



MAP ♦ 575 US Highway 250 ♦ Greenwich, OH 44837 ♦ (419) 962-1515 ♦ January 2023

The General Epistle of James

Teacher's Outline and Study Bible™

<p>1. Circumstance 1: When heavily tried, do not curse or swear</p> <p>2. Circumstance 2: When your experience ranges from affliction to cheerfulness, pray & praise</p> <p>3. Circumstance 3: When you are sick, call for prayer from church leaders</p> <p>a. The steps to healing</p> <p>1) Anoint with oil</p> <p>2) Pray</p> <p>b. The results</p> <p>1) Restored, saved</p> <p>2) Sins forgiven</p>	<p>B. Step 2: Take Each Circumstance & Respond Properly, 5:12-20</p> <p>12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.</p> <p>13 Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.</p> <p>14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:</p> <p>15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.</p> <p>16 Confess your faults one to</p>	<p>another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.</p> <p>17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.</p> <p>18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.</p> <p>19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;</p> <p>20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.</p>	<p>4. Circumstance 4: When you have sinned, confess your sins to one another & pray for one another</p> <p>a. Because the effective, fervent prayer of a believer works</p> <p>b. Because of the dynamic example of Elijah</p> <p>5. Circumstance 5: When a believer is backslidden, seek him</p> <p>a. He is to be sought out & led to repentance</p> <p>b. The results</p> <p>1) He will be saved from death</p> <p>2) He will have his sins covered</p>
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Section VI

TEMPTATIONS AND TRIALS:

COMBATED STEP BY STEP

James 5:7-20

STUDY 2: STEP 2: TAKE EACH CIRCUMSTANCE AND RESPOND PROPERLY

TEXT: James 5:12-20

AIM: To learn godly responses to trying circumstances.

MEMORY VERSE:

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

INTRODUCTION:

Life throws at us a great variety of situations. Ultimately, we are not able to control what circumstances we are faced with. How, then, can we be sure to take the right action? To say the right words? How can we combat and conquer the temptations of life?

Scripture tells us there are two steps that must be taken in order to live a consistent Christian life. The first step is to be patient and endure, to keep your eyes fixed upon the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The second step to be taken is the subject of this lesson: to take each circumstance and respond to it appropriately.

OUTLINE:

1. Circumstance 1: when heavily tried, do not curse or swear (v.12).
2. Circumstance 2: when your experience ranges from affliction to cheerfulness, pray and praise (v.13).
3. Circumstance 3: when sick, call for prayer from church leaders (vv.14-15).
4. Circumstance 4: when you have sinned, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another (vv.16-18).
5. Circumstance 5: when a believer is backslidden, seek him (vv.19-20).

1. CIRCUMSTANCE 1: WHEN HEAVILY TRIED OR TEMPTED, DO NOT SWEAR OR CURSE (v.12).

Swearing or cursing is common today, so common that it has tragically become an acceptable practice in society. Note exactly what this verse says: “Above all things, my brothers, swear not at all.” Above all things: Scripture puts swearing and cursing right at the top of the list of its prohibitions. Why would Scripture place such a heavy emphasis on not swearing or cursing? Because swearing and cursing are either taking God’s name in vain or else showing man’s worthlessness. A man’s word is a reflection of himself. He is either trustworthy or untrustworthy. If his word is untrue, he has lost his credibility and worth in the eyes of others. It is the truthfulness and reliability of a man’s word that is important, that really matters. There should, therefore, be no need for oaths. There should be no need for a man’s word to be reinforced. Swearing shows a heart that is disturbed, lacking, or evil. No matter who the person may be—how high or low in society—his words reveal the true condition of his heart: restless, assured, fulfilled, and good or else disturbed, insecure, lacking, and evil.

Note three significant points.

1. There are at least six types of swearing.
 - a. There is swearing by oaths. Jesus was put under oath to give an answer (Mt.26:63), and Paul swore by taking an oath (2 Co.1:23; Ga.1:20). What then does James mean by saying, “Swear not”? Simply that a man’s word should be trustworthy in his day-to-day speech, so trustworthy that no oath is ever necessary. His character should be his guarantee, the Only guarantee he needs.
 - b. There is habitual, frivolous swearing. The unrighteous are said to have “mouths full of cursing and bitterness” (Ro.3:10, 14).
 - c. There is hypocritical swearing. There are some who “bless God” in one breath and turn around and “curse men” in the next breath. “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing” (Js.3:9-10).
 - d. There is silent, universal swearing. Every man is charged with secretly cursing others within his heart. “Thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself...hast cursed others” (Ec.7:22).
 - e. There is evasive swearing. Some do not use words that are foul, dirty, ugly, harsh, or binding. They would never use God’s name in vain. Rather, they choose substitute words—words that are commonly used in everyday conversation, words that would never be considered swearing. Others choose what are thought to be milder curse words. By evading harsh swearing, they feel their words are not so improper or sinful. They count themselves less guilty.
 - f. There is ego or egotistical swearing. Many swear to boost their ego, their authority, their manliness around others. They feel an identity with the crowd by crossing over to the forbidden.
2. A person is not to swear by heaven or earth nor by any other oath. This is clearly stated by Scripture.
 - a. Do not swear by heaven, for it is God’s throne: the place where His glory is manifested (Is.66:1). To swear by heaven or to curse heaven is to swear by God and to curse God.
 - b. Do not swear by earth, for the earth is God’s footstool: the place He governs and looks over (Is.66:1; Ps.24:1). To swear by earth or to curse earth is to swear by God and to curse God.
 - c. Do not swear by any other oath, for all power belongs to God. In reality, no man has any power to do anything except what is given by God at that moment. Therefore, he really does not have the power to keep oaths. The recognition of this reality should cause a man to live so honestly and straightforward-

ly that his word alone is acceptable. Oaths and vows should not be necessary.

Note this: all power belongs to God; therefore, a man should stand in awe of God, not curse Him. But observe what it is that is usually cursed: God and the things of God, the very things that should not be cursed. This says much about the selfish, depraved nature of man. Cursing God is such a terrible sin that it is one of the Ten Commandments. A special judgment is even pronounced upon the curser (Ex.20:7). Cursing is meaningless, thoughtless, and irreverent.

“But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne” (Mt.5:34).

