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Beliefs of our Fathers: God

Chapter 1

This continues a study on the beliefs of our forefathers, based largely on the *Dordrecht Confession of Faith* from 1632. This section tells about theology, or the study of God.

God

For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things. (1 Cor. 8:5–6)

I am the LORD and there is none else, there is no God beside me (Isaiah 45:5).

I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images (Isaiah 42:8).

Introduction

Have you ever tried to describe God to someone? God is so far beyond description that our human language seems inadequate to give a proper portrayal of Him, yet He has given us a Book in which He describes Himself in a way that we can comprehend and come to know Him, the high and holy God.

Some see God as the Almighty Judge—harsh, almost slow to forgive, and quick to administer punishment to all who

disobey the rules. Others see Him as the all-inclusive God of love—tenderhearted, slow to anger, and quick to forgive. Is it possible that both are true?

We often form our viewpoint of God from those who preach the Word of God to us. Even though they mean well and their motive is right, they tend to portray God according to their own thoughts. The blending of God’s judgment and grace is an age-old battle in Christendom. Those who dwell on God’s holiness vs. man’s sinfulness will focus on man’s behavior—continually judging and warning people of God’s certain punishment. On the other hand, those who dwell on God’s love and forgiveness will claim that God could never condemn anyone to an eternal punishment—focusing on man’s efforts in spite of his continued falling into sin.

Both views are misleading. Those who hold to only one side have swerved away from the center of God’s teachings because they have failed to thoroughly study God’s Word with a teachable heart. If we work to balance judgment and love and carefully and consistently study the Scriptures, we are able to come to a right understanding of who God is and realize that He makes it possible for us to know

Him in a very personal way.

What the Anabaptists Teach

The *Dordrecht Confession of Faith* does not have a specific section on who God is, but it does give us an idea of what the early Anabaptists believed about God.

Article 1

“God is a rewarder of them that seek Him . . . eternal, almighty, and incomprehensible God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost” (Hebrews 11:6; Genesis 17:1; 1 John 5:7). He is the only God, “before whom no God was made or existed nor shall exist after Him: for from Him, through Him, and in Him, are all things.” He is eternal, receiving “praise and honor forever and ever” (Romans 11:36). He is a creative and powerful God. He “created, made, and prepared, heaven and earth, and the sea and all that in them is” (Acts 14:15). He is all knowing. “He still governs and upholds the same [the universe] . . . through His wisdom, might, and the word of His power.” He created all things good and upright, according to His pleasure; thus, He is righteous and holy (Genesis 1–2).

Article 2

As a holy God, He does not tolerate sin,

but judges man for his sin. Man's disobedience "brought upon themselves the wrath of God, and condemnation" (Romans 5:12, 18).

Article 3

God is loving and kind. God was "not willing to cast them off entirely, or to let them be forever lost." He provided a means of restoration and reconciliation (making peace) for the human race. He is a merciful and gracious God (1 Peter 1:19–20; 1 John 2:1).

Article 4

God is faithful; He kept his promise for the coming Messiah (John 4:25).

Article 10

God wants to have "unity and fellowship" with mankind. He is a personable God (Acts 2:42, 46).

Article 18

God is a living God—the giver of life; He will raise up the dead at the last day. God is a judgmental God; He will judge the works of man in the last day (Matthew 22:30–32; John 5:28; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 15; Revelation 20:12).

The Apostles' Creed also attests to the belief in an all-powerful Creator God who is the Trinity, the eternal Judge, and a forgiving God.

A more detailed description of God is found in the Second Confession of Faith, drawn up in Amsterdam in 1630 and published in the *Martyrs Mirror*. It states:

"We believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, that there is one only, eternal, incomprehensible [not able to be fully understood], spiritual Being, which, in Scripture, is

called God; to whom alone is ascribed [credited] omnipotence [all-powerful], mercy, righteousness, perfection, wisdom, all goodness, and omniscience [all-knowing], and who is called a fountain of life, and the source of all good, the Creator of all things; and the Preserver of the same; who in the Old Testament bears various appellations [titles]—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God Schadai [Shaddai], the God Jehovah, the God of Israel, I am that I am, the Alpha and Omega, etc.; but who in the New Testament is called by three distinct names—God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, whom we confess to differ thus far, namely, that the Father, as far as He is Father, is another than the Son; and the Son, as far as He is Son, is another than the Father, and the Holy Ghost, as far as He is a true Holy Ghost, is another than the Father and the Son, and that they, although differing in name, are nevertheless in their divine nature and attributes, one only, undivided God, according to the testimony of the apostle: *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one* (1 John 5:7)."

What the Bible Teaches

Many people say they worship God—Mormons, Baptists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, Amish, Mennonites, Muslims, Catholics, Native Americans, etc.—but do they all worship the same God? Since we have chosen to believe that the God of the Holy Bible is the one true God, we need to know how to answer this question. Many religious people base their knowledge of God only

on their own imagination of what they think God should be. Let's take a look at how God describes Himself in the Scriptures.

Our first introduction to God is in Genesis 1:1: *In the beginning God*. In the Hebrew language, the word for God is *Elohim*, which can be a general term for things or beings that are worshipped. In Genesis 2:4, God introduces Himself as *LORD God*. The English word "LORD," in all capital letters, stands for the Hebrew word *Yahweh*, or *Jehovah*. Jehovah was the only God that existed in Genesis 1:1, and He is the only God existing today.

The word *Elohim* is plural, meaning more than one. If God is the only God, then why would He use a plural word for Himself, as He did in Genesis 1:26? *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*. As we read the Bible, we see that God is three persons in one God—a Trinity made up of God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit. They are usually mentioned separately throughout the Old Testament, but are often mentioned together in the New Testament, as in Matthew 28:19: *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. They are equal in their attributes (qualities), but different in their functions (what they do). For example, God the Father created the universe by His will (Genesis 1), through His Son (John 1:3), and by the power of His Spirit (Genesis 1:2). We do not need to understand it to believe it. God does not lie (Titus 1:2).

Because God is so great and mighty, we find it difficult to describe Him in only a

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few words. In the Old Testament, however, as the Jewish people had needs, God provided for those needs and then introduced Himself by the name that expressed His quality that was shown in that provision. In this way, the people came to know God.

As we learn His names, we can know Him, too. He helped us by describing Himself in this way throughout the Bible. Although most of the names of God are translated into English, we will also look at the Hebrew names, remembering that the Hebrew word *El* is the singular form of *Elohim*, meaning “God the Father.”

In Genesis 21:33, Abraham called there on the name of the LORD, the **everlasting God**. The Hebrew word is *El-Olam*, meaning *Jehovah God is eternal*. The same word is used in Psalm 90:2 where we read, *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God*. He has no beginning, nor will He have an end.

