



MAP ♦ P.O. Box 128 ♦ 575 U.S. Highway 250 ♦ Savannah, OH 44874 ♦ (419) 962-1515 ♦ May 2017

LIVING IN THE STRONGHOLD OF DECEPTION

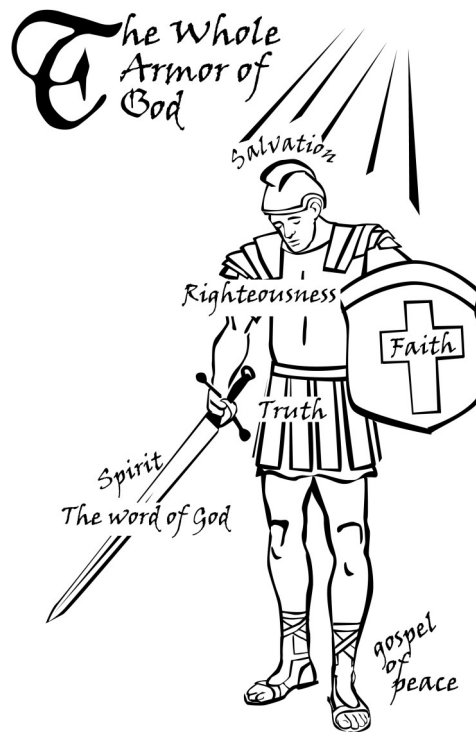
Fighting the Good Fight—by David Wickey

Part 1
of 8

Part one of an eight-part series called
Living in the Stronghold of Deception.

Fighting the Good Fight

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and



watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (Ephesians 6:10-18)

When God moves an individual or a group of people to do what He has called them to do, God Himself is the author of it, and these people are led by the Holy Spirit. This threatens Satan's kingdom. It

stirs up the demonic world of spiritual wickedness in high places. If we think we can battle this spiritual wickedness with our own carnal power, we will be utterly defeated, and the work of God will cease. I am not being negative; I am being truthful. I have seen it happen.

When a person is first born of the Spirit (born again), he or she is a baby in the things of God. When we are babies, we do not know how to fight properly. Those who have walked with Christ in the way of the cross for a longer period of time have learned to fight more effectively. Spiritual babies think they know how to fight the good fight of faith, but they fight carnally. They are babies in the things of God. I have personally fallen many times, and I am still learning. When we are babies, we hang on to our self-righteousness, self-work, and self-will.

Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law,

blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. (Philippians 3:5-11)

As we begin to lose our lives according to the working of His grace, we are brought into Christ and we begin to understand how to fight the good fight of faith. We then are made conformable unto His death. This must be by faith through His grace working in us. *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them* (Ephesians 2:10).

As babies, we begin to come into the workmanship that comes from God. We start growing into Christ Jesus. *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen* (2 Peter 3:18). My friend, this is called holiness!

The Holy Spirit teaches us how to fight the good fight of faith. We can begin to overcome the spiritual wickedness in high places because we are

in Him and not in the flesh. We learn how to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. We begin to know how to put on the whole armor of God. We learn how to stand, having our loins girt about with truth, for we are in the truth. We learn how to put on the breastplate of righteousness, for we are in His righteousness. We learn how to let our feet be shod with the preparation of peace, for He is our peace. We learn how to take the shield of faith, for we are in the faith. We learn how to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one, for we know how to put on Christ. We learn how to take the helmet of salvation, for our mind has learned of Him. We learn how to take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:10-18).

The one who has learned this fight from years of walking in faith can and will fight for the baby in Christ: *watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints* (Ephesians 6:18).

On earth, when people enlist in the army, they must go through basic training. They have given up their lives to serve their country. When they are in training, they must give up their way of doing things and learn how to fight the army's way. If they don't learn the army's way and keep on going their own way, they get into trouble. It is the same with a baby Christian. Baby Christians think they know how to fight, but they do not yet know how to fight God's way. If the baby Christian is to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and complete the call of God on his life, he must lose his own life and his own

purposes and enter the life of Christ and the purpose that God has called him to. If he doesn't do it God's way and in God's order, he will run into great failure and devastation. I have seen it in my own life and in the lives of others. *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier* (2 Timothy 2:1-4).

When we begin this training, through the work of the cross by the Holy Spirit, we want to run, because it puts to death our way of thinking and doing things. We do not want to die but death to the self-life is mandatory if we are to come into the life of Christ and into His purpose for our lives.

How does one die to the self-life?

If we have been born again of the Holy Spirit, we have a choice. God has given us free will. We can choose to submit to this training or run from it, going our own way, and doing our own thing. How do we know when we are being trained God's way or when we are going our own way? Ephesians says that after the Lord had descended and also ascended above all the heavens, He gave gifts unto men. *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints,*

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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's important for us to tell you that the cost of *The Amish Voice* is \$.50 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. Thank you.

for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive (Ephesians 4:11-14).

So you see, brothers and sisters, we cannot become good soldiers of Christ until we choose to put ourselves under the training of true, proven ministry that God has given to His church, and not to man. This is God's order and not man's order. I am afraid we have lost this order in the church. Let us pray that we will allow God's order once again to operate in the church. We learn how to fight the good fight of faith by God's ordained order. May God have mercy on us and give us wisdom and understanding. God's order always leads us to the cross and what He accomplished for us. This leads us into the great redemption of mankind and the manifestation of the sons of God. This is a glorious work! The human mind cannot understand it. The rulers of the darkness of this world and the spiritual wickedness in high places do not want this work to take place, because it is bringing the kingdom of God to earth, and Satan thinks it is his kingdom.

God has foreordained that we, the church, the called-out ones, who choose to become a *workmanship of God created in Christ Jesus* (Ephesians 2:10) and walk in the faith, learn how to fight the good fight of faith, by the grace of God.

When we choose to go our own way and walk away from this training, we will have eyes but will not be able to see. We will have ears but will not be able to hear. We will think we are doing the will of God. We will think we are fighting the good fight, but it will be by our own carnal ways which war against God's ways. Satan will laugh and encourage us to do so. He comes transformed as an angel of light. Satan has his apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, but they are false ministers. Baby Christians won't know the difference. That is why we need the training of Ephesians 4:11-16. Pray for laborers in the harvest field, for they are few. We MUST learn how to fight the good fight of faith God's way, which is the way of the cross. Brothers and sisters, let us never, never, never leave the cross. If we do, we will surely come into deception in the power of self-righteousness, which in the end will destroy us.

