

## WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

1. HEAR -- ROMANS 10:17, MATTHEW 7:24-27
2. BELIEVE -- HEBREWS 11:6, MARK 16:15-16
3. REPENT -- ACTS 2:38, 17:30; LUKE 13:3
4. CONFESS -- MATTHEW 10:32, 33; ACTS 8:36
5. BE BAPTIZED FOR REMISSION OF SINS -- ACTS 2:38; GALATIANS 3:27
6. LIVE FAITHFULLY UNTO DEATH -- REVELATION 2:10

## TOWNE ACRES CHURCH OF CHRIST

2411 East Riggin Road  
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Worship - 10:30am & 6:00 pm  
Wednesday Bible Study - 7:00 pm

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## UPON THE ROCK

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### THE DANGER OF A LIE

James Farley

The sinking of the Titanic was one of the great tragedies of the 20th Century. As you probably know 1,513 of the 2,224 people on her maiden voyage perished when, on April 14, 1912, the ship went down after striking an iceberg in the North Atlantic. Only six survivors are still living. The Titanic had double wall construction. It consisted of 16 water tight compartments, any four of which could be flooded without affecting the ship. It was billed as "unsinkable," yet, it sunk! The billing was a lie, and believing that lie, no doubt, cost some people their lives.

There is a popular idea in religion that says that if a man believes a thing to be true, honestly follows his convictions, and is sincere, his course will ultimately lead to heaven. But, only in religion is this thought to be true. Suppose you had invested several hundred thousand dollars in James McDougle's savings and loan, sincerely believing that he was an honest man and that the institution was on a solid financial foundation. Would that have meant that your money was secure? Obviously not! Sincere belief in the integrity of the institution would not have protected you from financial harm!

Belief in a thing is no guarantee that it is true. Jacob believed that Joseph was dead, but he was not (Genesis 37:32-35). Though it was not true, Jacob's grief was real because he had believed a lie. Paul sounded an alarm regarding the danger of believing a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). We would be wise to listen. The consequences of believing a lie can be eternal damnation.

Jesus asked: *“Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father, the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me”* (John 8:43-45). Jesus made a valid point. The devil is a liar! Deception is the most effective weapon in his arsenal, and he uses it well. Here are some of his more popular lies.

God is dead! He has convinced a lot of people that they have outgrown their need for God. Man has evolved to the point that he no longer needs religious superstitions to explain origin or to govern morality. All of this has occurred in spite of the fact that the best evidence still supports the Biblical assertion that in the beginning God created heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1).

The Bible is irrelevant! Satan would like us to believe that the Bible is an outdated and irrelevant book. Modern society has outgrown its need for the BOOK. It cannot possibly be relevant in a fast paced, technologically advanced, complex society like our own. All we need to do to see through this lie is read the Bible. It is inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16).

Jesus was just a man! It is not necessary to deny that Jesus lived. In fact, the devil would say of him: “He was a good man, but still, just a man!” But that’s a lie. A good man would not permit others to believe that he was something he was not. Either Jesus was the Son of God (Matthew 16:16), or he was a liar and an impostor. All the evidence supports the former and denies the latter.

Tolerance is the only virtue! Truth is always relevant. Right and wrong are arbitrary issues determined situationally. How dare anyone sit in judgment upon the beliefs and practices of others. The only real sin is intolerance. Now every pervert in America demands that his/her perversion be embraced, and those who refuse to do so are labeled intolerant bigots (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10).

their faces no more, Paul “kneeled down, and prayed with them all” (Acts 20:23-25).

(9) **AFTER GREAT EVENTS IN OUR LIVES.** Immediately upon having fed the five thousand Jesus “went up into a mountain apart to pray” (Matthew 14:21-23).

(10) **IN THE MIDST OF BUSY ACTIVITIES IN OUR LIVES.** As Jesus’ fame was spread abroad and great multitudes were coming to hear him and to be healed by him, “he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed (Luke 5:15,16).

(11) **WHEN WE SIN.** Psalm 51 is David’s penitent prayer upon having sinned with Bathsheba.

(12) **WHEN WE DIE.** Did not Stephen thus pray (Acts 7:59,60)? Yes, and our Lord prayed when he was dying (Luke 23:34).

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UPON THE ROCK is published for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first-principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians.

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## LORD, TEACH US WHEN TO PRAY

Wendell Winkler

From the life of Christ, from the life of the early church, and from the lives of other great Biblical characters, we can learn that we should pray at the following times:

