

UPON THE ROCK

February 2002

Volume 5 Issue 2



O WORSHIP THE KING

A.J. Cox

"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker" (Psalm 95:6). As the topic assigned to me suggests, this lecture will address the subject of worship. The principal word for worship in the Old Testament is, "shahah," and means, "to worship, prostrate oneself, bow down." The principal New Testament word is, "proskuneo," and means, "to kiss the hand to (towards) one." Thus, worship is an act of reverence, homage, and submission. God must be the object of our worship, and our worship must be according to His revealed pattern (Matthew 4:10; John 4:23-24). I have been asked to address this topic with Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 as my text. Notice the following:

Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words. When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands? For in the multitude of dreams

and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.

1. *“Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God” (verse 1).* The house of God was the place of worship. Thus, Solomon would have us to “watch our step” when we worship God. Such a warning implies that there is a right way and a wrong way to worship. How are we to know what is the right way to worship God? Solomon says, *“Be more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools...”* What we hear (God’s law) is the standard by which we determine what is acceptable and unacceptable in worship. If we neglect to hear God’s law, that is to say if we disregard His standard for worship and devise our own methods, we offer the sacrifice (worship) of fools.

Why did God accept Abel’s offering but reject Cain’s (Genesis 4:3-5)? Abel’s sacrifice was offered by faith (Hebrews 11:4). Since faith comes by hearing the word of God we must conclude that God had revealed the pattern for their worship (Romans 10:17). Abel submitted to that pattern and Cain did not.

In this age we are governed by the New Covenant (Galatians 3:23-25; Hebrews 9:15-17). It is in this law that the pattern for our worship is revealed. The New Covenant authorizes us to **sing** (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), **pray** (Acts 2:42; I Timothy 2:8), **teach** (Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7), **give** on the first day of the week (I Corinthians 16:1-2), and **observe the Lord’s Supper** on the first day of the week (Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7). Anything in addition to this is “strange” and unauthorized (Leviticus 10:1-2). While it is essential that we engage only in those authorized acts of worship, it is equally essential that we have the proper attitude. Remember, the Lord desires our hearts (Matthew 15:8).

2. *Be not rash with thy mouth (verses 2, 3).* We must always be mindful of where we are in relation to God. He is in heaven and we are upon the earth which is His footstool (Isaiah 66:1). Therefore we should give careful attention to what we say to God. Our prayers should not be offered carelessly or haphazardly. Solomon says, *“let thy words be few.”* This does not mean that our prayers should be few

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Upon The Rock
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(I Thessalonians 5:17). Rather, we should choose our words carefully. Our prayers should not be long simply for the purpose of being heard (Matthew 6:7). Neither should we address God as casually as we do one another. *“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name”* (Matthew 6:9) stands in stark contrast to the irreverent style of many of today’s prayers.

We should not only carefully consider what we say to God, but what we say for God as well. What we teach will determine, in part, whether or not our worship is acceptable. Our worship becomes vain if we teach *“for doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matthew 15:9). And if a person dies not having repented of preaching another gospel that person will be lost eternally (Galatians 1:6-9). The instruction, however, that takes place on the Lord’s day is not confined to the preacher’s sermon. According to Paul when we sing we also teach (Colossians 3:16)! Are we giving the same careful attention to what we teach through our singing as we do to what the evangelist preaches? It is inconsistent to demand soundness in the preaching and then advocate error through our singing. If the preacher cannot preach it, Christians should not sing it.

3. *When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it (verses 4-6).* Vowing evidently played a more prominent role in the Mosaic economy (Judges 11:30-31; I Samuel 1:11; Psalm 50:14; 66:13-14; 76:11). A vow was a promise, or an oath before God which bound the soul (Numbers 3 0:2). It was a sin to vow and not pay (Deuteronomy 23:21-23). In fact, it was better to not vow at all than to vow and not pay (Ecclesiastes 5:5). Though vowing does not appear to be as common in this age as in ages gone by, one cannot help but think of the words of the Apostle Peter in light of these passages. *“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with the in than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire”* (2 Peter 2:20-22). Just as two people marrying vow to be faithful unto death, when a person obeys the gospel and is wedded to the Lord

they make a vow. The vow taken by one who is joined to Christ is certainly no less binding than that taken by two people entering the marriage relationship. Let the one who becomes a child of God heed the words of Solomon, *‘pay that which thou hast vowed’* (Ecclesiastes 5:4).