In his first letter to the church in Corinth, Paul wrote: *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?* (1 Corinthians 3:1-4).

The people had their eyes on the ministers instead of on Jesus. Satan was laughing at the confusion in Corinth, for he was the author of it. Being yet babies,

they did not know how to fight the good fight of faith. If the apostle had not brought the word of God and put the church according to God's order, God's will and purpose would not have been accomplished in Corinth. It would have ceased to operate. They would have missed their calling and would have missed growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

After the correcting them and putting God's order in the church at Corinth by the Holy Spirit, In 1 Corinthians 16:13, Paul says: *Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.* In other words, be mature. Don't be babies anymore. Be strong. Don't fight the fight of faith in your baby or carnal ways that have not yet been crucified with Christ. If you do, you will be defeated concerning the faith. In 2 Corinthians 13:5, 11, Paul writes: *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith. . . . Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.* When we submit to God's order through the working of the cross by the Holy Spirit, we grow into maturity. We do not remain babies. We are humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and He is exalting us (1 Peter 5:6). We are than fighting the good fight of faith. Again, one cannot fight the good fight of faith unless one is in the faith, and not into some man-made worldly church system.

—David Wickey

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End

Emotional wounds are just as painful and real as **physical wounds**. Both wounds require time to heal. Neither one can be hidden or ignored. If I'm dealing with a physical wound on my hand, I fear that people will try to shake my hurting hand;

so I pull back, stay away from crowds and hide in the shadows. If I'm dealing with an emotional wound in my heart, I will fear that someone will come too close, rub against my pain and hurt me all over again. For that reason, I'll build a wall

around my emotional wound and live in a prison cell without bars. I feed my wound through all kinds of addictions; I'll protect those same wounds by losing my temper and staying in control of everyone's life around me. —Joe Keim

End

The Love of God

—By Orva Hochstetler

We can feel it in a soft breeze.
We can see it in colored leaves.
We can receive it through a friend.
It will be with us in the end:
It's the love of God.

We can smell it in a red rose.
It helps us overcome our woes.
We can see it in clear blue skies.
It's reflected in child's eyes:
It's the love of God.

We can hear it in a praise song.
It guides us away from what's wrong.
We can see it in the starlight.
It helps us follow what is right:
It's the love of God.

We can let it rule our home.
It never leaves us all alone.
We can see it in falling rain.
And let it wash away our pain:
It's the love of God.

We can see it in a waterfall.
And watch it smash dividing walls.
We can see it in the strong winds.
And it helps us conquer all sins:
It's the love of God.

We can see it in the morning dew.
And feel it when the day is through.
It will comfort us when we cry.
And it won't let us tell a lie:
It's the love of God.

We can hear it in a still voice.
It gives wisdom for a right choice.
We can see it in a rainbow.
And let it wash us white as snow:
It's the love of God.

We can see it in the sunshine.
It leads to things that are divine.
We can feel it give us a test.
It motivates to do our best:
It's the love of God.

We can let it dry painful tears.
And have it cast out all our fears.
It will make us less demanding.
With peace beyond understanding:
It's the love of God.

We can feel it's amazing grace.
It's the halo around God's face.
It redeems the sins we have done.
It comes to us through God's Son:
It's the love of God.

We can feel it in our new birth.
It's so big it covers the earth.
We can see it by how folks live.
It gives us power to forgive:
It's the love of God.

We can receive it in our heart.
It gives us a daily new start.
We can feel it each time we pray.
And have more by giving it away:
It's the love of God.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. — Romans 8:38-39

Contact The Amish Voice

Comments and Questions

1. 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*.

Printing and Postage

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

Friends and Family

3. If you know of others who might benefit from the *Amish Voice*.

Contact us at:

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Feedback and Response Section

1

Dear Amish Voice, we cannot agree with all your writings.

The Christian life is not just an easy downhill ride. Consider 1 Peter 4:18. Also 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. I am not saying only Amish will be saved, but this is where we (and some of you) were planted. Read 1 John 2:15 and 19 and Proverbs 22:28. I do not have all the answers, but want to try to bloom where I was planted by the grace of God.

—Ohio

Joe Keim Responds:

Thank you for your admonishment and concern. We fully agree with you; the Christian life is not an easy downhill do-as-you-please ride.

In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul wrote: **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.**

You and I cannot manufacture or produce our own *fruit* by following a list of do's and don'ts. *Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance* are the work of the Spirit in us; that is, if we have been born

of God and are walking in the Spirit (see John 1:13; John 3:3-5, Romans 8).

Jesus said: **Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing** (John 15:4-5).

Consider the natural branches on a fruit-bearing tree. They do one thing and one thing alone: they abide in the tree. It is the tree that forwards nutrients to the branches and causes the branches to bear fruit. In the same way, Christians are the branches through which the life of God flows. All we can do, and must do, if we want to bear fruit, is abide in Jesus Christ.

How do we abide in Christ?

The word "abide" simply means to live a life of consistency. Going through short spells where we really seek God will not substitute for abiding in Christ. This is one major reason why more Christians don't experience the abundant life that Jesus came to bring (John 10:10). Most people only really abide in Jesus when

the going gets tough. Then when the pressure lets up, they relax and go back to doing their own thing.

As Christians, we know they need to abide in the Lord more, but many don't feel they have the time. If we would see ourselves as worthless as a detached branch without Jesus, we would make the time. The more demands we have on us, the more we need to abide in the Lord.

What abiding in Christ is not: We sometimes think it is our own holiness that produces the fruit. The moment we think that way, we are no longer abiding (resting in, clinging to) in the vine, and we will become fruitless if we persist in that mindset. The word of God declares, "*all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*" (Isaiah 64:6).

This is speaking of our self-righteousness. All that we do on our own to obtain right standing with the Lord is grossly insufficient. But when we come to Jesus and receive His salvation, we are given His righteousness (2 Cor 5:21).

Jesus said, "*...by their fruits ye shall know them.*" (Matthew 7:20)

—Joe Keim, Ashland, OH
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END

2

Dear Amish Voice, it was with interest (and disgust) that I read Moses Schrock's article on forgiveness in the January *Amish Voice*. A partial gospel is a lie. Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me* (John 14:6). Anything apart from the truth is also apart from Jesus.