- (1) **WHEN FACED WITH IMPORTANT DECISIONS.** Before selecting the twelve apostles, the Lord prayed all night (Luke 6:12-16).
- (2) **BEFORE GREAT EVENTS.** Pentecost grew out of a season of prayer (Acts 1:14; 2:1ff).
- (3) **WHEN SUFFERING PHYSICAL AFFLICTIONS.** James 5:13 encourages, “is any among you afflicted? Let him pray.” Paul prayed concerning his thorn in the flesh (II Corinthians 1.2:7-9). Upon being “sick unto death,” Hezekiah “prayed unto the Lord” (II Kings 20:1-11).
- (4) **WHEN ANXIOUS OR DISTRESSED.** David said, “In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God. He heard my voice out of his temple and my cry before him even unto his ears” (Psalm 18:6). See also Psalms 118:5 and 120:1. We are to cast our care upon the Lord, confidently knowing that He cares for us (I Peter 5:7). Instead of being anxious, we are to take everything to God in prayer with such resulting in the peace of God as a garrison to guard our hearts against the instruction of all future anxious alarms and fears (Philippians 4:6,7).
- (5) **WHEN PROBLEMS ARISE.** When the problem arose in the early church concerning the neglect of the Grecian widows, the matter was immediately taken to God in prayer (Acts 6:1-4).
- (6) **BEFORE ENTERING TRIALS.** Think of the strengthening hours Jesus spent in Gethsemane in prayer to His Father just before the ordeals of His trials and subsequent crucifixion (Matthew 26:36-46).
- (7) **WHEN SUFFERING PERSECUTION.** Upon being lacerated with the whip and being cast into prison, “at Midnight Paul and Silas prayed” (Acts 16:23,25).
- (8) **BEFORE SEPARATIONS.** Upon leaving the Ephesian elders, to see

There is no hurry! The devil argues that even if a man sees through all the other lies, there is one more that is almost certain to work. There will always be a tomorrow. Any decision concerning Jesus can wait until then. But he is lying! “...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

We haven’t begun to cover all the lies the devil has foisted upon man. The good news is that none of them can harm us if we refuse to believe them. However, believing a lie can cost us our soul. We must test everything we hear under the microscope of God’s word, and build our lives and faith upon truth. The rewards of doing so are immeasurable and eternal.

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS  
FROM THE EDITORS AND WRITERS OF  
UPON THE ROCK

## THE MIND OF CHRIST

Philip L. Gear

The advances in medical technology are absolutely mind-boggling, particularly in the field of organ transplants. Not so many years ago heart, liver, or kidney transplants were the stuff of science fiction, but are now daily occurrences. We certainly thank God for the ability and knowledge of those in the medical field who are capable of performing these amazing surgeries.

Every Christian must undergo a transplant of a different nature. We who are following Christ must undergo a spiritual “mind transplant.” “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). Such a transplant will cause us to think like Christ, and that will result in our acting like Christ. As he thinks in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7).

How do we have the mind of Christ? Paul answers this question for us. He says, “The Spirit searches the deep things of God”, and then reveals them to the Inspired writers “not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches” (I Corinthians 2:10-16). By reading what those inspired writers have written we can know “the mind of the Lord” and be instructed by it. The mind of Christ is recorded in the Bible. The more the Bible controls our thinking the more we are thinking with the mind of Christ. We are in the process of receiving that spiritual “mind transplant.”

Thinking with the mind of Christ will result in humility. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5-8). This passage is written in the context of a plea for unity, and Paul makes it clear the key to that unity is humility. He offers Christ as an example of one who willingly gave up glory and humbled himself for the benefit of others. Thinking with the mind of Christ will keep us from selfishly demanding the honor and limelight, and will prompt us gladly to forego such in the name of getting along with our fellow Christians. Selfish pride is the exact opposite of the mind of Christ. Wanting the preeminence, power and recognition is a sign of a worldly mind, not the mind of Christ.

Thinking with the mind of Christ also leads to holy living. Peter wrote, “Therefore since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God” (I Peter 4:1-2). Christ suffered in the flesh because he stood against the wickedness

correctly observed, “The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the Lord” (Proverbs 19:3). The wise man is describing an individual who deliberately defies God’s will and then complains to the Lord about the consequences, of which he was adequately and sufficiently warned. What should one put away on grounds of fornication do, seeing he or she can never marry again? Remember these words of Jesus, “...and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of Heaven’s sake...” (Matthew 19:12). Obviously, the Lord is not speaking of self-mutilation, but rather one who keeps his body free from sexual impurity and the blight of wrong. I have known several Christians who, having been put away on grounds of fornication, repented of their sin, and lived faithfully before God by remaining celibate the rest of their lives. God bless such individuals for their dedication, discipline, and courage.

As the church of Christ we must continue to defend the Lord’s teaching concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Not all brethren are willing to do so. I knew of one deacon who urged an unfaithful sister who happened to be living with her fifth husband, to come back to church, despite the adultery, and enjoy sweet fellowship, with absolutely no repentance. He said he would let God judge the matter. The fact is God has already judged in such matters through the pages of the Holy Scriptures. Indeed, it is sad to be studying the Bible with someone whom you are trying to convert, only to find out they are presently involved in an adulterous marriage. Unless they are willing to end that relationship, salvation is not possible, because salvation necessitates repentance. It must be remembered that God places these restrictions upon us for the good of the family and the stabilization of society. Any society that disregards God’s law on marriage will wreak havoc and chaos. No nation has ever survived for very long that had a divorce rate above forty percent. Presently, our nation hovers at a fifty percent divorce rate. Sadly, many members of the church contribute to and condone divorce for any cause. I am thankful the Forest Hill eldership and her faithful members uphold the truth with regard to marriage, divorce, and remarriage. We can never forsake the clear Biblical injunction on this subject, despite those who would seek to change the Lord’s teaching.

false teaching surrounding marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Even some otherwise faithful elders and preachers have acquiesced to the trends of the times. However, despite an alarming number of homes being ripped apart by divorce and multiple marriages taking place thereafter, God's Word does not change from condemning such activity to condoning it. It is good to remember the following account:

“The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you. Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matthew 19:3-9).

