getting excited*) Yes, yes. And look—we have wax plates so we can make honey comb (*lifts her wings to show the wax plates*).

FRANKLIN FROG: So you have special glands that make wax? What a great design.

WALTER WISEMAN: (*wisely*) And talk about design—each wax cell in the comb is perfectly shaped for a new bee.

(*Both bees beam with pride.*)

FRANKLIN FROG: (*impressed*) Amazing!

BECKY BEE: (*beaming*) We also have honey stomachs. We fill this special stomach with nectar to carry to our hive...

BEE QUICK: (*adds happily*) ...there we change the nectar into honey. And it tastes soooo goood.

BECKY BEE: (*heartily agrees*) Yummmmm!

FRANKLIN FROG: My little friends, do drones have pollen baskets, or honey stomachs, or wax plates or...

BEE QUICK: (*shakes head vigorously*) Oh noooooo.

BECKY BEE: *(makes fun of)* Drones don't even have stingers like Bee Quick and I have.

WALTER WISEMAN: *(wisely)* Neither do they have special long tongues to reach the delicious nectar in the flowers. *(wisely)* Right?

BECKY BEE: *(both bees laugh scornfully)* Drones can't do anything!

FRANKLIN FROG: *(making a point)* So then—the drones cannot do the work you do. Do I have it right? *(both bees stop laughing)*

WALTER WISEMAN: *(wisely)* That's true. They can't. If they could, maybe they would.

BEE QUICK: *(slowly)* Ohhhhh, maybe they would.

BECKY BEE: We never thought of that.

WALTER WISEMAN: *(kindly)* Besides, my little bees, who are you working for? Are you obeying the drones or your queen?

BEE QUICK: *(emphatically)* Our queen.

BECKY BEE: We work for Queen Flora, of course.

WALTER WISEMAN: I thought so. You are her servants.

FRANKLIN FROG: The drones are her servants, too. Don't you think...

BECKY BEE: *(gets the point)* Oh, yes...

BEE QUICK: *(gets the point)* Yes, of course!

BECKY BEE: *(brightens up)* I see, we don't need to worry about what the drones do, or don't do.

BEE QUICK: Becky and I need to work faithfully for our queen and do our very best.

BECKY BEE: And leave the drones to Queen Flora!

WALTER WISEMAN: *(wisely)* Your queen will reward each of you according to your work.

FRANKLIN FROG: And she'll drive out those drones when she's ready.

(The two bees start to fly off stage—both turn around to say thank you, then exit humming a merry bee tune.)

BECKY BEE: Thank you, Franklin Frog. Thank you.

BEE QUICK: Thank you, Mr. Wiseman.

(Curtain)

Adapted from "Forest Folk Tales" by Marian M. Schoolland.

DIFFERENT GIFTS

When the Martin twins came in from school, Matt went to his room, but Mark bounded into the kitchen. "I made all A's on my report card," he announced proudly.

Mother hugged him. "Good for you! That makes me very happy." She looked around. "Where's Matt?"

Mark shrugged. "Gone to his room, I guess."

Mother went down the hall. "May I come in, Matt?" she asked.

"I guess so," came the muffled reply. "I suppose you want to see my report card." Without looking at Mother, Matt handed it to her.

"Hmmm." Mother smiled. "Not too bad."

"And not too good, either," Matt added angrily. "Mark got all A's. I didn't even make the honor roll."

"Making the honor roll isn't the most important thing in life." Mother sat down beside Matt. "I'm proud of both you and Mark. You're twins, but you're very different, and that's good. Mark loves to read and study. And you...."

"...are stupid," Matt interrupted.

"Matt, don't ever say that again!" Mother scolded. "You've got a good mind, too—but in a different way from Mark. For instance, when his bike was broken, who fixed it?"

"I did, but there wasn't much wrong with it," said Matt with a shrug.

"It is easy when you can do it. You have mechanical abilities that Mark doesn't have. Last year we gave Mark the State Maze game, and we gave you a set of tools, remember? Did it make you mad that we gave you different birthday gifts?" Mother asked.

"Of course not!" exclaimed Matt.

"God gives each of us different gifts, too," explained Mother. "Remember the verses we read this morning?" Matt nodded, and Mother continued. "Don't think less of your abilities just because they're not like Mark's. Thank God for the talents you have, and use them for Him." ♦

The above story is adapted from *KEYS FOR KIDS* 1997



BE YOURSELF

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you compare your abilities with those others have? You shouldn't do that, because God has not given you the same gifts He gave others. Don't try to be anyone else. Be yourself. Use the talents God has given you.