As we read through the gospel, we notice Jesus did not spend much time or words

with theology, but rather he called us to a life! Separated from the world, consecrated unto God our Father.

Just take for instance His sermon on the mount. All these things He is teaching, are "doing" things. For example, when you do alms, when you pray, when you fast, lay not up treasures on earth, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, are only a few of his many teachings on being a disciple of Christ, a

life that starts by forsaking all (surrendering all) and following Him.

When we experience the new birth, I like how it says it in Ephesians 4:22-25, when we really see the magnitude of our bondage of sin, and how Jesus frees us from the chains, by our faith in Him, then it brings about a response on our part! We now become a servant of the living God instead of servant to

**Continued
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sin! We will be judged by the way we live our lives, not by believing right, as you said in the article. What method will we be judged by? Our works? You say No! The day of judgement is recorded in Matt. 25:31-46 in Jesus' own words. Please also read Rev. 20:12-13 and Rev. 22:12. Rev. 22:14 says, *Blessed are they that do his commandments*. It does not say blessed are they that know or believe his commandments.

My only reason for writing to you is out of a deep concern that all lies be exposed and only truth be published! Please read Luke 21:8, Luke 21:34-36, and there are many more. I have been noticing more and more in the *Amish Voice* that the editorials are a Protestant belief, not at all the faith of the early church before 315 A.D., or the faith of the Anabaptists of the 1500s. So Please BEWARE!

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:6-8). They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts (Galatians 5:24). How did Jesus end his teachings on the sermon on the mount? Again, He ends with the same not — it's not him that saith, but him that doeth (Matthew 7:21-23). John 14-15 says

that it is all about keeping his commandments. Again, it's not our works that earn our salvation, but our response to what Jesus did and does in our daily lives.

Sincerely and with love, Indiana

Jeremiah Zeiset Responds:

Dear Indiana, overall, I like what you wrote. We absolutely must have fruit as evidence of our faith in Christ. There are churches in America where a message like yours ought to be preached. There are some denominations that preach what is called "easy believism" — simply say a prayer, and you get to go to heaven.

On the other hand, what we are finding out (and what I know from my own experience), is that most plain church members do not truly understand or claim salvation by faith for themselves. This is a big problem, as anyone who does not build on the foundation of Christ will be lost (1 Corinthians 3:11). We can go around and do great things to help others, but if we don't have Christ, we will be lost. In many plain funerals, I hear the preacher say, "He or she tried their best, and we think God will look at that." My friend, God will not look at how hard we tried. He will look at whether or not we had faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is counted for righteousness. In fact, the apostle Paul was so bold as to say, *But unto him that works, the reward is not reckoned as*

grace, but as debt. But to him that does not work, but believes in him that justifies the ungodly, the faith is counted as righteousness (Romans 4:4-5).

While the topic of what a Christian's life should look like merits some discussion, it must be preached in the right context. We're focusing mainly on this essential topic of salvation by faith in the *Amish Voice* because that seems to be the most misunderstood topic among the plain people. We're not trying to undo good works in this magazine, and in no place have we said that good, biblical works are not important. We are, however, making a clear effort to preach Jesus Christ as the starting point — and the ending point. It starts and ends with Christ (Revelation 22:13).

Finally, I know in my own life after I claimed faith in Christ for my righteousness, I finally could start living in victory. I can now honestly claim that I can do all things through Him. And that is good, because He gets the glory, not me.

I hope this helps you understand where we are coming from and why we care so much about making a clear case for faith in Jesus Christ. It is biblical, and the salvation of each person, Anabaptist or not, depends on it.

—Jeremiah Zeiset

Abbotsford, WI

End

3

I'm a sixty-six year old Amish man; we have ten children and forty some grandchildren. I really appreciated your story titled "Salvation Crystal Clear."

The *Amish Voice* just came the other day, and I was just so blessed by the article. I can say that 100% agreed with it. You know, it used to be that I didn't believe that way. Like I said, I'm an Amish man, and I'm okay in the church right now, but that about faith and works has been so distorted over the years. —Pennsylvania

Joe Keim Responds:

Thank you for the encouraging message you left on our voice mail. *Salvation Crystal Clear* was also one of our favorites. Curtis Hudson, the one who preached that sermon, was a very gifted evangelist in his time. He is now with the Lord and enjoying the reality of eternity and heaven's glory.

It has always been and, will continue to be, our goal to share relevant Christian articles, fully based on God's Word.

One of my ultimate desires is to help people come to a full understanding that salvation is by grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone.

It is true, *good works* will always follow *real faith*, but when it comes to salvation—the new birth, one must completely forsake the mindset that his or her works have any value.

Paul writes in Titus 3:5: "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...*" —Joe Keim

End

4

To the Amish Voice, greetings in the Precious Name of our Lord Jesus, the Christ, the only Name given by which man must be saved (Acts 4:12).

As I read your paper, to me it seems it could be misleading. I'm not sure what you are all trying to prove. Now, the scriptures you quote are right, but let's be careful and not neglect some [others]. I like to think of Eph. 2 as the grace chapter, but take a good look at verse 10, James 2:14-20.

Yes, you spoke the truth (saved by grace, right on) but I see you as skipping some valued points. Your doctrine sounds to Protestant to me. Accept Christ, then live as you please. Grace will get you to Glory Alleluia. It's not what our Anabaptist for fathers taught, according to history.

I do not see the scripture where we will be judged by grace as you quote. According to my understanding we will be judged by works Matt 16:27, II Cor. 5:9-11. Study the whole chapter, notice verse 19. Col 3:25, Titus 2:14, 3:1,8,14. Jude speaks of unweil works need the grace of God. Churches in Rev. some lacked good works. Rev. 20:12-15, Rev 22:12.

Yes, we are save by Grace, judged by our works. John 14 and 15 have a lot of good points. Check John 5:28, 29, I like V24.

LET'S TEACH THE WHOLE GOSPEL.

Yes, I believe I know where you are coming from. Seems some people try to work themselves to heaven, don't know whether

they can live good enough to get there, I don't understand the word Hope (Living Hope). Try to live and teach like the old people, but they go back 1 or 2 generations. Dear friends, what our churches need is the whole doctrine, not 1 sided. My great concern is that Christ will accept me and by the Grace of God I have this assurance, but if we lead someone wrong, we have to answer. God bless!

