

The Amish Voice



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The Right Hand of Fellowship

—By Levi Yoder

Intro: Over the years, I have had some great opportunities to sit next to men of God, who, without a doubt, have the gift of teaching God's Word. You'll know who these men are very quickly, because they are able to take God's Word and lay it out so simply that even the most difficult to understand verses seem so simple and easy to grasp. The man who wrote this article, "The Right Hand of Fellowship" for the Amish Voice, is one of those men; his name is Levi Yoder. In order to fully grasp this power and precious study, may I encourage you to read the whole chapter of Galatians 2? And then, please enjoy the message. It is God's gift to you today. —Joe Keim

Levi Writes:

In Galatians chapter 2:9, the apostle Paul talks about the *right hand of fellowship*, which in this case involved himself, Barnabas, James, Peter and John.

Was there an issue going on with these early Christians, according to Galatians chapter 2? There certainly was and

the issue was that the gospel was being challenged.

This can clearly be seen in Galatians 1:7, where Paul says "...there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the GOSPEL of Christ."

Later, in Galatians 2:5, Paul says, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."

So we might ask---was the gospel at stake? The answer is obvious. So just how important is this issue? I believe that we would all recognize the extreme importance of the gospel since no one has ever had their sins forgiven, other than through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Did the early church leaders struggle with salvation by grace, through faith, in Christ alone?

Let's look at Acts 15:1, where it reads, "And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, EXCEPT YE BE CIRCUMCISED AFTER THE MANNER OF MOSES, YE CANNOT BE SAVED." And again in

verse 5, some leaders were saying: "it is necessary to command them [believers of the gospel] to keep the law of Moses."

By these verses, we can clearly see, some believed it was necessary to add stipulations [extra conditions] to faith, in order to be saved. Let's watch this argument closely to see how it unfolds, because these truths are of the utmost importance for us today. God was leading the outcome as we see in verse 28, which says, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us"

Paul and Barnabas were preaching the gospel to the Gentiles and they were responding and many were coming to faith in Christ.

In Acts 14:27, Paul is reporting to the church what God had done and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles [non-Jews]. Was it hard for some of them to come to grips with the fact that Gentiles were coming to Christ and being saved? It most certainly was, because for centuries they had a deep-seated mindset that they alone were God's chosen people and His favor did not include the other nations. It is obvious they really wrestled with the issue, as Acts 15:2 points out, they had great dissension and debate.

In verse 7, we are told again that after much debate, Peter stood up and spoke.

In verse 12, Paul and Barnabas--- in order to strengthen their case--- related what miracles and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.



In their conclusion, they determined that God saved the Gentiles through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as the Jews also were saved, cleansing their hearts by faith and giving them the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:8, 9 and 11).

James, in his conclusionary statement (Acts 15:13-21), quotes scriptures, affirming his agreement with what Peter, Paul and Barnabas had said.

Going back to Galatians 2, Paul's rebuke to Peter was strong; he confronted him in front of everyone. I doubt that any of us can imagine just how much pressure was on these men. All the early church leaders had been devout Jews, and the Jewish teachings were, that in order to be right with God, you had to keep the whole law of Moses right to the letter.

We get a glimpse of this, in Acts 10, where Peter's response, when asked of God to "rise, kill and eat." Peter said, "By no means, Lord."

God's answer to Peter's response was, "What God has cleansed" man should no longer consider unholy.

Although, God was using these men in a tremendous way, they still struggled with the transition from the old into the new.

In Acts 10:19-20, it says: *While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.*

When Peter gets there, in front of this gentile group, what is one of the first things he says?

Acts 10:28 says, *And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.*

In the latter part of chapter 10, Peter preaches a powerful sermon and a group of Gentiles

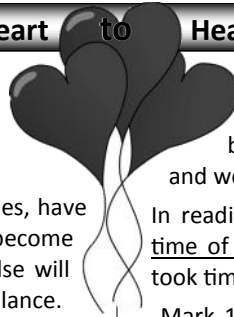
are saved. What a time of rejoicing! But did everybody rejoice? Not exactly, because when Peter came up to Jerusalem some took issue with him, accusingly saying, "Thou wentest in to uncircumcised men, and didst eat with them." And then Peter carefully makes his defense, explaining to them how God had told him to go without doubting. After hearing this in 11:18, we are told that they quieted down and also glorified God.

In view of all that happened here, one would think that Peter so knew the truth that nothing could ever sway him and yet, as we see in Gal. 2:12, Peter is swayed. Fearing those of the circumcision, he begins to withdraw, and in so doing, incurs a sharp rebuke from Paul.

In verse 14, Paul terms it like this: "If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles...why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"

Was it serious? Most certainly, since the truth of the gospel was at the center of the issue. Peter's actions affected his co-workers.

Heart to Heart with Joe Keim



It seems hard to believe, but we are already half way through the year. For many of us, it is the busiest time of all. And when we get busy, we have a tendency to work from daylight to darkness—six days a week.

Working long hours is not a bad thing, although it does, at times, have the tendency to cause an unbalanced life style. When we become unbalanced in any area of our life, someone or something else will suffer. And it will continue to suffer until we swing back into balance.

Maybe, as you are reading this, you are already thinking of an unbalanced area in your life that needs attention. It could be that your relationship with your spouse or a family member is hurting, or maybe your walk with God is not what it once was. In fact, long hours of hard work has caused you to loose touch of God, and at times, you question whether He even cares about you; He feels so far away.