4. *Fear thou God* (verse 7,). Solomon’s theme in Ecclesiastes is *‘Vanity of vanities...all is vanity’* (Ecclesiastes 1:2). There is the danger that our worship may become just another vain and empty exercise. To protect against this eventuality Solomon recommends the following: (1) *‘keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God’*, (2) *‘be not rash with thy mouth,’* (3) *‘pay that which thou has vowed.’* In other words, *‘fear thou God.’* If we truly fear and reverence God we will do all of the above.

SOLDIERS OF CHRIST, ARISE

Phil Grear

When Satan first tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden he began a war between the forces of evil and the forces of good that has never ended. The Bible says the Christian life is a war against *‘the rulers of the darkness of this world.’* (Ephesians 6:12) This is not a figure of speech. We are involved in a literal war against a literal enemy. True, we do not fight in the physical sense of bloodshed. *‘My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight.’* (John 18:36) But let us never make the mistake believing the war is not real. There have been innumerable casualties throughout the years. Some, such as James, have lost their lives in this battle. (Acts 12:1-2) Some, such as Paul, have been POW’s. It is a baffle not just of ideas and philosophies, but for the souls of mankind. It is one we must fight and win.

‘Soldiers of Christ, arise, and put your armor on.’ The battle is raging and none may shirk his duty. *‘Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit (behave) you like men, be strong.’* (1 Corinthians 16:13) This is no time for cowardice or compromise. It is no time to be AWOL. We have a duty to defend our spiritual homeland. Families are being divided. Souls are being lost. The casualties are mounting. It is time to fight!

We can flee to Him for refuge if the storms overcome us (Hebrews 6:18; Isaiah 25:4). In a worst case scenario those living on the coasts have insurance policies if the storms destroy their homes. Christians also have an assurance policy, the assurance of a home in heaven. *‘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’* (2 Corinthians 5:1).

Friend, there are fierce and devastating storms building and they may make landfall in your life. Are you ready; will your anchor hold?

UPON THE ROCK is published monthly 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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The chorus of the song, “Will Your Anchor Hold,” encourages us with the words, “We have an anchor that keeps the soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll; fastened to the Rock which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Savior’s love.”

The chorus stands as a ray of hope following the grave warning of the previous verses. “Will your anchor hold in the storms of life, when the clouds unfold their wings of strife? When the strong tides lift and the cables strain.. .when the breakers have told the reef is near?”

Obviously the songwriter believed that these things were certain to come at some point in our journey. This is also the warning of the Bible. Job said, “man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). Paul warned, “yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). He also encouraged us by writing, “who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35-39). In other words, despite all of the terrible things we may have to endure in life, we have an anchor that keeps the soul! The anchor is available and able to save us from being overcome by these storms, but the question is, will we use it? Coastal dwellers do not wait until the hurricane has hit to use their tools and supplies to secure their homes. They have them ahead of time and prepare before the storm arrives. Have you prepared? Do you pray and study that you may be fully prepared when the storms hit? If not, then you will not be prepared when the storms come.

Coastal dwellers also have an escape route that they can take if the storms are too dangerous. Thankfully the child of God has one as well. “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved” (Psalms 55:22). “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

A GOOD SOLDIER KNOWS HIS COMMANDER

Let us never forget the source of our fighting strength is our commanding officer. *“Strong in the strength which God supplies”* *“Strong in the Lord of hosts, and in his mighty power.”* *“Stand then in his great might, with all his strength endured.”* We will undoubtedly falter and fail if we trust our own strength in the battle.

Our commander is the almighty Son of God. The Bible often portrays him as a great military leader. “And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.” (Revelation 6:1-2) “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.” (Revelation 19:11) “And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Revelation 19:15-16)

Nowhere but in our commander can we find strength for the battle. No one else has the power to defeat Satan and his forces. Therefore, if we are to win the victory, we must lean on him and use his tactics. He gave us our marching orders. “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:15- 16) Our commander has instructed us to preach his name throughout the world. In so doing we will bring the ultimate defeat to Satan.

A GOOD SOLDIER KNOWS HIS WEAPON

“But take to arm you for the fight the panoply (armor) of God.” *“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.”* (Ephesians 6:13) But most of that armor is defensive in nature. Christ’s soldier can defend himself with “the breastplate of righteousness”, “the shield of faith” and “the helmet of salvation”. (Ephesians 6:14-17) But he only has one

offensive weapon—"the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God". (Ephesians 6:17) But that weapon is all that he needs. It has the power to defeat "spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12) Satan cannot withstand the word of God. Jesus repeatedly confronted him with the overwhelming power of the Scriptures. He met every temptation with, "It is written..." (Matthew 4:1-11) "And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." (Revelation 19:15) Man's methods will be overwhelmed by Satan, but he has no hope against the word of God.