—Minnesota

Jeremiah Zeiset Responds:

Dear Minnesota, thank you for writing in. Your letter is excellent. As I see it, there are at least two ways to be off balance: 1) to believe our works will save us, and 2) to say we believe in God but go on sinning. Paul deals with this very well. In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul says *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.* Then, in Ephesians 4:1, he says *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.*

This pattern of salvation by faith first, followed up with loving and living for the Lord, is found all throughout scripture. What really is needed is this: *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (2 Timothy 2:15). What is cause

for shame? Not studying, and not rightly dividing the word of truth!

It is time for the church to clearly understand that we are saved by faith. That is through Christ, and Christ alone. What of works then? We will be rewarded according to our works, much as in a footrace, where there are different prizes according to what we accomplish (Matthew 25:20-23, Luke 6:23, 1 Corinthians 3:8, Revelation 22:12, and many other scriptures).

Now, which is more important? Our salvation, or our reward? I say it's our salvation (1 Corinthians 3:11-15 clearly supports this). If we are not saved by faith, we will be lost. To see men saved is our primary interest. It is necessary, however, to also talk about works and rewards, but that will follow. We are currently focusing on what seems most important, but I also have a desire to see more discussion about works, but only in the proper perspective.

Finally, it seems to me that if we pay any attention to the first and greatest commandment, to Love the Lord our God with all our heart..., works should naturally follow. But, enough said. We're on the same page Alvin. We must look at all of scripture, understand the context, and apply to in our heart appropriately.

—Jeremiah Zeiset
Abbotsford, WI

END

Persecution In the World

—By Herald of His Coming

Each year, Open Doors produces a World Watch List, highlighting the 50 countries where Christians experience the worst persecution. The ranking of countries for 2017 is listed below. Please **remember in prayer**, our brothers and sisters in Christ, in these places. **Pray** also for Open Doors and other ministries that are working to encourage and help believers in these oppressive countries.

Extreme Persecution

1. North Korea
2. Somalia
3. Afghanistan
4. Pakistan
5. Sudan
6. Syria
7. Iraq

8. Iran
9. Yemen
10. Eritrea

Severe Persecution

11. Libya
12. Nigeria
13. Maldives

14. Saudi Arabia
15. India
16. Uzbekistan
17. Vietnam
18. Kenya
19. Turkmenistan
20. Qatar
21. Egypt
22. Ethiopia
23. Palestinian

Territories

24. Laos
25. Brunei
26. Bangladesh
27. Jordan
28. Myanmar
29. Tunisia
30. Bhutan

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Moderate Persecution

- 31. Malaysia
- 32. Mali

- 33. Tanzania
- 34. Central African Republic
- 35. Tajikistan
- 36. Algeria
- 37. Turkey
- 38. Kuwait
- 39. China
- 40. Djibouti
- 41. Mexico
- 42. Comoros
- 43. Kazakhstan
- 44. United Arab Emirates

- 45. Sri Lanka
- 46. Indonesia
- 47. Mauritania
- 48. Bahrain
- 49. Oman
- 50. Colombia

Continued Below

The following information is condensed from a press release by Open Doors UK:

North Korea, which has topped the list for over 15 years, remains the most dangerous place to be a Christian with an estimated 70,000 Christians imprisoned inside North Korean labor camps. However, persecution of Christians has seen the biggest rise in Laos, Bangladesh, India and Vietnam.

Emerging superpower India, the second most populous country in the world, has seen persecution levels rise dramatically for the fourth year running. Open Doors researchers have recorded over 15 violent attacks on Christians every week – this is a conservative figure as many victims are too scared to report attacks. Persecution affects millions of Indian Christians, people like Jitendra and his father. A Hindu convert, Jitendra’s neighbors tried to force him and his family to return to Hinduism by harassing his mother at the market and building an open drain in front of their house, filling it with rotten waste and feces. When those non-violent attempts failed, they assaulted his mother and father before turning on him and beating him so severely that his leg was broken. Forced to flee from the village, the family was helped by emergency relief

teams funded by Open Doors who provided them with medical assistance, accommodation in emergency safe houses and trauma support.

With the exception of China, all the countries surrounding India have seen rises in persecution this year.

Persecution levels in Somalia are nearly as high as in North Korea, where to be a Christian is almost impossible. Yet thousands of Christians continue to worship, keeping their faith secret. Islam is Somalia’s state religion and all Christians come from a Muslim background – despite conversion being illegal and punishable by death. They face persecution from Islamic extremists as well as from family and friends. Lisa Pearce, CEO of Open Doors UK and Ireland, commented: “If a Christian is discovered in Somalia, they are unlikely to live to see another day. Just the suspicion that someone is a Christian can lead to a rushed beheading.”

Islamic fundamentalism is rising most sharply in sub-Saharan Africa. In Africa, more people are killed for their Christian faith than anywhere else in the world. As extremist Islam spreads across Africa westwards from Somalia, almost every country from Kenya upwards is affected.

Mali has seen a dramatic rise in persecution. Neighboring Mauritania, an Islamic Republic where Christianity is forbidden, has also joined the ranking. Somalia and Sudan also saw sharp rises in levels of persecution last year with large numbers of refugees in countries torn apart by war and unrest. These unstable areas allow intolerance and persecution to flourish, resulting in large areas where people do not dare to profess their Christian faith.

An increasingly common form of religious persecution is the deliberate sabotage of homes, churches and villages by extremists aiming to eradicate Christianity from a particular area. This is widely seen in northern Nigeria, Syria and Iraq where, after people have been driven out, homes have been ransacked, churches destroyed and village water sources poisoned. In Nigeria cattle are deliberately stolen and crops burned to make returning all but impossible unless significant aid and investment is pumped into the area of need. In addition, frequent so-called ‘lone-wolf’ attacks by extremists make those equipped to effect change and rebuild fearful for their safety and the safety of their families.

From *Herald of His Coming*
– www.opendoorsuk.org

End

EACH MONTH

322 CHRISTIANS ARE KILLED FOR THEIR FAITH



Learn more about the persecution of Christians worldwide, and what you can do to help.