When God was sending Moses to Pharaoh to bring His people out of Egypt, Moses wanted to know who he should say sent him. God told Moses, **I AM THAT I AM**: *Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel. I AM hath sent me unto you* (Exodus 3:14). This name of God comes from the Hebrew word *hayah*, which means “exists.” In the statement to Moses, He is saying He wants to be known as the “God who is the one God.” The Egyptians had many gods, so God was telling them that He was the only God. God does not need anyone or anything to exist, and He is independent of anyone else’s power and knowledge.

In Romans 11:33–34 we read, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?* God is omniscient, which means He is all-knowing. All

knowledge, whether ancient or modern, comes from God, and it is man who uses it for either good or evil. David understood the extent of God’s knowledge when he said:

O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

Thou compassest [takes care of] my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. (Psalm 139:1-6)

As Abram returned from the battle of the kings in Genesis 14, Melchizedek, a priest of the **most high God**, came out to meet him, and he blessed him, and said, *Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand* (Genesis 14:19-20). Abram went out with only 318 of his servants and defeated the kings who had taken Lot captive. This name of God, the **most high God**, comes from the Hebrew word *Elyon*. It pictures God as king over all. He rules the earth and the universe from heaven. He is sovereign, the highest authority, and the supreme ruler. God has every right to rule over us and tell us how to live and act, for He created us.

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty

God; walk before me, and be thou perfect (Genesis 17:1). The Hebrew name *El-Shaddai* is translated as the all-sufficient, the all-powerful, and the all-mighty God. God appeared to Abram in order to make a covenant with him, and He promised to make him a father of many nations. Considering his age, Abram knew this feat would take God Almighty to accomplish it. Later, *God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them* (Exodus 6:3).

Name by name, God was making Himself known to the Israelites. The writer of Psalm 91 said, *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty* (Psalm 91:1). No one, not even Satan, is more

powerful than God. He created the universe out of nothing, simply by His spoken word. He is all-powerful and all-mighty. Many of us strive to live as self-sufficiently as we can because we know others will fail

us, but we were not made to live independently. We were created to depend on *El-Shaddai* for all our needs.

Ezekiel described the city of Jerusalem at the end of his book. He told where the tribes were to be located, where the borders were, and where the suburbs were. He gave measurements of each side and labeled the gates by the tribes. In the end, he said it *was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there, or Jehovah-shamah* (Ezekiel 48:35). He is omnipresent—in all places at the same time. Psalm 139:7 says, *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I*



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flee from thy presence? Jeremiah 23:24 says, *Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth?* We are never alone. There is nowhere we can go without God being there.

Neither are we ever out of range of God's seeing eye. In Genesis, when Hagar fled from Sarai, she hid by a fountain in the wilderness, but God found her. Even in her distress, Hagar called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, **Thou God seest me**: for she said, *Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?* (Genesis 16:13). This God who sees is *El-Roi*, a name that is given to help us understand that He sees everything. This fact can be either comforting or daunting, depending on our relationship with Him.

Malachi 3:6 gives us another characteristic that can comfort us. It says, *I am the LORD, I change not*. Another word for this is "immutable." If God the Father never changes, neither does His Son nor His Spirit. Hebrews 13:8 tells us that *Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*. Thus, the God of the Old Testament is the same God as the God of the New Testament. His law still remains the standard of His perfection, but God has now entered into a New Covenant with us through His Son. *But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises* (Hebrews 8:6).

Yes, God does change His mind at times, depending on our response to Him. For example, He said that the people of Nineveh had forty days until their destruction. Then, because they repented, He changed His mind. *And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth,*

from the greatest of them even to the least of them. . . . And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not (Jonah 3:4-5, 10). God may sometimes change His mind, but His character, the way He is, never changes.

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jeremiah 23:5-6). This is *Jehovah Tsidkenu*. At the time of this prophecy, the kingdom of Judah was about to fall because of their idolatry, oppression, and violence. This name means that God will always do what is right.

Psalm 48:10 says, *According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness*. God is right all the time. He is never wrong. His holiness demands perfection from His creation. When His created ones disobeyed His one command, His holiness could not tolerate their error. To tolerate sin, any sin, and not separate it from Himself would only stain His holiness. Because of His righteousness, God had to judge Israel and Judah. We would not be loving parents if we allowed our children to cheat, lie, and steal, because we would only be training them to live lives of sin. Likewise, it is God's love and righteousness that made Him judge and punish sin.

When David went to fight Goliath, he was much smaller than Goliath and wore no armor. Goliath made fun of David. *Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom*

thou hast defied (1 Samuel 17:45). David trusted in the armies of God. This LORD of hosts was *Jehovah-Sabaoth*—the Lord of hosts.

Who is the King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory (Psalm 24:10). David was a warrior king, and he depended on the LORD of hosts to fight for him and protect him.

Even with all this, if this was all that we knew of God, we would be a people most miserable. Many people have spent their whole lives trying to please God with their sacrificial living in order to gain His favor. These people have failed to notice that Jeremiah 23:6 says, *THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*.

Why would we need His righteousness? Aren't we acceptable people in spite of our sin as long as we regularly ask forgiveness for our sins? Paul quoted the Old Testament in his letter to the Romans. He said, *There is none righteous, no, not one* (Romans 3:10). All of us are condemned to eternal punishment unless we are clothed in God's righteousness, like Abraham. *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. . . . His faith is counted for righteousness* (Romans 4:3, 5). God chooses to make us right with Him by faith in His Son, even though there is nothing in us to offer to God (Romans 3:22). We must be rightly clothed to come into His presence. *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness* (Isaiah 61:10).

Exodus 17:15 tells us that *Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi*. This name means **the LORD is my banner**, or **the LORD is conqueror**. He is a God of war. He goes to battle against our enemies and against sin, Satan, and eternal death. Through God the Son, this victory was won at the cross. First Corinthians 15:57 says, *But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through*

our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ has set us free from the power of sin, the control of Satan, and eternal punishment in hell, and He will continue to defend us to the end. He is our Banner, our Conqueror.

Moses told the people that if they would *hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God* and do all that He commanded them, He would keep the Egyptian diseases from them, because I **am the LORD that healeth thee** (Exodus 15:26). He was *Jehovah-Rapha*. Just as God chose to heal the Israelites from their snakebites by faith, He has chosen to heal our hearts from Satan's bite by faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. John tells us that *as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life* (John 3:14–15). *Jehovah-Rapha* is not only the God who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases, but He also healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds (Psalm 103:3; 147:3).