DID JESUS SAY TO THE WOMAN, “NEITHER DO I CONDEMN YOU”?

A Woman is Caught in Adultery

7:53 And everyone went to his own house.

8:1-6 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?” This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

8:7-10 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?”

8:11 She said, “No one, Lord.”

And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”

“I have heard that the account of the woman taken in adultery in the gospel of John, chapter 8, is spurious. If that is so, why is it in our Bibles?” —from a subscriber

The incident you refer to (John 7:53–8:11) is often quoted, and much loved because it pictures the popular concept of Jesus’ compassion for sinners. But you are correct that it is not in

the best manuscripts—in fact, it is not in any manuscript prior to the 4th century.

Why is it in our Bibles? One reason is that Bible translations are made from different manuscripts. Some scholarship uses the oldest manuscripts available to them. Others use manuscripts accepted by the institutions they represent. Another important reason is that translators and publishers are reluctant to part with the story The Woman Caught In Adultery. In the words of one commentator, the passage expresses so well “Jesus’ love for the sinner” and His typical attitude toward the scribes and

*Some modern translations that include the passage without comment are: The King James Version, The Revised Standard Version, The New Jerusalem Bible, The International Standard Version. Other translations (The NCV, NET, Holman Christian Standard Bible, NLT, ESV, NA27, NASB 1995, NIV, Westcott and Hort Greek NT, Latin Vulgate, NIRV, the NRSV) place the passage in brackets, with notes acknowledging that it has been added.

A footnote in The Lexham English Bible reads, “John 7:53–8:11 is not found in the earliest and best manuscripts and was almost certainly not an original part of the Gospel of John.”

A footnote in the NKJV reads, “The words *And everyone through sin no*

more (8:11) are bracketed by NU-Text as not original.”

A footnote in the NET Bible reads, “This entire section, [John] 7:53–8:11, traditionally known as the *pericope adulterae*, is not contained in the earliest and best manuscripts and was almost certainly not an original part of the Gospel of John. Among modern commentators and textual critics, it is a foregone conclusion that the section is not original but represents a later addition to the text of the Gospel,” then adds, “it is found only in manuscripts of secondary importance.”

A footnote in the New Berkeley Version of the Bible reads, “The episode recorded in Chapter 7:53–8:11 is not found in any of the important ancient

manuscripts. In some less authoritative manuscripts it appears either here or at the end of John’s gospel or, with certain variations in the text, following Luke 21:38.” A footnote in Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott reads, “This paragraph concerning the woman taken in adultery is wanting in the Alexandrian, Vatican, Ephrem, and other manuscripts of great authority, and in the oldest copies of the Syriac version; and is not cited by Origen, Chrysostom, and other ancient ecclesiastical writers.”

The Revised Standard Version, the New International Version, and numerous others omit it entirely, and serious Bible students concur that it is lacking in the oldest manuscripts (Sinaitic, Vatican, and Alexandrian).

Pharisees. Another says it is included “because it emphasizes forgiveness,” though when we look more closely at Jesus’ teaching we have to challenge these conclusions.

Bible publishers are in three groups:

- 1) those that include the passage without comment, leaving the reader uninformed;
- 2) those that include it, then add an explanatory footnote;
- 3) those that omit the passage entirely.*

In addition to the questions raised by the fact that the passage is missing in the earliest and best manuscripts, a closer look at the passage reveals noticeable flaws and statements that contradict other passages of Scripture.

POINT 1: The story disrupts the Biblical narrative that is recorded in chapter 7 and that continues in chapter 8.

In John 7:37, we are told that it was the 8th (or last) day of the Feast of Tabernacles. If Jesus had gone to the Mount of Olives to spend the night, as John 7:53 indicates, and the incident with the adulterous woman occurred the next day, the Feast would have been over. Yet, John 8:12 continues on with Jesus’ words on the 8th (last) day of the Feast.

In John 7:37, Jesus had said, *“If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.”* Then discussions followed, along with which Nicodemus suggested to the Chief Priests and Pharisees that they were being too hasty in judging Jesus. Then, in John 8:12, *“Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.’”* Following this, the Pharisees said to Him, *“You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true,”* and Jesus replied, continuing with the line of reasoning He had used earlier (see John 8:14–18).