According to this passage Jesus reinforces divine teaching on marriage which was established at creation—one man for one woman for life. In verse 9 he gives one exception for remarriage to another if a mate is still living. The exception is fornication, which covers a broad range of sexual immorality (adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bestiality, etc). It must be understood that when the innocent party (one not guilty of fornication) puts away the guilty, the marriage ends. If not, the innocent party could never remarry. The question arises, can the guilty party ever marry another with the approval of God? The answer is no! While such an individual can be forgiven of sin, he or she is not eligible to marry another ever!

Is this a difficult doctrine? It was for the disciples, and Jesus recognized it was so (Matthew 19:10,11). Many who are put away on scriptural grounds, despite their sinful behavior, often begin to feel sorry for themselves and bemoan the Lord's teaching, Solomon

and sin of the world. Making the same stand will also cause us to suffer persecution, because the world will not understand our desire to live as they do. They will “think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation” and will “speak evil of you” (I Peter 4:4). To endure this opposition we must “arm ourselves with the mind of Christ.” As He did not allow the threat of persecution to deter him from living a godly life, neither can we. Compromise with the wickedness of the world is a sign of not thinking as Christ thought. The world may accuse us of being “unfriendly”, “old-fashioned”, “holier-than-thou”, “judgmental”, or “forcing our morality on everyone else.” Their accusations are wrong, we are simply trying to think with the mind of Christ. Since He refused to compromise with sin, neither may we!

It is a big assignment to think with the mind of Christ. It is not one we are going to fulfill easily, nor are we going to fulfill it accidentally. The only way to think with the mind of Christ is to spend time with the mind of Christ. And since the Bible is our only means of knowing the mind of Christ we must be constantly—and persistently studying that Grand Old Book.

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## THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Mark E. Reynolds

When Christians think back to their childhood teachings on Christ, one of the first pictures that comes to their minds is Jesus, the Good Shepherd. The picture of Jesus there on a rock with His staff in hand with sheep gathered all around Him was so clear to understand. The sheep were safe under His watch. Jesus came to lead His sheep (people) back to God with compassion, strength and courage. In the face of our sins, He provided for us the hope of salvation. The characteristics of the Good Shepherd and what He does for us is worthy of our close examination.

First, “He giveth His life for the sheep (John 10:11). This is a paramount characteristic of the Good Shepherd. To live spiritually it is necessary that humans, whose character is much like the aimless sheep, be shepherded by someone who is willing to lay down his life for their salvation. Our Savior did just that. The Good Shepherd came to live and to show us how to live, and then to die for His sheep,” Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25). The Lord Jesus Christ is THE Good Shepherd. Anyone who tried to come before Him or after Him are only imposters. Who else could live perfectly, be crucified and raised up, and still offer salvation? The answer; as we sometimes sing, No Not One!

Second, the Good Shepherd knows His sheep (John 10:14). Not only will the Good Shepherd lay down His life for His sheep, but He knows who His sheep are and even knows their names (John 10:3). This implies individual knowledge of all His sheep, whom He not only marks but actually names. It does not matter if it is sheep, cows, horses or pigs, one must learn about that animal to know its needs. A good shepherd actually lives with his sheep as the Good Shepherd lives with His followers. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, was uniquely qualified to provide for man’s spiritual needs, “for He knew what was in man” (John 2:25). We should never be anxious of any needs, for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all things” (Matthew 6:32). Jesus is the Good Shepherd because He knows His sheep, their needs, their wants and their desires, and provides appropriately.

Third, Jesus cares for His sheep (John 10:12-13). Like the wolf, Satan finds his greatest enemy in the Shepherd of our souls. Like a shepherd of sheep, Jesus is there to guard His flock and defeat the wolf. The sheep of Christ are told to cast their cares upon Him; for He cares for them (I Peter 5:7). The Good Shepherd “will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (I Corinthians 10:13). Any wrongdoing, whether it is the lust of the flesh; the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life (I John 2:16), can never be blamed, on the Shepherd. We always have a choice when facing the wolf. The Good Shepherd is there to deliver us from this present evil

day (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12- 15). We must learn to control our sexual desires (Matthew 15:9; Titus 2:12)!

### **WE MUST CONTROL OUR PHYSICAL APPETITES**

Peter pled, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (I Peter 2:11). In December 1993, a thirty-two-year-old man in Buenos Aires died of overeating. At death he weighed 660 pounds; Five days before he died, he ate an entire piglet for dinner, which put him in intensive care. To carry him to the hospital, doctors had to call the town’s fire brigade. Any appetite that is out of control is dangerous, whether it is the appetite for food, drink, nicotine, money, or power (I Corinthians 6:12). Take drinking, for instance. The Bible forbids drunkenness, of course (Proverbs 23:29-35; Proverbs 20:1), but it forbids more than just legal intoxication (.10% blood-alcohol level in most states). We should avoid even “looking at” (tempting ourselves with) wine in the cup (Proverbs 23:31); the wicked servant was condemned for “drinking with the drunken” (Matthew 24:49); and Paul forbade being “drunk with wine” (Ephesians 5:18), a word meaning, “to begin to be softened with wine.” Paul also taught that Christians are not to associate with drunkards (I Corinthians 5:11). While working as the chaplain for the Cub Scouts, one man asked the boys if they could name any of the Ten Commandments. They began to call out several, including, “Don’t drink and drive!” It is not exactly one of the Ten Commandments, but it is pretty close.