3. A person is to let his word be so true that it is his guarantee. A man is to need no other words to show his character or strength—no curse words and no swearing words a man should not have to say any more than “yes, I will...” or “no, I will not....” In fact, Jesus Christ said that anything more than straightforward words is rooted in evil. A man’s life should be so honest and upright that no one would ever question his word, whether or not something is true, whether or not something will be done or followed through with.

Something that is often overlooked is this fact: swearing and cursing do not make a matter more believable; they really make a matter more suspicious. A person swears something because the issue or his character is questionable. What an indictment of depravity! Yet swearing and cursing are the acceptable habits of men.

“But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Mt.5:37).

ILLUSTRATION:

Think for a moment about the utter foolishness of profane talk. If what we say is to be thought of as reliable, why would our words need to be “verified” by forceful cursing or flippant swear words? A simple, straightforward statement should be enough to make our point.

A certain senator disliked profanity above all things. This venerable senator had been shocked by the inflammatory interjections of a certain politician, with whom he frequently was compelled to confer. But on all such occasions he would refrain from censuring the culprit except in the mildest manner.

One day when the politician came to the senator’s committee room on a subject of considerable importance, the senator indicated a seat to him, and remarked, “Now, Mr. Blank, before we enter upon a discussion of this question,

we shall assume that everybody and everything is damned. Now we can talk it over [in a friendly manner].”⁴³

The point is obvious: cursing and swearing do not add to the truthfulness of what we are saying. They only take away from the integrity of our character!

QUESTIONS:

1. People swear or curse for many reasons, but it is always wrong. Why is it not only wrong but foolish to swear or curse?
2. What will really guarantee the truth of our words? How can you strengthen your own testimony?

2. CIRCUMSTANCE 2: WHEN YOU EXPERIENCES RANGE FROM AFFLICTION TO CHEERFULNESS, PRAY AND PRAISE (v.13).

When we are facing trouble, God wants us first and foremost to seek Him for power and deliverance to walk through the trial or temptation. He wants us to ask Him for courage to be a great witness for Him as we walk through it all. And when we are free of trouble, God wants us praising Him and rejoicing in Him.

1. All kinds of temptations and trials afflict us as believers, in truth, afflict everyone on earth.

- ⇒ There are temptations to drink, do drugs, be immoral, commit adultery, cheat, steal, lie, be prideful, be selfish, and on and on.
- ⇒ There are trials such as accidents, unemployment, ill health, financial difficulties, unfaithfulness of a spouse, any number of disappointments, and on and on.

When such circumstances strike or happen to us, we are to combat them by prayer. We are to pray and seek God for His presence and guidance, His power and strength to walk through the trial. Then we are to ask God for the courage to be a dynamic witness for Him and His glorious salvation.

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mt.26:41).

“And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Lu.18:1).

⁴³ Paul Lee Tan. Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations, #10099.

2. Most people on earth also have times when they are free from trials and temptations. As stated, these are times when God wants us walking about praising and worshipping Him. We are to be cheerful in the Lord, showing the world that there is joy in the Lord—the joy of assurance and confidence in the eternal salvation and life that Christ provides. This is the praise that is to be constantly flowing from our lips.

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ep.5:19).

QUESTIONS:

1. How have you seen prayer help you through a trial?
2. What good reasons do you have for praising God every day?
3. How is the joy of the Lord in your life evident to others?

3. CIRCUMSTANCE 3: WHEN YOU ARE SICK, CALL FOR PRAYER FROM CHURCH LEADERS (VV.14-15).

1. Note the four facts given in this passage.
 - a. “Is any sick among you?” The sick are those who are so sick that they are shut-ins—unable to get out to go to the ministers and leaders of the church.
 - b. “Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders [ministers or leaders] of the church.” The sick person is to be so concerned over his welfare and so trusting of God that he knows God can heal him. He also believes in prayer, that where two of three are gathered together in the name of Christ, Christ will be there in more power.
 - c. “Let them [the elders] pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” The elders are to do both of these things in the name of the Lord. That is, they are to know and acknowledge that the Lord alone is the Healer of our sicknesses. We are not healed by our prayers nor by oil, but by the Lord. But the elders are also to know two other things:
 - ⇒ First, God has commanded us to pray for deliverance and healing in times of affliction and suffering.
 - ⇒ Second, God has told us to anoint the sick with oil.
 - d. “The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up....” The Lord will heal the sick person and forgive his sins because of the prayer of faith.

This is a difficult passage for many people, because many true believers have prayed in faith for healing—for themselves or for a loved one—and not been healed. Does this mean that Scripture is wrong? Or that God does not carry through with His promises? Not at all! There are several factors to consider when looking at each situation:

- Is the believer truly praying in faith, believing that God can and will heal?
- Is the believer praying with the right motive?
- Is the believer praying for God’s will?
- Is the believer praying for healing so that the Lord will be honored, Him and Him alone?

Remember: God chooses to heal some and not to heal others. Why? Why would God not heal someone who is suffering and whom He loves? For the same reason God allows us, His children, to go through any other trial or temptation...

- to test us and prove us
 - to help us learn patience, endurance, and perseverance
 - to use our forbearance and stamina as a testimony to others of God’s sustaining grace
 - to bring more glory to God as people see His strengthening, sustaining power at work in us
 - to bring more glory to God through our healing
 - to reach more souls for Christ through our faith and testimony as people see the Lord strengthen us through the suffering
2. Second, picture the scene of what is being said in this passage. A dear, dear brother or sister is so sick that he is bedridden. His sickness is ongoing, unending, so much so that if he is ever going to join us in the worship of the Lord again, the Lord is going to have to miraculously heal him. Our dear brother or sister is hopelessly bedridden and will be so for the rest of his life. What is he or she to do? Just lie there and give in to the trial? Yield to the temptation to limit God’s power? What should the elders (ministers and leaders) of the church do? Encourage the dear brother to bear his affliction and suffering—to lie there and accept his affliction with dignity, but with no hope of ever being healed by God?
- This passage emphatically says “No!” Neither the dear brother or sister nor the elders should give up to the trial or sickness. As clearly as possible, Scripture says they should do two things:
- ⇒ Gather around the sick person and pray.

- ⇒ Gather around the sick person and anoint him with oil.

Now, for a couple of questions.

- ⇒ Does this work? Is this what God expects us to do when one of our loved ones or dear brothers or sisters become sick? Let us answer these questions by asking several other questions.