An unbalanced life almost always results in frustration, anger, discouragement and many other emotional feelings. Too many days of this kind of living can become overwhelming, and in some cases, cause mental and physical breakdown.

With that in mind, can I recommend that you consider doing something about your dilemma? How about taking a break from your work and doing something special with God? Just you and Him! Grab your Bible, ignore your work schedule and get alone with God.

But you say, Joe, "I can't do that. There is way too much going on in my life. If I took off for a day or two, my work load would get so far behind

that I could never catch up."

Ok, well, that is your other option. You can continue on as before. Although, you might consider that even Jesus took off and went away to be alone with the Father.

In reading below, notice Jesus' heavy work schedule, as well as the time of day. Secondly, notice that in the midst of His busyness, He took time off to be alone with His Father.

Mark 1:32-37 says: *And AT EVEN, WHEN THE SUN DID SET, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.*

And IN THE MORNING, RISING UP A GREAT WHILE BEFORE DAY, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with Him followed after Him. And when they had found Him, they said unto Him, All men seek for Thee.

Notice that most of the work that Jesus did in verses 32-34, happened after sundown. But as verses 35-37 clearly state, Jesus got up early in the morning and departed to a place where no one could interrupt Him. It could have been the countryside, a building or an orchard. The fact of importance is, once He got there, He ignored the many needs and spend alone time with His heavenly Father.

For more on Jesus' prayer life, see Luke 4:42-44, Luke 5:16, Luke 12:6-16

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Since our beginning in 2000, many people have written to us, asking to be added to our mailing list, while others have sent us names of their friends and family members. We think it is important for us to tell you that the cost of *The Amish Voice* is \$.45 a copy and is totally funded by readers from across our great country, who appreciate the ministry and care to support it. If the Lord would lay it on your heart to come along side of us, by helping with expenses, it would be a great benefit as well as highly appreciated. In order to continue receiving the Amish Voice, please keep us informed of any changes to your address.

Even Barnabas, Paul's valued co-laborer, followed Peter's example.

So why are we even talking about this? Well, to me this gives me courage, knowing that all of these men were so being used by the Lord. They were all about proclaiming and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ and rejoiced in seeing others come to Christ, and yet, we see the struggles they went through and didn't always do the right thing. This should give us courage, seeing how God used them and knowing He can use us, too. Sure, we feel our frailties, sense our weaknesses, feel so unqualified—but what we as Christians have to share is so desperately urgent in nature that we had better not sit back and fail to share the Gospel of Christ. We need to pray for boldness as the early Christians did in Acts 4:24-31.

Paul says in Romans 1:16, "I am not ashamed of the GOSPEL, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."

In Philippians 1:16, he makes reference to the fact that he was "appointed for the defense of the GOSPEL."

And in Gal 2:7, he says that "he had been entrusted with the GOSPEL."

In Galatians 1:11-12, Paul said the gospel that he was preaching was not received from any man, nor was he taught it, but he received it through a revelation from Jesus Christ Himself. He had such a passion to share the gospel with everyone!

In 1 Corinthians 9:22, Paul makes this statement, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

Paul certainly lived this out in his life, as we see in Luke's account in Acts.

Exactly, what was this gospel message that Paul proclaimed everywhere he went? The scriptures have the answer.

First of all the word gospel means "good news". What did the angel bring to the shepherds (Acts 2:8-12)? He brought good news of great joy! For whom? All people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11)

This is very, very good news, since each one of us is a sinner in desperate need of a Savior.

The angel also spoke to Joseph, saying, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to

take unto thee Mary, thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she will bear a Son and thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:20-21)

Jesus Himself said in John 3:14-17 that He was sent so that the world might be saved through Him.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

In John 4:39-42, we see that many Samaritans were convinced that Jesus Christ was indeed the Savior of the world.

John 4:39-42: And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.

1 John 4:14: *And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.*

1 John 2:2: *He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

So will everyone benefit if He died for the sins of the whole world?

The invitation is open, as we so clearly see in Rev 22:17:

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

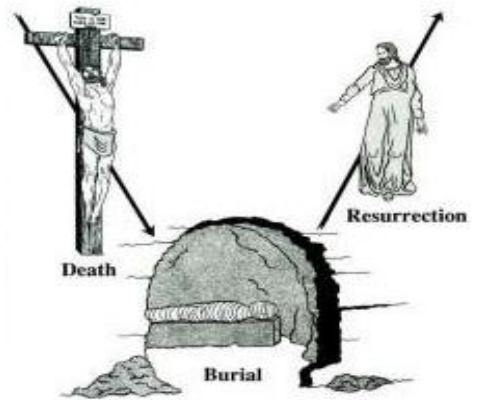
But Jesus also said in John 8:24:

Unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.

There can never ever be any greater tragedy than for someone to die in their sins, because Hell is a real place and is the destination for all who die in their sins.

Jesus often spoke about and taught that Hell was a real place. And this is why the gospel is so very important.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the scriptures."



This is truly the gospel that Paul was preaching and people were responding to and receiving Christ (being saved just as he says in verse 1-2 of Galatians 15, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and by which also you are saved).

Again in 1 Timothy 1:11 Paul mentions "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" and then defines it in verse 15 "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners".