Remember, life’s only remote control is the one between our ears.

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### **EXCEPT IT BE FOR FORNICATION**

Barry M.Grider

Of all the departures from the faith that I have witnessed since my childhood, none have been more harmful and widespread than the

why, Mom?” she asked. “I’d rather do the chasing myself instead of being chased.” That is a problem today—too many are more interested in being chased than chaste. The book, *The Day America Told the Truth*, reported: “Almost one-third of all married Americans (31%) have had or are now having an affair. This isn’t a number from Hollywood or New York City. It is the national average for adultery...American affairs last, on the average, almost a year...Only a minority of those who are cheating (28%) have any plans to end their current affairs soon. Today, the majority of Americans (62%) think that there’s nothing morally wrong with the affairs they’re having... Sixty-seven percent of us are tempted at least once a week” (p. 94-98). In a time when adultery is laughed about and fornication among teens is expected, we need more teaching about self-control. It seems many have forgotten what the Lord said about sexual sin. Some adults are like a group of first graders in Sunday School. The teacher was a little nervous about trying to explain, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” and sure enough a seven-year-old raised her hand with a question. She asked, “What does *commit* mean?” People are asking the wrong questions. They are asking, “How can I get away with it?” instead of, “How can I avoid it.” They want to know, “How can I hide it?” instead of, “How can I elude it?” Solomon wondered, “And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?” (Proverbs 5:20). God still warns, “...whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul” (Proverbs 6:32; of. Hebrews 13:4). Recent political scandals show the truth of this statement even in a modern age. Paul discussed self-control with another politician named Felix. His three points were: “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come” (Acts 24:25). Paul made his point to the extent that this Governor “trembled.” It is no wonder that Felix was terrified. He was a stranger to righteousness, knew no self-control, and was unprepared for the judgment. According to Tacitus, he was guilty of “every kind of cruelty, and lust, he exercised the authority of a king with the temper of a slave.” The historian represents Felix as considering himself licensed to commit any crime with impunity (*Annals*, 11:54). The last of his three wives, the beautiful Drusilla, young daughter of Herod Agrippa I, was wooed away from her husband Azizus, king of Amesa. Thus Felix had been married three times and Drusilla twice. Sexual scandal among politicians is nothing new, of course; for that matter it’s nothing new among citizens, either! All—great and small—will be judged by the same Book on the world’s last

world (Galatians 1:4), and provide us “the peace of God which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7).

Fourth, the Good Shepherd will come again and receive us unto Himself (John 14:3). The obedient believers in Jesus Christ, the sheep that hear His voice and follow Him (John 10:4), are promised great blessings. Christians, in this life, are promised cleansing from sin (Galatians 1:4), help when trials come (Hebrews 4:6), burdens lifted (I Peter 5 :7), the present joys, and a bright future (Romans 5:5), comfort from Scriptures (Romans 15:4), and the honor of wearing His great name (James 2:7). All of these are ours if we are “steadfast, unmovable and always abounding in HIS word” (I Corinthians 15:58). But the greatest blessing of all will be when, the Chief Shepherd, shall appear, and all that have been found faithful in Him (Matthew 25:23) will be caught up to meet Him in the air, forever to be with the Good Shepherd (I Thessalonians 4:16-18). In that great day “every knee shall bow to the Good Shepherd and every tongue shall confess His name and give an account of himself to God” (Romans 14:11-12).

How thankful we should be that we can know the Good Shepherd who died for us and will one day take us home to be with Him (John 14:1-6). He gave His life for us, He knows us, He cares for us, and He will come back for us! What a Shepherd!

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## PIKEVILLE PROPHETESS’ PREDICTIONS PROVE PRESUMPTIOUS, PRETENTIOUS, AND POWERLESS

James E. Farley

Three years and eight months before moving to Pikeville, Kentucky, I saw an interview on WSAZ-TV, Channel 3 from Huntington, West Virginia. An Eastern Kentucky woman, Kim Colley, was being interviewed because she had made some claims to have received a vision from God concerning a “massive disaster” that was going to come up on this region on Saturday, March 5, 1994. The interview was on March 3, 1994.

Mrs. Colley said that she first heard the sound of a trumpet and then an angel announced “Judgment is coming!” She claimed that the Lord then put His arm around her and, said, “The recent cold and high waters were only a warning of coming disaster.” When asked if she was sure of her vision, Colley said, “That’s the word the Lord gave me.” She added, “I know that I know that I know...”