- ⇒ □ What is there in this passage or in this book that says this is not a clear instruction of Scripture? It would seem that raw honesty before the Lord—without preconceived notions—would require us to say that this instruction stands as the Lord’s teaching as much as any other in the book of James.

- 1 Why not do this? What is wrong with going to a dear brother or sister—one whom we love ever so deeply and one who has been among us as one of God’s faithful worshippers and servants—and putting a little oil on his head and praying for God to heal him? He is a dear brother who is hurting, suffering, and racked with pain, and he has been given no hope. What is wrong with us doing all we can for him? What is wrong with praying with all the faith we can arouse within our hearts and minds?

All believers, of course, have to answer these questions for themselves; but as we answer them, we must be honest—honest to God and His Word and honest to ourselves and our loved ones. There is absolutely no question—these instructions are in the Word of God. Their presence and clear teaching cannot be denied. What, then, are we to do? What does God want us to do? Regardless of what men say and do, what does God’s Word say?

“Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Mt.17:20).

“Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mk.9:23).

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (Jn.15:7).

3. Note the instruction to anoint with oil. Why would Scripture tell us to anoint the sick with oil? There are two excellent reasons.

- a. Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, of His presence.

The oil helps the sick person to focus and concentrate upon the presence of the Holy Spirit and His power. It is often difficult for a sick person to focus. Therefore the oil—its presence and placement upon the body—helps the sick person to concentrate upon the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

- b. Oil is a symbol of God’s care, comfort, and joy, of His mercy to us. It is the oil of gladness. Therefore, the presence of the oil is to stir the sick individual to believe in God’s will to be merciful and His desire to fill the believer’s heart with gladness.

ILLUSTRATION:

Evangelist Charles Price relates this touching story of a deathly sick woman.

She said to me “My Brother, do you know what Jesus has done?”

“I know that my Lord doeth all things well,” was my reply.

“He has given me His faith,” she said. “Honestly, I do not know the moment I received it; but, praise His name, I know it is here.”

And it was. That night, the heavenly breezes blew. That night the Christ of the healing road touched, with the power of Omnipotence, the sick, weary body of His needy child. That night a cancer was melted by the touch divine. A mountain was moved by the faith of God which had been imparted to a sick woman by the Lord of Glory Himself.⁴⁴

What a marvelous story of an ordinary woman in whom God did an extraordinary thing! This woman followed the Scripture, praying for God’s mercy, for His healing touch upon her body. And the Lord, with great compassion and mighty power, rewarded her faith right then and there.

QUESTIONS:

1. Have you personally experienced a healing or do you know someone who has? What events or actions preceded the healing?
2. What is your responsibility as a Christian believer when afflicted with severe illness?
3. Why does Scripture tell us to anoint the sick with oil?

4. CIRCUMSTANCE 4: WHEN YOU HAVE SINNED,

⁴⁴ Charles S. Price. *The Real Faith*. (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1940), p.57.

CONFESS YOUR SINS TO ONE ANOTHER AND PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER (vv.16-18).

Does this mean that believers are to go around confessing all their sins in all their details and ugliness? No! This is not what this passage is talking about. It is referring to certain types of sins or to certain times when we are to confess our sins. We should confess our sin...

- when the sin has been a wrong or injustice done against someone else
- when we have misled or lied to someone
- when we have offended someone or caused someone to stumble and sin
- when restitution should be made
- when we have publicly committed some crime and public forgiveness is required
- when a trusted minister or Christian counselor may be able to help us in seeking repentance and restoration before God and man

Note why we should confess our sins to one another: so that we, on hearing, can pray for one another. Prayer is of critical importance for many reasons, one of which is stated in verse 16: the effectual, fervent prayer—the earnest, working power of prayer—avails much. Prayer that is truly earnest is a prayer that works and heals a sin-sick soul (v.16).

Elijah is an excellent example of the power of prayer. He was a man like us, a human being who had passions and feelings just like we have, who faced the same temptations and trials that we do. Yet Elijah earnestly prayed for it not to rain, and it did not rain for three years and six months. Then he prayed again for it to rain, and it rained and the earth bore its fruit (1 K.17:1f; 18:1f; Lu.4:25). The point is this: prayer—earnest and fervent prayer—is effective; it works. God hears and answers prayer.

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Mt.7:7-8).

QUESTIONS:

1. What are some practical examples of when and why we should confess our faults or sins to one another?
2. Whose prayers does God answer? In what manner do we need to pray for God to move on our behalf? Is this an area where you need to improve?

5. CIRCUMSTANCE 5: WHEN A BELIEVER HAS BACKSLIDEN, SEEK HIM (vv.19-20).

This is speaking of believers: brothers, if any of you stray from the truth. Note that believers can....

- stray away from the truth (v.19)
- walk in the way of error (v.20)

When this happens, the believers of the church are to seek to convert him, that is, to lead him to repentance. The word convert means to turn, hence, to take him by the hand and lead him to repentance. What a descriptive picture: loving one another so much that as soon as a believer slips into sin...

- we take him by the hand
- we turn him around and lead him to repent

APPLICATION:

What a different place the church and world would be if we loved one another so much that we actually did this! How desperately such a ministry of restoration is needed today! What is to prevent churches or ministers or teachers from arousing people to set up a ministry of restoration?

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Is.55:7).

Note: if we turn a believer around from his sin, we save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. What is meant by death here? The great Greek scholar A.T. Robertson says that the person saved here is a believer being won back to Christ.⁴⁵ Once a believer's soul has been saved, restored back to Christ, a multitude of sins becomes covered and forgiven by the blood of Christ. (Please see A CLOSER LOOK below, James 5:19-20, for a full discussion on the subject of the “Sin Unto Death.”)

Note this about temptation and trials: seeking others for the Lord strengthens oneself against temptations and trials. The Christian witness becomes a student of the gospel and of man. He learns all he can about the faults and needs of men and all he can about God and His provision. The knowledge of both strengthens his own faith.

QUESTIONS:

1. What should we do when a fellow believer strays from the truth?

⁴⁵ A.T. Robertson. Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol.6, p.67.