He came to save us by laying down His life for our sins. This is the central truth of the gospel. Paul clearly points out in Romans 10:9-10, the word of faith which we are preaching,

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:13 tells us "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Paul writes to the Ephesian Christians:

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of

your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise. (Ephesians 1:13)

We clearly see a timeline here: first, they heard the gospel of truth, but it was when they believed that they received Christ, the gift of eternal life! God saved them by His grace (caused them to be born again). When they believed, they were sealed in Christ and they actually passed from death into life!

Jesus Himself said: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (John 5:24)*

When this happens, God is glorified.

The Bible says, in John 1:12-13, *But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."*

This clearly tells us that everyone that received Jesus became born again, born from above, born of God.

Jesus says in Revelation 3:20, *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him."*

Here is another question: Are we inviting others to come to Christ?

Jesus said in John 6:37: *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

Are we sharing the gospel with our neighbors, our friends, people we work with, people we meet wherever?

If we study the life of Paul, as recorded in the book of Acts, it is doubtful that anyone could have gotten in or out of his presence without hearing the gospel. That is what we need to be doing, telling others that Jesus is the Christ, that He is Lord, that we have offended Him since He is holy and we are sinful, that we need to turn from our sins in

repentance and in faith, asking Him to forgive us and save us by His grace and give us spiritual life---and He will. That is what salvation is all about.

In Peter's sermon, in Acts 4:12, he says:

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

I would like to leave you with a hypothetical scenario: If the apostle Paul walked into my church or your church (of course in this scenario his identity would be hidden), and carefully scrutinized [or examined] everything that is being taught and preached and practiced---keep in mind this is the man that wrote over half of the New Testament--- in view of what he found, would he be able to give the leadership of my church or your church the *"right hand of fellowship"*?

This study was written by Levi Yoder for the Amish Voice. Levi lives in Mansfield OH and can be reached at (419) 589-2461.

The Pharaoh and Egypt vs. Obama and America



Genesis 47:13-17 says,
And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine.

And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house. And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth.

And Joseph said, Give your cattle; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail. And they brought their cattle unto Joseph: and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses: and he fed them with bread for all their cattle for that year.

So we see, according to the Scriptures we just read, that economic hard times fell upon Egypt, and the people turned to the gov-

ernment of Pharaoh to deal with this for them. And Pharaoh nationalized the grain harvest, and placed the grain in great storehouses that he had built. So the people brought their money to Pharaoh, like a great tax increase, and gave it all to him willingly in return for grain. And this went on until their money ran out, and they were hungry again.

So when they went to Pharaoh after that, they brought their livestock -their cattle, their horses, their sheep, and their donkeys - to barter for grain; verse 17 says that their grain only took them through the end of that year.

But the famine wasn't over, was it? So the next year, the people came before Pharaoh and admitted they had nothing left, except their land and their own lives.

Genesis 47:18-20 says: *When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, We will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent; my lord also hath our herds of cattle; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies, and our lands:*

Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes,

both we and our land? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh: and give us seed, that we may live, and not die, that the land be not desolate. And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for the Egyptians sold every man his.



So they surrendered their homes, their land, and their real estate to Pharaoh's government, and then sold themselves into slavery to him, in return for grain.

What can we learn from this, brothers and sisters? Answer: Turning to the government instead of to God to be our provider in hard times, only leads to slavery? Yes... That the only reason government wants to be our provider is to also become our master?

But look how that chapter ends:

Genesis 47:28 says, *And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years.*

God provided for His people, just as He always has! They didn't end up giving all their possessions to government, no, it says they gained possessions!

How Did



Matthew

Suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia, killed by a sword wound.



Mark

Died in Alexandria, Egypt, after being dragged by horses through the streets until he was dead.



Luke

Was hanged in Greece as a result of his tremendous preaching to the lost.



John

Faced martyrdom when he was boiled in huge basin of boiling oil during a wave of persecution in Rome. However, he was miraculously delivered from death. John was then sentenced to the mines on the prison island of Patmos. He wrote his prophetic Book of Revelation on Patmos. The apostle John was later freed and returned to serve as Bishop of Edessa in modern Turkey. He died as an old man, the only apostle to die peacefully.



Peter

He was crucified upside down on an x-shaped cross. According to church tradition it was because he told his tormentors that he felt unworthy to die in the same way that Jesus Christ had died.



James

The leader of the church in Jerusalem, was thrown over a hundred feet down from the southeast pinnacle of the Temple when he refused to deny his faith in Christ. When they discovered that

he survived the fall, his enemies beat James to death with a fuller's club.



James the Great

Son of Zebedee, was a fisherman by trade when Jesus called him to a lifetime of ministry. As a strong leader of the church, James was ultimately beheaded at Jerusalem. The Roman officer who guarded James

watched amazed as James defended his faith at his trial. Later, the officer walked beside James to the place of execution. Overcome by conviction, he declared his new faith to the judge and knelt beside James to accept beheading as a Christian.



Bartholomew

Also known as Nathaniel, Bartholomew was a missionary to Asia. He witnessed for our Lord in present day Turkey. Bartholomew was martyred for his preaching in Armenia where he was

flayed to death by a whip.



Andrew

Was crucified on an x-shaped cross in Patras, Greece. After being whipped severely by seven soldiers they tied his body to the cross with cords to prolong his agony. His fol-

lowers reported that, when he was led to-

ward the cross, Andrew saluted it in these words: 'I have long desired and expected this happy hour. The cross has been consecrated by the body of Christ hanging on it.' He continued to preach to his tormentors for two days until he expired.