But a good soldier must know how to use his weapon. One who is untrained in the use of any weapon is dangerous to himself and others. It requires practice, training, and experience to be skilled in the use of any weapon, and God's word is no exception. We must spend innumerable hours honing our skills with the only weapon God has given us. Only then will we be able to "withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Ephesians 6:13)

A GOOD SOLDIER KNOWS HIS OBJECTIVE

It was once said of a cavalryman that he was so caught up in the excitement of facing the enemy for the first time that he jumped on his horse and rode off in all directions. A good soldier knows what his objective is. He has his orders and knows his part in carrying them out. He does not just strike out in any direction. He knows what his commander wants him to do.

Christ's soldier has one objective— *"to stand entire (complete) at last"*. He is working and training for the day when he will stand complete in his duty to God. He knows this will not happen in this life, because the battle is still raging. There will be no truces or cease-fires. No peace treaties will ever be signed. It is a deadly war that will not be over until Satan is finally destroyed and sent forever into "the lake of fire and brimstone." (Revelation 20:10) Satan's unconditional surrender and defeat is the only acceptable outcome. Christ's soldier will fight until he stands completely victorious with his commander when the war is over. He will be satisfied with nothing less.

Grace with the spirit and with the understanding. God's grace is amazing to all who know it. Accept it in humble obedience today!

Endnotes:

(1) Subject: John Newton at

www.geocities.com/Heartland/Pointe/4495/

(2) www.cyberhymnal.org/

(3) All scripture references and quotations are from the New King James Version

Will Your Anchor Hold?

Brandon Britton

One of the first things we humans learn about life is the reality of pain and hardships. Pain mainly comes in two forms, physical and emotional. Who among us has not felt the indescribable hurt of losing a friend or family member to death? Most of us have experienced this type of pain several times in our lives. How many of us have spent time in the doctor's office, hospital or nursing home due to physical ailments? As long as we live in these bodies and in this world, there will be pain, sadness and great hardships and we will experience them. Knowing there is nothing we can do to completely alleviate all forms of suffering from our lives, we must instead focus our efforts on pain management. We must learn how to endure the storms of life patiently and calmly.

The residents of the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts of the United States have long since accepted the reality of hurricanes or other powerful storms interfering with their lives. They know that these storms will eventually come, though their arrival and the magnitude of them is unpredictable. Since stopping the hurricanes is out of their hands, they spend their time in preparation for when the storms make landfall. They have tools and materials to board up and protect the house, an evacuation plan to escape the storm and insurance policies to give them assurance in a worst case scenario. The Christian also knows that in this life there will be many storms; storms that we cannot control or avoid, but we can endure and survive. The key to enduring these storms of life is in our preparation for them.

salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness...” (Isaiah 61:10). If grace were not grace and should I have to procure it, the bank of heaven knows full well the miserable record of overdrafts against my spiritual account! Grace is amazing because it is grace!

Grace Is Amazing Because Of Its Scope

“Amazing grace! How sweet the sound - That saved a wretch like me!” I think I am of predominantly Gentile heritage; I think but I don’t know! Actually, it makes no difference to me. If the Old Testament were still operative and if God’s promises were yet predicated on blood kinship to Abraham, my attitude would be entirely different. Note Galatians 3- “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (vv 27-29).

Years ago I heard an old preacher speak on Galatians 3. As a point of emphasis he asked the question, “Now how many are in Christ? How many?” Then, from the text he answered the question: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ; that’s how many! Just as many — no more and no less!” His point is Paul’s point All those and only those who have been baptized into Christ are in Christ. Furthermore, all who are in Christ have equal standings with God without regard to blood heritage!

Grace is amazing because every tribe and every tongue along with every culture and every color have equal access to it. Millions of dollars are spent each year on building to ensure that facilities are accessible to all who wish to use them. Long ago, God thought of equal access to the most important building every erected, the church of Jesus Christ! Grace is amazing because of its scope!

Conclusion

Grace is just grace until it affects me; then and only then does it become amazing grace. God wants every individual to sing Amazing

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MASTER, THE TEMPEST IS RAGING

A Historical Perspective and Some Current Observations

The Scripture

“On the same day, when evening had come, He [Jesus] said to them, ‘Let us cross over to the other side.’ Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stem, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace, be still!’ And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, ‘Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?’ And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, ‘Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!’” (Mark 4:35-41).