QUESTIONS (continued):

2. What is the result of converting someone to Christ? Who has the Lord put on your heart to try to lead to Christ?

SUMMARY:

The circumstances of life are anything but predictable. God made the world that way for a reason—He expects us to live by faith. As true believers, we are to do more than just mentally believe in God. We are to have real faith, a faith that is evident in our actions:

1. When we are heavily tried, we will not curse or swear.
2. When our experience ranges from affliction to cheerfulness, we will pray and praise.
3. When we are sick, we will call for prayer from church leaders.
4. When we have sinned, we will confess our faults to one another and pray for one another.
5. When one is backslidden, we will seek him.

PERSONAL JOURNAL NOTES:

(Reflection and Response)

1. The most important thing that I learned from this lesson was:
2. The thing that I need to work on the most is:
3. I can apply this lesson to my life by:
4. Closing Prayer of commitment:

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Fear Not

—by John Weaver

When Angels spoke to people they often said, "Fear not." Jesus told us to "Fear not." Yet many, many people, believers and unbelievers alike, struggle with fear.

Fear of men. Fear of sickness. Fear of death. Fear of pain. Fear of poverty.

The list could go on and on. If a person has the proper fear of God, there is really nothing else to fear. God has promised that when we believe in Him, He will never leave us nor forsake us.

"For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5b).

God said that He has not given us a spirit of fear. Fear is a tool of Satan.

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Now, if you are a person who struggles a lot with fear, my heart goes out to you. People do not fear because they want to. People fear because they lack trust or faith. I will not try to convince a person that there is no need to fear. I will encourage them to increase their faith. Faith and fear can not dwell together. One will drive out the other from a person's life. As the disciples told Jesus one time; "...Lord, increase our faith" (Luke 17:5).

The opposite of fear is faith. Our faith should rest squarely on our connection with God and his son Jesus. God will not lie or let us down. When we really and truly believe that, then fear has no more habitat in our lives.

As with any other sins that plague us, Satan will try to make a stronghold out of them and try to convince us that we must live with them. (Our strongholds are sins that easily beset us.) He will

try to keep you bound in fear. But, praise God! Satan has no chains that can not be broken by our faith in Jesus. We never wrestle with flesh and blood. We go to war with the powers of darkness in the name of Jesus.

Rebuke Satan for your fears and claim the promises of God.

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).

Tell God that you believe

"...that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Repeat that verse and many others again and again. Then think, and ask yourself...

If all things work together for my good what right have I to fear? That's right. Nothing. Nothing at all. Amen.

In the November issue, we took a look at the events and issues that surrounded the beginning of the Reformation and the defining of the Anabaptists.

Persecution and growth

In 1525 the Anabaptist movement began with the (re)baptism of three “radical believers.” This step challenged the unity of the Swiss State Church and undermined the authority of the Council of Zurich. Infant baptism also meant Swiss citizenship. Therefore, by rejecting infant baptism, the Anabaptists were cast-outs in the Swiss society and a threat to the social fabric. By refusing military service they made the city vulnerable for attacks from outside.

Even though the Anabaptists were persecuted from the start, the movement spread rapidly in the countryside around Zurich. Within several years, groups were found throughout Switzerland, in southern Germany and parts of Austria. Later the movement spread further north to the Netherlands and northern Germany. Lay preachers, book sellers and merchants spread the message of God’s direct grace and a church free of state influence, practicing Jesus’ teachings.

The ways of persecution were varied. Many were hunted and tortured in jail. Some Anabaptists were burned at the stake. Others were drowned or sold as rowing slaves on galleys. In some areas there were special “Anabaptist hunters” (paid by the head) to track them down.

These circumstances caused the Anabaptists to seek hiding. Their meetings often took place at night, in caves or woods and in small groups. It was a fearful time and a deep distrust of larger society and government was developed, leaving lasting marks on the movement.

Disagreements and confessions

Though the organization of the Anabaptist church was rather decentralized, some leaders soon felt the need to express what held their congregations together. In 1527 a confession was written in Schleithem in northern Switzerland. This Schleithem Confession contained 7 articles about the main Anabaptist beliefs: baptism, the ban, breaking of bread, separation from evil, pastors in the church, the sword (non-resistance), and the oath.

A few years later, these articles became important in a discipline matter among the northern Anabaptists.

Some of the Anabaptists in these areas were very occupied with the Second Coming of Christ. Several even took it so far that they wanted to establish a new Messianic Age, and therefore violently occupied the city of Münster in 1534, persecuting everyone that did not want to be rebaptized. Persecution of Anabaptists became intense in Northern Europe as well, since governments now had a reason to state that Anabaptists could be dangerous. The non-resistant wing of the Anabaptist movement had to state clearly, that they rejected actions like these.

A Dutch former catholic priest, who had become an Anabaptist, played an important role in redefining Anabaptism in the North. His name was Menno Simons and he denounced the violence of Münster openly in 1536. Menno Simons writings and teachings became so popular and well known, that a decade

later some officials were calling the Anabaptists “Mennonites.” Later this name also spread to other parts of Europe.

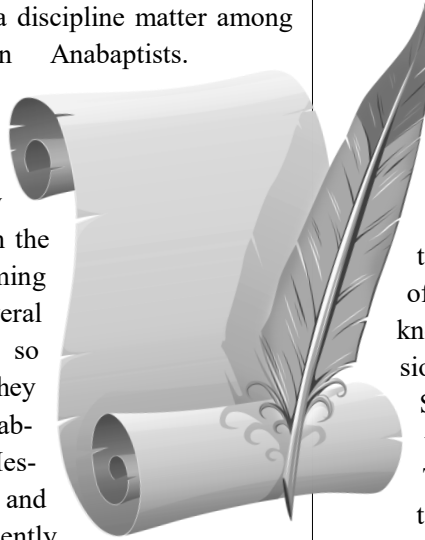
More and more, the Northern Anabaptists practiced an intense form of shunning to excommunicated members, which might have to do with the fact that they clearly wanted to avoid any ties with the fanatical Anabaptists who had turned to violence.

Less strict excommunication practices were held by Southern Anabaptists. Also in the north there were differences in views on excommunication and shunning.

In 1632 an historic meeting was held in the Dutch city of Dordrecht. Leaders of different Anabaptist groups came together and wrote a confession of faith. This confession became known as the Dordrecht Confession and had clear ties to the Schleithem Confession that was written a century before. The Dordrecht Confession contains 18 articles and also covers topics that were not mentioned in the Schleithem Confession, such as the nature of God and marriage. The last two articles are about the practice of shunning. Business and social relationships should be ended after a wayward member was excommunicated. However, the church was still to feed and clothe them if the need would arise.