214 CHURCHES AND CHRISTIAN PROPERTIES ARE DESTROYED



772 FORMS OF VIOLENCE ARE COMMITTED AGAINST CHRISTIANS (SUCH AS BEATINGS, ABDUCTIONS, RAPES, ARRESTS AND FORCED MARRIAGES)



Image used with permission from Open Doors : www.opendoorsusa.org



—by Mary Grace

Journal from the Heart

Lord, Jesus, I need Thee now.
Take my hand in yours, I plead.
My flesh is in the way.
Please guide me as I pray.
There is a war inside of me.

Lord, I plead, help me to see
All You really want from me
Is to have my eyes on Thee.

Fully surrendered within Thy will;
Go to You when the storms are ill.
Find sweet peace and joy again.
My life will have a song within.

I just want to thank you!

Thank you Jesus for forgiving me. Thank you for your redemptive work on Calvary Cross. Thank you for loving me when I couldn't love myself. Thank you for defeating me in my rebellion, conquering me in my sin, winning my heart, and capturing my mind. Thank you for being my hope, and my best friend. Thank you for welcoming me into your presence, working on me, reshaping me, molding me. Thank you for providing for my family, shielding and guiding me and all your people.

Thank you for my preacher, build him up where he is torn down, strengthen him where he is weak. Thank you for every church door that opens up in your name, the name above all names. I pray have mercy on all your people. Thank you for

the privilege of being your servant. I can't go back and I won't go back. Continue to allow the message and gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ continue to be spread across the world. You are so deserving of our praise.

When I thought I was garbage and full of guilt, and didn't want to live, you thought I was worth saving and worth fighting for. When I had a mindset of "I'm going to do what I want," you still were right with me. When I wasn't a friend to you and ashamed, you were still a friend to me, always right by my side loving me unconditional. You encouraged me to go on and I'm forever grateful. Help me never to play Church again. Forgive us of our many sins.

I will never apologize for being serious

about my faith because Jesus was serious when he died for all of our sins. Continue to do what only you can do King Jesus. God we know you are still on the throne, always have and always will, have you way Lord. Thank you for the blood Jesus, our resurrected King who is going to reign forever.

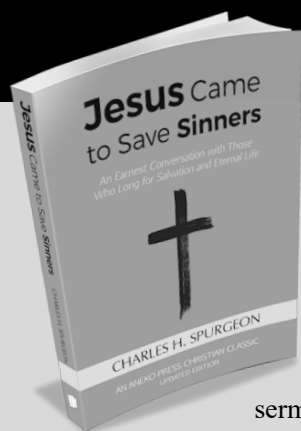
—Andricus, A Willing Servant

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. —Psalm 139:7-10

End

Jesus Came to Save Sinners

By Charles H. Spurgeon



Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) was a British Baptist preacher. He started preaching at age 16. He quickly became popular, frequently having more than 10,000 people present to hear him preach at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. His

sermons were printed in newspapers, published in books, and translated into many languages. He is still known as the Prince of Preachers.

This book, *Jesus Came to Save Sinners*, is a heart-level conversation with the reader. Every excuse, reason, and roadblock for not coming to Christ is examined and dealt with. If you think you may be too bad or if you are full of sin, you will discover that life in Christ is for you.

You can reject the message of salvation by faith. You can falsely profess faith in Christ while you remain in sin. You cannot, though, change God's truth. As such, you and your family have a logical duty to embrace truth, claim it for your own, and be genuinely set free for now and eternity. Come and embrace this free gift of God and live a victorious life for and in Him.

Through the generosity of the publisher, this book is available to you for FREE, which includes shipping and handling. To get a copy for yourself and a friend(s), contact us at:

The Amish Voice

P.O. Box 128

Savannah, OH 44874

or call our office at (419) 962-1515



As the world continues to turn its back on God, we want to take a look at what the future holds according to the One who is the Beginning and the End—God! We hope you enjoy and benefit from this series, courtesy of Middletown Bible Church. Follow along, fill in the blanks, and look up! May we all be ready for the return of Jesus Christ!

You will need a Bible for this lesson.

The Final Rebellion and the Final Judgment

Man has always tried to blame someone else or something else for his problems. Sinful man always tries to defend himself: "IT'S NOT MY FAULT! I'M NOT TO BLAME!" Man has been doing this from the beginning. Adam and Eve both disobeyed God and ate the fruit that they were told not to eat (Genesis 3:6). Whom did Eve blame (Genesis 3:13)? _____ Whom did Adam blame (Genesis 3:12)? _____

As we study the final rebellion and the final judgment we are going to find out where the real problem lies. Whom should man really blame for his problems? Who is really at fault?

The Final Rebellion

The final rebellion is an event that will take place after the 1000 year Kingdom of Christ. We can read about this event in Revelation 20:7-9. But before we take a close look at this event there are some things that must first be understood:

1) Only Saved People Enter the Kingdom.

When the 1000 year Kingdom begins, only saved people will be allowed to enter the Kingdom. Jesus will say to these saved people, "C_____, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the _____ prepared for _____ from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). What will happen to unsaved people (Matthew 25:41)? _____

We learn the same thing in Matthew 13:41-42. These verses tell us that all the wicked people will be removed from the earth and cast into a furnace of fire. Who will remain on the earth to be

part of the Kingdom—the righteous people or the unrighteous people (Matthew 13:43)? _____ According to Matthew 13:49-50 the angels will separate the wicked from among the just (the righteous people) and the wicked will be cast into the _____ of fire.

This means that when the Kingdom begins, every person on earth is a saved person. The wicked (unsaved) have been removed but the righteous (saved) remain. At that time every person on earth will be able to say, "I have trusted Jesus Christ to be my Savior and my King!"

2) Children Will be Born with Sinful Hearts.

During the Kingdom age countless numbers of children will be born. One thousand years is plenty of time for thousands and thousands of people to be born and to grow up into adulthood. Today many babies die because of sickness or hunger, but this will not be true during the Kingdom age. Healthy babies will be born all over the world and these babies will grow up into adults.

Remember, the first babies that are born will have saved parents. But having saved parents does not make the baby saved. Today, if a person has Christian parents, does this mean that he becomes a Christian at birth? _____ Salvation is not something that parents can give (pass on) to their children through birth. Parents can teach their children about salvation but each child must believe on Christ for himself. Just because the parents have faith does not mean that the children have faith. [Someone once remarked, "God has many children but He has no grandchildren."]