In Genesis 22, we find the account of the time God told Abraham to offer up his son Isaac. They traveled to Mt. Moriah, and when he was about to slay his son, God stopped him. Then Abraham saw a ram in the brush, and he offered it to God. *Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen* (Genesis 22:14). This name is translated *The Lord Who Will See To It*. In other words, He will see when we have a need and He will provide for us, so the name has come to mean **the LORD will provide**. God provided water, manna, and quail for the Israelites in the desert. He provided bread and meat for Elijah when he was hiding, and Jesus provided wine at the wedding and bread and fish for the multitude. But the loving Judge knew that mankind could never meet His standard of perfection that would enable him to renew a relationship with his Creator. Instead, He provided not only His own righteousness in place of man's, but also



His own good works to be done through man by God the Spirit. *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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them* (Ephesians 2:8–10).

One of the greatest qualities of God is that He is love. *He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. . . . Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation [payment] for our sins* (1 John 4:8, 10). Jeremiah tells us that God said, *I have loved thee with an everlasting love* (Jeremiah 31:3). How could anything be better than that?

Within the first three commandments of Exodus 20, God declared that He is the only true God, and we are commanded to worship no other god but Him. Then in the New Testament, He stated that the greatest commandment is *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind* (Matthew 22:37). Our obedience should be born out of our love for God, not out

of duty to a set of rules. Without love, our obedience is for nothing. *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* (1 John 4:20). First Corinthians 13:4–7 gives us a picture of this love:

Charity [love] suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth [boasts] not itself, is not puffed up [proud], doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

In addition to being a God of love, God is faithful. Lamentations 3:22–23 says, *It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: **great is thy faithfulness.*** God is a faithful God. Even though God may change His earthly plans for us depending on our response to Him, He will always keep His covenantal promises. He has always done what He said He will do, and He can be trusted to keep His word. Long ago, Moses told us, *Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, **the faithful God,** which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations* (Deuteronomy 7:9). In Revelation, John says, *I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called **Faithful and True,** and in righteousness he doth judge and make war* (Revelation 19:11).

In this brief overview of God's names, we have learned that God is harsh toward those who sin, but incredibly loving, merciful, and gracious toward those who fear Him. *The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom* (Proverbs 9:10). It should make us run to Him, not away from Him.

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To fear God is to honor and love Him because of who He is. Our respect and love for God brings glory to His name, and He will only reveal Himself to those who love Him enough to seek Him.

I hope the names of God encourage you to study more about Him through the

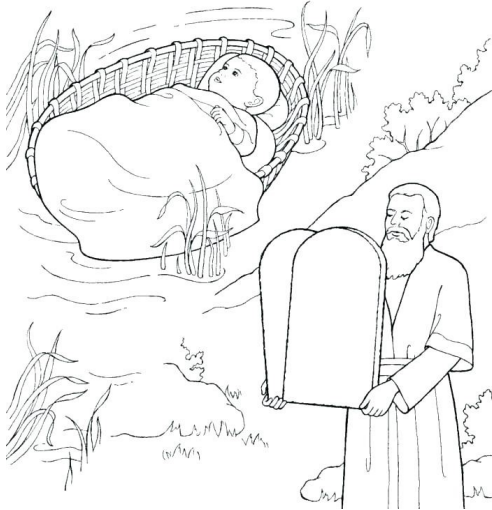
Scriptures. God desires to communicate with you through His written Word. Why not dedicate your life to increase your knowledge of Him? Over and over in the Bible, God says to increase your learning of Him, for only fools hate knowledge (for example, see Proverbs 1:5, 29).

Holy Father in heaven, as You tell us in Jeremiah 9:23–24, let us not be like the

wise man who glories in his wisdom. Neither let us be like the mighty man who glories in his might, nor like the rich man who glories in his riches; but if we are going to glory in anything, let us glory in the fact that we understand and know You, that You are the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, for we were created to bring glory to Your name.

Desperation Births the Beautiful

—By Norma Miller



I read a well-known story to my children last night. It is my youngest son's favorite Bible story: the story of baby Moses.

This little guy didn't pick the best time to make an appearance into the world. He was conceived at a time when Hebrew parents didn't exactly want to be having babies. If you remember the story, the pharaoh had just decided there were too many Hebrews around for his liking, and he ordered that all the baby boys should be put to death.

I really, really cannot begin to imagine the incredible angst these parents went through, especially the mothers, when they found out they were pregnant, had their babies, tried to keep them a secret, and then had their baby boys ripped from their arms and put to death! Desperation does weird things to a person. It can make you go wild with fear. Imagine with me for a moment how the enemy may have

used this. Is it possible some people committed abortion or killed their own babies to avoid having them taken away? I don't know, but it is possible. Parents will take desperate measures to protect their children, and fear can cause you to not be able to think clearly.

Well, the mother of Moses, Jochebed, was a desperate mother. Like many before her and, I am sure, many after her, she hid her baby. It is very difficult, though, to hide a squirming, crying little bundle, as you know, and Jochebed was very determined to not have Moses found. She must have prayed earnestly for wisdom. She was a wise, courageous mother, and her tears and cries were heard by God, who gave her the wisdom to make a little boat and float her baby at the edge of the Nile River, which, by the way, was loaded with crocodiles. People bathed there, too. This probably didn't feel so safe either.

She had her daughter hide in the rushes to keep a close eye on the baby and let her know what happened, and then she went home and, I'm sure, cried a lot more, pouring out her heart to the One who made all mothers' hearts, and the only One who could hear her desperation. Her tears and painful desperation were not in vain, and they birthed a most beautiful redemptive story; not only was her precious baby saved, but she got him back and got paid to take care of him, too! Wow! What an incredible answer to a very desperate prayer! Moses went on to

become a very powerful leader who led God's people out of Egypt, through a long journey in the wilderness, to their promised land for which they had hoped, wept, and sighed for many years.

Sweet woman today, are you in a desperate place? Have you been weeping and weary before God, seeking His face and begging for your answer? Have you been crying out for your miracle? I want you to know that those tears are heard by an Almighty God who put those womanly dreams, goals, and desires in your heart, and who is so not okay with your heart being crushed by the weight of sadness and cares and plans gone awry, and dreams scattered to the wind. He is a kind and faithful Father who is a miracle-working, way-making, promise-keeping, chain-breaking God. He sees your tears, hears your cries, and loves to make beautiful things out of our ugly messes and joyful surprises out of our crushed dreams. He is there, right now, a very real Presence in the midst of your pain and sorrow. He is a God who makes great things come out of desperation. He is waiting to make all things beautiful in His time. We do need to trust His good intentions toward us and give Him a chance, but He will come through. That is His amazing and infinite nature. Run to Him with courage and boldness, Woman of God. He will come through; He *will* come through! —Norma Miller

Original Mandate

—By Joe Keim

Here is the original mandate for the human race:

Genesis 1:27–28 says, *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them:*