The Swiss and Southern Anabaptists did eventually also adopt the Dordrecht Confession, even though not all of them agreed on the articles about shunning.

The Dordrecht Confession was a document of reunification for the early Anabaptist Church. It would, however, unfortunately not be able to keep this unity for a very long time.



END

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January

8 Ways to Jump Off the Crazy Cycle

Join Emerson and Jonathan as they discuss 8 ways to prevent and get off the “Crazy Cycle.” Examples include what to do when you see the spirit of your spouse deflate.

The Way to Heaven (part 1)

Do you know the one and only way to get to heaven? Sermon by Dr. Charles Stanley.

The Way to Heaven (part 2)

Do you know the one and only way to get to heaven? Sermon by Dr. Charles Stanley.

Things I Wish I'd Known Before Parenting Teens (part 1)

No one feels prepared for raising teens. But you can do this! Author Gary Chapman reveals what I wish I'd known and ways to redefine your relationship.

February

You Will Never See Death

One day your strength will fade, and your body will fail, but if you are trusting in Jesus you will never see death. Message by John Piper.

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Be inspired to lean on God when hardship comes your way. Make Jesus Christ your inner strength so you can triumph over trials. Message by Dr. Charles Stanley.

How We Profit From Suffering (part 2)

Continued message given by Dr. Charles Stanley. See above for description.

Things I Wish I'd Known Before Parenting Teens (part 2)

No one feels prepared for raising teens. But you can do this! Author Gary Chapman reveals what I wish I'd known and ways to redefine your relationship.

March

Baptism: God's Will for Every Believer

Baptism is a necessary and powerful acknowledgment of Jesus' lordship in our lives. Message by Dr. Charles Stanley.

The Triumph of the Gospel in the New Heavens and the New Earth

Death and decay won't have the last word. One day soon, God will release all of creation from corruption. Message by John Piper.

Why Confess Our Unloving and Disre- spectful Comments?

If the roles were reversed, we'd expect another to confess to us. If another was mean to us, blamed us for their unkind reactions, made light of their unkindness since they meant no harm... Message by Emerson Eggerichs.

50 Things Every Child Needs to Know Before Leaving Home

In parenting's daily grind, are you losing sight of the end game? Josh and Jenn Mulvihill unpack skills for every child to learn to thrive in faith and life.

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The cost of *The Amish Voice* is \$.75 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 alongside of us by helping with expenses, it would be a great benefit, as well as highly appreciated. Thank you. —Joe Keim, Executive Director

In part 1 of this article (Nov 2022 AV), we took a moment to prove God's existence and concluded that belief in God is a matter of faith in that what He reveals to us in His Word is true. Man has a desire to JUDGE and CONTTOL others, but once we accept that God has created all things, we understand that He alone has the right to determine a set of rules for all people and judge all people by His standards

QUESTION: Are you a judgmental and condemning kind of person? If so, consider the following passage, taken from Romans 14:10-13:

*"But why dost thou judge thy brother? ... for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So, then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: **but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.**"*

Paul was citing this Old Testament verse to show that each one of us is accountable to God. Therefore, we don't have to judge our brethren; God will do it.

QUESTION: Do you try to change people? If so, who are you trying to change now? How is it working out for you?

In Eph 4:2, Paul wrote to forbear one another in love, with all lowliness, meekness, and long suffering. I am very much aware of how difficult this can be, particularly when that challenging brother or sister is someone that you must live with, or work with daily.

Maybe you've wondered why you

feel so judged, condemned, and unforgiven all the time? Is it because you judge, condemn, and do not forgive others? According to Jesus, in Luke 6:37-38, that may very well be the case. Jesus said:

"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged:

condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned:

forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:

Give, and it shall be given unto you...

For with the same measure that ye mete withal [you use], it shall be measured to you again."

With the same measure of judgment, condemnation, and unforgiveness you and I hand out to others, so we ourselves will be judged, condemned, and unforgiven.

I once saw a quote that said:

"When you destroy someone's life with lies, take it as a loan. It will come back to you with interest."

QUESTION: Do you seek praise from other people?

The answer is most likely, "Yes." We all do – even though everything we have – looks, talents, possessions, abilities – come from God. The Lord spoke through Isaiah 42:8:

"I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."

Jesus said in John 12:42-43:

"Nevertheless among the chief rulers

also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

Let that sink into the depth of your heart. These chief rulers were more concerned about man's short-term praise and acceptance than they were about God's eternal and final praise and acceptance. How totally absurd!

QUESTION: Do you seek approval from others? In simple terms, are you a people pleaser?

When the chief scribes and Pharisees warned the apostles to stop preaching in Jesus' name, they had to decide ... if they should please men or God. In Acts 5:29, we are told that

"Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than men."

People who seek praise and live for acceptance of others may feel hurt, rejected, unappreciated, and insecure.

Now that we have looked at ourselves, let's switch gears and look at the life of Jesus. He is our perfect standard, and example! Let's see how Jesus always trusted God's control.

Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:23:

"Jesus, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; instead, He committed Himself to Him that judges righteously."

Jesus did not judge anyone. Passing judgment on others is not why He came to earth. He had a greater purpose!

John 12:47 says:

"If any man hears my words, and be-

lieve not, I judge him not: for ***I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.***"

In Philippians chapter 2, the apostle Paul asked us to think of ourselves the same way Jesus thought of Himself. Think about it! Jesus knew in His heart that He was equal with God; however, He never once clung to the advantages of that status. When the time came for Him to go to the cross, He set all His power, His status, and His privileges aside. He humbled Himself and took on the status of a slave. Not only did He die a selfless and obedient death – it was the worst and most humiliating kind of death – a crucifixion. Let's read the passage.

"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant [slave], and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:6-8).

Think about it! Jesus Christ, who being in the form of God, emptied Himself and became a man. He took one great step down from heaven to earth. The Sovereign Lord of the universe—He who existed ...

- in eternity and perfection
- in glory and majesty
- in dominion and power

...stepped down and became a man. But more than this: He who was the Lord and Master of the universe—who deserved all the honor and service of all living creatures—took upon Himself the form of a servant.