Thomas

Was stabbed with a spear in India during one of his missionary trips to establish the church in the sub-continent



Jude

Was killed with arrows when he refused to deny his faith in Christ.



Matthias

The apostle chosen to replace the traitor Judas Iscariot, was stoned and then beheaded.



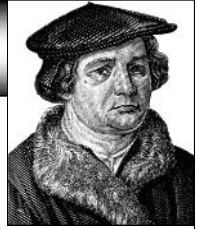
Paul

Was tortured and then beheaded by the evil Emperor Nero at Rome in A.D. 67. Paul endured a lengthy imprisonment, which allowed him to write his many epistles to the churches he had

formed throughout the Roman Empire. These letters, which taught many of the foundational doctrines of Christianity, form a large portion of the New Testament. Perhaps this is a reminder to us that our sufferings here are indeed minor compared to the intense persecution and cold cruelty faced by the apostles disciples during their times for the sake of the Faith. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake:



Martin Luther German Reformer - 1483 - 1546



Martin Luther was the son of a Saxon miner. He was born at Eisleben in 1483. He had begun studying law when something happened to change his course of life. In July, 1505, he narrowly escaped death when lightning struck a tree near him, throwing him to the ground. As a result of this brush with death, Luther determined to try to appease God's wrath by becoming a monk. He was ordained as an Augustinian monk in 1517.

The next year he was sent to Wittenberg to continue his studies and lecture in the University. He became a Doctor of Theology and professor of Scripture. Visiting Rome in 1510, he was shocked to see the open and shameless corruption and wickedness of the officials and clergy of the Roman Church.

Luther was well acquainted with the theology of his day. When he studied Scriptures, especially the Epistles of Paul, he became increasingly aware of the differences between current Roman Church teaching and the Biblical standards of truth. *His studies led him to the conviction that Christ was the only mediator between God and man, and that God's grace was the sole basis of salvation.* Such views were not tolerated by the church hierarchy; they led to a struggle which was to become the first steps in what we know the Reformation.

The sale of indulgences, a form of "Forgiveness for Sale", was especially offensive to Luther. The new Archbishop of Mainz had promised to pay the Pope a vast sum of money in exchange for his appointment. This money was to be raised by the sale of Indulgences, and a horde of salesmen descended on the land. Outraged by the spectacle, Luther posted his famous 95 Theses on the door of Wittenberg Castle Church on October 31, The battle was on!

Luther's 95 Theses were copied and spread throughout a Europe weary of the flagrant abuse of power by the Papal authorities. During 1518 and 1519, Luther publicly debated his position with a leading Roman Church theologian.

At the same time, the Church officials were trying to get Luther to go to Augsburg to arrest him for heresy and put him to a fiery death. Instead, he obtained the protection of the elector Prince of Saxony. The Pope's representative returned to Rome complaining that the only slogan I heard in Germany more than "Long live Luther" was "Death to the Pope."



In 1521, Luther had to defend himself to a meeting called the Diet of Worms. Refusing to betray his faith, he was condemned and would certainly have been killed had the Elector of Saxony not protected him. He was forced to hide in Wartburg Castle for 8 months. He used the time well, translating the entire New Testament into German! During his time in the Wartburg Castle, things had changed greatly. In

fact, he left his hiding place in order to protect Roman priests, officials and Churches from angry mobs.

Luther was now in little danger from the Roman Church's attacks. Great areas of Central and Northern Europe had been awakened to the truth of the Gospel; the Bible was available in languages that most people could understand. Under Luther's leadership, many reforms of religious practice were put into place. Clergy were allowed to marry; convents and monasteries were abolished. Luther worked on Catechisms to help the people clarify their beliefs. He wrote hymns, thousands of tracts, Bible commentaries and treatises. He translated the entire Bible into German. He recovered the Biblical truths of the Gospel which tradition and superstition had almost destroyed.

Let's rejoice in the great heritage we have as the heirs of Luther's reforms, and be vigilant to guard the truths that the Lord was pleased to renew through this great man of God.

Pennsylvania Deitsh Testament

If you would like to obtain a New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs in Pennsylvania Deitsh, they are available for \$13.95 postpaid from the **Committee for Translation, 3864 Township Road 162, Sugarcreek, OH 44681. Phone 330-852-4663.**

You do not need to send money ahead of time; they will bill you with your order. Your local Christian bookstore may also have them available.

In making this translation, the committee's purpose was two-fold: 1) to adhere as closely as possible to the Textus Receptus Greek text, which is closely associated with Luther's (German) and the Authorized (English) version, the two versions most commonly in use by the Amish, and 2) to make the translation in fluent

everyday Pennsylvania Deitsh as it is spoken in the home.

The translation procedures and principles used in this translation are basically those employed by the Wycliffe Bible Translators, and the exegesis closely follows their series of in-house "Exegetical Helps". The final manuscript was checked for exegetical accuracy by New Testament Greek specialists from the Translation Department of the Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Old Barns and Old People



A stranger came by the other day with an offer that set me to thinking. He wanted to buy the old barn that sits out by the highway.

I told him right off, he was crazy.

He was a Pennsylvania type Amish; you could tell by his clothes, his haircut, and the way he talked.

He said he was driving by in a taxi car and saw that beautiful barn sitting out in the tall grass and wanted to know if it was for sale.

I told him he had a funny idea of beauty.

Sure, it was a handsome building in its day. But then, there's been a lot of winters pass with their snow and ice and howling wind.

The summer sun's beat down on that old barn, till all the paint's gone, and the wood has turned silver gray.

Now the old building leans a good deal, looking kind of tired. Yet, that fellow from Pennsylvania called it beautiful.

That set me to thinking. I walked out to the field and just stood there, gazing at that old barn.

The stranger said he planned to use the lumber to line the walls of his sports den, which he was building in the Lancaster area. He said you couldn't get paint that beautiful.

Only years of standing in the weather, bearing the storms and scorching sun, only that can produce beautiful barn wood.

It came to me then. We're a lot like that, you and I. Only it's on the inside that the beauty grows with us.

Sure, we turn silver gray too... and lean a bit more than we did when we were young and full of sap. But the Lord knows what He's doing.

And as the years pass, He's busy using the hard weather of our lives, the dry spells and the stormy seasons to do a job of beautifying our souls that nothing else can produce.

And to think how often folks holler because they want life easy!

They took the old barn down today and hauled it away to beautify another man's house.

And I reckon someday, you and I'll be hauled off to Heaven to take on whatever chores the Lord has for us on the Great Sky Ranch.

And I suspect we'll be more beautiful then for the seasons we've been through here... and just maybe, even add a bit of beauty to our Father's house.

May there be peace within you today. May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

And I do sincerely Thank God for my wonderful friends and family who care about me, even though I show signs of weathering!

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

...but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Note two significant points from 2nd Cor. 4:16-18:

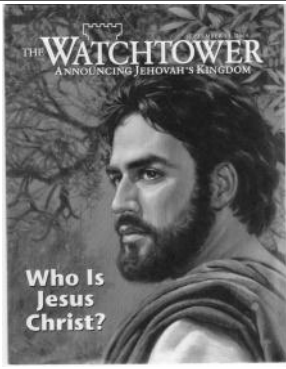
1. The Christian's afflictions are light when compared to the glory he shall receive in heaven. Note the phrase "weight of glory." This picture should always be kept in mind by every Christian. The picture is that of a set of scales sitting before the Christian. He balances his afflictions on one end and the eternal glory he is to receive on the other end. The afflictions may be heavy and severe, but when he places the eternal glory he is to receive on the scales, the afflictions become light. It is as though they weigh nothing.

2. The Christian's eyes are not focused on the physical and temporal, but on the spiritual and eternal. The word "look" means to focus one's eyes and attention on a set goal or end. The goal, of course, is spending eternity with God in the new heavens and earth. The Christian does not look at the things which are seen (the physical and corruptible), but at things which are not seen (the spiritual and incorruptible).

The reason is strikingly clear: the things which are seen are temporal (brief, temporary, fading, passing, fleeting, transient); but the things which are not seen are eternal (lasting, endless, forever, permanent, immortal, glorious).

Did you Know?

1. It has been estimated that the number of actively spoken languages in the world today is about 6,000.
2. English is the most widespread language in the world and is more widely spoken and written than any other language.
3. The language of a society changes slowly but steadily with the result that an educated person will not be able to read or understand words in his language written 500 years ago.
4. The shortest word in the English language with all its letters in alphabetical order is the word **"almost."**
5. The letter most in use in the English language is **"E"** and the letter **"Q"** is least used.
6. Of all the languages in the world, English has the largest vocabulary about **800,000** words.
7. No word in the English language rhymes with month, orange, silver, or purple.
8. **"Underground"** is the only word in the English language that begins and ends with the letters **"und."**
9. **"The sixth sick sheik's sixth sheep's sick"** is said to be the toughest tongue twister in English.



Sincere People but Sincerely Wrong

Can I Trust the Watchtower?

Since their beginning in the late 1800's, "Jehovah's Witnesses" have actively spread their message around the world.

What do they believe? Can they be trusted?

First of all, it is worth noting that some of their teaching (regarding creation, angels, morality, apostasy in the church, etc.) is in line with what is taught in the Bible. However, the differences that do exist are so numerous and important for most Christians to label Jehovah's Witnesses as a "cult." Let us briefly highlight a few of the differences.

The first and most serious departure deals with the nature of Jesus Christ. "Jehovah's Witnesses" deny the eternal deity of Christ, saying rather that Jesus was originally created by God as Michael the arch-angel. However, Scripture proves the Lord Jesus Christ to be co-equal and co-eternal with the Father:

- *Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:23; Matthew 2:6; Psalm 45:6,7; Hebrews 1:8; John 1:1,2; John 8:58; John 10:30,33,36*

"Jehovah's Witnesses" claim that Jesus rose from the dead with a "spiritual body" which was immaterial and invisible. Scripture teaches otherwise:

- *Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-28*

"Jehovah's Witnesses" also deny the Personality of the Holy Spirit, referring to Him as "God's active force." However, Scripture speaks of the Holy Spirit as a Person of the Godhead, not merely a force.

- *John 14:16,17,26; John 15:26; John 16:13,14; 2 Thessalonians 2:7; 1 Timothy 4:1*

More errors concern death and judgment. For example, "Jehovah's Witnesses" teach that the soul is not eternal, but rather dies with the body. However, Scripture teaches otherwise:

- *Matthew 10:28; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Luke 23:43*

Consciousness after death is also denied, but Scripture proves it.

- *Luke 16:19-31; Matthew 10:28*

Eternal punishment is also denied, but Scripture affirms it.

- *Matthew 25:46; John 3:36; Revelation 14:9-11; Revelation 19:20 & 20:10; Revelation 20:14,15*

- *Luke 16:19-31; Matthew 10:28*

Eternal punishment is also denied, but Scripture affirms it.

- *Matthew 25:46; John 3:36; Revelation 14:9-11; Revelation 19:20 & 20:10; Revelation 20:14,15*

One of the central teachings of "Jehovah's Witnesses" concerns Christ's future Kingdom. They predicted that Jesus Christ would return to the earth in 1873. When this was not fulfilled, the date was changed to 1874, and then again to 1914. Other dates have since come and gone, but rather than admit their error as false prophets, they have amended their views and changed their writings. After Christ did not return in 1914, they now teach that "in that year, Jesus was invisibly enthroned." However, the Bible teaches that when Jesus returns to earth to set up His kingdom, it will be neither invisible nor symbolic.

- *Matthew 24:27; Revelation 1:7; Acts 1:11; Mark 13:26*

The central leadership (the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society) claims to be the sole authority for proper interpretation of the Bible. However, the past 100+ years have brought many reversals (and reversals) of doctrine. God's truth does not change back and forth. Sincere people but sincerely wrong...

15 Unusual Bible Facts

1. Man who lived to be 969 years old (Genesis 5:27)
2. Man who used a stone for a pillow (Genesis 28:11)
3. Baby had a scarlet thread tied around its hand before birth (Genesis 38:28-29)
4. Sun and moon stood still for a whole day (Joshua 10:13)
5. A woman killed a man by driving a nail through his head (Judges 4:17-21)
6. Men lapped water like dogs (Judges 7:5)
7. An army with seven hundred left-handed men (Judges 20:16)
8. Man who had twelve fingers and twelve toes (2 Samuel 21:20)
9. Man who had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kings 11:1-3)
10. The axe head that floated in the river (2 Kings 6:1-6)
11. Woman who boiled and ate her son (2 Kings 6:29)
12. Woman whose body was eaten by dogs (2 Kings 9:30-36)
13. Father who had eighty-eight children (2 Chronicles 11:21)
14. The sun travelled backwards (Isaiah 38:8)
15. Man whose life was increased by fifteen years because he prayed (Isaiah 38:1-5)

The following poem was written by Esther Keim, when during her 3rd pregnancy, she lost our little Star.

LITTLE STAR

I was glad to know that you named me Little Star
As it will help me when I shine for you in a land afar
Just to know that you cared enough for me
Even though you knew I'd never be
Thanks big bro and sis for praying for me
Even tho' you will never get to hold me on earth
And I am sure you're sorry I had to die
I'll be waiting for you in my home beyond the sky
And I'm sure my mother and my dad
Were wondering would I be good or would I be bad
Now they don't have to worry at all
As I'm already in heaven having a ball
Even tho' you'll miss holding me in your arms
I have a better home beyond the starts

For ever, O LORD, thy
Word is settled in heav-
en. —Psalms 119:89

Q. I am still young, and likely to live for a long time. Why should I think of eternal things now?

God says: "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" and "What is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (Proverbs 27:1; James 4:14).

Q. When I do die, won't that be the end of me?

The rich man died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments (Luke 16:22,23).

Q. Must we not wait until the judgment day to see who goes to hell?

He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:18).

Q. I have lived a fairly good life; am I condemned?

God says: "There is none righteous, no not one ... There is none that doeth good, no not one ... all the world [is] guilty before God" (Romans 3:10,12,19).

Q. God is a loving, merciful God. Won't He pass over my sins?

The Lord God ... will by no means clear the guilty (Exodus 34:6,7). The wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment (Heb 9:27).

Q. But I say my prayers, and have given money to the church. Won't that count in my favor?

Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord ... in Thy name [we have] done many wonderful works. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me (Matthew 7:22,23).

Q. Why would God judge me the same as somebody who is grossly immoral, or a murderer?

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isaiah 53:6). "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

Q. If that be the case, I must plead guilty. I have sinned. What must I do to be saved?

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house (Acts 16:31).

Q. Tell me exactly what I need to believe.

The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6). The Son of God ... loved me, and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:20). Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (1 Peter 3:18).

Q. But must I do nothing to gain salvation?

A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16). For by grace are ye saved ... not of works (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Q. To be saved just by believing seems too simple.

If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? (2 Kings 5:13). Jesus says, Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life (John 6:47).

Q. Did God really love me before I was saved?

God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

Q. I often think I am too great a sinner to be saved.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool (Isaiah 1:18). Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).

Q. Won't my life change if I become a Christian?

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him (1 Corinthians 2:9).

What is today's value of Judas Iscariot's 30 pieces of silver?

Matthew 27:3-5: *Then Judas, which had betrayed Him...brought again the THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER to the chief priests and elders...And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.*

Answer: No one knows exactly, however, some say it may have amounted to the price of a slave or 90 days of wages. If that is the case, and you figured \$12 an hr times a 10-hr work day, it would equal out to be about \$10,000.

One thing we do know, the Bible tells us in Matthew 27:6-8, *And the chief priests took the silver pieces...and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.*

HEARING and SEEING but not HEARING and SEEING

In Matthew 13:13, Jesus said: *Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.*

During a recent conversation with a person seeking to be baptized, I sensed the lack of assurance of her salvation. She was struggling with God's forgiveness and deliverance. So I asked her, do you remember the story of the one thief on the cross when he looked over and said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" and Jesus responded, by saying, "verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise?"

When she said that she remembered the story, I asked her, "do you think the thief had hopes that he would make it to paradise?"