- * Be fruitful,
- * and multiply,
- * and replenish the earth,
- * and subdue it (tread down, conquer, bring into subjection, as a footstool):
- * and have dominion (prevail against, reign, rule) over the fish of the sea,
- * and over the fowl of the air,
- * and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

In Genesis 3, Adam surrendered his God-given earthly kingdom to Satan. In the New Testament, Satan is portrayed as:

- * the prince of this world (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11)
- * the god of this world (2 Cor.4:4)

- * the prince of the devils (Matt. 12:24)
- * the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2)

In Luke 4:5–7, we see that Satan offered to give the world's kingdoms to Jesus:

And the devil, taking Him up into an high mountain, shewed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is [Adam] delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

Can you imagine what would have happened if Jesus gave in and did things Satan's way instead of following His Father's direction? Because, you see, Satan was "tempting" Jesus to bypass the sacrifice on the cross. He was giving Jesus an easy way out, but Jesus had not only come to take the earthly kingdom back, but He had come to destroy the power of the devil (1 John 3:8).

In Mathew 28:11, Jesus said, *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth* (He had fought in life and in death, and took the power away from Satan). Then Jesus turned around and gave the power to the church: *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you* (Acts 1:8).

Second Corinthians 10:4 says, *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.*

Revelation 11:15 says, *And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.*

What does all this mean for the church today? I believe it means we must get back in the war against evil, including getting involved in all levels of government affairs. The power was given to believers, not unbelievers. —Joe Keim

God Is Perfect, but He's not a Perfectionist

—By Dale Schmucker

James 1:12: *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*

This verse has captivated me for the last month. What is the crown of life? I don't believe it's just eternal life, because we all receive that when Christ dwells within us by His Spirit (1 John 5:12). It's called a crown, and crowns are given to kings as a sign of an authority that has been given to them.

Life. What is the life that He is talking about here? I know the life of repeated failure. God's grace and mercy and love are there, but one's faith, hope, and confidence are continually being torn down by the continual defeat to the sin that so easily takes us down. There's a never-ending circle there that the enemy wants to keep us in. God is habitually

dishonored and the enemy mocks us when we try to walk. It's a sad place of tears and shadows. God never intends for any of His children to remain there.

The overcoming life is quite different. *Ye are strong . . . and have overcome the wicked one*, the apostle tells the young men (1 John 2:14). The one who overcomes is promised hidden manna and a new identity (Revelation 2:17). There is an inner vitality, confidence, strength, a continual life-giving provision, and a new identity that no man can take away that is worn by those who have overcome—those who, by the grace of God, can stand through temptations.

Temptations are messy. War is messy and dirty. We often feel messy and unclean during a prolonged period of temptation and fighting. This can be discouraging if we are walking by our feelings rather than by faith, especially if you're a

perfectionist. Be encouraged. God is perfect, but He's not a perfectionist. He's our Father and He's blessed by every effort He sees on our part to overcome and to be like Him. By faith you are complete in Christ, and by faith you will overcome the world.

The Bible tells us to consider it a joy when we are being tempted, because it produces faith and patience, which will in turn make us completely mature spiritually (James 1:2–4). Think of it! It's through our temptations that we become perfect and entire, not lacking in any area! No, temptation will never make us feel good, but God never intended for us to cringe and cower at the thought of it. Instead, God wants to give us an overcomer's testimony and a crown that is of much more value than any earthly kingdom or presidency.

Yes Lord!

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November

The Call of Faith, Parts 5 and 6

Charles Stanley teaches that Moses, David, and Peter were ordinary men who lived extraordinary lives. Their abundant faith in a great God set them apart and empowered them to accomplish what seemed impossible. You can choose to trust God fully, too, for He will use anyone who desires to follow Him.

Discovering God's Plan for Your Parenting, Parts 1 and 2

Author Gary Thomas joins Focus on the Family and explains how parenting can lead to spiritual transformation in a discussion based on his book, *Sacred Parenting: How Raising Children Shapes Our Souls*.

December

The Faith That Conquers, Parts 1 and 2

Charles Stanley explains that many of us know the spectacular story about young David facing the Philistine giant Goliath with his sling, a smooth stone, and his faith in the God of Israel. Although this was amazing, the real lesson is in trusting God when you're faced with a seemingly hopeless situation. Learn how you can stand strong in your own battles.

A 40-Day Journey to Loving Your Children

Stephen and Alex Kendrick join Dennis Rainey of Family Life Today to talk to parents about a forty-day dare to parents to love their children. Parents need to intentionally seek out ways to encourage, teach, and bless their children daily.

Does God Still Heal?

Moving Beyond Treating the Symptoms, Parts 1 and 2

Chip Ingram of Living on the Edge, discusses finding wholeness in a broken world.

January

Unshakeable Faith, Parts 1 and 2

Have you ever faced an angry boss, a financial problem, or a physical illness? In this sermon, Dr. Charles Stanley teaches you how to stand strong in spite of overwhelming adversity.

Better Ways to Communicate with Your Children, Parts 1 and 2

Michael Anderson and Dr. Timothy Johanson join Focus on the Family to encourage parents to stop trying so hard to raise "perfect" children by lecturing, reminding, and warning them, which are often ineffective anyway.

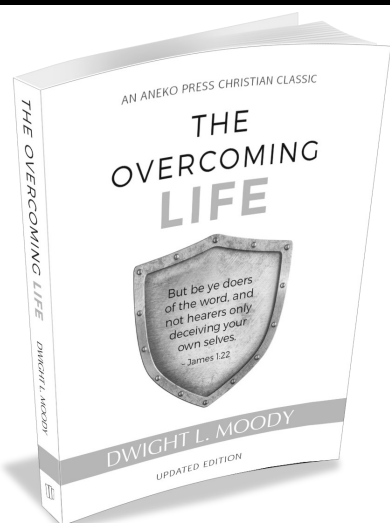
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Continued from the last issue.

True Wisdom

And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever (Daniel 12:3).

That is the testimony of an old man. He had the richest and deepest experience of any man living on the face of the earth at the time. He was taken to Babylon when he was a young man. Some Bible students think he wasn't more than twenty years old. If anyone had said, when this young Hebrew was carried away into captivity, that he would outrank all the mighty men of that day, no one would have believed it. All the generals who had been victorious in almost every nation at that time would be eclipsed by this young slave. Yet for five hundred years, no man whose life is recorded in history shone like his. He exceeded Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus, Darius, and all the princes and mighty monarchs of his day.

We aren't told when he was converted to a knowledge of the true God, but I think we have good reason to believe that it happened under the influence of Jeremiah the prophet. Evidently, some earnest, godly man made a deep impression on him. Someone taught him how he was to

serve God.