- The Lord whom we are to serve, came and served us.
- The Lord whom we are to love, came and loved us.
- The Lord whom we are to adore, came and adored us.

- The Lord whom we are to wait upon, came and waited upon us.
- The Lord whom we are to minister to, came and ministered to us.
- The Lord whom we are to seek, came and sought us.

Jesus did not come to earth as a prince or some great leader upon earth. He did not come to receive the homage and service of men. He came as the humblest of men, as a servant to serve men. "He was brought up meanly, probably working with his supposed father at his trade. His whole life was a life of humiliation, meanness, poverty, and disgrace; he had nowhere to lay his head, lived upon alms, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, did not appear with external pomp, or any marks of distinction from other men. This was the humiliation of his life" Matthew Henry.¹

The POSB Commentary describes Jesus in the following way:

"Jesus willingly allowed men to kill Him. He did not have to bear such hostile humiliation and rebellion, but He did. Just picture what is involved in the death of the cross.

- Christ humbled Himself to die.
- Christ humbled Himself to come out of the spiritual and eternal world (dimension) into the physical and corruptible world in order to die.
- Christ humbled Himself to lay aside His eternal glory and majesty and become a man for the purpose of dying.
- Christ humbled Himself to suffer rejection, denial, cursing, abuse, arrest, torture, and murder at the hands of rebellious men—whom He had originally created for the joy of eternity—rebellious men whom He had come to save.
- Christ humbled Himself to take

all the sins of men upon Himself and to bear the weight and suffering of them all.

- Christ humbled Himself to bear the judgment and condemnation and punishment of sin for every man.
- Christ humbled Himself to suffer the awful experience of having God the Father turn His back upon Him.
- Christ humbled Himself to suffer the terrible justice and wrath of God against sin.
- Christ humbled Himself to bear the pain of suffering for sin eternally. Christ is eternal; therefore, His death is ever before the face of God. (Just imagine! It is beyond our comprehension, but the Lord's eternal agony is fact because of the eternal nature of God.)"²

Paul wrote in Philippians 2:3-5:

*"Let nothing be done through
strife or vainglory; but in
lowliness of mind let each esteem
other better than themselves.
Look not every man on his own
things, but every man also on
the things of others. Let this
mind be in you, which was also
in Christ Jesus."*

¹ Matthew Henry's Commentary, Vol. 6, p. 732f.

² Leadership Ministries Worldwide, *Galatians-Colossians*, The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible (Chattanooga, TN: Leadership Ministries Worldwide, 1996), 276.

The following article was taken from *The Topical Sermon Notebook, End Times* by Dr. Alan Carr, with permission. www.serrmonnotebookorg, Lenoir, NC.

1 Corinthians 15:51–58

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

Intro: These verses that we have read this morning give us a little insight into a future event known as *“The Rapture”*. While this word itself does not appear in the Bible, the event is real nonetheless. We get the word *“Rapture”* from the Latin translation of the Greek word *ἁρπάζω* (*harpazo*). It means just what the King James Bible says it does, *“caught up.”* The Rapture is that future event when the Lord Jesus Himself will return in the clouds above this earth and will catch away all the saved people of the world. It is a time that is known in the Bible as *“The Blessed Hope Of The Believer,”* **Titus 2:13**. This future event will be the focus of our preaching this morning.

While the return of our Lord is spoken of many times in the New Testament, there are only three passages which deal with the Rapture in any detail. I have read two of them this morning. The other is found in **Revelation 4:1–2a**, *“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the spirit: ...”* I want to draw your attention to one common theme that punctuates each of these references. That common theme is the mention of the “trumpet.” We are told in clear language that the Rapture will be a time that will be heralded with the sound of trumpets.

When the writers of the New Testament used the imagery of trumpets, the peo-

ple to whom they were writing were well acquainted with what they were saying. However, we modern readers need to be educated about the significance of the trumpet.



In the Bible, trumpets were used for four specific purposes.

1. **To Proclaim Victory**
2. **To Call An Assembly**
3. **To Announce A Warning**
4. **To Call The Troops To Battle**

It is clear to see how the trumpets fit with the idea of the Rapture. All four of these events will take place when the Rapture comes about.

1. **Victory over the world will be announced by the church.**
2. **The saints will be called to assemble themselves in the presence of the Lord.**
3. **The trumpets will announce a warning of judgment to the world.**
4. **The angelic troops will be summoned to battle.**

Also, in the society of that day, trumpets were heard on a daily basis. The Roman army, which occupied most of the civilized world at that time used trumpets to carry out the movement of their troops. Typically, when a Roman legion moved, there would be three blasts from the trumpets. The first would tell the troop to strike their tents and to prepare to move. The second would alert them to fall in and line up. The last trumpet would be the signal to move out. Notice what Paul says in **1 Cor. 15:52**. He tells us that we are leaving at the “last trump.” When the trumpet sounds, it will be the signal to move up to glory!

Folks, when the trumpet sounds, all those who are saved by grace will be leaving this world. It is that event that I want to preach about today. I want you to know that before the sound of that trumpet blast fades from our ears, several great and precious events will take place. Allow me to share them with you this morning as we think on the thought, *“When Trumpets Fade.”*

I. Our Lord Will Have Returned—I Thessalonians 4:17

A. In Fulfillment Of His Promise—

Before the Lord Jesus went to the cross, He promised His disciples that He would return for them one day, **John 14:1–3**. He later reaffirmed this promise to the Apostle John, **Rev. 22:20**. Just as sure as there is a blue sky above us, He will return as He promised He would! Even as He was ascending back into Heaven, angelic messengers were dispatched to tell the Apostles of the Lord’s impending return, **Acts 1:9–11**, *“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”*

B. In Fulfillment Of His Purpose—

While the Lord was making His promise to return some day, He also stated His purpose, **John 14:3**. The Lord desires to receive His bride unto Himself, **Eph. 5:25–27**. After all, He paid the ultimate price to redeem her from her sins and to cleanse her from her filthiness! He died on the cross to purchase His Bride and He wants her to be with Him in His heavenly home.