Salvation is not given (passed on) from parents to children, but there is something that is given (passed on) from parents to children: SINFULNESS. Even though parents might be saved, they still have sinful natures which they pass on to their

children. David understood this when he said, "Behold, I was shapen in _____, and in _____ did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). Every child that has ever been born (except Jesus Christ) has received a wicked and sinful nature from Adam. People are not born saved. People are born in sin. Those who will be born in the Kingdom will be born with wicked, sinful hearts.

3) Children Born During the Kingdom Will Need to be Saved.

What must a person do to be saved (Acts 16:30-31)? _____

Those children born in the Kingdom will need to believe on Christ and receive Him as their Savior. Some of these children will believe on Him but many others will not. Outwardly they will obey the King and follow His rules, but inwardly they will be against the King (see Mark 7:6). These unsaved people may bend down on their knees before the King but in their hearts they are still standing up. Sometimes children do this with their parents. Outwardly they do what their Mom and Dad say, because they know that they will get into trouble if they do not obey their parents. But inwardly they are angry with their parents. Has this ever happened to you? During the Kingdom there will be thousands of people who honor Christ outwardly but hate Him inwardly.

There is another verse that tells us that this is what people will do in the Kingdom. It is found in Psalm 66:3. This Psalm is speaking of the time when all the earth is told to make a joyful noise to God (verse 1). It is speaking of the time when "all the _____ shall worship" God (verse 4). These verses are speaking of the time when Christ will rule and reign as King over all the earth. Look again at verse 3: "Say unto God, How terrible art thou in Thy works! through the greatness of Thy _____ shall thine enemies submit themselves unto Thee." ["Because of the greatness of Thy power Thine enemies will give feigned obedience to Thee"]. Even during the Kingdom age God will have enemies on earth. And even though these enemies do not want to, they will submit to the King. They will be afraid to disobey Him because of His power and greatness. So instead they will pretend to honor Him and serve Him. They will do what the King says, even though in their hearts they are His enemies! During the Kingdom age there will be many people who will do this.

God Demonstrates How Sinful Man Really Is

At the end of the 1000 year Kingdom God lets Satan out of his P _____ (Revelation 20:7). Will people follow Satan?

Will people choose the Savior or Satan? People could say, "Satan, we want nothing to do with you. We love our King, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we will not follow you!" But is this what they will say? We learn in Revelation 20:8 that thousands and thousands (a host of people too numerous to count) will follow Satan. Just like we cannot count all the grains of sand at the seashore, so we will not be able to count all the people who will follow Satan, because there will be so many of them! These rebels will make war against God and God's people and God will destroy them (see Revelation 20:9). How does God destroy them (Revelation 20:9)? _____

It never pays to rebel against God! At the end of the 1000 year Kingdom these people will prove how sinful their hearts really are!

Man's Real Problem is Sin

People never want to blame their own sinful hearts for the problem. They always want to look outside of themselves and find things to blame. They want to BLAME SOCIETY (the world around them). They say things like this: "If we could get rid of sickness and hunger and poverty and crime and if we could live in a perfect world with a perfect government, then our problems would be solved." During the Kingdom age, God will give men a perfect world and a perfect society and a perfect government. There will be no wars, no sickness, no crime, no poverty and no hunger. God will give men a perfect world to live in, but men will still choose to turn away from God.

Did Jesus say that man's real problem comes from **within** or **without** (Mark 7:21)? _____ The final rebellion proves that man has a wicked heart (Jeremiah 17:9). Man cannot blame anyone else or anything else. The problem is WITHIN, not WITHOUT.

What Is the Solution?

The problem is sin! What then is the solution? Feeding the poor, building better homes, fighting crime, getting rid of disease, building a better world—all of these things are helpful, but none of these things solve man's greatest problem. Man's problem is SIN and therefore what man needs is a SAVIOR. Why did Christ come into the world (1 Timothy 1:15)? _____ Christ is the only solution to man's problem! John Newton once said, "I am a **great sinner** but I have a **greater Savior!**" What about you?

The Final Judgment

Another great event takes place after the final rebellion. This is called THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT and it is described in Revelation 20:11-15.

Who is the Judge?

The Person who sits on this great white throne is described in

Revelation 20:11. Who is this Judge? We learn in Acts 17:31 and John 5:22,27 that this Judge is none other than Jesus Christ. Those who reject Jesus Christ as Saviour must someday face Jesus Christ as Judge. Today He is the Saviour of sinners. The day is coming when He will be the Judge of sinners.

Who Will be Judged?

John the Apostle said, "And I saw the Dead _____, small and great, stand before God _____" (Revelation 20:12). Who are these dead people? In 2 Peter 3:7 we learn that this will be "the day of judgment and perdition of _____ men." These are people who are ungodly and who are unsaved.

There is coming a day when all of the unsaved people who have ever lived will be raised up from the dead to stand before God. Jesus spoke of this resurrection in John 5:28-29. All of the wicked and unsaved people who have ever lived must appear before the Judge. This would include

- **Cain**
- **The people who died in the flood of Noah's day**
- **Pharaoh who lived in the days of Moses**
- **Wicked King Ahab and his wife Jezebel**
- **Judas**
- **People living today who refuse to get saved**
- **Those in the future who will be part of that final rebellion.**

All of the unsaved dead will stand before God to be judged!

The Books

In Revelation 20:12, we learn that there will be books opened on this judgment day. These books contain a very careful record of what the people to be judged have said and done (THEIR WORKS). God keeps very good records. In fact, nothing a person does escapes His notice. Nothing is hidden from God (Hebrews 4:13). Does God even know what a person is thinking? _____

Suppose that for an entire week you were being watched by a secret camera and heard by a secret tape recorder. You did not know that the camera and tape recorder were being used. How would you like this film to be played back to your friends? How would you like them to hear every word that you said all week long (even those bad words or angry words)? How would you like them to see everything that you did during the week (even those things you did when you were all alone in your room)? Would you want that film to be shown? Would you want that tape to be heard? Would you be ashamed to let others know about some of the things you said and did? What if somehow our thoughts could be recorded and then replayed?

We would like the books to stay closed, but for the unsaved these books will someday be opened (Revelation 20:12). When these books are opened what will these unsaved people realize?