We hear people nowadays talk about the hardness of the field where they labor. They say their position is a very peculiar one. Think of the field in which Daniel had to work. He wasn't only a slave, but he also was held captive by a nation that detested the Hebrews. The language was unknown to him. There he was among idolaters, yet he took his stand for God from the very beginning and went on through his whole life that way. He gave the dew of his youth to God and continued faithfully right on until his pilgrimage ended.

Notice that all those who have made a deep impression on the world and have shone most brightly have been men who lived in a dark day. Look at Joseph. He was sold as a slave into Egypt by the Ishmaelites, yet he took his God with him into captivity, just as Daniel later did. He remained true to the end. He didn't give up his faith because he was taken away from home and placed among idolaters. He stood firm, and God stood by him.

Look at Moses, who turned his back upon the gilded palaces of Egypt. He identified himself with his despised and downtrodden nation. If ever a man had a hard field, it was Moses; yet he shone brightly and proved faithful to God.

Elijah lived in a far darker day than we do. The whole nation was turning to idolatry. Ahab, his queen, and all the royal court threw their influence against the worship of the true God, yet Elijah stood firm and shone brightly in that dark and evil day. Now his name stands out on the pages of history.

Consider John the Baptist. I used to think I would like to live in the days of the prophets, but I have given up that idea. You can be sure that when a prophet appears on the scene, everything is dark, and the professing church of God has gone over to the service of the god of this

world. So it was, when John the Baptist made his appearance. See how his name shines out today. More than nineteen centuries have rolled away, and the fame of that wilderness preacher shines brighter than ever. He was looked down upon in his day and generation, but he has outlived all his enemies. His name will be revered and his work remembered for as long as the church is on the earth.

Talk about a hard field. Paul shone for God as he went out as the first missionary to the heathen. He told them of the God he served and who had sent His Son to die a cruel death in order to save the world. Men reviled him and his teachings. They laughed at him and mocked him when he spoke of the crucified One, but he kept preaching the gospel of the Son of God. He was regarded as a poor tentmaker by the great and mighty ones of his day. However, no one can recall the name of any of his persecutors unless their names happen to be associated with his.

The fact is, all men like to shine. We may as well acknowledge that now. Men struggle to get to the top of the ladder in business. Everyone wants to outshine his neighbor and stand at the head of his profession. In the political world there is always a struggle going on as to who will be the greatest. Even in schools you will find a rivalry between the boys and girls. They all want to stand at the top of the class. When a boy reaches a position where he outranks all the rest, the mother is very proud of it. She manages to tell all the neighbors about how well Johnny has done and what awards he has received.

In the army you find one trying to outstrip the other. Everyone is very anxious to shine and rise above his comrades. The young men are anxious to outdo the other in their games. So we all have that desire in us. We like to shine above others.

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However, there are very few who can actually shine in the world. Once in a while one man will outstrip all his competitors. Every four years, a struggle goes on throughout our country to determine who will be the president of the United States. The battle rages for six months or a year, yet only one man can get the prize. Many struggle to get the position, but most are disappointed, because only one can attain the coveted prize. But in the kingdom of God, the very least and the very weakest can shine if they want to. Not only can one obtain the prize, but all may have it.

It doesn't say in this passage that the statesmen will shine as the brightness of God's kingdom. The statesmen of Babylon are gone. Even their names are forgotten.

It doesn't say that the nobility will shine. Earth's nobility are soon forgotten. John Bunyan, the Bedford tinker, has outlived the whole crowd of those who were the nobility in his day. They lived for self, and their memory is blotted out. He lived for God and for souls, and his name is as fragrant as it ever was.

We aren't told that the merchants will shine. Who can name any of the millionaires of Daniel's day? Their names were all buried in oblivion a few years after their deaths. Who were the mighty conquerors of that day? We can name a few. It's true that we know of Nebuchadnezzar, but it's Daniel, not Nebuchadnezzar, who stands as the giant in the faith, despite the fact that they were both used by God during the same time in Israel's history.

What a different story it is with this faithful prophet of the Lord. Twenty-six centuries have passed away, and his name shines on and on and on, brighter and brighter, and it will continue to shine as long as the church of God exists. *They that be wise shall shine as the brightness*

of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever (Daniel 12:3).

The glory of this world quickly fades away. Napoleon, the French military and political leader, almost made the earth tremble. He blazed and shone as an earthly warrior for a little while. After a few years passed, a little island held the once proud and mighty conqueror. He died a poor brokenhearted prisoner. Where is he today? Almost forgotten. Who in all the world would say that Napoleon lives in his heart's affections?

However, look at this despised and hated Hebrew prophet. He was thrown him into the lions' den because he was too righteous and too religious, yet the memory of him is still fresh today. His name is loved and honored for his faithfulness to God.

Many years ago, I was in Paris at the time of the Great Exhibition. Napoleon III was then in his glory. Cheer after cheer rose as he drove along the streets of the city. A few short years later, and he fell from his lofty estate. He died an exile from his country and his throne, and where is his name today? Very few think about him at all. If his name is mentioned, it is not with love and esteem. How empty and short-lived are the glory and pride of this world! If we are wise, we will live for God and eternity. We will get outside of ourselves and care nothing for the honor and glory of this world. *The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise* (Proverbs 11:30). If any man, woman, or child can

win one soul to God by a godly life and example, their life will not have been a failure. They will have outshined all the mighty men of their day, because they will have set a stream in motion that will flow on and on throughout eternity.

God left us here to shine. We are not here to buy and sell, accumulate wealth, or acquire worldly position. If we are Christians, this earth is not our home. *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ* (Philippians 3:20). God sent us into the world to shine for Him and light up this dark world. Christ came to be the Light of the World, but men put out that light. They took it to Calvary and blew it out.

Before Christ went up on high, He said to His disciples, *Ye are the light of the world. . . . Go ye therefore, and teach all nations* (Matthew 5:14; 28:19).

God has called us to shine just as much as Daniel was sent into Babylon to shine. Let no man or woman say that he can't shine because they don't have as much influence as others may have. God wants you to use the influence you have. Daniel probably didn't have much influence in Babylon at first, but

God soon gave him more because he was faithful and used what he had.

Remember, a small light will do a lot when it's in a very dark place. Put one little candle in the middle of a large room, and it will give a good deal of light.

Out in the prairie regions when meetings were held at night in the log schoolhouses, the meetings were held by candlelight.



The first man who came brought a strip of tallow-soaked cloth with him to burn. It was perhaps all he had, but he brought it and set it on the desk. It didn't light the building much, but it was better than nothing at all. Each household brought their candle. By the time the schoolhouse was full, there was plenty of light. So if we all shine a little, there will be a good deal of light. That's what God wants us to do. If we can't all be lighthouses, all of us can at least be a tallow candle.