II. All Departed Saints Will Have Been Resurrected—1 Thes. 4:13–16; 1 Cor. 15:52b

A. **Their Present Condition**—1 Thes. 4:13 tells us that those saints who have departed are “**asleep**.” This does not refer to “**soul sleep**.” It refers to the fact that their bodies are asleep. When a saint of God leaves this world, they are immediately ushered into the presence of the Lord. This was the conviction Paul held, **2 Cor. 5:8**, “*We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*”; **Phil. 1:23**, “*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:*” Presently, all those who left this world in a saved condition are in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(III. The question may arise as to what manner of body they possess. Certainly they do not have their glorified bodies yet. However, it would seem that they possess some sort of a spiritual body. When Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, they possessed bodies that could be seen and recognized, **Matt. 17:3**. Whatever form they are in this morning, they are certainly in a place free from the cares, pains and burdens of this world. The Bible is clear when it teaches us that “*nothing that defileth shall enter*” Heaven, **Rev. 21:27**.)

B. **Their Promised Completion**—**1 Cor. 15:52b** tells us that the departed saints will be raised “**incorruptible**.” That is, they will be changed! When they left their body, it was destined for the ground from which it came. However, when the Lord Jesus returns, He will bring their spirits back with Him, He will raise their bodies and glorify them. He will then place the spirits back into those newly glorified bodies!

(III. There will be more said about that future body in just a moment!)

(III. How will all this happen? Certainly, to our mortal minds it is a great mystery. However, if you take the time to look back at the times our Lord shouted while He was on this earth, you will discover that each time He did so, dead folks got out of their graves.

1. **He shouted in Bethany and Lazarus lived!**—John 11:43–44
2. **He shouted at Calvary and some lived!**—Matt. 27:50–52
3. **He will shout from the clouds and all the departed saints will live!**—1 Thes. 4:16.

There is power in the Word of our Lord!)

III. All Living Saints Will Have Been Raptured—1 Thes. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:51–52a

A. **The Church Will Leave Instantaneously**—Notice the use of words that imply speed and swiftness, **1 Cor. 15:52**, “**moment**”—This word speaks of an “*indivisible point in time. A span of time so short that there is none shorter.*”; “**twinkling of an eye**”—Scientists have determined that the blink of an eye is 1/30th of a second in duration. That is fast! However, a twinkling is even faster than that, somewhere in the neighborhood of 1000th of a second! Then in **1 Thes. 4:17**, Paul uses the term “**caught up**.” This phrase means “*to snatch away, to seize with force, to claim for oneself.*” It refers to a sudden event when the saints of God will be “*snatched from this world with force and claimed for the glory of God.*”)

(III. The whole idea here is one of speed! There will be no forewarning. There will be no announcements on TV, on radio, or in the papers. There will be no announcements from the pulpits. God will not proclaim in a booming, Charlton Heston voice that the end is nearing. It will just happen! My friend, if you have ever listened

to anything in your life, then listen to this. You need to be ready! Jesus Himself said, “*Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh,*” **Matt. 24:44**.

If He were to come today, would He find you ready? Oh friend, do not be deceived, it could happen! Today could be that glorious day when the Lord returns for His people. Will you be in that number that hears the shout, that hears the trumpets and that leaves this world in an instant? Only if you are born again! Be ready, He is coming!)

(III. Can you imagine the chaos that will ensue when this event takes place? All babies missing! Most children gone! Some husbands and wives missing. Many Cars, planes, trains, etc. without drivers. Television personalities taken right off the air. It will be a time of great hysteria and mayhem. Some of you had better prepare for it, because you may experience it first hand! Why not come to Jesus before that happens?)

B. **The Church Will Leave Intact**—In **1 Cor. 15:51**, Paul tells us that “**all**” will be changed. The Rapture will not be an event enjoyed by a select few. But, every born again believer will have a part in the Rapture of the church! The body of Christ will not be fragmented! Part will not be taken and part left behind to endure the Tribulation. When the Rapture comes ALL the saints will go together!

(III. Because of the lives they have lived, some will not deserve to go, but they will go nonetheless. All the redeemed of all the ages will leave this world as one when the trumpet sounds. There are no second class citizens in the Kingdom of God! Saved is saved and lost is lost! All the saved will go, all the lost will stay behind!)

IV. All Saints Will Have Been Reconstructed—1 Cor. 15:52b-57

A. **Changed Physically**—At the moment of the Rapture, all the saints will experience a radical change. These mortal bodies will be changed to immortal ones. The bodies that are destined to perish will be made like the body of our Lord. A body that cannot experience death, decay or disease. A body that will shine with the brilliance of 10,000 suns. What a day that will be!

B. **Changed Perfectly**—When this change comes, it will remake us into the image of our glorified Lord. **1 John 3:2**, “*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*” We do not know a lot about our Lord’s glorified body, but we do know:

1. **It is a body not bound by time or space—John 20:19.**
2. **It is a body that can enjoy food and fellowship—Luke 24:36-43.**
3. **It is a body that can never die—Heb. 7:25.**
4. **It is a body that shines with a heavenly brilliance—Rev. 21:23; Matt. 17:2**

All of this is enough to let me know that I want one of these bodies some day. All the saints will wear a glorified body when we arrive in that Heavenly home!)

C. **Changed Permanently**—The language of our texts tells us that we will no longer be mortal. These new bodies will never wear down or wear out, but they will last throughout eternity. They will be a perfect in 10,000,000 years as they were the day we received them! Notice what Paul says about this body in **2 Cor. 5:1**, “*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*”

V. All Saints Will Be Enjoying a Reunion—1 Thes. 4:17

A. **With Our Loved Ones**—Notice the phrase “*together with them in the clouds.*” This indicates that all the children of God will be together forever in Heaven. Imagine being reunited with spouses, parents, children and grandparents. Imagine seeing your departed loved ones in their new glorified bodies in the presence of the Lord Jesus! What a glorious privilege has been given to all the saints of God!

B. **With Our Lord**—As great as that reunion with our loved ones will be, it will be eclipsed by another reunion. This same verse tells us that “*so shall we ever be with the Lord.*” My friends, one day, we will see Him Who died for us on the cross! We will look at His face. We will be able to bow before Him in adoration and worship. We will be in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ! I can imagine no thrill any greater in this universe than to see the One Who loved me enough to lay down His life in payment for my own. Hallelujah! Just the thought of that is enough to make a Baptist shout! Glory! Glory!