Colley, a member of a “Full Gospel Congregation” said that March 5, 1994 would be a day filled with floods, earthquakes, the ground moving and splitting, sink holes, etc. She said the Lord showed her sink holes around the coal mines two and three hundred feet deep! Her pronouncements caused some stir in and around Pike County. Gary Stone, a local Pikeville radio talk show host, said that her predictions did cause some panic. He reported that some went to the stores in the area and bought extra water and groceries, some went to the bank and took money out, and some even purchased more disaster insurance! However, on the news program, Colley said that she was afraid because some in her community threatened to stone her house if her prophecy did not come to pass. The news reported that she had boarded up her windows in case this should happen. It seems to me that this says something of Mrs. Colley’s faith in her vision, does it not?

Well, March 5, 1994 has come and gone, and none of what Kim Colley said would happen come to pass. I have never met Kim Colley. She very well may be a nice person and a good wife and neighbor. She was certainly very polite and neatly dressed in the news program that I watched. I know something else about Mrs. Colley, however; I know she is a false prophetess!

The Bible says, “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him” (Deuteronomy 18:22).

Jesus warned us about false teachers and said we can know them by their fruits (Matthew 7:15-20). We are commanded to “try” these folks; to put them to the test (I John 4:1). We have Biblical examples of the church doing just this (Revelation 2:2; Cf. 2 Corinthians 12:12).

to a spouse or child, but the same organ can say, “I hate you” to an enemy. James addressed these possible discrepancies: “...the tongue can not man tame; it is an unruly evil full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after, the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (James 3:8-10). We must not use our tongues to constantly complain. It is easy to find something to criticize; it takes a mature person to find something to compliment. Two kids sat down for lunch, and one opened his lunchbox and began to gripe. “Baloney again? This is the fourth day in a row! I’m sick and tired of baloney.” His friend said I bet if you just tell your mom you don t like baloney, she’ll fix you something else.” “Mom?” he replied. “I fix my own lunch!” The ancients said: “...I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace...” (Psalm 39:1,2).

### **WE MUST CONTROL OUR TEMPER**

Anger should be held by self-restraint (Proverbs 14:17; 15:18; 16:32; James 1:19). The Bible uses the word anger 234 times in 228 verses which shows it must be a problem for Adam’s race. The wise man said, He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls” (Proverbs.25:28). Kipling said that it was the test of a man if he could keep his head when everyone else was losing his and blaming it on him, and if when he was hated he did not give way to hating. In sports we hear, “How a man plays the game shows something of his character; how he loses shows all of it.” Joseph showed self-restraint when he faced his brothers (Genesis 43:31), but Herod did not when the magi tricked him (Matthew 2:16). Though Jesus preached about anger (Matthew 5:21-24), the ten disciples who heard about James’ and John’s plan to be exalted became indignant (Mark 10:35-45).

### **WE MUST CONTROL OUR SEXUAL DESIRES**

Times have changed. One mother said she had scoffed at the idea of the generation gap—until recently. When talking to her preteen daughter, she mentioned how important it was to be chaste. “But

delight in finding unsuspecting souls to inflict with pain. God is a God of comfort (II Corinthians 1:3-4) and a help (Psalm 46:1). Satan is the adversary (Job 1-2). No reason is assigned for the loss of either friend's mother, nor is it explained why a student was killed on the way to school. But without knowing the details, there can be no doubt that the cause was sin. Somewhere Satan is laughing at all the hurt which people experience; he probably doubles over and rolls in the aisles when mankind then tries to pin the blame on God instead of him and themselves. Do we mistakenly think that if everything always went well, everyone would love and serve God? What happened in the Garden of Eden disproves that faulty notion. Many live tragedy-free lives and do not believe in God. Why not concentrate on the things that God has done for us and ask ourselves, "Why has God done all this for me?"

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CHECK OUT PEARL STREET CHURCH OF CHRIST'S WEBPAGE  
[www.pearlstreet.org](http://www.pearlstreet.org).

## LIFE'S REMOTE CONTROL

Allen Webster

One young girl was asked to recite the fruit of the Spirit. She answered "Love, joy, peace patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and *remote* control..." (cf. Galatians 5:22,23). It might be easier if there was an omnipotent hand pressing the buttons to direct our lives but it does not work that way — we must have self-control. The Bible says to add "temperance" to faith (I Peter 1:6) Temperance is "self-control."

## WE MUST CONTROL OUR TONGUES

Speech is a powerful tool — either for good or for evil. With it we can praise God, or we can curse Him. With it we can teach others the Good News, or we can teach false doctrine. With it we can encourage a brother, or we can discourage him. The tongue can say, "I love you"

No, Mrs. Colley is no prophetess! The Lord did not speak to her! She very well may have had a bad nightmare, but her "visions" did not come from the Lord. Her predictions proved presumptuous, pretentious and powerless. We need not be afraid.

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## IS JESUS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON?

Brandon Britton

The Lord willing, this will be the twenty-fifth Christmas holiday I will celebrate. Christmas has always been one of my favorite holidays because it is the onetime during the year that most of the family is together in one place. It is also during this time of the year that I see many signs, church bulletins, and yard decorations stating, "Jesus is the Reason for the Season," or "This Year, Let's Put The Christ Back In Christmas." Nativity pageants and decorations are also a popular part of the American Christmas celebration. When I see these decorations and sit down to study my Bible I begin to ask the question, "Is Jesus the Reason for the Season?"