The Song

In 1874, almost 2 millennia after Jesus stilled the waters of Galilee, Mary Baker, a lady from Chicago, Illinois troubled by the untimely death of a beloved brother, penned the words to the hymn **Master the Tempest is Raging**. The words are as follows:

Master, the tempest is raging! The billows are tossing high!
The sky is o’ershadowed with blackness. No shelter or help
is nigh.

Carest thou not that we perish? How canst thou lie asleep
When each moment so madly is threat’ning A grave in the
angry deep?

Refrain

The winds and the waves shall obey thy will: Peace, be still.
Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea Or demons or
men or whatever it be,

No waters can swallow the ship where lies The Master of
ocean and earth and skies.

They all shall sweetly obey thy will: Peace, be still; peace, be
still.

They all shall sweetly obey thy will: Peace, peace, be still.

Master, with anguish of spirit I bow in my grief today.
The depths of my sad heart are troubled. Oh, waken and
save, I pray!

Torrents of sin and of anguish Sweep o'er my sinking soul,
And I perish! I perish! Dear Master. Oh, hasten and take
control!

Refrain

Master, the terror is over. The elements sweetly rest.
Earth's sun in the calm lake is mirrored, And heaven's
within my breast.

Linger, O blessed Redeemer! Leave me alone no more,
And with joy I shall make the blest harbor And rest on the
blissful shore.

Refrain

Dr. Horatio Palmer set these words to music as with other favorites like **Angry Words** and **Yield Not to Temptation**. The biblically-based words and the drama expressed by the musical arrangement led to a ready and sustained acceptance of this hymn. As a bit of trivia, this hymn was sung in 1881 at several memorial services for James A.

That is, we come into His ark of safety and are embraced by Him upon our salvation. Perhaps that's what Newton meant when he wrote, "Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved."

Substituting the meaning that inheres with grace, we could say that God's favor taught my heart to fear, and God's favor relieved my fears. How true that is! Through the gospel of Jesus Christ man learns the danger of sin as well as the remedy. Or as Paul expressed it to the Romans, "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4). Repentance and salvation are wrought by the grace of God. Grace is amazing because of its effect!

Grace Is Amazing Because It Is Grace

"Amazing grace! How sweet the sound - That saved a wretch like me!" Bankrupt! Every human being that comes to know the grace of God is morally and spiritually bankrupt. All must recognize that our righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). We are wretches! If we say that we see, we are blind and only when we admit our blindness is it possible for us to see (John 9:39-41).

Hear these words: "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified." (Isaiah 61:1-3). Jesus is the person speaking prophetically in this passage. He specifically identified His ministry through the gospel as fulfilling this passage (see Luke 4:16-21).

"Oh wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24). I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of

this wonderful song is are the same: a life of serving Christ and your fellow man is a happy and beautiful life.

AMAZING GRACE

Larry G. Reynolds

The Bible does not use the term amazing grace, but it certainly teaches that grace is amazing. Grace is amazing on several counts, three of which we will consider here. Amazing Grace, the Song, John Newton, slave trader turned Church of England clergyman, wrote the words to the song, Amazing Grace (circa 1779). The American musical arrangement came some 50 years later from a folk song entitled “Loving Lambs”. The earliest known publication of the tune was found in a book named “The Virginia Harmony”, compiled by James P. Carrell and David S. Clayton and published in 1831 in Winchester, VA. (1) Cyberhymnal, an internet based hymn information site that averages over 2000 “hits” per day, says that Amazing Grace is “the runaway winner” in the most popular hymn category (2). Its melody is instantly recognized by cultures the world over.

Grace Is Amazing Because Of Its Effect

“Amazing grace! How sweet the sound - That saved a wretch like me!” God used human language to communicate Divine wisdom. The product is the Bible. Grace is used to describe human affairs as well as being used in a pure theological sense. The early disciples were, “... praising God and having favor (charis) with all the people.” (Acts 2:47). “For by grace (charis) you have been saved through faith...” (Ephesians 2:8). These 2 passages illustrate that the word “grace” (charis) is not exclusively theological; it was used to describe favor — sometimes man’s and sometimes God’s.

Saved! Now that’s a word with many different meanings. As used here it means to rescue from danger or destruction. Someone has said that we are usually saved from something and saved to something. In this case, we are saved from God and to God. God’s wrath is surely promised on the unsaved. But oddly enough we are saved to God.