POINT 2: If the narrative is true, the Jews who brought the woman to Jesus were not complying with their own law.

According to the passage in question, the accusers stated that the woman caught in adultery was taken *“in the very act.”* If this is true, the man must have been present when the woman was taken. Why was he not taken also? According to Jewish Law, both the woman and the man were to be brought to the court, tried, and if guilty, were to be put to death (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22: 22–24). The man involved in “the act” is not even mentioned.

POINT 3: The story makes Jesus a law breaker.

When asked to judge the woman, Jesus should have demanded that judgment be withheld until the man who was also guilty could be brought. By either exonerating or condemning the woman alone, He was violating Jewish Law, and Jesus was supposed to be without fault (Lev. 18:20; Deut. 22:22).

It could be argued that Jesus was a “law breaker” on more than one occasion. But if we look closely at those occasions, we find that He was not breaking the Law of Moses as God gave it. He was violating the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees. Recall the time Jesus healed the man with the withered hand. Knowing that the Jews were trying to accuse Him, Jesus said, *“Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?”* And they *“held their peace”* (Luke 6:9). Numerous times the Jews accused Jesus of breaking the law because He healed on the Sabbath. But Jesus was breaking their *interpretation* of the law, not the law itself. In no case did He, either by His actions or words, justify a wrongdoer.

POINT 4: The passage condemns Jesus on yet another point.

By releasing the woman uncondemned in the presence of *“two or three witnesses,”* which the law required, wasn’t He disobeying the law? Or was He intentionally overruling the law, and their verdict that she should be stoned? When Jesus overruled the old law, He stated this fact (see Matt. 5:21–48; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5; 13:15).

POINT 5: This account supports neither Jesus’ teaching on forgiveness nor the Law of Moses.

The Law of Moses demanded a payment of penalty. Jesus taught repentance as a condition of forgiveness. Jesus said when preaching, *“Unless you repent you will all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3). He sent His disciples out to teach *“repentance and remission of sins”* (Luke 24:47). According to the story, Jesus mandated neither repentance nor a payment of penalty as a condition of the woman’s release. If the woman did not say she was penitent, shouldn’t there at least have been some visible evidence that she intended to change her life? For example, the one leper among ten whom Jesus healed, who returned to express his gratitude to Jesus or the *“sinful*

woman" who washed Jesus' feet with her tears (Luke 7). Both showed their gratitude, which could suggest their desire to change their lives. This woman's conduct was more like one who was caught sinning, and escaped narrowly by some chance of good fortune.

POINT 6: Jesus' role during His earthly ministry was not that of judge.

Jesus stated this plainly to a young man who wanted Him to decide how an inheritance should be divided. His reply to the young man was, "Who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" (Luke 12:14). Another time, speaking to the Pharisees and scribes, He said, "You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one" (John 8:15).

We do not have any example of Jesus' acting as a judge of Jewish law. The Jews had their own courts, to which they would have taken such a case. They did not regard Jesus as a judge.

POINT 7: How did Jesus write on the floor of the temple?

When the scribes and Pharisees presented their question, "tempting Him," Jesus did not reply immediately. Though He often used the technique of keeping His inquirers waiting, here He is said to have stooped down and written on the ground with His finger.

Now where was Jesus at this time? John 8:2 reads that "Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came unto Him." How could He have written on the ground with His finger when He was in the temple, in a paved courtyard? He usually taught in Solomon's Porch, which was stone. (Incidentally, paintings of this passage have showed it as taking place by the seashore, where there is sand.)

POINT 8: The vocabulary used is not consistent with John's style of writing.

The incident speaks of the "scribes and Pharisees." John in his gospel does not even once mention the "scribes," or the "scribes and Pharisees," as do the other gospel writers. He preferred the simple term "Jews," which he used 70 times.

POINT 9: Were there loose stones lying around in the court of the temple that could be used to stone someone?

According to the narrative, Jesus is supposed to have said, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first"

(John 8:7). If the incident took place in the court of the temple, where would the accusers have found stones to throw? The even larger problem is a subtle teaching that came about during the apostatizing of the early Church, that we are all helpless sinners before God, that no one is any "better" than anyone else, and all need Christ's redemption. According to that line of reasoning, no one could claim the "without sin" standing, so no one could throw any stones. The further false inference is that sin can only be punished by those who are "perfect."