I fully realize that the Lord is the reason we have the blessings to enjoy this, and every other holiday season. This is true for every time of the year, not just December. My real question is, "Does Jesus want me to celebrate and commemorate His birthday?" I certainly hope He does not, because I do not know when the Lord was born. It would be impossible for me to celebrate His birthday when I do not know the day on which He was born. I know that many in the religious world proclaim December 25th is the day on which our Lord was born, but that comes from man, not the Bible. In fact, the tradition of Christmas as a religious holiday commemorating the birth of Christ was started by the Catholic Church several hundred years after the time of Christ. The Lord did not reveal to us in His Inspired word the date of His birth, because He did not intend for us to celebrate it. He did, however, tell us what, when and how to celebrate.

The **what** that we are to remember is His death, not His birth (I Corinthians 11:26). The **when** that we are to celebrate is every

Sunday not one day a year (Act 20:7). The **how** is by eating unleavened bread and drinking fruit of the vine in a worthy manner, not by sending cards, attending nativity pageants, or singing Christmas carols (I Corinthians 11:23- 29). The Christian is not authorized to observe special religious holidays. In fact, the apostle Paul tells Christians that the practice of observing special religious days, or holy days is unacceptable (Galatians 4:9-11).

We have no more authority from God to celebrate the birth of Christ as a religious holiday than we do to celebrate His baptism, Sermon on the Mount, or temple cleansing. Instead of trying to put Christ back in Christmas, let's put Christ back where He belongs, in His church. I do not put out a manger scene in my yard or sing religious Christmas carols but please do not think I am a Scrooge; I love Christmas as much as anyone. I put up a tree, give gifts, watch Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer on TV. The Lord commands Christians to celebrate His death, not His birth. Jesus did not command it, the apostles did not teach it, the first century church did not celebrate it, and I am not going to alter it.

This year let us remember that Jesus is the reason for every season, not just once a year. Instead of teaching and practicing peace, love and generosity in the name of Christ only in December, let us do these things every day of the year.

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## QUOTES FROM THE PAST

"I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." —Abraham Lincoln

"In the church of God two opposite dangers are to be recognized and avoided: they are a cold heart and a hot head."  
—A. w. Tozer (1897-1963).

## WHY DISEASE?

God's gender, despite the feminist influence, is not a mystery. The student of the Bible realizes that God is not He/She, but He. We pray to "our Father" (Matthew 6:9). The female respondent needs to spend some time in the Book to learn about the One she apparently hates so much.

Why do disease, death, hurt and heartbreak dominate this world? There is an answer for each of these things—SIN! God did not sin; man sins. Because we have chosen to disregard God's commandments and principles, all these things plague us. Why does AIDS exist, for example? Did it come about by mankind being morally pure? No. it developed because of man's perversions of sex—the practice of bestiality, homosexuality, fornication and adultery. All of these are denied in the Holy Scriptures as violations of God's holy law, but mankind has repeatedly rejected these teachings because he would rather satisfy unlawful lusts. As is usually the case with sin, innocent people have suffered for a no more sinister reason that they needed a blood transfusion (through which they contacted the AIDS virus). But most contracted and suffer from AIDS because they chose to disregard the warnings, just as cigarette smokers indulge themselves—although they are fully aware of the suffering they will one day face.

Man's dilemma is that he wants to sin without facing the consequences of his actions. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:7-8). We tell children that fire burns. If they choose to handle it, they will suffer for their poor judgment. God likewise warns against what will burn us spiritually. If we choose to ignore the truth, does that make God evil?

## WHAT GOD WOULD DO THIS TO ANYONE?

This statement is biased enough to be laughable. The youth who wrote it apparently pictures God as a capricious individual who takes

## GOD IS ALMIGHTY

The Scriptures affirm this truth in a number of passages but it is the inference some draw from this fact that is erroneous. Many think that God is Almighty, He will control everything that happens, but such is not the case—yet. When God created man, He gave us “free will.” We may choose to obey or disobey Him. If we choose the latter option, many evil things will result. Suppose, despite all of the warnings against the dangers of drinking and driving someone goes ahead and does so. If he loses control of the vehicle and crashes into a tree and is killed, whose fault is it? If God prohibits harm, there is no free will; if He allows free will, tragedies will abound. God does not stop people from bearing the consequences of their actions.

## GOD IS GOOD

God created a perfect world in which man could dwell, but we exercised our free will in a negative way and allowed sin to enter Paradise. Man could not be man without this possibility. We either must be robots, programmed always to do right, or we can enjoy freedom (recognizing that such a privilege means we bear the consequences of our actions). Unfortunately, when a person chooses to sin, innocent people usually suffer, also. The drinking driver, for example, may not simply hit a tree and kill himself he may suddenly swerve across the center line and kill a family of innocent people. Does God cease to be good because He does not intervene in the natural course of daily events?

Certainly, we are tempted to think so—especially if the victims were our family. But God cannot be blamed for man’s decisions. The person who acted irresponsibly is the one who is at fault. God is doubly good in that He not only created us – He recreates all who obey the gospel. He allowed Jesus to die on the cross for our sins so that we could be redeemed from the consequences of our own actions. Accepting the salvation He offers through repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38) enables us to triumph even over death.