Sometimes a little light will do a great deal. The city of Chicago was set on fire by a cow that kicked over a lamp, and a hundred thousand people were burnt out of house and home. Don't let Satan take advantage of you and make you think that because you can't do great things you can't do anything at all.

We must remember that we are supposed to let our lights shine. It doesn't say to make your light shine. You don't have to make light shine. All you have to do is to let it shine.

I remember hearing of a man at sea who was very seasick. In my opinion, if there is a time when a man feels that he can't do any work for the Lord, it is then. While this man was sick, he heard that someone had fallen overboard. He wondered if he could do anything to help save the man. He laid hold of a light and held it up to the porthole. The drowning man was saved. When this man got over his seasickness, he went on deck and talked with the man who was rescued. The saved man gave this testimony. He said he had already gone down a second time and was going down for the last time when he put out his hand. Just then, someone held a light at the porthole. The light fell on his hand, and a sailor grabbed it and pulled him into the lifeboat.

It seemed like a small thing to do, but it saved the man's life. If you can't do great things, you can hold the light for some poor, perishing drunkard who may be

won to Christ and delivered from destruction. Let's take the torch of salvation into dark homes and hold up Christ to the people as the Savior of the world. If the perishing masses will be reached, we must come alongside them and pray with them and labor for them. I wouldn't give much for a man's Christianity if he isn't willing to try and save others. It is utter ingratitude if we don't reach out our hand to others who are down in the same pit from which we were delivered. Who is able to reach and help drinking men like those who have themselves been slaves to alcohol? Won't you go out today and attempt to rescue these men? If we all did what we could, we could make a difference.

I remember reading about a blind man who sat at the corner of a street in a great city with a lantern beside him. Seeing he was blind, someone asked why he had the lantern, since the light was the same to him as the darkness.

The blind man replied, "I have it so that no one will stumble over me."

Where one man reads the Bible, a hundred read you and me. That's what Paul meant when he said we must be living epistles of Christ, *known and read of all men* (2 Corinthians 3:2). I wouldn't give much for all that can be done by sermons, if we don't preach Christ by our lives. If we don't present the gospel to people by our holy walk and conversation, we will not win them to Christ. A little act of kindness will possibly have more influence on them than any number of long sermons.

A vessel was caught in a storm on Lake Erie, and they were trying to reach the harbor of Cleveland. At the entrance of that port they had what are called the upper and lower lights. In the distance on the bluffs, the upper lights burned brightly, but when they neared the harbor they couldn't see the lights showing the entrance to it. The pilot thought they should return to the lake. The captain was

sure they would go down if they went back, and he urged the pilot to do what he could to enter the harbor. The pilot said there was very little hope of making it into the harbor, because he had nothing to guide him. They tried everything to get the vessel in. She rode on top of the waves, then into the trough of the sea, and at last they found themselves stranded on the beach, where the vessel was dashed to pieces. Someone had neglected the lower lights, and they had gone out.

Let us take warning. God keeps the upper lights burning as brightly as ever, but He has left us down here to keep the lower lights burning. Our job is to represent Him here, as Christ represents us before the Father. I sometimes think that if we had as poor a representative in the courts above as God has down here on earth, we would have a pretty poor chance of heaven. Let's prepare for action and burn our lights brightly so others can see the way and not stumble around in darkness.

I heard about a man in the state of Minnesota who was caught in a fearful storm. That state is cursed with winter storms that sweep down so suddenly that it makes escape difficult. The snow falls, and the wind beats it into the face of the traveler so that he can't see two feet ahead. Many men have been lost on the prairies when they were caught in one of those storms.

This man was caught and was almost to the point of giving up, when he saw a little light in a log house. He managed to get there and found a shelter from the fury of the tempest. He is now a wealthy man. As soon as he was able, he bought the farm and built a beautiful house on the spot where the log building stood. On top of a tower he installed a revolving light. Every night a storm comes, he lights it in the hope that it may be the means of saving someone else.

That is true gratitude, and that's what God wants us

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to do. If He rescued us and brought us up out of the horrible pit, let us always look to see if there is someone else we can help save.

Two men had charge of a revolving light in a lighthouse on a rockbound and stormy coast. Somehow the machinery went wrong and the light didn't revolve. They were so concerned that those at sea would mistake it for some other light that they manually rotated the light through the night to keep the light moving round.

Let us keep our lights in the proper place so that the world can see that Christianity is not a sham, but a reality. In the Grecian sports there was one game where the men ran with lights. They lit a torch at the altar and ran a certain distance. Sometimes they were on horseback. If a man came in with his light still burning, he received a prize. If his light had gone out, he lost the prize.

Many in their old age have lost their lights and their joy. They once burned and shone brightly in their families, in Sunday school, and in the church, but the world or self has come in between them and God, and their light has gone out. If you are one who has had this experience, God can help you come back to the altar of the Savior's love and light your torch again. Then you can go to those in need and let the light of the gospel shine in those dark homes.

If we only lead one other soul to Jesus Christ, we may set a stream in motion that will flow on when we are dead and gone. Way up on the mountainside there is a little spring. It seems so small that an ox might drink it up in one drink. Then it becomes a stream, and other streams run into it. Before long it's a large brook, and then it becomes a broad river sweeping onward to the sea. On its banks are cities, towns, and villages where many thousands live. Vegetation flourishes on every side, and commerce is carried down its stately pathway to distant lands.

So if you turn one to Christ, that one may

turn a hundred, and they may turn a thousand. So the stream, small at first, goes on broadening and deepening as it rolls toward eternity.

I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them (Revelation 14:13).

Many are mentioned in Scripture of whom we read that they lived so many years and then they died. The cradle and the grave are brought close together. They lived and they died, and that is all we know about them. In these days, you could write on the tombstone of many professing Christians the date they were born and the date they died. There is nothing in between.

You can't bury a good man's influence. It lives on. They have not buried Daniel. His influence is as great today as it ever was. Do you tell me that Joseph is dead? His influence still lives and will continue to live on and on. You can bury the frail house of clay that a good man lives in, but you can't get rid of his influence and example. Paul was never more powerful than he is today.

Do you tell me that John Howard, who went into so many of the dark prisons in Europe, is dead? Are Henry Martyn or William Wilberforce or John Bunyan dead? Go into the southern states, and there you will find millions of men and women who once were slaves. Mention to any of them the name of Wilberforce and see how quickly their faces light up. He lived for something besides himself, and his memory will live on in the hearts of those for whom he lived and labored.

Are Wesley or Whitefield dead? The names of those great evangelists were never more honored than they are now. Is John Knox dead? You can go to any part of Scotland today and feel the power of his influence.