Garfield, 20th president of the United States. President Garfield, a member of the Disciples of Christ, was the 2nd president to be assassinated, Lincoln being the first. Since that time this great hymn has been used in countless worship assemblies throughout the world.

Current Observations

The song, unlike some that have become favorites, is eminently scriptural. Based on an event in the life of Jesus, it draws a spiritual analogy. Sin is represented by the wind and the waves with their obvious dangers. Without intervention, the result is sure; all will perish. The terror of imminent and extreme danger is like the terror that one feels when the horrors of sin are seen for the first time through eyes enlightened by the gospel. Only God can bring reprieve from the guilt of sin and God is the only one upon whom we may call.

In the historical events portrayed by the gospel writer, the disciples asked Jesus, “Do You not care that we are perishing?” In reality, they knew that he cared otherwise, why wake Him up. They also knew that He could remedy the situation. Their cry was a cry of despair; utter hopelessness prevailed. When sin has run its course in our lives we cry out to God from desperate hearts! But like the disciples of Galilee, we can be assured that He cares! No condition of the human heart is so dark; no situation so bleak but that He cares. Not only does He care, but He is able — able to arrest the ravages of sin and bring deliverance to endangered sailors upon life’s seas. He awaits our call!

How similar in condition were the conspirators gathered in Jerusalem on a Pentecost almost 2000 years ago. The seas upon which they were sailing seemed calm enough. The Roman government had reluctantly allowed them to put the man to death who had been causing such uproar with His claims to the Messiahship. Now with Him out of the way, the going would be smoother; things would be better. Suddenly, accompanied with the sound like a rushing, mighty wind comes a message that petrifies every guilty soul. Peter says, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” (Acts 2:36). Out of the blue, a lightning bolt strikes! Truth, awful yet

wonderful, truth! “There is forgiveness, but we have to awaken the Master in order to receive it.”

With this desperate realization (i.e. there is no hope apart from Jesus), they ask, “What shall we do?” Peter responds, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:37-38). For 3000 souls that day, the tempest was quieted. But the greatest news isn’t that they were delivered; the greatest news is that I can be delivered from the same fate of spiritual death by the same Savior in the very same way. The offer of spiritual calm will exist as long as there is one soul in spiritual peril! The tempest is raging, but the Tempest-stiller continues in His saving role!

Endnotes:

- (1) All scripture quotations are from the New King James Version
- (2) Facts about the song, ***Master the Tempest is Raging***, were primarily taken from ***The Cyber Hymnal*** (www.cyberhymnal.org)

Why Did My Savior Come To Earth?

When reading the four gospel accounts, one is reading only portions of the very life of Jesus. One is quickly introduced to his humble beginnings. He was not born in a palace, as one might think proper for a king. He was born into a family of modest means. He worked a life of labor as a carpenter. While preaching, he walked everywhere he went. He had no office, no place to call home, nor a bed to call his own. He had critics, seemingly, from dawn to dusk. All of them wanted to see him dead and diligently sought ways to accuse him and take his life. His blood family did not believe in him, his religious family, by and large, did not believe in him. He prayed all night and hand picked apostles: one denied him a few hours after claiming he would die or go to prison with him, another would sleep during the Master's darkest hour, yet another would break bread with him and then betray him. Ultimately he was spat upon, put through a “trial”, scourged, mocked, humiliated to degrees not known by many of us, and nailed to an old rugged cross to die alone. One has to ask the question; why? Why would anyone voluntarily put himself through such a turbulent life and go through such a dark, depressing, and

In sharp contrast with this view is the message of this song, and of the Bible. The message is that a life in service to others is a beautiful life. Notice the lyrics: “Each day I’ll do a golden deed by helping those who are in need...I’ll sing His praise while ages roll and try to help some troubled soul...the only life that will endure is one that’s kind and good and pure, and so for God I’ll make my stand, each day I’ll lend a helping hand.. I’ll help someone in time of need...I’ll help the sick and poor and weak and words of kindness to them speak.. while going down life’s weary road I’ll try to lift some traveler’s load, I’ll try to turn the night to day and make flowers bloom along the way.”

While the words to this song are beautiful and true, they are only a reflection of the teachings of God in His inspired Word. When the disciples argued amongst themselves about who was the greatest Jesus told them, “If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all” (Mark 9:35). Paul commented to the Corinthians that he “made himself servant unto all” (I Corinthians 9:19). He would commend others in his writings for being servants of Christ and the church (Romans 16:1,2; Colossians 1:7). