



MAP ♦ P.O. Box 128 ♦ 575 US Highway 250 ♦ Savannah, OH 44874 ♦ (419) 962-1515 ♦ May 2018

LIVING IN THE STRONGHOLD OF DECEPTION

Buy of Me Gold Tried in the Fire

Part 7
of 8

The Unlimited Power of God by the Operation of the Cross

First Corinthians 1:18: *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.* This unlimited power becomes a reality in a believer's life because it is the power of God that saves us. This can never be accomplished by self-effort or human good works.

Second Corinthians 13:5: *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?* "Reprobates" in Greek means unapproved, rejected, worthless, castaway. When we are in the faith by God's grace, we are NOT reprobates, but are operating in the reality of the cross of Christ, which is the unlimited power of God. We cannot put a cap on this power or limit God in our lives.

Dear brothers and sisters, I'm afraid we have denied this power too many times by thinking with our carnal minds. Second Timothy 3:5: *Having a form of*

godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. We want the power of God yet stay in our worthless state because we have a form of godliness, while in reality we deny His power in our carnality.

How does one come into this power? By trying to be good? By trying hard to believe? By going to all kinds of different churches or crusades where we think the power is? By looking up to someone with a healing ministry? Yes, these things might have their place, but this is not where the unlimited power of God comes from. The power comes from letting the cross of Christ operate in our personal lives. When we are born of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ comes into us. Second Corinthians 13:5: *Jesus Christ is in you.* This must be a reality of the unlimited power in us, or we become reprobates.

The carnal mind can never understand this power, because it always chooses some outward thing. Yes, it will be religious, but it will never come into the unlimited power of God. Therefore,

it will be worthless and reprobate. When God brings us to the end of ourselves and we cry out to Him, His holy power begins to operate within us. Then we begin to be delivered from dead, powerless religion. Then we will be delivered from the sins of the flesh and start to walk in the victory of God's power. This includes victory over homosexuality or any kind of sexual perversion. May the Church start to understand this power of God working within us, which is what Jesus accomplished for us on the cross.

This also includes the healing of our physical bodies. Original sin, the sin nature, and sickness go together. In 1 Corinthians 11:30, Paul says concerning discerning the Lord's body: *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.* When we don't discern the power of the cross working in our lives in remembrance of what was accomplished there, we will stay in our sin and sickness. All of us want to be well, but we don't want the operation of the cross in our lives, which will

heal us. This movement of miracles and healing will come with teaching and understanding. Jesus always taught after healing took place. God always has a purpose in mind when He heals people. Yes, sometimes He heals simply because He loves us. This impending movement is for a purpose and comes with understanding. It is time the church begins to understand. If I have a heart problem but I don't know I have a heart problem or if I deny it, how can I be healed? If I don't know I have an original sin problem or if I deny it, how can I be healed? I will stay in my sin and sickness, and I will die early.

Please read Revelation 3:17-22:

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my

Father in his throne.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Please forgive me if I sound negative. I believe there is a healing wave coming over all the earth. Sin will be exposed; sickness will be healed. It will be through the unlimited power of God. This is the kingdom of God and not the kingdom of Satan. The body of Christ will come into the health of Jesus Christ and will function correctly as it was purposed to function before the foundation of the earth.

Church, let us humble ourselves! Matthew 6:10, 13: *Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. . . . For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.* By the way, this is the greatest prosperity message ever told to mankind. All these things will be added unto you. It is God's way.

May I give a word of warning? Where there is no cross, Satan will imitate miracles. You can see this even today in all the mystical, unreal things going on in some churches. Yes, it looks real with the natural eye, but there is no cross, no true foundation, no understanding. Second Thessalonians 2:9-10: *Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.* s, we can see this even today. God help us!

May the church come into health again

in the unlimited power of God. Let us not hang on to the traditions of men, but let us hold on to and implement the tradition that Paul the apostle gave to the church years ago. Traditions of men will not stand in this coming movement. Our rules and regulations will be burned up and melt away. Mystical, spiritually unhealthy things will be blown away. They will not stand, because God is a jealous God. The bridegroom has a godly jealousy for His bride. He does not want His bride to go whoring after other gods, which are the traditions of men.

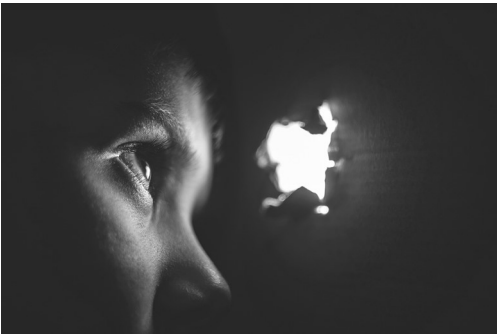
We will see His power more and more in our communities, in our states, in our nation, and in the world. Today He is preparing men and women for this very thing, and is bringing us into health with understanding of the unlimited power of God. Dear brothers and sisters, believe in His power. Don't look to your circumstances or whether your church is growing or not. Don't even look to your ministries. God has called you to look to Jesus, who is the unlimited power. He is the author of your ministry. Do not fear man or what man thinks of you. Obey God!

Be not afraid to say no to the traditions of men. Yes, it will cost us our lives that we might come into the power of grace and mercy through faith in God, which is through the cross. When our godless foundations crumble and burn, take courage. He has not forsaken us, but is restoring us to health and to truth. *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life,* said Jesus! —D. Wickey, (602) 448-8528

End

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May I talk with you about something close to my heart? There is a word I hear a lot of these days, and that word is anxiety. Anxiety, worry, and feeling scared are all the same thing. They can all be summed up in one word, and that is FEAR (false evidence appearing real!). Now don't get me wrong, folks- I do experience fear. In fact, I recently became aware of how much fear has actually been in my life! I used to be irritated by the word "anxiety" and thought I was not much affected by it, but since my mother died, I suddenly became more aware of it and realized it was a bigger issue than I knew!

But I don't think we are all aware of what fear actually is! Did you know it is not just a feeling, but it is actually a spirit? And not one from God either! God tells us in scripture that God has not given us a SPIRIT OF FEAR but of power, love, and sound mind. He also says that Perfect Love (which is Himself) casts out all fear. If it can be cast out, it is not just a feeling!

This revelation has been very beneficial in helping me work through my insecurities, fear, anxiety. When we see something for what it is, we can be much more equipped to handle it.

Something else I feel should be pointed out is our tendency to control if we feel insecure, fearful, or anxious. We will do things to try to make our surroundings or circumstances feel more secure. This is especially true if we have been through a lot of trauma. This is a knee-jerk reaction, but it doesn't make it right.

Now I am not a person who tends to control anyone. I have a lot of grace for others. However, God recently made me aware of a couple of areas where I would try to control. Now if you had been through some of the experiences I was, you would probably have responded in a similar way, but again, it is still control. I just want to share it with you to show you how this works. My husband did a lot of traveling in his business for the last 8 years. It was a sore spot for me and it seemed his trips didn't plan themselves around important events very well at all. I felt very alone and unsupported at home with the children. Some of these years, he spent more time away from home than at home, and worst of all, it was during a fragile time in our marriage and family. But what God started showing me was

that I would try my best to keep my husband at home so I could feel safer.

While I think my reaction was very understandable given the circumstances, it was still an area of control. Often it amounts to the simple fact that we do not trust God to protect us from those who hurt us. I can draw a pretty straight line from the moments I didn't trust God to take care of me to the decisions I made in place of trusting Him.

I can also tell you how well they worked out for me! Not. Well. At. All. I spent a good seven years recovering from and cleaning up a mess I made that started about nine years ago. In fact, I am still healing, and so are others. Trust me - it isn't worth it to not trust God. He is much more capable of taking care of us than we are taking care of ourselves! I choose to trust Him. He is my safe place.

How about you?

Will you trust Him to fix your mess?

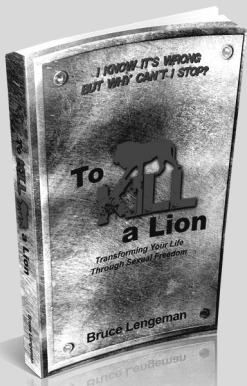
Will you trust Him to fix your husband or your wife?

Will you try to do it yourself?

May I tell you what will happen if you try to fix it yourself? You will wear yourself out!! And you will have a bigger mess! Let Him do it. He is good at His job! —Norma Miller

End

Do you struggle with lust or other sins and addictions?



To Kill a Lion, written by **Bruce Lengeman**, is designed to help men find the roots of their sexual addiction. The theme is, "Men cry out, 'I know it is wrong, but why can't I stop!'" The book is for both counselors and strugglers. *To Kill a Lion* will help men understand their own sexuality and what makes it operate "out of alignment" with God's design. You'll learn why it is healthy to be sexual as a man, but in a pure and Godly way. Though this book was not written for women, many are reading it and getting understanding of things they never knew about sexuality.

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Seven men walked up to the door of the kingdom of God to seek entrance; only one made it in.

The names of the seven were: Religion, Good Works, Repentance, Confession, Do Your Best, Poor Sinner, and Righteousness.

Religion was very faithful to his church.

Good Works was known for his many good deeds in the community.

Repentance preached that repentance was the key to being accepted into the kingdom.

Confession confessed his sins every time he committed them. Well, he confessed the ones he was aware of at least; it was a full-time job.

Do Your Best was quite popular and had many followers.

Poor Sinner was sincerely humble about his sinful condition. Many times, he was heard saying, "I'm just a poor sinner."

Righteousness was given his name at his second birth. It was not a name fitting to him. It was the name of another, but he humbly accepted it when it was offered to him.

Religion

When the first man knocked on the door of the kingdom of God, an angel opened a window that was a few feet away and off to the side of the gate.

"Yes? Who are you?"

Trembling, he replied, "My name is **Religion**."

The angel went to the library and scanned the shelves until he found **Religion's** book. He came back to the window and opened it. In it was an exact record of all of **Religion's** thoughts, words, and actions. Every good work was written down, but so was every sin.

The angel looked at **Religion** and asked, "Why should I let you into the kingdom?"

Religion, a little hopeful, answered, "I was always very sincere from my childhood. I read the Bible, went to the right church, kept all the rules, and whenever I failed, I asked God to forgive me."

The angel called him closer. **Religion** walked over, and the angel showed him the record of sin on his account.

"I'm sorry, **Religion**, but I can't let you in."

Religion began to plead most woefully, "But what about my religious activities?"

The angel shook his head. "Don't you know that *the wages of sin is death*?" (Romans 6:23).

Religion cried, "I tried to die to myself!"

"No, no," the angel said. "I mean real death. Innocent blood is required to take away sins."

Religion was wailing most pitifully by now. He knew his works were not good enough, but he had hoped against hope that somehow God would have mercy on him.

Another angel took him away and cast him into hell.

Good Works

The next man walked up and knocked.

"What's your name?" the angel asked.

"**Good Works!**" said the man with a note of confidence; he had out-performed all his peers.

The angel said, "You have a list of good works. Let's see . . ." and the angel looked again. "Impressive! You did many good deeds. You helped the poor, visited the sick, and never caused trouble in the church. But, my dear friend, there is also a big list of sins on your record." The angel looked at his record and at the many sins: lust, greed, envy, gossip, and pride, just to list a few.

"But angel!" cried **Good Works**, "I thought the Bible said if we keep the law,

we will be justified! I tried my best to obey it."

The angel nodded. "Yes, God's Word says *doers of the law shall be justified*" (Romans 2:13).

Then, the angel looked deeply into **Good Works' eyes**. It seemed to **Good Works** that the angel was looking right into his soul. With his penetrating eyes, the angel asked him, "Are you a doer of the law?" Under those eyes, **Good Works** knew he wasn't.

Though he believed that one had to obey the law, as hard as he tried, he never did fully. He always hoped God would forgive him where he failed. Now, he realized that the only way to be justified through the law was to fully follow and do the law. It only takes one failure before you have to seek some other means to be justified.

Good works turned deathly pale. "No," he said. "I guess I'm not a doer of the law as much as I tried."

"Then you can't be justified by the works of the law" (Galatians 2:16), said the angel. "You have a big list of sins, and the law says sinners must die (Ezekiel 18:4). *The wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23).

Good Works was about to faint. "There is no denying my sins. But what about all my good works?"

The angel looked on him with compassion. "**Good Works**, don't you realize that it takes blood to pay for your sins? No amount of good works can pay for sin" (Hebrews 9:22).

Good Works began to wail. An angel picked him up and cast him over the edge of the pit into hell.

Repentance

Repentance was next. He knocked gingerly, and the angel opened the little window. He still had sadness written over his face from seeing the last two sinners

meeting their due judgment.

“Yes?” **Repentance** asked as he crawled over to the window.

He was dressed in rags, and it was as if repentance was written on every piece of his rags. His very life was one of repentance, and he cried many a tear over his failures.

He looked up at the angel and said, “I know I have sinned, but I have repented as sincerely as I could.”

It sounded pitiful, but the words just wouldn’t come out any more eloquently than that.

The angel looked at his record.

“Yes, I see many sins on your record. But, my friend, don’t you know that even if your tears should forever flow, they could never wash away a single sin? Only the blood of Jesus can wash away sin. Therefore, every sin you have ever done is still on your account.”

“Yes, yes, I know I have sinned, but the Bible clearly says that if we repent, God will have mercy.”

“Yes,” said the angel. “God is very merciful, but repentance is not a currency whereby you can buy God’s mercy. It is not merely a change of mind, but rather a turning to God and receiving His forgiveness that is freely offered because of the blood of Jesus. His blood is the currency that bought your forgiveness. Jesus should have been the focus of your repentance, not your act of repenting” (Acts 20:21).

“It is not the quality of your repentance, but rather the quality of the blood of the lamb that counts. Here, let me show you: Ephesians 1:13 says, *In WHOM [Jesus] ye also trusted. . .*”

The angel looked at **Repentance** and said, “See? You should have trusted Jesus like the Ephesians did. Instead, you trusted your tears of repentance. Look at verse 7: *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins . . .*”

Repentance stopped him and said, “Yes, but that is only true according to how sincerely one repents.”

The angel replied, “No one repents sincerely enough. Let’s read the rest of the verse. Where were we? Oh, yes.

“ . . . in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”

“See? Forgiveness of sin cost the Son of God His life. He freely offered it to you, and yet you tried to earn it by your tears.” The angel was saddened even more. He thought to himself, “People treat sin to be such a small thing. How could repentance deal with sin?”

He motioned the other angel to take **Repentance** away. He took him by the arms, carried him to the edge, and cast him into hell.

Confession

A few days later, **Confession** came to the gate and knocked.

“Who is it?” the angel asked.

“It’s **Confession**,” he said, quite humble in his demeanor.

The gatekeeper opened the window and looked out. Upon hearing the noise of the window being opened, **Confession** came over to the angel and asked, “Can you let me in?”

“Well, let me see,” said the angel. He found his book and opened it. “I’d gladly let you in, but we can’t let sin into God’s kingdom,” he said a little exasperated.

“Yes, but I confessed them all!”

“That may be, though I highly doubt it. Even if you had, it still wouldn’t have erased any of them.” The angel paused and looked over one of the pages of sins under the heading: “Unconfessed Sins.” He picked one at random and asked, “Do you remember that time you plotted a prank on your classmate simply because he looked arrogant one day after winning the spelling bee in school?”

Confession turned pale. “I missed one! I can’t believe it!”

The angel said, “You missed myriads of sins, my friend. Now, if confession is the means to have your sins forgiven (not saying it is), you are unforgiven because I have many pages of unconfessed sins here on your ledger.”

Confession had nothing to say. He was carried to hell and cast in.

Do Your Best

Do Your Best came to the gate a while later the same day. He knew he wasn’t perfect, but he always believed he simply had to do the best he could. He didn’t believe anyone could know if he would be accepted until Judgment Day; all one could do is hope.

As weird as it sounds, **Do Your Best** seemed to have a certain amount of hope in not knowing where he was going. The very fact that he didn’t know gave him some measure of assurance, because if he knew he was going to heaven, he would have the unforgivable attitude of confidence. And once anyone is confident of his salvation, he is most certainly lost because of the saying:

Aber ein Mensch, wenn er gleich sein Bestes gethan hat, so ist es noch kaum engefangen; und wenn er meint, er habe es vollendet, so fehlet es noch weit.

When a man has done his best, it is barely begun; and when he thinks he has fulfilled it, then it fails yet by far (Sirach 18:6).

Do Your Best did not take the above verse as a revelation of how hopeless it is for a man to do his best. He still believed one had to do his best, but along with doing his best, he also had to avoid the attitude of thinking he had done it perfectly. He kept himself in this grey area between trying his best and avoiding confidence.

Ignorance kept him from thinking he was going to

Continued
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make it, and therefore increased his chance that he will make it. Standing at the gate, he was about to lose the ignorance that had kept him humble all his life.

He knocked on the door that had been built into the large gate. The angel opened the side window and asked, "Who is it?"

"**Do Your Best**," he said meekly.

The gatekeeper checked for his name and found it. "What right do you have to get into the Kingdom of God, my friend?"

"I don't know. I am letting you tell me," **Do Your Best** responded. He had been feeling uneasy ever since he left his body, and now he was shaking a little.

The angel looked at him for a moment, wondering why he would say such a thing.

"I did the best I could," added **Do Your Best** hesitantly, realizing even as the words left his mouth that he could have done better.

The angel voiced his realization. "Are you sure you did the best you could?"

"Well, there were times I could have done better."

The angel asked him a startling question: "Since you believed you had to do the best you could, and since you knew you failed, why did you keep trying? Your own standard was condemning you."

"That was the point!" answered **Do Your Best**. "That kept me humble. I'd try my best and when I failed, I took comfort in the fact that my failures kept me from thinking I had fulfilled it."

The angel had never heard anything so strange in his life. Why would anyone take comfort in his failures? Failures should scare one so much that they should seek God's answer until they know they have it.

"Let me get this straight. You believed you should be completely righteous in

order to get into heaven; is that correct?"

"Yes, I believe one should BE completely righteous, but since no one is, then no one should ever THINK he is completely right," answered **Do Your Best**.

The angel thought for a moment, and then replied, "I agree that one should be righteous, and I also agree that if an unrighteous person thought he was righteous, he would be deceived."

"Yes," said **Do Your Best**. "I warned people of those false teachers who claimed they knew they were going to heaven."

"What's wrong with knowing you're going to heaven?" the angel asked.

Do Your Best was surprised and replied, "Didn't you just agree that thinking you're righteous is a deception? Those who say they know they're going to heaven are saying they know they're righteous."

It finally dawned on the angel that this man's belief was based purely on his own performance and excluded the finished work of Christ.

"**Do Your Best**, I'm looking at your book. About one eighth of one page of your book contains your best efforts. The rest of the book records your failure to live up to what you knew was right. There is a huge gap between your performance and your knowledge of right and wrong, and if I'm hearing you correctly, you believe your attitude of humility and lack of confidence covers that gap."

Do Your Best answered, "Yes, I don't want to presume I am righteous; therefore, I will let you tell me."

"**Do Your Best**, you already know you are not righteous."

"But what about my lack of confidence?" cried **Do Your Best**. He couldn't believe how foolish it sounded. How could I have thought that lack of confidence is a virtue?

"Take him away!" ordered the angel. He

found out where he was going when he was cast into hell.

Poor Sinner

Next up, **Poor Sinner** came to the gate and knocked.

The angel answered, "Who is it?"

"I'm just a poor sinner," he said.

The angel looked at him and asked, "What's your name?"

"My name is **Poor Sinner**."

The angel found his book and opened it. He was baffled by the name. Why would anyone own his sinfulness so completely? When he opened the book, he saw it full of sins.

"What do you have to say for yourself, **Poor Sinner**?" The angel was actually curious.

Poor Sinner was at a loss for words and didn't say anything.

"Why did you adopt the name, '**Poor Sinner**'?"

"Well," he stammered, "it sounds stupid now, but I thought there was humility in admitting I was a poor sinner. I simply wanted as much humility as I could get, so I adopted it as my identity."

The angel was dumbfounded. Why would anyone own something that condemned him? He must have gone to the same church as **Do Your Best**, he decided.

He turned to **Poor Sinner** and asked, "Did you know sinners go to hell?"

"Yes."

"Then why did you keep calling yourself a poor sinner?"

Poor Sinner thought a while, and then responded, "I think it's because we all knew we were sinners."

"Yes, but why weren't you scared to death of your sinfulness instead of owning it?" cried the angel.

"Because of the words of Jesus."

At this response, the angel almost fell off his seat. Before he ordered him to his

fate, he thundered, “Where did you get that idea?”

Poor Sinner was feeling very poor by now, but he managed to explain, “Jesus said a publican prayed, *God be merciful to me a sinner*” (Luke 18:13).

The angel straightened up in his chair, a little understanding coming to his mind. “So you thought Jesus was saying God is impressed when a man is poor and pitiful?”

The angel thought for a while. “I think I see it now. You thought coming to God humbly as a sinner would cause Him to be merciful.” The angel was scratching his head. He looked at **Poor Sinner**, who had just quoted Jesus. Then, he looked at his book full of sins.

“Let me ask you a question, **Poor Sinner**. When you realized you were a sinner, did you ask God for mercy?”

“Yes, all the time!”

“Did you go away justified?”

“I was never sure. I simply hoped He heard me and that He would have mercy on me.”

The angel said, “Let me tell you something. God had plenty of mercy for you, but His mercy comes out of His own heart, not out of your humility; His mercy cannot be bought. If He could have forgiven you based on you presenting yourself a sinner, why did Jesus have to die for you? Why didn’t you come to the cross, where Jesus was made to be sin for you, and believe on Him? (2 Corinthians 5:21) Mercy was flowing so richly there, you would have received a witness of the Spirit that He had indeed justified you” (Romans 8:16).

The angel paused. “Okay; you had me quite confused for a while. For my own satisfaction, I had to understand your way of thinking before I had you taken away. What strange ways to seek mercy and yet fail to receive it!” With that, he ordered him taken to his place in hell.

The angel fought off a wave of discouragement. “I’m sure I’ll never see a

man enter the narrow gate.”

Righteousness

At that moment, **Righteousness** came to the gate and knocked.

The gatekeeper, prepared for another failure, answered, “Who is it?”

“**Righteousness**,” came the answer.

The angel felt something surge through his very being as he opened the window. There was **Righteousness**, fighting tears amidst a smile. The angel stared for a moment. The look on the man’s face must have been the most beautiful sight he had ever seen; it was a look of knowing he was worthy of hell, but at the same time boldly trusting in Christ.

“Angel, would you check my book? I can’t wait to get in and see my Savior.”

“Oh, yes; just a moment.”

The angel found his name and was startled with what he found. It said, “Born in Bethlehem, grew in favor with God and man, obtained a testimony from heaven when a voice said, ‘This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,’ went about doing good, healed the sick, and preached the gospel. He knew no sin, but was perfect in every way.”

The angel looked at **Righteousness**. “This is not your record! Where is YOUR record?”

Righteousness answered, “My record is in the book of the Lamb.”

The angel couldn’t believe it. He got the Lamb’s book and was shocked. It said, “Began to lie right after birth, had eyes full of lust, was selfish, greedy, and disobedient to parents, slandered, gossiped, spoke filthy words, . . .”

The angel couldn’t take it anymore. “Who messed with the records? This claims to be Jesus’s record; this is NOT Jesus’s record!”

Righteousness explained, “When I believed on Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit took my sins and placed them in Christ’s account. The Holy Spirit then took

Christ’s righteousness and put it in my account. The consequences of that exchange caused Jesus to be put to death, but it granted me the gift of life.”

Almost moved to tears at the thought of it, he continued. “He died because of my sins, and I live because of His righteousness. He took my name so I could take His. He was covered with my sins and died . . .”

Righteousness paused. He lifted both arms, and shouting, he continued, “. . .so I could be covered with His righteousness and live!”

The angel was stunned. He looked at him again. There was not a stitch of sin in his robe; it was perfect in righteousness.

“How did you live so perfectly?”

Righteousness answered, “I didn’t. This is not my righteousness. It is the righteousness of the Son of God, who became a man and walked out this righteousness for me. Will you open the gate?”

The angel opened the gate. **Righteousness** walked in and was greeted by saints and angels in the most beautiful paradise he had ever seen.

“Where’s Jesus?” He looked around, and there He was. **Righteousness** fell at His feet and worshipped Him. “Thank You, thank You, thank You,” he said over and over. “Thank You for taking my place down on earth on that shameful cross, so I could come up here in this beautiful place and be with You forever!”

“Welcome home, son,” Jesus said. “Welcome home.”

—Moses Schrock

Who are you?

Religion? Good Works?

Repentance? Confession?

Do Your Best? Poor Sinner?

Righteousness?

End

Feedback and Response Section

1

Please take our name off your mailing list. Could you direct your energy more toward guarding the people who took the step that you have, trying to keep them from moving on out into the world. If you look at the next generations, you cannot keep from being

Jonas Yoder responds:

JG: Thank you for your response. I'm sorry that you were offended by the *Amish Voice*. We try hard to keep our materials biblical with the intention of bringing encouragement and the good news of the gospel while also warning against the dangers of the world. *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God* (Romans 12:2).

I wonder if it's possible that your view of the world and the Biblical view of the world might be different. I know that various people groups, often including Amish, view the world as people who use certain modern conveniences etc.. If you do a study on the biblical use of the word, world, you will find that the Bible defines world as a particular mindset, particularly that of operating from an unregenerate mind or not operating by

alarmed. I have cousins that are not so sure that the "creation" is a true story. Seems if someone starts to resist leadership, soon they are in conflict, which subjects them to sin. Serve the Lord with a perfect heart. — JG

faith but by sight. A biblical description of a worldly person would be one that is preoccupied with the physical things of the world, money, possessions, fame etc. So from that perspective any person from any culture can be a worldly person because it's based on the mindset of the person instead of physical possessions. Likewise any person from any culture can be a spiritual person based on whether they have been born again into the kingdom of God and consequently will have a more spiritual focus or mindset. Unfortunately it is easy for a person from any culture to become worldly by being preoccupied with physical possessions etc.

I'm glad that you pointed out that we need to serve the lord with a perfect heart but we also know that no human being has a perfect heart of themselves which is why it is so vitally important to be born again into the kingdom of God by which we receive a new and perfect heart. May God bless you as you endeavor to serve him with a perfect heart. — Jonas Yoder

2

Good Morning. I would like to order one of your books, "The Overcoming Life."

And here is some money to help pay for your newsletter.

Thank you Emma! Your kind words and donation to help pay for printing and postage was greatly appreciated. You also encouraged us to keep on keeping on.

As I read your note, I was reminded: there's only one way to escape opposition in life. A person would have to move away from all mankind and live on a lonely island for the rest of his or her life. That would not be any fun either.

It is also clear that those who stand for biblical truth, will often be scrutinized and mocked. It happened under the leadership of Moses, the prophet Jeremiah, King David, Jesus Christ, and all the apostles and witnesses of Christ throughout the ages.

Many who lived before us, gave their lives because they stood for the truth! They were cast out of synagogues and churches. They were forsaken by parents and other family members. But

Finally! Keep up the good work! I know you face opposition, but so did Jesus. I'm also thankful for some opposition so we know Jesus is working. If Satan would leave us alone, then he would be sure he has us in his clutches already. —Emma

nothing kept them from moving forward and keeping their eyes on the prize. Nothing!

As editor of the *Amish Voice*, I will be the first one to tell you, I do not have it all together. Yes, I have learned a great deal about the Scriptures, but I have so much more to learn.

I have determined this: I will pray and do my very best to provide encouraging and challenging articles through the *Amish Voice* publication. I believe it is what God called me to do. Some will be open and receive what we have to share. Others will not have anything to do with us, and mock us. Either way, when I die, it is my utmost desire to hear those precious words from the lips of my Savior, Jesus Christ—*well done, good and faithful servant*. Hallelujah and God bless you, Emma!

—Joe Keim, for the glory of God

This is what some local Amish have observed with regard to non-Amish churches in this area. Why, they exclaim, with no fences the sheep will all disappear! Funny they should say that, since sheep are such a good example of the difference between the Old Testament and New Testament system of governing. Also I appreciate the honest comment that permits a conversation. And my thanks to Andy who told me of this.

In the old system of governing by laws and rules, the penalty is like a fence or wall that prevents straying. You can look at all the green pastures out there and wish you could get into those lush pastures, but fences can not be moved to allow that. If some sheep get outside the fence, the farmer will make sure that the sheep are returned and repairs are made to prevent that from happening again. Laws always need to be tinkered with, since loopholes are found. Farm fences always had to be repaired when I was young, and most likely still do. As do rules.

The name of this particular fence is fear. Break the rules and you will fear the consequences. All governments in the world use the fear principle. For example If the penalty for texting while driving does not stop the violation, then the penalty is increased. Increase the fear factor until you comply. Raise the fence. Turn up the pain for those who do not comply. Such is the thinking of some of my people. Therefore the strictness is increased expecting better compliance. How then does your church even function? All the sheep will be going to the neighbors and never return!

However, under the new covenant, the system is very different. We have a shepherd. The fences do not even exist.

“What then”, you may say “keeps the flock together”?

No, we are not serving God out of fear, but out of love. The shepherd has said, in *John 10, 27* “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*” That sure makes a difference! Now we have the whole world as pasture! Just ask the shepherd if we could go to those green hills way off on the distance, and you can be sure that if there is a good way to get there safely, he will take you there. This is how the gospel will be taken to the ends of the earth. People called to be a pastor or other service usually are glad to do so, because they love the shepherd.

This verse above also reveals that a relationship exists between sheep and shepherd. I once had a man tell me that God had told him women were to have their dresses a certain distance below the knees. This would mean the shepherd could not tell a female what was proper and a man had to pass on the information, which made me doubt that was indeed true.

There is a vast difference between the two systems. One is driven by fear of breaking through the fence and being punished. Others see what has happened to you and fear doing the same thing. That system works, but there is no relationship needed. In other words, love is missing.

Now we come to the most important command in the Bible. The Sadducees had just been stumped. So an expert in law asked Jesus as written in *Matthew 22:36-40*. *Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the*

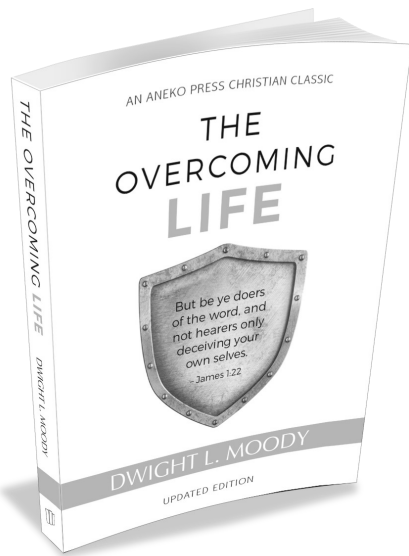
second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

How, then shall we love God whom we have not seen? Does it seem that love cannot control the sheep? Ah, yes it can! He has shown his love for us by giving his very life for us! The shepherd has redeemed us with his own life. That is the basis of faith in my life, and for countless others. I have to know God loves me for this system to work, otherwise it seems dangerous to step out where others sheep have not gone. That is the core of the New Testament. Unsure of your faith? Don’t stay there, read the promises, get the assurance and trust the Lord of our salvation. Otherwise the danger is to get back to fences and that requires no relationship.

Are Christians then obliged to follow the Old Testament law? It was and is a system using fear and punishment. *Romans 10; 4* *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. If you believe and obey Jesus, the law is fulfilled. My yoke is easy and my burden is light.* If you want some guidance on this, start with Matthew’s account of the sermon on the mount. What is written seems to apply to everyone that believes. Many missionaries and pastors are called to carry the word of God to various other places. Those are called individually. To hear what God wants for an individual requires a relationship, and that relationship requires knowing first, that God loves me and second that I am to love him. This particular view of how the New Testament kingdom works has helped me sort out some things and hope it helps you too!

—Eli Stutzman

End



Continued from the last issue.

Persecution

I don't think we have enough persecution today. Some people say we have persecution that is just as hard to bear as in the Dark Ages. Anyway, I think it would be a good thing if we had a little of the old-fashioned kind about now. It would bring out the strongest characters and make us all healthier. I have heard men get up in a prayer meeting, say they were going to make a few remarks, and then keep on till you would think they were going to talk all week. If we had a little persecution, people like that wouldn't talk so much.

Charles Spurgeon used to say that some Christians would make good martyrs. They would burn well because they are so dry. If there were a few stakes for burning Christians, I think it would take all the religiousness out of some men. I admit they haven't got much to start with. If they aren't willing to suffer a little persecution for Christ, they aren't fit to be His disciples. We are told that *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution* (2 Timothy 3:12). If the world has nothing to say

against you, Jesus Christ will have nothing to say for you.

The most glorious triumphs of the church have been won in times of persecution. The early church was persecuted for about three hundred years after the crucifixion. Those were years of growth and progress. But then, as Saint Augustine has said, the cross passed from the scene of public executions to the crown of the Caesars, and the downgrade movement began. When the church joined hands with the State, it consistently deteriorated in spirituality and effectiveness. However, the opposition of the State only served to purify it of all impurity. It was persecution that gave Scotland to Presbyterianism. It was persecution that gave this country to civil and religious freedom.

How are we to overcome in time of persecution? Hear the words of Christ. *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world* (John 16:33). Paul could testify that, though persecuted, he was never forsaken. The Lord stood by him, strengthened him, and delivered him out of all his persecutions and afflictions.

Many shrink from the Christian life because they will be mocked. Then sometimes when persecution won't bring a man down, flattery will. Foolish people often come up to a man after he has preached and flatter him. Sometimes ladies do that. Perhaps they will say to some worker in the church, "You talk a great deal better than so-and-so." He becomes proud and struts around as if he was the most important person in the town. I tell you, we have a wily devil to contend with. If he can't overcome you with opposition, he will try flattery or

ambition. If that doesn't serve his purpose, perhaps there will come some affliction or disappointment, and he will overcome in that way. Remember, anyone who has Christ to help him can overcome every foe and overcome them singly or collectively. Let them come. If we have Christ within us, we will overthrow them all. Remember what Christ is able to do. In all the ages, men have stood in greater temptations than you and I will ever have to meet.

There is one more thing to consider. I have to overcome the world, or the world is going to overcome me. I have to conquer sin in me and get it under my feet, or it is going to conquer me. Some people are satisfied with one or two victories and think that's good enough. We have got to do something more than that. It's a battle all the time. We can be encouraged by the fact that we are assured of victory in the end. We are promised a glorious triumph.

To Him That Overcomes

In the book of Revelation, the author makes eight promises to those who overcome in this life.

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God (Revelation 2:7). He will have a right to the tree of life. When Adam fell, he lost that right. God turned him out of Eden so that he couldn't eat of the tree of life and live forever. Perhaps He took that tree and transplanted it to the garden above. Through the second Adam, we are offered the right to eat of it.

He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death (Revelation 2:11). Death holds no power over him. It cannot touch him. Why? Because Christ tasted death, and through His death gained victory for every man. Death may

take this body, but that is all. This is only the house I live in. We should have no fear of death if we overcome.

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it (Revelation 2:17). If I overcome, God will feed me with bread that the world knows nothing about, and He will give me a new name.

He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations (Revelation 2:26). Think of it. What a thing to have, power over the nations. A man that is able to rule himself is the man that God can trust with power. Only a man who can govern himself is fit to govern other men. It seems like we are down here in training, and God is just polishing us for higher service. The details may not be specific, but God's Word tells us that we will reign with Him.

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels (Revelation 3:5). Jesus will present us to the Father in white garments, without spot or wrinkle. Every fault and stain will be removed. We will be made perfect. He that overcomes will not be a stranger in heaven.

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name (Revelation 3:12). Imagine no more backsliding and no more wandering over the dark mountains of

sin. We will be forever with the King.

He says, *I will write upon him the name of my God*. He is going to put His name on us. Isn't it grand? That is something worth fighting for.

It is said that when Muhammad came in sight of Damascus and found that the people had all left the city, he said, "If they won't fight for this city, what will they fight for?" If men won't fight here for all this reward, what will they fight for?

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne (Revelation 3:21). My heart has often melted as I have looked at that passage. The Lord of glory comes down and says, "I will grant to you to sit on My throne, even as I sit on My Father's throne, if you will just overcome." Isn't it worth a struggle? Countless many fight for a crown that will fade away. Yet, we are to be placed above the angels, archangels, seraphim, and cherubim. We will be placed upon the throne, and we will remain forever with Him. May God put strength into every one of us to fight the battle of life, so we may sit with Him on His throne.

When Emperor Frederick III of Germany was dying, his own son would not have been allowed to sit with him on the throne. Nor did the son have the authority to let anyone else sit there with him. Yet, we are told that we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ, and we will sit with Him in glory.

Finally, *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son* (Revelation 21:7). My dear friends, isn't that a high calling? I used to have my Sunday school children sing, "I want to be an angel," but have not done so for years. We will be above angels. We will be sons of God. We will inherit all things. Do you ask how much

I'm worth? I don't know. The Rothschilds cannot compute their wealth. They don't even know how many millions they own. My condition is the same. I haven't the slightest idea how much I'm worth. God has no poor children. If we overcome, we will inherit all things.

What an inheritance. Let's get the victory through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master.

Repentance

Results of True Repentance

I want to draw your attention to what true repentance leads to. I'm not addressing the unconverted only, because I believe that there is a good deal of repentance to be done by the church before much will be accomplished in the world. I firmly believe that the low standard of Christian living is keeping many enslaved to the world and bound in their sins. When the ungodly see Christian people who do not repent, it's unreasonable to expect them to repent and turn away from their sins. I have repented thousands of times more since I've known Christ than ever before. I think most Christians have some things to repent of.

This lesson applies to Christians, to myself, and to anyone who has never accepted Christ as his Savior.

There are five things that flow out of true repentance:

- Conviction.
- Contrition.
- Confession of sin.
- Conversion.
- Confession of Jesus Christ before the world.

This article was taken from the book, ***The Overcoming Life* — by D. L. Moody**. To get a free copy of *The Overcoming Life*, go to page 15.

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May

God Loves You Just as You Are

Dr. Charles Stanley explains how an abundant life is possible only when we recognize all that our Savior did for us at Calvary. Once we grasp the message of the cross, we will see it as the power of God to redeem us from our sins and to deliver us from what we were before we met our Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Transforming Power of Faith

Dr. Adrian Rogers from Love Worth Finding shares a very thought-provoking quote: "Nature forms us, sin deforms us, education informs us, society reforms us, but only Jesus Christ can transform us." This message looks at the transformed life of "the shady lady of Jericho" who became the great-grandmother of King David.

Fear of Death, Parts 1 and 2

Fearing death is a common experience. Do you fear dying and going to hell, leaving behind loved ones, or that the ones you love might die? In this eye-opening message, **Pastor Jeff Schreve** will help you understand the root of your fear.

June

Controlling Your Thoughts, Parts 1 and 2

Charles Stanley asks, Are your thoughts full of unforgiveness, pride, lust, or anger? Your mind is constantly processing and managing incoming information. Unfortunately, the fact that

you're struggling with your thoughts may mean that you haven't been focusing them on things that honor God. In his profound sermon, Dr. Stanley shows you how to win the battle for your mind in a way that will impact every area of your life.

Finding Healing from Sexual Assault, Parts 1 and 2

Leila Sommerfeld and **Kathleen Terrill** join Focus on the Family as they openly share about the pain and devastation they've experienced as rape survivors, offering hope to women who've been sexually assaulted as they discuss the healing and restoration they've found through the power of God's love.

July

Eternal Life -- Ours Now

Throughout his ministry, **Vance Havner** lived and preached that a Christian should exhibit faithfulness to Jesus in all areas of life. Listen to this country preacher explain from the Bible how we can have eternal life now.

Biblical Assurance Parts 1 and 2

Paul Washer asks How do you know you are saved? The only way, is to examine your life in the light of what the Bible reveals about genuine faith, he asserts; and the best place to get a Biblical assurance instead of an emotional one is 1st John.

Ancient Revival

L. E. Maxwell speaks on the main hindrance to revival in the Scripture, and the main hindrance today: our own sin. The reason we don't see God move is that we think that someone else besides us is blocking the moving of the Spirit.

Contact The Amish Voice

1. Comments and Questions: If you have any comments, prayer requests, suggestions, ideas, or questions, or if you want to send us an article or your testimony to be printed in the *Amish Voice*.

2. Printing and Postage: If you enjoy the *Amish Voice* and would like to help us with the cost of printing and postage.

3. Friends and Family: If you know of others who might benefit from the *Amish Voice*.

Contact us at: The Amish Voice, P.O. Box 128
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In the January *Amish Voice*, we asked for your interpretation of I John 2:15-16: *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

Below is one response we received.

Dear *Amish Voice*:

Be careful what you ask for, because you might just get it! I could write this letter and feel I'm smarter than most, but that would be foolish. The Lord's strength is made perfect in my weakness. I would understand the lust of the flesh to be anything we can do to make our flesh feel good or good about itself. At this time I will take the liberty to speak my mind. I want to live a righteous life, and it's not wrong to do that in itself, but I find that I

do so to feel good about myself—the lust of the flesh.

The lust of the eyes. You know I like to have my place neat. What if I find myself or my eyes taking pleasure in that? Our eyes can find many things to lust after.

The pride of life. God stands against the proud! You know where our salvation comes from? Does it come from living a righteous life? *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you* (John 15:12). If anyone could have boasted, it was Paul. He called all those good things filthy rags – manure. *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags* (Isaiah 64:6).

Would I be willing to give up my Amish heritage for Jesus Christ? It is a good life, and I wouldn't want to live any other way. I find it selfish to be Amish! I don't feel that it is wrong to be Amish, but it can be.

Ever since Adam fell in the garden of Eden, mankind has tried to be right with God. Do you think I'm different? Absolutely not! What was Jesus's purpose in coming to earth? It was for mankind – to redeem them. *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* (John 3:16). This verse says that it is whosoever believes in Jesus – not whosoever believes in his own righteousness, but in His. He commanded us to go out and preach the gospel, and I'm not talking about just overseas or just to the church. Once I accept that what Christ did was good enough, then I have all power in heaven and earth. *No man cometh unto the Father, but by me* [Jesus] (John 14:6).

Lord, open the eyes of all who read this, that they might know the truth, and that the truth will set them free. To God be all honor and glory. Praise God! —Schwartz

The Most Powerful Sermon I Ever Heard

—By Gerald Hochstetler

This morning the little girl again flashed through my mind! The single most powerful sermon I've ever heard preached was preached at the doctor's office. Years ago, I found myself at the doctor's office for some odd reason! I can't remember why, other than I needed to be there! Business was turning me into an angry, bitter man. I fought through a huge lawsuit, supposedly good people, church going people, were driving me crazy. Hate and anger towards people in general was taking a deep root and I couldn't shake it!

As we all waited for our appointment a little girl in a wheelchair came in and my heart sank. I have never seen anyone so horrifyingly deformed. I didn't want to stare. The room became deathly quiet, people were squirming and uncomfortable. And then she pulled herself up as best as she could, and kind of sideways looked up and around with a big smile, a smile that shone with love and peace.

I can still see the girl, I can still see the smile, I can still feel the tension. And even to this day, I choke up and fight

back the tears. There is no doubt in my mind that God came into the room that day. God smiled to us in the form of a deformed crippled girl!

Who will be the greatest in the kingdom of God? I believe little ones like this dear one will be seated in the highest ranks in heaven!

And as for me? My God, my God – have mercy on this old ungrateful me! I hope to be a servant to these great ones on those heavenly shores!

—Gerald Hochstetler

A Broken Heart

A broken heart is a thing hard to explain,
It's a burst of light, a stab of pain,
It burst's, it blooms, it spreads,
It takes over life, til you may as well be dead,
It takes and it takes, 'til you have no more to give,

There's a dull ache, deep in your heart,
And left alone, it will tear you apart,
But a heart, after all, is only a heart,
And with time, can heal, part by part.

— Annie Mast

Why Did Jesus Come to Earth?

—John Weaver

How would you respond if someone were to ask you the following two questions: Why do you think Jesus came to earth, and in what way did you personally benefit from it?

Most of the answers I'd receive would probably revolve around the idea that Jesus came to earth to take away our sins. While this is correct, and praise God that it is, it is only partially right. As wonderful as it is to have Jesus take away our sins, he came to earth to do a lot more than just that. Let's take some time to look at a few more of reasons that Jesus gave his life on earth so many years ago.

First, in Matthew we read that Mary was told she would bring forth a son. She was told to name her son Jesus because He would "save His people from their sins." Just as most people assume, one of the reasons Jesus came to earth was to save us from our sins. Not only did He come to save us from our sins, but He also came to give us power to become the children of God and to give us the ability to stop living in our sins as lost and unsaved.

Another reason that Jesus came and gave His life on earth was to redeem us. *Redeem* means to vindicate or to set free. In my lifetime, I have seen many people who were bound in sins and strongholds; these people longed to be free, but there were demons controlling their lives. In spite of all of their human efforts, they continued to be bound; the name of Jesus was the only thing that could eventually set them free. Today, because of His power, these same people are able to walk in complete freedom. When we walk with Jesus in the Spirit, we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

After a person is redeemed, Jesus will give restoration. The Bible says that "He leadeth me beside the still waters; he restoreth my soul..." *To restore* means to bring back to a previous condition after having been left to deteriorate. Sometimes, a person will buy an old, junky vehicle, and with much labor, effort, and time, they are able to restore what most would see as a piece of junk into a beautiful new usable work of art. In the same way, after Jesus takes away our past sins, He saves us from our sins, redeems us, and restores us!

Restoring a vehicle is certainly a labor of love. A person must see beyond the rust and deterioration; he must see a finished product in the future that is worth all the labor and effort it takes to get to that point. In the same way, Jesus also sees us as a labor of love; no one ever put as much time and effort into a restoration project as Jesus did for me and you.

Another reason Jesus came to earth was to take away the curse of the law. Galatians 3:13 says, "For Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law." Jesus gave us the ability to no longer live under the law and to instead live in grace.

Finally, Jesus came to earth to re-establish a relationship with God; He became our mediator. 1 Timothy 2:5 says, "For there

is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." A mediator is a go-between person or a reconciler; he is a person, who brings two parties together. This is exactly what Christ did for us when he died on the cross.

Wow! Thank you, Lord Jesus. I am sure there are many more reasons that you and I benefit from Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. I have found it to be a great inspiration in my daily walk to simply say: "Thank you Jesus, for what you did for me." Today, instead of just focusing on being thankful for having my sins forgiven, I can also be grateful for lots more.

I have just one more thought in closing. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4). At this meeting, we become joint heirs with Christ. Think on that thought for a minute.

I recently updated and made changes to my will. One thing, however, that always stays the same is that my children are my joint heirs. They are to receive equally, not because they earned it, but because they are my children. In the same way, we are joint heirs with Christ. This truth tells me one thing: God sees us as equal sons and daughters, equal to His only begotten son Himself.

Wonderful. Thank you, Lord! —John Weaver

End

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Why Would a Good Father Punish..., cont. from back cover

things we've done wrong, but about the "earthen vessel" that surrounds the treasure we are carrying. (2 Cor. 4:7) God is a wonderful Father! And we can be completely convinced that He will make all things work out for our benefit if we love Him. (Rom. 8:28)

Recently I was telling God, "Lord it seems so much of my life You've had to humiliate me. I really want you to take the

reproaches (disgraces, slander) out of my life, and be able to bless me with favor." Just that quick, God spoke to my heart, "Would you rather be proud?" I bowed my head and with tears I told Him, "No Lord, I would rather be humiliated and disgraced for the rest of my life than to be proud." Later, I saw the apostle Paul said he takes pleasure in reproaches. (2 Cor. 12:10) Be encouraged with the cup God has given you to drink. He is your Father and will work out all things for your benefit if you keep on trusting and loving Him. Hallelujah! —Dale Schmucker

Forsaking All and Following Jesus

—Joe Keim

One by one, Jesus called out and said follow me. Peter and Andrew said yes. James and John said yes. So did eight others. They dropped all—their jobs, incomes and family and followed immediately.

They were ordinary people like us—middle-class, family men, going about their business. They lied, stole, murmured, lost their temper, swore, struggled with belief, dealt with jealousy, hid behind closed doors, and slept through some of Jesus' most anguishing moments.

In spite of who they were and where they came from, in spite of their failures, shortcomings and total mess ups, Jesus loved them unconditionally and continued to believe in them.

All but John and Judas died a martyr's death—they were beheaded, crucified, thrown off cliffs, beat to death, stoned, dipped in boiling oil, imprisoned, cursed at, dragged behind horses, and flayed to death by a whip.

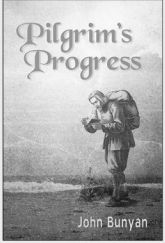
So we see that at some point they became believers, and when that happened, they refused to get tangled up in this old world and its wicked and empty affairs. They refused to lose focus of eternity, and they felt fervently about passing the Faith on to the next generation. Why? Because they desired *a better country; that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city* (Hebrews 11:16).

Today we know these men as being the very foundation of Christ's beloved church, and their names are inscribed on the twelve foundations of New Jerusalem.

Oh God, let the testimonies of these forefathers be a challenge to us this day. Awaken us from our slumber. We have turned your blessings and prosperity into selfishness. We've become lazy and weak in our faith. Break out heart and help us make the name of Jesus more important than cartoon, movie characters and sports figures. We have strayed away from You. We are spending more time passing this world and all its garbage on to our children than we are passing the Faith on. Our children and grandchildren must know about Jesus and our forefathers - by name - and what they endured to pass the Faith on to us. Yes, Lord, break our hearts, even if it means persecution. I can't take more fake Christianity. It's so much worse than fake news! —Joe Keim

End

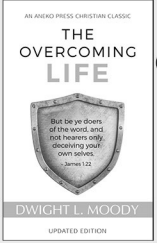
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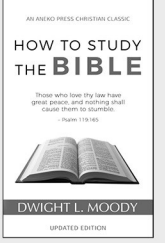
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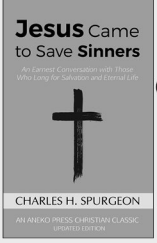
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Why Would a Good Father Punish His Children?

—Dale Schmucker

Heb. 12:6 *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

For years I struggled with the idea of God's chastening in my life. Especially the idea of God chastening me without me knowing why. I would never punish my own children without first making sure they understand why. And yet I had to be honest, in many of the difficult things I've faced in my life, I have not had a clear reason for them. Is there a difference between trials and chastening? How can I know the difference? You cannot love and trust a God who seems to delight in hurting you. And yet scriptures are very clear on the value and need for God's chastening in our lives. This is by no means conclusive, but here are a few thoughts that have helped clear things up for me.

First of all, I believe the Word is clear, there is a chastening in the form of sowing and reaping. (Gal. 6:7-9) And there's the chastening that comes from straying from God's will. (Ps. 119:67) In both of these I believe God will make it clear why we are being chastened if we want to know. And I also believe God has no delight in chastening of this nature. Rather, His delight is in showing mercy and blessing, and lifting the chastening as soon as He sees we've learned what He's trying to teach us. He's a good Father.

One of the meanings for the word "chastening" is "discipline; training and education of children." So much of the difficult

times we go through are intended to teach us things. It's here that we receive the revelation of Jesus and the completion we have in Him. I believe this is an endless process. As we see the immensity of the value of the revelation of our completion in Christ, it becomes easier to suffer the pain and the loss. (Phil. 3:7-8)

And then we have what is described in 2 Cor. 4 and 12. The chastening that ministers poverty, weakness and death. The only way the power of Christ can work through us is by a continual weakening and death (letting go) of our natural strength. This is an endless process and extremely important. It makes us "poor in spirit" weak and dependent on God alone. It keeps us pliable and teachable. It can only be endured by faith...without faith it will embitter and destroy a person. But all of the godly people we've appreciated the most, have gone, and are going through this continual process. During the time the tabernacle was being built, man had already learned how to pour hot metals into forms in order to make their desired objects. However, all the gold objects to be used in God's service were to be made of "beaten gold." This means every piece was made from a lump of gold and beaten into something useful and beautiful, one blow at a time. Gold is very malleable. This such a beautiful and prophetic picture of God's way with us in the new Covenant.

I believe by far the majority of our chastening is not about

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