1. They will realize that they did not live well enough to earn their way to heaven. Salvation is "not of works lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).
2. They will realize that nothing which they did or said really pleased God because "they that are in the flesh cannot _____ God" (Romans 8:8).
3. They will realize that they are GUILTY before God (Romans 3:19).
4. They will realize that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20; 2:1). No one will open his mouth (Romans 3:19). No one will say, "God, You are unfair! I do not deserve this judgment. I deserve to go to heaven!"
5. They will realize that they deserve to be punished (Romans 1:32). They will have no one to blame but themselves!

The Book

There is another book mentioned in Revelation 20:12 and 15. This is called the BOOK OF L_____. This book is a book of names (like a telephone book). This book will contain all the names of those people who will be with Christ in heaven (compare Luke 10:20). What will happen to those people whose names are not found in this book (Revelation 20:15)?

The unsaved dead who stand before Christ at the great white throne will discover that their names are not in the BOOK OF LIFE. This is because they rejected God's Son and God's Savior. It will be their fault! They will be to blame! They could have had eternal life but they refused eternal life! They could have come to Christ but they did not want to come to Christ: "And ye will not come to me (you refuse to come to Me), that ye might have _____" (John 5:40). They rejected God's precious gift (see Romans 6:23) and they will have no one to blame but themselves!

What About You?

God is holy and righteous and pure. This is why the throne is called the GREAT WHITE THRONE. God hates sin and must judge sin. We are all sinners. We have all done things that are wicked and wrong. We are all guilty before God, and God must judge guilty sinners!

When the Lord Jesus went to the cross, all of our sins were laid upon Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). He became our Substitute and He died in our place. We are the ones who should die and who should be judged, but Christ took God's judgment upon Himself.

**Continued
Next Page**

God's anger and wrath and judgment came down upon His beloved Son who died in our place. Do you really believe that Christ did this for you?

Those who have believed on Christ and trusted Him as their Savior do not need to fear a future judgment. The Bible says that those who believe have everlasting life and "shall not come into _____ (JUDGMENT)" (John 5:24). See also Romans 8:1. The believer does not need to be afraid that someday God will remember his sins and judge him for them. The believer in Christ has complete forgiveness of all his sins—past, present and future (Acts 10:43). God has said, "Their _____ and their iniquities will I remember _____" (Hebrews 10:17).

Yes, those who reject Christ as their Savior have only themselves to blame. Sin is man's problem and Christ is man's only Solution and man's only Savior! Have you admitted that you have a problem? Have you found God's solution? Have you believed in God's Son? Is your name in the Book of Life? If your name is in the Book of Life, you have only God to thank! If your name is not in the Book of Life you have only yourself to blame!

Judgment for Believers?

The true believer will not come into condemnation or judgment (John 5:24). There is "no condemnation" for him (Rom. 8:1). All of his sins have been taken care of at the cross. The believer's judgment for sin took place about 2000 years ago when Christ was judged and condemned for us! He was punished and condemned for our sins. God's wrath was poured out on Him. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities...the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all" (Isaiah 53:5-6). And when we come to Christ in faith we are justified and declared "NOT GUILTY" by the Judge of all the universe! "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? Shall Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?" (Romans 8:33-34). If God is never going to condemn us and if God is never going to charge us with guilt,

then we need not worry!

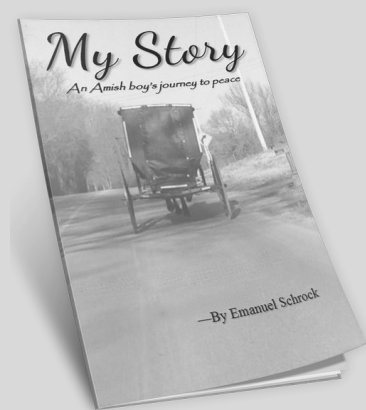
We are so identified with the risen and glorified Christ "in Christ Jesus; Who is our Life" that, only if "condemnation" can be attached to Him, could condemnation fall on us! Impossible!! In other words, we are so identified with Christ that if God were to condemn us, He would have to condemn His Son also. "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because even as He is, so also are we in this world." (1 John 4:17).

On the one hand we are told that the believer will not come into judgment (John 5:24 and Romans 8:1), and on the other hand we are told that every believer will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:10). How can these two seemingly contradictory facts be understood?

- 1) The believer will never stand before the JUDGE to be condemned for his sins and punished for his sins. This condemnation and punishment has already fallen upon Christ our Substitute (Romans 8:3, and see the previous paragraph). Remember, if the believer were to be condemned for only one sin, that would be enough to condemn him to the lake of fire forever.
- 2) The believer will stand before the BEMA or judgment seat of Christ to give an account of how faithfully he has lived the Christian life since the day he was saved. The issue then will not be condemnation or no condemnation, but the issue will be rewards or loss of rewards (1 Cor. 3:12-15). Loss of rewards does not mean loss of salvation. Even the most unfaithful Christian at the judgment seat of Christ "shall be saved" and not condemned (1 Cor. 3:15).

Who can claim and enjoy this wonderful statement of "NO CONDEMNATION"? Only those who are "IN CHRIST JESUS" (v.1). There is no safer place to be! In the days of Noah there was only one safe place to be—in the ark! God's judgment came down upon everyone who was not in the ark. Today Jesus Christ is our Ark of safety! Those who are positioned in Him are safe and secure and are not in danger of the judgment of God.

END



My Story

By Emanuel Schrock

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May

The Simplicity of Salvation

Pastor Adrian Rogers explains that God makes the way to be saved so simple, even a little child can understand. Listen to this account that makes it clear how a person can know beyond any shadow of doubt that he or she has been saved.

How You Can Be Sure

Adrian Rogers teaches from Acts 10:33-40. Many Christians go through their daily walk with a cloud of doubt over them. They believe God and trust in Jesus to forgive their sins, but they just don't FEEL God's love for them.

Dealing with the Difficult Child 1, 2

Do you struggle to connect with one or more of your children? Maybe she's strong willed and every day is a battle, or maybe you don't share his interests or hobbies. Dr. Tim Clinton joins Dr. Dobson to talk about the "extra effort kid" and what you can do to strengthen that difficult relationship.