The enemies of these servants of God are dead. Those who persecuted them and told lies about them are dead; but the men themselves have outlived all the lies that were uttered concerning them. Not only that, but they will also shine in another world. *They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever* (Daniel 12:3).

Let's continue to turn as many as we can to righteousness. Let's be dead to the world, to its lies, its pleasures, and its ambitions. Let's live for God, continually going forth to win souls for Him.

Dr. Chalmers said, "Thousands of men breathe, move, and live, pass off the stage of life, and are heard of no more. Why? They do not partake of good in the world, and none were blessed by them; none could point to them as the means of their redemption. Not a line they wrote or a word they spoke could be recalled; and so they perished. Their light went out in darkness, and they were not remembered more than insects of yesterday. Will you thus live and die, O man immortal? Live for something. Do good, and leave behind you a monument of virtue that the storm of time can never destroy. Write your name in kindness, love, and mercy, on the hearts of thousands you come in contact with year by year; you will never be forgotten. No! your name, your deeds, will be as legible on the hearts you leave behind you as the stars on the brow of evening. Good deeds will shine as the stars of heaven." —D. L. Moody

This article was taken from the book *The Overcoming Life* — by D. L. Moody. To order this book, send \$7.00 and your address to Aneko Press, PO Box 652, Abbotsford, WI 54405.

It's Christmas Eve. Millions of people are doing the last-minute preparations for the big day—Christmas. The stores are closing early tonight. Thousands are traveling to be with family and friends.

Everywhere you look, it looks like Christmas. The lights, the trees, the gifts.

It sounds like Christmas, too—just go to Walmart. You'll hear the bells from the Salvation Army—and we can't forget the Christmas music!

It even tastes like Christmas! The yummy candy and cookies are hard to beat this time of year!

For most of us, we think of the family gatherings and the delicious spread of food. We think about Christmas caroling and gift exchanges. We love Christmas.

That's okay.

But there are many people today who are dreading Christmas. There are more tears than happy smiles, more painful flashbacks than joyful memories.

I think of the parents who are going through their first Christmas without their beloved child; the mom who recently gave her child up for adoption; the children who just buried their parents; the grandparents who haven't seen their daughter and grandchildren in years; the woman who dreads having to face the brother who took her innocence many years ago; the son who wishes he could remember a time when there wasn't tension and fighting at his family's Christmas dinner; the child who is in the hospital with cancer; the widow who would do anything to live one more day with her husband; the homeless man who has nothing and has no one to spend the day with.



For these dear souls, Christmas is hard. Painful.

Sometimes the pain that grips them is greater than the joyful hustle and bustle of this glorious time of year. Behind the smiles you see at church, Walmart, or the Christmas concert is a broken, oozing heart.

Recently I've met a few of these people. They look like ordinary people who are caught up with Christmas, just like me—except that when I asked them if they were looking forward to Christmas, there was a long pause.

One woman replied, "What's the point in putting up a bunch of Christmas lights and décor when Christmas is so painful?"

Another woman answered my question by saying that she goes all out in décor at Christmas time because it helps her to forget the pain of not being able to see her grandchildren and daughter.

No, these were not random strangers I met at Aldi.

**And she shall bring forth a son,
and thou shalt call his name Jesus:
for he shall save his people from
their sins.**

Matthew 1:21

These are neighbors and acquaintances. People I know. People I go to church with.

And I was completely blind to their pain.

For several weeks now, I've been thinking about how I can be a blessing to the folks who find themselves dreading Christmas. How would Jesus respond?

Maybe He would invite them over to His house for a meal or a snack on Christmas Eve. Maybe He'd "adopt" them as his parents. Maybe He'd send them flowers. Maybe He'd drop some groceries on their doorstep. Maybe He'd slip a card into their mailbox.

I don't know. But I know He'd do something for them. He wouldn't just go about His Christmas activities and forget about them.

After all, He knows how it feels to leave everything familiar and come to a sin-cursed earth where He was hated and despised, where His friends and family forsook Him, and where He was hated and mocked. He is acquainted with grief and sorrow. It is not a new thing to Him.

Oh Jesus, please help me to remember You this Christmas season, so that I can remember the hurting souls who find Christmas hard. May they see You through me.

If you're the dear soul who is dreading Christmas, please know that the baby in the manger, Jesus, cares about your grief and sorrow. He hurts with you. I can't do something for everyone, but I am praying that God would send someone your way to ease the pain and loneliness this Christmas; and I'm praying that you will experience Jesus in a tangible way.

Have a blessed Christmas!

Feedback and Response Section

1

Hello, *Amish Voice*:

I agree that just because we don't drive cars or have cell phones we are no better than anyone

else, but if we leave the denomination we were baptized in, the Lord will not know us on Judgment Day. So believe whatever you want, and I will believe what I feel is right.

—DT from OH

Jonas Yoder responds:

DT,

Thank you for writing to us at the *Amish Voice*. I am unaware of where the Bible teaches that if a person were to leave a particular denomination into which he was born, God would not know him on Judgment Day. If that were true, we would have to believe that either any person from any faith or no faith would get to heaven if they stayed with their particular people group until they die, or else we would have to believe that certain people groups are automatically condemned to hell at birth based on their

particular people group.

It may also be that you are referring to an often misunderstood Bible verse: *Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle* (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

I know many people simply assume Paul was teaching that whatever particular traditions you have been taught is what a person needs to continue in until death, which would have to lead a person to believe that the above explanation was true—that either all people who stay in their particular tradition will someday go

to heaven, or else God automatically condemns certain people to hell simply because of who they were born to.

In context of what Paul was writing to the church of the Thessalonians, he was simply encouraging them to continue in the faith as they had received it from God through his teachings.

So, keep reading the Bible and following Jesus, knowing that God sees our hearts and knowing that our hearts must be made pure before Him, even if we go to church!

—Jonas Yoder

2

To Whom it May Concern:

First of all, I will say that the article on abuse probably has some value (“Relating to Perpetrators and Relating to Victims,” by Ann Detweiler). It is very, very sad that God's people have to deal with such things, and obvious sins start from what man thinks.

There is also danger in internet use. To have all the information

and filth at our fingertips greatly increases temptation. One example is pornography. Most humans are not strong enough to not snoop through by just clicking a few buttons. You might be strong enough, but what about your children? We need to protect the little lambs, don't we?

Aus leibe,

—M.Y.

Jeremiah Zeiset responds:

Dear M.Y.,

Thank you for writing to us. I appreciate your desire to avoid temptation. In thinking what the Bible says about evil, it seems that evil always starts in the heart of man rather than originating from outside of man and entering into his heart. *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile the man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man* (Matthew

15:19).