POINT 10: Jesus' attitude toward the sinner in this story is contrary to His own teaching.

Did Jesus say to the woman guilty of adultery, a sin that under Moses' Law was punishable by death, "neither do I condemn thee"? If so, wasn't Jesus, in effect, condemning the accusers, not the woman? Wasn't He saying that reacting to any sin, no matter how serious, is wrong, that one should not make the sinner feel "condemned"? Taking this reasoning to its logical conclusion, wasn't Jesus saying that sin should not be condemned or punished, but rather dismissed—a position which would contradict most of His teaching.

What do we find Jesus teaching by example? In Matthew 23, He pronounced eight "Woes" on the "scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites" who were not obeying the law they professed to teach. He condemned them by comparing them to their fathers who had killed the prophets (Matt. 23:30–35). He condemned them for committing atrocities—extorting money from widows and helpless persons—while at the same time making a false show of their religiosity (Matt. 23:13–14).

Jesus did not hesitate to condemn evil in any and every form. His gentle dismissal of the woman's offense is totally out of character with His teaching and ministry.

POINT 11: Jesus taught repentance as a condition for forgiveness. We are not told that this woman repented.

Jesus sent His disciples out to teach "repentance and remission of sins" (Luke 24:47). He came to call sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32). The account in question offers no evidence that the woman repented, either by her words or actions. When He said that "publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" [referring to the teachers of the law who were

again trying to entrap Him, Matt. 21:24–31], Jesus' point was that the publicans and harlots repented, which the scribes and Pharisees were not willing to do. At no time did He say of one who was breaking the law, "*neither do I condemn you*," or infer that they were not condemned for wrong conduct. With Jesus, repentance always precedes forgiveness and remission of sin.

POINT 12: Jesus amplified Moses' Law forbidding adultery.

Jesus taught that not only the act of adultery was wrong but even to look upon a woman with the desire to commit adultery was wrong (see Matt. 5:28). He condemned even the one who would look lustfully at a woman (Matt. 5:28). In other words, at the level Jesus taught, the desire was as culpable as the action.

When Jesus condemned a lustful look, can we imagine that He said to the woman guilty of adultery, "*neither do I condemn you*"? By leaving her uncondemned, He would have been contradicting His own teaching.

POINT 13: Did Jesus say, "Go and sin no more"?

This is a statement Jesus could have made, in line with His own teaching. His apostles also taught that to be clean from any sin one need only to stop committing it. "*Let him that stole steal no more*" (Eph. 4:28). The other half of the statement is also needed: that one must do what is right. In the words of Isaiah the prophet, "*Cease to do evil; learn to do well*" (Isa. 1:16).

Jesus made a similar statement in John 5:14, however it was relevant not to a sin such as adultery.

Relocate or remove the story?

Some Bible scholars believe that the problem with the John 8 passage is, "not textual authenticity but location," and suggest several alternate locations in John's gospel. But we cannot accept this solution when:

- 1) the passage disrupts the narrative in John 7, and its continuation in chapter 8;
- 2) the passage is omitted in all the manuscripts before the 4th century,
- 3) the passage is not quoted by any of the early church fathers, who borrowed so heavily from Scripture that it is said the entire New Testament could be reconstructed from their writings;
- 4) several statements in the passage contra-

dict Jesus' attitude and teaching as conveyed to us in the Gospels; that He repeatedly condemned those who were violating God's laws.

A comment in the *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* is informative:

"The Gothic gospel text, as we have indicated, is taken from Greek manuscripts of Byzantine text-type. But the date of the surviving manuscripts makes it inevitable that readings from the Latin have crept in. The most striking of these, in all likelihood, is the absence of the pericope of the Woman taken in Adultery (John 7:53–8:11). The presence of this is distinctive of the Byzantine text, although the pericope is older than that text. Its absence in the Gothic is the more remarkable. We may note that it is absent not only in the codex Brixianus but in three other Old Latin manuscripts as well, and is not quoted by Latin Christian writers until the late 4th century. Such a type of Latin text, where the pericope was not known, may then have early led to its exclusion from the Gothic when that version began to encounter Latin tradition."

In view of the above, we can only conclude that it is spurious, and not part of the inspired Scriptures.

THE BELLS ARE RINGING

"I have heard that the High Priest in Israel had bells on his garment. What was their purpose?"