"Of course", was her reply.

Then I asked her, why are you able to answer with so much assurance? To which she replied, "Because Jesus told him so."

Exactly, I replied. Therein lies the answer to actually knowing your destiny.

Even though you and I hear the exact same words, we may not perceive the same thing. Consider that the thief on the other side of Jesus also heard the same words, yet he did not respond in the same way. There is seeing and yet not really 'getting it.' There is hearing and not understanding.

When God speaks to our spirit inside us, we usually do not hear a voice as did the thief on the cross. Yet, in spite of hearing directly from the Lord of Glory, the second thief did-

n't have the words enter deep into his soul. It was all based on understanding of who Jesus actually was and is.

1. Could Jesus actually influence the outcome of a man's life and death?
2. Was He actually the Son of God with power to forgive sin and grant eternal life?
3. Was His promise going to be honored by God the Father?

Often, when we read the bible, we read but do not 'get it'. When I was young, I used to think, if only I heard God speak in an audible voice, I would just have so much more assurance. Now I know, that was foolish thinking.

Words I hear, can be quickly forgotten, however, when they are written down, I can read them over and over and always be freshly reminded.

In Romans 8:16, it says; *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

When the Spirit speaks to my spirit and tells me I am a child of God, I hear no voice; no bells or heavenly music. The way I know, my spirit comes to total peace and I know the question is settled in my inner person without a doubt. That often comes when you look at scripture, which is the Word of God.

I once had part in a serious matter that was before a church council. I was losing sleep and praying during the middle of the night. A chart came to mind that I had not considered before. As I conceded that it was a powerful way of presenting a message, total

peace came over me and I went to sleep immediately. The next day the council was presenting its final assessment and presentations were made around the room. I was last to speak. I got up from my chair and began to draw a chart in the form of a timeline on the blackboard. I recall being very nervous and shaky. Yet the impact was quite dramatic. Understanding began to show on the faces of those present. The outcome was definitely affected. We had spoken all the same information previously, but it failed to show a complete picture.

We often perceive the power of the word of God by the peace in our soul that cannot be controlled by the mind.

I have many times written of the need to read scripture. Often, when reading a certain passage, we suddenly know exactly what it means to us personally. The troubled heart finds deep rest. Again, God's spirit speaks to our spirit, and the troubling issue is settled. Salvation has to be the first question to be firmly settled.

Which passage will touch you? I don't know. The verse that first touched me was John 3:14 and 15. That may seem odd, since many people have been touched by John 3:16, but my verse of note was ahead of that. I have no idea why.

Experience teaches me to expect the unexpected. Your passage may be a totally different one from others. But please do look for it! Remember, I'm praying for you!

*Eli Stutzman — Ontario Canada
Phone: (519) 866-3737*

1. Aren't you glad you don't serve a weak and helpless God who is sitting over in the corner of Heaven wondering what man will do next?
2. Aren't you glad that He is the God who created all things in six days and rested on the seventh?
3. Aren't you glad that the rest He took was not a rest from weariness but rather a rest of satisfaction with all that He had made?

4. Aren't you glad that, had He wanted to, He could have created the universe in six milli-seconds but chose to do it in six days as a pattern for man to follow in observing a day of rest once a week?
5. Aren't you glad that He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life?

—Continued from page 12—

to repent. If you've been holding in your hurt, your spouse may not even know s/he's offended you. Bitterness often comes from hurt that has been suppressed without communication, like filling up a bottle with pressure—eventually that bottle will explode.

In the same way, the outburst in your heart can result in a broken marriage, and your spouse never even saw it coming. In this case, go ahead and tell him or her what's been bothering you. Sit down and try to work it out.

Perhaps your spouse *does* know of your unhappiness, but s/he chooses to continue in the same patterns. This does not cancel out your responsibility to remove the bitterness from your heart. You still need to give your spouse the chance to repent, although stronger measures, such as, marriage counseling may need to take place.

You may ask, "How many times does my spouse have to do something before I'm justified in my bitterness?" In Matthew 18:21-22, Peter had a similar problem. He asked Jesus how many times he needed to forgive someone, even questioning as many as seven times. But Jesus saith unto him, "I say not unto thee, *Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven*" No matter how many times your spouse may do something against you, you are still responsible to forgive.

(Note: If your spouse is physically abusing you, get out of your house and do not stay there. A person who is physically abusive needs extensive counseling and rehabilitation. However, no matter how the situation ends, you can still work on forgiveness from the heart.)

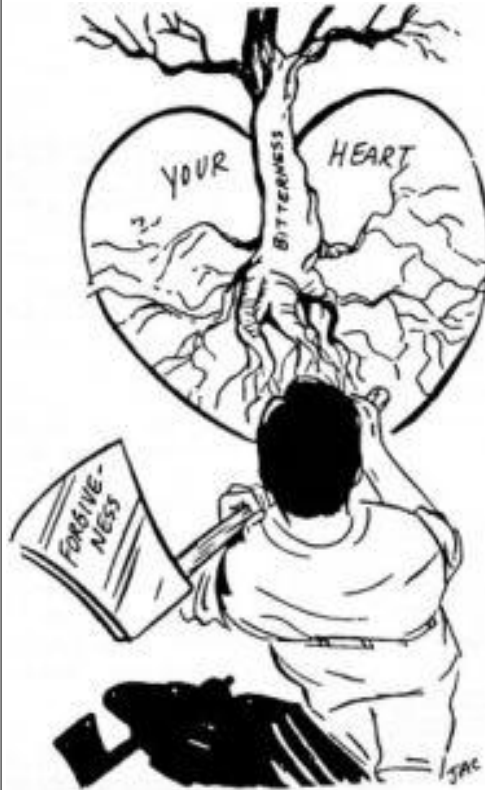
Third, *bitterness spreads*. Have you ever seen a piece of moldy bread? It appears that there is only one ruined area, but if you looked at the bread through a microscope, you would see long roots spreading throughout the slice. What appears on the surface doesn't reflect what's really happening below.