Imagine for a moment if we took a man and set him in the middle of the desert, with no access to anything or anyone else. Would he still be capable of sin? If it is true that sin begins in and flows out of the heart, then yes, he would still be very capable of sin.

But if our heart is right, it will grieve us when we realize we are tempted by any particular sin, and if we love God we will resist the devil and flee from temptation. But here is the reality – **the internet itself does not accidentally expose adults to**

sin—you actually have to look for it.

Just as evil starts in the heart, so does love for God, and that love works its way out from our heart to our soul, to our mind, and finally to our strength. *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment* (Mark 12:30).

In Matthew 23:26, Jesus warned about cleaning the outside of the cup, but not first making sure that the inside is clean: **Cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, Cont.**

that the outside of them may be clean also. It is just as possible to look good on the outside, with no internet access, but still not have a clean heart.

No doubt, as you mentioned, we also need to care for our children (I highly recommend internet filters, educating our children, and other easy ways we can help guard them from accident exposure

to pornography).

Also, if one has a weakness with regard to lust and pornography, that individual should decide for himself not to have internet access, and this is also backed up with Jesus' teaching: *And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and*

not that thy whole body should be cast into hell (Matthew 5:30). But each must know what he can handle, and act accordingly. It should be noted that not every single person should "cut off their hands," but only those who are tempted.

Sincerely,

Jeremiah Zeiset, Abbotsford, Wisconsin

Thank You and Blessings

—David Wickey

I want to take this time to thank all of you for the phone calls, text messages, and the responses in the *Amish Voice*; I appreciate you all. When I was doing this writing (*Living in the Stronghold of Deception*), I had no idea it would be published like this in the *Amish Voice*. When I receive understanding from the Lord, a piece of paper is my platform. Whatever happens after that is God's business. At times I do send these writings to different ministries, and whatever happens—happens.

From the beginning of my walk with the Lord, my prayer was and always is "Do not let me be deceived." As a young Christian, even after I was born again, I

was very self-righteous. I judged others from the outward based upon the circumstances in their lives, not knowing what God was doing in their lives. I even used the Bible to do so. Believe me, God allowed these same things to happen in my life that I had judged others for, and some of the things that happened weren't pretty.

Today I try not to judge from the outward, anything that somebody is going through except revealed by the Holy Spirit. This is the reason I write what I do. I am forever mindful of my inability to communicate these things correctly; please forgive me. I try to make the emphasis of all my writings

"Jesus Christ and Him crucified," for without the work of the cross by the Holy Spirit, we would never be corrected or disciplined. Yes, God does give me dreams and visions, but they must always be based on the true foundation of Jesus Christ.

Again, I want to thank you for your response. I pray the articles have blessed you. May God's healing come to every member of His Body, whether spiritual, sick in body or sin, or in any other area. May the benefits of the cross flow over all!

Blessings,

David Wickey

Who Is in Charge?

—Eli Lee

Inviting Jesus into our heart or deciding to follow Jesus are good things, but they don't necessarily equal salvation, because we can speak from our mind (knowledge) without engaging our heart (will).

Just like Jesus first gave up His life to die, and afterward was raised to eternal life, our old life (self desires) too must be given up to die before we can be resurrected to eternal life. Jesus will not accept Lordship of our life until we surrender lordship to Him. He will not force Himself on us. *You cannot serve two masters* (Matthew 6:24).

Thousands of people followed Jesus and believed in Jesus, trying to fit Jesus into their lives, but when they heard that He required that they must give up their lives if they want to be His disciples, all but a handful went their own way.

Have you given up your agenda for His, or have you just added Him to your life? It really is just a decision we make, but our lives afterward will testify of what happened. Who is really in charge of your daily activities?

Gerald's Goat Sense

—Gerald Hochstetler



Lately I've heard a lot of, "We are just POOOR sinners saved by grace. We all sin every day; we will sin today, we will sin tomorrow, and then we will sin again on Saturday."

Yes, there is an element of truth to that, but that is only one side of the coin. Do you really want to focus on that side of the coin? Do you want to focus on your earthly body rather than what God Himself declares you to be?

Here at the goat compound, we choose to look upward. If God has declared us righteous, then we will be happy to accept that!

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

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The Sower and The Seed

—John Weaver



One day when a lot of people were gathered around Jesus, He preached a sermon about the sower and the seed. He said a man went out to sow seeds. Some seeds fell by the wayside, some fell on rocks, some among thorns, and some on good ground. Then Jesus interpreted His parable. The seed is the Word of God. The wayside is people who hear the Word of God, but before it can take root in this type of person, the devil comes and takes the Word out of their hearts so they don't get saved (his motive is clear).

The seed that falls on a rock is a person who hears and receives God's Word with joy, but when temptations come, he falls away.

The seed falling among the thorns is where the Word of God starts to grow in a person's heart, but he gets sidetracked. Cares, pleasures, and riches take priority in this person's life. The result is that no fruit is brought to perfection.

The last group of seeds fall on good ground. That describes the Word of God falling on a good and honest heart. The Word takes root, and with time brings forth fruit, with patience.

Every one of us is described here in this verse. We are or were one of these people. I have many times seen myself as the one where the seed fell among the thorns. When I heard the good news of salvation, I was overjoyed. I started to grow in my spiritual life. I knew that Jesus was real. I trusted in Him, and life took on a whole new meaning.

Alas, soon my life was cluttered with work, with building my business, and going after pleasures. That faith, that joy of the Lord (my real strength) was pushed back. I did not "seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). Therefore, the fruit was not much there. I have said that I am so very grateful it doesn't say that the little plant died. It was hindered and its growth was stunted, but it didn't die.

Here is the good—no, the marvelous—part! Somehow when I came to my senses like the prodigal son, when I repented and turned around, God met me, just like the prodigal's father met him. I was given another chance. I see the father lifting me out of the thorns and transplanting me on good ground. Then

my life could flourish; I could become useful in the kingdom of God.

My life became fruitful. God has given me the opportunity to touch many lives in Honduras, in the church, and even by writing. It is God's power working in and through me to show forth the marvelous and great God whom we serve. When I could have stayed in the thorns and lived life as a stunted and fruitless plant, God in His great mercy redeemed me for His use.

I will forever be thankful to my great God for His work in me—that He didn't let me just go on in the condition that I was in. I feel very privileged and loved by Him.

I marvel at the people who hear the Word of God and immediately start to grow and bring forth fruit. These people are the ones with the best testimony. I am sure that is the testimony of many of you. Praise God!

However, if your testimony is like mine, thank God that He cares for you, and if you haven't yet done so, ask Him now to transplant you into that good ground where you can flourish and bring those fruits that please and bring pleasure to the Master. What a mighty God we serve! Truly *we love Him, because He first loved us* (1 John 4:19).

End