The instructions for making the garments for the High Priest were as follows: "*You shall make the robe of the Ephod all of blue....upon its hem you shall make pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet, all around its hem, and bells of gold between them all around: a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe all around*" (Ex. 28:31–34).

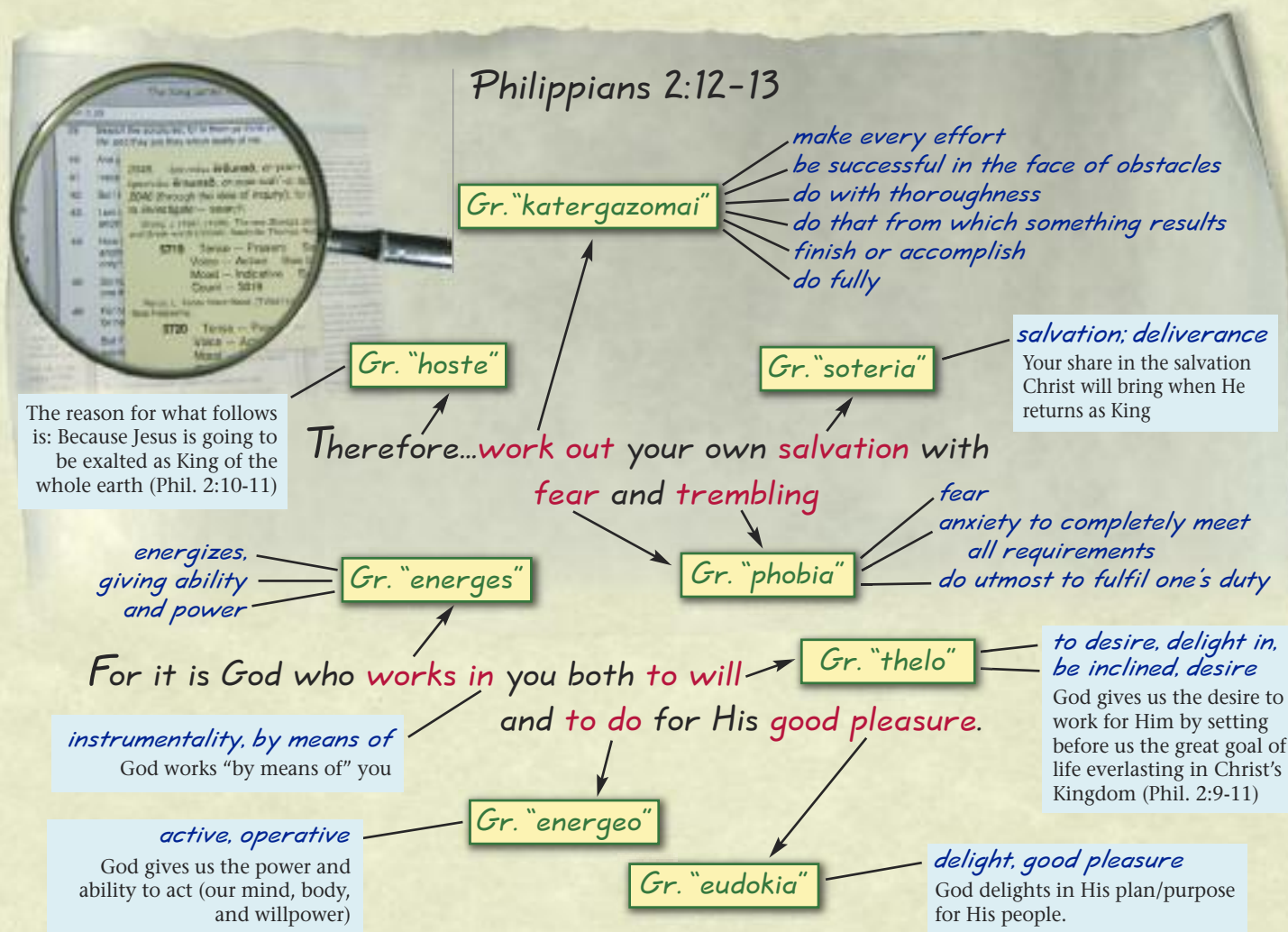
What was the purpose? We are told only this: "*And it shall be upon Aaron when he ministers, and its sound will be heard when he goes into the holy place before the Lord and when he comes out, that he may not die*" (Ex. 28:35).