Conc: Well, I’ve done a lot of preaching this morning and I have tried to

describe several events that will happen when the Lord returns for His church. But please remember, all this will take place before the sound of the trumpet fades away. Are you ready for that event? Have you been washed in the blood of the Lamb? If Jesus came back for His church today, and He could, would you go, or would you be left behind? What I am asking is this: Have you ever come to the place where you knew you were lost? Have you confessed your sins to God? Have you placed your faith in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you received Christ as your personal Savior? Are you saved? If you are, then you have a reason to rejoice this morning! There are exciting things ahead for the children of God! If you are not saved, I beg you to come to Jesus right now! This is the only time you have to be saved! If the Lord is tugging at your heart and is calling you to come to Him, then please come! Don’t delay another minute. It is too dangerous! Jesus may come at any time and you really need to be ready when He does. Will you come to Him right now while there is still time? Will you be saved so that you too can be ready for that meeting in the air? Jesus is coming! Don’t be caught unprepared!

END

You are holding a cup of coffee when someone bumps into you, making you spill your coffee everywhere. Why did you spill the coffee? You spilled the coffee because there was coffee in your cup. Whatever is inside the cup is what will spill out.

When life comes along and shakes you (which will happen), whatever is inside you will come out. It’s easy to fake it, until you get rattled.

So, we have to ask ourselves, “What’s in my cup?” When life gets tough, does joy, gratefulness, peace and humility spill out? Or does anger, bitterness, and harsh words?

Today let’s work towards filling our cups with gratitude, forgiveness, joy, words of affirmation, kindness, gentleness and love for others.





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Do you ever feel like you are sitting in a boat, being pushed about with heavy waves, and not really going anywhere in life?

Have you been wondering, like so many other people in the world, what is God's purpose for your life? Why am I here on earth?

Is your faith in God weak and struggling?

If the answer is yes to these questions, why don't you prayerfully consider coming to *Step Out of the Boat Conference* in Ohio?

At the *Step Out of the Boat Conference*:

1. You will hear from others what happened when they stepped out of the boat.
2. You will receive an unlimited amount of encouragement to get back in the race of life.
3. You will be challenged in your faith and walk with God
4. You will learn what happened when others, just like yourself, released God from their box and let Him be who He really is.

The very heart and goal of having another *Step Out of the Boat Conference* is so that each one of us can come together in one place and talk about faith, and what happened when people in our generation stepped OUT of their comfort zone and trusted God for something much bigger than themselves.

Hebrews 11:6 says: "*But without faith it is impossible to please Him...*"

What that means is this: just like your key unlocks the door to your house, so faith is the key that pleases God.

It does not matter what a person does; without faith he cannot please God. It is utterly impossible to please God without faith.

What does this mean?

The person will never be acceptable to God nor accepted by God.

- Without faith the person will never live with God—not in this world nor in the next world.
- Without faith, a person has to plow through this life all alone and handle all the trials, temptations, sufferings, accidents, diseases, and death by himself.
- Without faith, a person stands all alone in this world—utterly without God. It is impossible for him to please God.

Faith is the heart of Christianity. By faith Noah built an ark. By faith people have been healed of sicknesses. By faith people have been translated from spiritual death to everlasting life.

Paul writes in 2 Cor 5:7: "*For we walk by faith, not by sight.*"

The number one reason we lack faith is because people would rather walk by sight—if I don't see it, I won't believe it.

God has blessed our nation! And because He has blessed us, we live in prosperity and great success—at least

outwardly. But inwardly, we suffer and struggle. We lack faith, the real key to God's heart.

Some of the greatest works ever accomplished by human beings like yourself are those who walked by faith. They stepped out, trusting God with all their heart!

Conference Registration and Details:

Date: March 22 (starts at 7pm), 23, 24, and 25 (ends at noon).

Location: Bethel Chapel, 575 US-250, Greenwich, OH.

Cost if you register by Feb 1: \$45/person, \$65/couple, \$85/family

After Feb 1: price increases by \$15

After Mar 14: price increases by \$20

Food: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner - daily

Registration: You can either call our office at (419) 962-1515 and pay by credit card, or mail a check to MAP Ministry, 575 US-250, Greenwich, OH 44837.

Bethel Chapel (conference location) is just 15 minutes from Ashland, OH where all the motels are located. Unless you know someone in the area, you will need to get a motel room as early as possible; otherwise, you may not get a room.

Bring yourself, your spouse, and your family. We can hardly wait to see you, and get to know you in person. It is going to be absolutely awesome this year. I promise, you will never be the same. Register today! —Joe Keim

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Does God Tempt Us to Sin?

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“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am” (Gen. 22:1)

In Genesis 22:1, the Hebrew word translated “tempt” is the word *nacah*, and it means “to test, try, prove, tempt, assay, put to the proof or test.” Because it has so many possible synonyms, we must look to the context and compare it to other passages. As we read the account of the event, we note that God did not intend Abraham to complete the sacrifice of Isaac. However, Abraham did not know that and was willing to carry out God’s orders, knowing that if God did require this, He was able to raise Isaac up from the dead.

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Heb. 11:17-19).

This passage in Hebrews is better translated “Abraham was ‘tried,’” instead of saying he was “tempted.” So, the conclusion is that in Genesis 22:1 the Hebrew word translated “tempt” has to do

with testing or evaluating something.

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man” (James 1:13).

James 1:13 gives a guiding principle: no one has the right to say that he has been tempted “of God.” The word “of” is essential to our understanding, because it indicates the origin of something. Temptations to sin do not originate with God. James concludes: God cannot be tempted with evil, and God does not tempt anyone to sin.

Another important word in this discussion is found in James 1:3.

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (Ja. 1:2-3).

The Greek word translated “temptations” denotes trouble, or something that breaks the pattern of peace, comfort, joy and happiness in someone’s life. The verb form of this word means “to put someone or something to the test,” with the purpose of discovering that person’s nature or that thing’s quality. God brings such tests to prove—and increase—the strength and quality of one’s faith and to demon-

strate its validity (vv. 2-12). So, according to James, when we face temptations, God’s purpose is to prove our faith and produce character. That is a high, good, noble motive.

Are there temptations which are designed to make us fail? Yes, but they do not come from God—they come from Satan:

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil” (Matthew 4:1).

His evil angels:

“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” (Ephesians 6:12).

Or from ourselves:

“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Romans 13:14).

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13).

God allows us to experience them, and they are allowed for our benefit. God told Abraham to offer Isaac—the temptation was not intended to get Abraham to sin, but to test and prove his faith.