Our Mate's Three Driving Needs

Are you loving your mate as God loves you? Tim and Darcy Kimmel define love as "the commitment of my will to your needs and best interest, regardless of the cost." They explore the three driving inner needs in marriage: security, significance, and strength.

June

Crucified with Christ

Charles Stanley explains that a GPS device can determine physical location almost anywhere on earth. The Bible tells us something even more important: our spiritual position. Our position in Christ makes all the difference for a victorious life. God has put you right where you need to be. Do you know where you are?

Not Tonight, Dear, I Have a Headache

From Family Life Today with Dennis Rainey. "Not tonight, dear." Maybe you've said that often or heard it repeatedly. Robyn McKelvey, Ray's wife for over 20 years and a mother of nine, talks honestly to women about enjoying and thriving in an intimate relationship with their husbands.

Anger Management 1, 2

Everyone gets angry at times, but is your anger manageable? The first step to controlling your anger is understanding why you are so mad in the first place. Pastor Jeff Schreve will help you discover what God says about the root causes of your anger and give you the tools to control your anger and turn that energy into something positive for the Kingdom of God.

Your Personal Convictions

Dr. Charles Stanley answers the questions, What does it take to live a life of purpose and courage? What does it take to stand your ground in the face of criticism and rejection? The answer is to be utterly convinced of the truth of God's Word. Learn the power of having convictions and the role they play in our lives.

July

Encouraging Your Husband to Lead

Barbara Rainey invites young women to encourage their husbands to lead, and follow when they do. She recalls the disappointment she experienced early in her marriage as she discovered that Dennis Rainey led differently than she expected. What she thought was failure was just a different way to lead.

Following Your Husband's Leadership

Barbara Rainey helps wives understand that a husband is designed to be the leader of the home, and a wife is called to follow him. A wife needs to know what to say, how to say it, and discern the best timing.

The Book that Changed the World

Dr. Rogers begins a powerful series on one of his favorite books of the Bible—Romans, the "Magna Carta" of the Christian faith. Many books have affected the course of history, but here is one that changed the world.

The Devil's Religion

This generation needs to be warned against false religion. What do you think Satan's stand is on religion? It's not what you think., and it goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. But his religion will always oppose truth faith in Christ.

Our Time

The way we use our time reveals what we really believe to be important in life. The Lord Jesus Christ spent time alone with God the Father, no matter how packed His schedule. Do you spend enough time with God?

that the proud shall be humbled, and the humbled shall be honored. I have observed men who have great talents and speaking abilities, but, may have never been called by God to be teachers and preachers. These individuals are just like the Pharisee, and because of their pride, God cannot use them.

Brokenness and humility are the keys that unlock the gifts that God wants to

manifest in us. God will always resist the proud, and He will always give grace to the humble. We are all sinners, and we are all like the poor Publican. All we need to do is come before God and beg, "Be merciful. I am a sinner."

We need to admit that goodness doesn't cut it. Instead, we need God's goodness. We cannot make ourselves holy; we need His holiness. A broken and contrite heart God will not despise. Rather, He will accept a heart like that.

Finally, God will justify. Do you know what justify means? Just-as-if-I had never sinned. What a great, loving, and merciful God we serve! He does not give us what we deserve. Instead, He bestows mercy upon us and gives us the righteousness for which His Son paid an unbelievable price. God does all of this because He loves us. That is the grace of God. Thank you, Jesus!

—by John Weaver

END

Amish Voice Conference Calls (Past, Present, and Future)

Join us for a live conference call on the first Sunday of every month at 8:00 P.M. EST.

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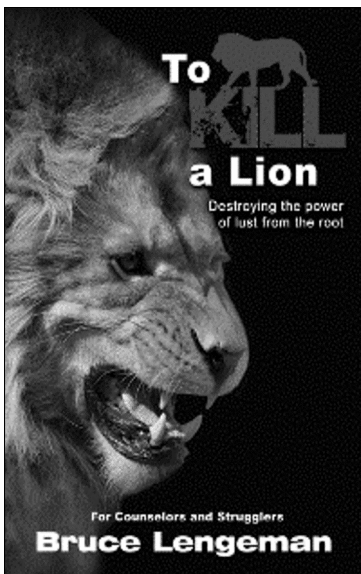
1. Sunday Night, June 04: Ephesians 3
2. Sunday Night, July 02: Ephesians 4
3. Sunday Night, August 06: Ephesians 5

PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS

(RECORDED)

If you missed any of our previous conference call discussions, dial (641) 715-3800, enter code 89752, and listen to the recordings.

1. February—Testimony, by Sam Troyer: Hear how God has changed Sam's life.
2. March—Zion, Our Heavenly Home, by Daniel Lee: What will heaven be like? Are you looking forward to being there? Are you certain that heaven is your eternal destination?
3. April—Ephesians 1: Listen to recording
4. May—Ephesians 2: Listen to recording



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Two Men: One Religious, One Humble

—By John Weaver

During one of Jesus' sermons here on earth, He began to tell a parable. In His story, He was specifically targeting a group of people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others (Luke 18:9).

His parable began by introducing two men who entered the temple to pray.

Both of these men seemed to be good. The prayers of the two men, however, were very different.

The Pharisee prayed and thanked God that he was not like other people; he named some specific people groups, including the man who was standing beside him. The Pharisee also went on to name two things that he did regularly: fast and give tithes.

Now, it is important to note that what this man did was certainly not wrong. He was praying for good things and was thankful that he was not unjust, an adulterer, or an extortioner, all of which are sins that should not be named among the people of God. In fact, in most churches, the Pharisee would be welcomed with open arms, especially for his giving, which may even be

lifted up as a good example.

The poor chap praying beside him, on the other hand, seemingly had nothing. All this man did was pound his chest and ask for mercy from the Lord. He also admitted that he was a sinner.

As Jesus concluded His parable, He made this statement: this man went down to his house justified rather than the other (Luke 18:14). The seemingly good fellow was rejected, and the poor, insignificant one was lifted up. This seemed strange indeed!

Why did Jesus commend the poor man? It was all a matter of the heart. God cares very little about our goodness if we simply do it to gain righteousness. Instead, God wants brokenness and humility. It is in this kind of person that God can place His righteousness. God can use a broken and humble person in a mighty way.

Jesus finished up His sermon that day by stating

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Two men went up into
the temple to pray; the
one a Pharisee, and the
other a publican.

—Luke 18:10