What was the purpose? Every part of the Levitical system was given to teach reverence for God and respect for His authority. Compliance with the law was not an option; it was a divine decree. God was preparing a nation of ex-slaves for self-government and political autonomy. Why did the High Priest move under the threat of death for disobedience? Because God had appointed the High

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MAGNIFYING THE WORD

Search the Scriptures – Philippians 2:12–13



A Critical Look: Salvation Is NOT Free

What did Paul mean when he said, "Work out your own salvation"?

Almost any commentary on these verses will say that these Philippian believers already had salvation, they needed only to "work out" for the benefit of others what God had already "worked" in them.

If this is true, why any command to "work"? And why work with "fear and trembling" if they already had salvation? And look at the commands Paul had already given in this letter. They must:

- ◆ Live lives worthy of the gospel (1:27)
- ◆ Stand fast in one spirit, being of one mind (1:27)
- ◆ Not only believe but also suffer for Christ's sake (1:29)
- ◆ Endure the same conflict Paul himself was enduring (1:30)
- ◆ Don't be selfish (2:3 NLT)
- ◆ Don't try to impress others (2:3 NLT)
- ◆ Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves (2:3 NLT)

◆ Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too (2:4 NLT)

◆ Have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had (2:5 NLT)

Whatever they had done, Paul felt they still had work to do and still needed encouragement and instruction, else why this letter—for them and for us?

They must work out their salvation (accomplish the task, against difficult obstacles) and with fear and trembling, lest they come short; lest they fail in the great undertaking, as Paul himself was concerned (see 1 Cor. 9:25–27).

The next verse might raise some question, but in the context of the passage we can get Paul's meaning. Why are they working? Why the prospect of salvation? Because God has done His part in their behalf. The New Jerusalem Bible captures the thought: "It is God who, for his own generous purpose, gives you the intention and the powers to act." God calls us, opens the way for us, giving us "the intention and the powers to act." He equips us for the task, gives us the tools, but it is our part to use them, to act, to work, to form the Christ-like character that God is seeking and has promised to bless and reward with immortality (Rom. 2:7; 5:3–5). ◆

Mental Junk Food



My spiritual makeup is the cumulative result of what I've been feeding my heart and mind.

I read a warning that challenged my misplaced priorities: *"Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life"* (Prov. 4:23 NAS). "Diligence" here refers to one who is posted to keep watch. It implies a guardedness as to what types of ideas and influences are allowed to enter one's heart and mind.

Why the need for such tight security? Because Jesus said, *"The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart"* (Matt. 12:34 NAS). And, *"By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned"* (Matt. 12:37 NAS).

My heart has the capacity to hold an abundance—of ideas, beliefs, convictions, preferences, priorities, and thoughts. In God's sight, the critical issue is what is the contents of my "heart." Is it an abundance of healthy treasure or that which makes me sickly and weak?

I decided to examine carefully my mental consumption, starting with my reading material. Whether a novel, magazine, or short story, I asked myself, "What is this teaching me? How does it influence me, be it ever so subtle, and what values does it portray?" I became increasingly aware that every piece of literature projects values of some sort, invisibly woven and carefully determined by the choice of words. Those values can range from humanistic to Christian, but whatever I open my heart and mind to, it will make an impression on me.

Then I thought about all the other things I look at—on the street, on the internet, on my computer screen—in the course of a day. Whatever a person sees and hears becomes a part of his or her thought-life.

The negative values of unscriptural principles I've exposed myself to are now as much a part of my memory as the positive ones; they've become a part of the abundance of my heart.

As a parent, I began to see that I also needed to teach my children to be selective in what they feed their minds.

Many if not most television programs, including cartoons, feature lying, selfishness, and a "me first" philosophy.

My growing discontentment and lack of thankfulness could be attributed to the magazines and books I'd been reading. "If only I looked like her..." "If only I had a husband like that..." On and on the list goes for the one who has taken his eyes off the Lord's priorities and has fallen to the world's deceitful value system.

In Philippians 4:8, God gives more guidelines for discerning what we should be feeding our minds: things that are true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable—anything virtuous or praiseworthy. The Greek definition of "true" means "conforming to reality." For the Christian, this speaks of God's reality, not a false philosophy that the world would embrace. ♦

THE BELLS ARE RINGING

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Priest to be the spiritual leader of the nation, and if he could not respect Divine authority, who else could be expected to?