## PERFECT THROUGH SUFFERING

II CORINTHIANS 12:5-10

Larry G. Reynolds

### INTRODUCTION:

#### A. THE NEED FOR PREACHING.

1. *“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel”* (I Corinthians 9:16-18).
2. The power is in the gospel (Romans 1:16).

#### B. THE TEXT: CORINTHIANS 12:5-10.

1. In chapter 11 is Paul’s method of defense of his apostleship.
2. Paul states his method: *“If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities”* (11:30). He would not glory in his accomplishments but in his weaknesses.
3. Paul also states that he has a thorn in the flesh (12:7).
4. Then Paul states his request and records God’s reply (12:9). *“My grace is sufficient for thee:”* Notice the next words *“for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”*
5. Strength is made **complete** in weakness. Suffering makes us complete!

#### C. WHAT WE WILL DISCOVER IN THIS LESSON?

1. Suffering may be the result of our own actions.
  2. Suffering may be the work of Satan.
- :3, Receiving the power.

### DISCUSSION

#### A. SUFFERING MAY BE THE RESULT OF OUR OWN ACTIONS.

1. God has created a world governed by natural laws.
  - a. Laws of cause and effect.
  - b. Laws of action and reaction.
  - c. Laws of sowing and reaping.
2. If we violate these laws, the consequences are often grave.

- a. Like stepping off a ten story building.
  - b. Or running out in front of a truck.
  - c. Or exposing oneself to contagious diseases, dangerous chemicals, pollution, etc.
3. Suffering is experienced when some natural law is violated. It is not because we are good or evil.
4. What really hurts is when we suffer because someone else violates a natural law. For example, car wreck, child abuse by an alcoholic parent.

#### B. SUFFERING MAY BE THE WORK OF SATAN.

1. The Bible presents Satan as a cause of suffering.
  - a. As in the case of Job (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6).
  - b. As in the case of persecuted Christians (I Peter 5:8-9).
2. But why does God allow Satan to test us? Because God is able to use such suffering to make us better! (II Corinthians 12:7-10; James 1:2-4; I Peter 5:10).
3. Satan does, however, have limits (I Corinthians 10:13).

#### C. THE POWER TO BECOME PERFECT (COMPLETE).

1. Suffering keeps this world from becoming too attractive. We are pilgrims and sojourners (I Peter 2:11; Hebrews 13:14; II Corinthians 5:1,5).
2. If there was no suffering no one would want to leave this temporary world.
3. Suffering can bring out our best. We reach out to people because our compassion for others is touched.
4. If we understand suffering it makes us rejoice.
5. Suffering makes us thankful (Philippians 1 3-8).
6. Suffering makes us dependent upon God. Too often, we think ourselves self-sufficient. Hearing the words, "We have done all we can, it is out of our hands," makes us realize that *"In Him we live and move and have our being"* (Acts 17:28).
7. Suffering helps to purify us (I Peter 1:6-7; James 1:2-5).

#### CONCLUSION

- A. Have you ever prayed, "God allow me to suffer and help me to endure so that I may become stronger?"
- B. May we seek to become perfect in power?

## IS GOD RESPONSIBLE FOR MY PROBLEMS?

Gary W. Summers

Periodically, over a few weeks' time, *Parade Magazine* has published responses of young people to the question, "Do you believe in God?" Much of the thinking has been quite superficial and insubstantial, whether the person believed or disbelieved. The truly disturbing thing about many of the responses is that created beings seem to think they have the right to sit in judgment on the Creator.

Consider what an 18 year-old girl from Riverdale, New Jersey writes, "I was taught that God was the Almighty and was good, but the past few months have set me straight. There is no God. At least not the God everyone is talking about. If He/She was real, then there wouldn't be so much disease, death, hurt and heartbreak in tile world.

In December, one of my friends lost her mother. In January, a friend was killed on his way to school. In April, a friend of the family lost his long battle with AIDS. And in May, one of my best friends also lost her mother. What God would do this to anyone? None that I know of or believe in." [This scathing denunciation of God appeared on page 23 of the October 15th, 1995, issue.]

What an outburst of unrighteous indignation! Her philosophy of God may be summarized as follows: 1) God does not run the world they way think He/She should; 2) Therefore, God does not exist. How arrogant for one merely eighteen years of age to think that she has disproved God's existence based on so few observations. Those who have watched their loved ones be killed in Nazi death camps (with much greater reason to doubt God's benevolence) have emerged with a strong faith in God while she has barely become acquainted with life's tragedies.

She is obviously even less acquainted with the Word of God, to which one goes to find reality and truth. A study of some fundamental matters might be of some help to those who feel as this young girl does. Some crucial doctrines follow.