Bitterness grows the same way. One little bit of bitterness can start to spread throughout your heart, and contaminate your whole body. It will start to manifest itself in your attitude, demeanor, and even your health.

In addition, the spreading can also affect your children and your family. Have you ever

noticed how one person's criticism makes everyone else critical, too? It's the same with bitterness. Paul compares it to yeast when he writes, "A little leaven, leavens the whole lump" (Galatians 5:6). When you bring bitterness into your life it extends to your family, your church body, and everyone else who is involved in your life.

Getting Rid of Bitterness



You may feel like there is little hope left for your marriage relationship. You may be so full of bitterness that you've convinced yourself that your marriage could never be healed, but let me assure you that the healing begins with yourself. With God, all things are possible (Matthew 19:26). Here are four steps to take to begin healing from bitterness.

First, *confess your bitterness as a sin*. It's so easy to justify our attitude when we've been hurt, but the Bible teaches that bitterness is a sin. Hebrews 12:14-15 says "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" You must seek peace with your spouse and the grace to forgive.

Second, *ask for God's strength to forgive your spouse and diligently seek that for-*

giveness. In Ephesians 4:31-32, Paul exhorts us to "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"

It's hard to be tender-hearted to a person who has hurt you, but it is possible. We have the power to forgive because Christ forgave us, and He gives us strength through the Holy Spirit (Colossians 2:9-11).

Third, *make a list of your hurts and find a time to talk to your spouse about it*. After you've made your list, pray about which things you can let go and which need to be resolved. If you can let them go, then do so. You may want to physically scratch off each one that you can forgive as an act of faith. Then for those transgressions that are left, ask God to give you the strength to talk to your spouse about them.

Before talking to your spouse, let him know that you plan to set aside some undistracted time for you to talk about some issues. As you talk, keep the discussion productive. Start by confessing your own sins to him. Then talk to the spouse about your hurts. Don't just dump all your irritations and criticisms on him or her, but speak in love with gentleness and rationale.

If you feel like you can't talk to your spouse alone, then ask a minister or mentor couple to join you in the discussion. Make sure your spouse knows that someone else will be there. Once you begin, your spouse may deny their behavior or even become irritated. But the object of the discussion is to expose the wounds, not to accuse. Keep love the main motivator of your communication.

Fourth, *worry about changing yourself, not your spouse*. You cannot change your spouse—only God can. But what you can do is allow God to change your heart. If you have a log of bitterness in your own eye, how can you take the speck out of your spouse's eye? (Matthew 7:3). You, too, have made choices in this relationship that have hurt your spouse and need to be mended. Even though your spouse's sin goes unresolved for now, s/he will answer for them one day before God (Matthew 10:26). In the same way, God will hold you responsible for the bitterness in your heart.

—By Sabrina Beasley

Current Resident

Don't Let Bitterness Poison Your Marriage

What Causes Bitterness?

In every marriage, a husband or wife does something that hurts the other. It's bound to happen because none of us is perfect. And in some cases, a spouse has a habit of doing the same thing over and over again, even after the behavior is confronted.

Bitterness comes when you hold onto hurt and refuse to forgive the person that hurt you. Most of the time, this comes as a result of ongoing actions of a small nature—lack of understanding, misuse of finances, harsh comments—that build up over time. Each offense takes residence in the heart, and at some point there is no more room left before the wife or husband has had enough. That's when bitterness is manifested and causes the most damage.

What's Wrong With Bitterness?

A hardened heart can cause a lot of pain. Here are three reasons why bitterness should be removed from your heart as soon as possible.

First, *bitterness harbors un-forgiveness.* You

may feel justified [you have the right] in your anger. You may think that your spouse doesn't deserve your forgiveness until s/he straightens things out. But have you forgotten the mercy that Jesus had for you? Romans 5:8 tells us that Christ died for us *while we were yet sinners.* By God's grace, He didn't wait for us to "get our acts together" before He provided a way for forgiveness. He gave it to us freely even when we didn't deserve it. At Golgotha as the soldiers gambled for Jesus' clothing, the dying innocent Christ prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). If forgiveness is given freely to us, how much more should we give it to our spouse?

Not only should you desire forgiveness simply because it was given so freely to you, but also, the Bible tells us that there are conse-

quences for un-forgiveness.

Jesus said, "*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*" (Matthew 6:14-15). Seek forgiveness not only for the sake of your spouse, but also for yourself.

The other day, I found that my disappointment in my friend was turning into its own form of bitterness. So I sought the Scriptures for guidance. As always, the Word of God shone brilliant light on my own darkness. I was so moved by the verse I read that I wrote it down over and over until there was no more room left on the note page. "*For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment*" (James 2:13)

I wonder how many hurting marriages would be healed if Christian husbands and wives learned to love mercy as much as they love justice?

Second, *bitterness doesn't give your spouse a chance...* —Continued on page 11—