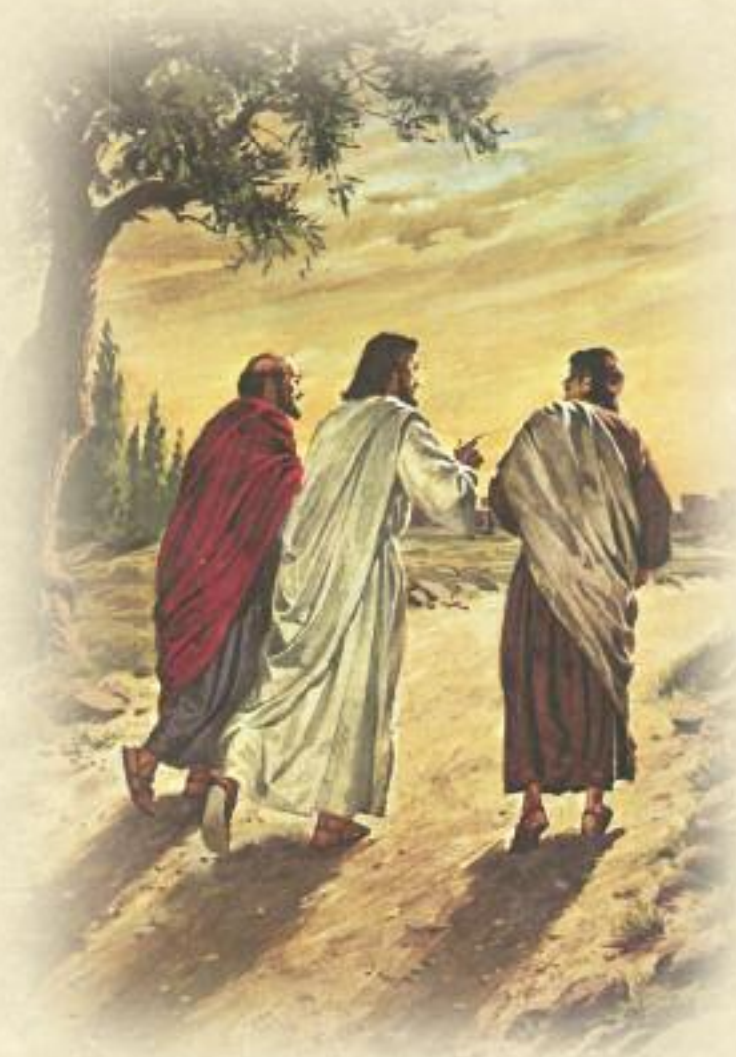
God also set up the system to distinguish the High Priest from the rest of the people. He wanted the people to respect the High Priest's position because the High Priest was a mediator between the people and God. To despise the honorary office of High Priest was to despise God. For this reason, instructions concerning High Priest were very detailed, even to his clothing and official robes. There was to be nothing light or casual about worship services. At the hem of his garment, the dressmakers were instructed to sew alternating a golden bell and a pomegranate.

Why the bells on the garment? We are also told that the clothing of the Priests, as well as

the High Priest, was *"for glory and for beauty"* (Ex. 28:2, 40). Worship was not to be a casual, ordinary activity. By its beauty it was designed to lift the minds of the people above the ordinary to a level of *"beauty."* More than this, there was to be *"glory"* in it, i.e., honor, majesty, and splendor as would be appropriate to honor God. The soft ringing of the bells added a connection with the people. When the High Priest went into the Holy Place, the priests and Levites down to the people waited outside. The sound of the bells as he moved about in the Holy Place performing his duties held their attention.

A parallel has been drawn with our High Priest, Jesus Christ, who is presently at the right hand of the Father in heaven (Heb. 9:24), the real Most Holy Place, and will soon be returning. The bells we hear today are the ringing of fulfilled and fulfilling prophecies, which tell us that His return is near. ♦

By Emmaus Way



*Beginning at Moses and all the
Prophets, He expounded to them in all
the Scriptures the things concerning
Himself. —Luke 24:27*

*The men were plodding along the road,
Their minds engrossed on events that flowed
In swift succession (or so it seemed),
And of His nearness they little dreamed.
Then, quietly joining the two, He said,
“Why are you walking with bowed down head?
And why are your hearts so heavy, sad,
When the season demands that we all be glad?”*