SECOND ANNUAL  
*UPON THE ROCK*  
 LECTURESHIP

*February 24, 2000*

*WE HAVE AN ANCHOR*  
*HEBREWS 6:13-19*

*8:30—9:00 AM REGISTRATION*

*9:00 – Our Anchor in Jesus Christ Our High Priest*

*10:00 – Our Anchor In The Promises of God*

*11:00 – Our Anchor in Faith*

*12:00—1:00 Lunch Break*

*1:00 – Our Anchor in Hope*

*2:00— Our Anchor in Love*

*3:00— Our Anchor in the Resurrection of Christ*

*West Side Church of Christ*

*6600 W. Kilgore Ave.*

*Yorktown, IN 47396*

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Editor's Note: *Larry preached this sermon at a Lectureship in  
 Columbia City, Indiana. Several people have requested this outline,  
 some having heard the sermon and others hearing of it. We make it  
 available here so that some preachers may preach it, and others may  
 study it.*

**WHAT IS THE ROLE OF ANGELS TODAY?**

D. Gene West

There is a great deal of Interest in angels today because of the popularity of the CBS show "Touched By An Angel." Not only is there a great deal of interest regarding these heavenly creatures but there has also grown up an industry making porcelain and pewter "angels" as well as pictures and all kinds of stuffed toys which replicate baby-like figurines which are, in the minds of men, supposed to look like angels. Most of these look like small sad children. Incidentally the angels on the above mentioned program are females, but every time angels have appeared on the earth, and that appearance has been recorded in the Bible, they have appeared as men! Sorry about that ladies! Angels are really spiritual beings who are sexless. Jesus said that "In the resurrection they (human beings, DGW) neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:30) This statement in its context, indicates that the angels of heaven are sexless spiritual beings, or else it indicates, since they have always appeared in male form upon the earth, that all angels of heaven are male. We prefer the former explanation. So, the making of images of angels in the form of women or children is a thing that is done to make money and not to teach that which the Bible says about angels (incidentally, there is a "death angel" on the aforementioned program who is a man and this is a part of the feminist propaganda regularly put out on TV).

Today, there are all kinds of fantastic stories told about guardian angels who have rescued people from certain death, kept people from getting on planes that later crashed, rescuing people from illnesses that were undiagnosed by doctors, and many other fantastic

things that the Bible never mentions or speaks of angels ever doing in the past. If you will recall the days of the past, twenty years ago the same type of people were telling the same fantastic stories about the Holy Spirit. Man likes to sort through the mysterious and unknown, as is evidenced by the number of so-called “psychics” that are found in our nation today. One day, by the way, a “psychic” called me on the phone and after identifying herself as a psychic asked me if I was Gene West, and I told her that if she were a psychic she would know with whom she was speaking...she hung up the phone. But because of this desire to sort through the unknown, people make up, repeat and believe all kinds of fantastic things, and claim they were done by angels, yet none can tell you what that angel looked like.

If we would look up the word “angel” in the Bible we find that the basic meaning is one who is a messenger of another. Broadly speaking, if your wife sends a message to a neighbor lady by a child, that child is the “angel” of his mother. Sometimes the word is used to refer to messengers that came from God to deliver a message to human beings, such as in the case of Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus (Matthew 1:19-21), and the angel, who was called Gabriel, who appeared to Mary the mother of the Lord (Luke 1:26-35). Angels appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre (Genesis 18:1-33). In each of the above occasions, these angels were given the responsibility of delivering a message from God. If you go to the books of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, you find angels doing the same thing, as well as putting marks upon people who were to be saved from destruction in the fall of Jerusalem. Something very similar to this took place in Revelation chapter seven. The books of 2 Peter and Jude say that message bearers, which are called angels in those books, were messengers who delivered a false message rather than a true one, and therefore fell from their “first estate,” and were reserved in chains of darkness. So, primarily, the angels down through the history of the Bible have been messengers from heaven; and messengers among men have done just that, they have delivered messages that God wanted people to know. Since the word means a messenger, that is what they did primarily.

To the best of my knowledge no angel ever worked a miracle, unless you call the striking of the men of Sodom temporarily blind, a miracle (Genesis 19:1-11). Incidentally, the angel told Lot that God had sent

them to destroy the city of Sodom (Genesis 19:13). So, angels in the Bible were creatures, both human and divine, who were sent to do the will of God under certain circumstances. Some “angels” were the evil emissaries of the devil as well (Matthew 25:41).

People often ask about their “guardian angel,” but we must point out that this term is never used in the Bible, and is largely the figment of the imaginations of men. This concept is based on a statement made in the parable of the lost sheep, in which Jesus told the Jews, “*Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven*” (Matthew 18:10). This passage says nothing about angels guarding Christians upon this earth so that nothing bad can happen to them. If that were the case then we need to ask “where the guardian angels of Stephen, James and Antipas were when, they needed them so badly?” These men were but a few who died for the faith of Christ, and if there are guardian angels who keep any harm from coming to us where were theirs on the days of their deaths? This passage says nothing about these angels doing anything upon the earth; rather it speaks of their looking upon the face of God in heaven.

Angels, in apostolic times, rescued people from prison, and in other ways aided the infant church. They were given charge concerning Jesus until the time came for His sacrificial death. They do none of these things upon the earth today, because, like the miracles of the Lord, the Apostles, and those upon whom they laid their hands, their work on the earth came to an end when the Word of God was completely revealed.

It is impossible for one to cover the work of all those called angels in the Bible in a short article like this, so let me recommend a book that can be a great help to those who wish to study angels in a greater depth. The book is entitled, “*Every Good and Evil Angel In the Bible,*” written by Larry Richards, and published by Thomas Nelson Publishers. The cost of the book is about \$20.

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