*“Are you but a stranger?” the one replied,
“And have not heard of the man who died,
Yea, rather was killed by the rabble mad?
Their wrong is the reason our hearts are sad.
A Prophet was He, in word and deed,
And One to whom we should all give heed;
In fact, we were hoping it would be He
Who would break our oppressors and set us free.*

*“At His touch the sick left their pain-filled bed;
He cleansed the lepers, and raised the dead;
But the wrath of the priesthood He incurred—
Their anger against Him was hotly stirred.
They arrested Him during the dark, night hours,
And took Him before the ruling powers;
And when the chief rulers about Him lied,
They led Him away to be crucified.”*

*“O fools, and slow to believe indeed
The words of the Prophets that all should heed.
Ought not the Christ to have suffered so,
That He might soon to His glory go?”
And beginning with Moses, He then made clear
What the Scriptures had told of the One most dear
To the hearts of those who will do the right
That they might share in their Lord’s delight.*

*We, too, have been fools, and slow of heart
To believe the things the Truth would impart;
We too need to walk the Emmaus way,
And closer get to our Lord each day.
It is time that we cast our doubts aside,
And take His word for our only guide;
For the day soon dawns when our Lord will come,
To rule in the new Jerusalem.*

*When He comes, ‘tis those who are swift to hear
The prophetic words, ringing now so clear,
He will choose; but to all who are slow of heart
Who refuse His word, He will say, “Depart!”
He wants the ones who obey His word,
Whose hearts within them are deeply stirred.
Unto them He’ll say, “Come, enter the rest
That I have prepared for the true and blest.”*

—Liot L. Snyder

Use a difficulty as sand on your track to keep you from skidding.

As a field, however fertile, cannot be fruitful without cultivation, so a mind won't be fruitful without discipline.

Keep out of your life anything that keeps God out of your thoughts.

Admitting you need help is the first sign of spiritual strength.

God is the author of Scripture. Don't go to it looking for your ideas, go there searching for His.

Running in place may give you exercise, but you're not covering the ground. To reach your goal, you must run for it.

God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. —1 Peter 5:5-7

Hope is that inner vision which enables us to see a faint star in the most dismal of midnights; and faith keeps it shining there.

Initiative is doing the right thing at the right time without being told.

The Meter Reader

I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.
—Revelation 2:19

Meter readers have to brave wind, rain, dogs, and dark basements to check gas, electric, and water usage in homes. But in some cities today, gas meters have radio transmitters. Mobile vans equipped with radio receivers and computers can collect readings by simply driving by. While a good meter reader could check 250 meters a day, a van cruising residential streets can cover almost 100 times more in the same period.

God has the ultimate in meter reading ability. He can read the heart of every man and woman, just as easily as we can read their faces. Proverbs 15:3, *"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good."*

Jesus described Himself to the church of Thyatira as *"the Son of God, who has eyes like a*



flame of fire" (Rev. 2:18). It is with infinite and intimate knowledge that Jesus says to us, I know your works. I know what you are doing. I know your love, service, faith, and your patience (v.19). And it is with that same knowledge, He says, *"I have a few things against you"* (v.20).

Is any thought more reassuring—or sobering? I know your works. This thought should humble us as we live every moment in His presence, anxiously awaiting His return. It was said of Jesus that He, *"had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man"* (John 2:25). He reads our hearts today. What is He reading? Will we be happy to own the record we furnished for our lives?

*Take control of my life today,
Let Thy will be also mine,
That in each thought and word and deed,
I shall be forever Thine. ♦*

Jesus' reading of our life will be accurate and final—write with prayerful care.

I Will Come

While the busy day dies slowly
O'er the sea;
And the hour grows quiet and holy
With thoughts of Me.
E'er you slumber, go and do
What must be done,
For it may be in the evening
I will come.

As the evening shades grow longer
And the night
Descends to veil the hills
From mortal sight,
Behold, I say unto you, Watch!
Let the door be on the latch
In your home.
For it may be at the midnight
I will come.

When the house is hushed in slumber,
Quiet, still
And the hours grow long and dreary,
Cold and chill,
Keep the door upon the latch
In your home.
In the chill before the dawning
'Twixt the midnight and morning
I may come.

Kee your faith lamps brightly burning
All the night,
As you wait through vigils long
The morning light.
Behold, I say unto you, Watch!
Let the door be on the latch
In your home.
For I soon will break the silence
And will come!

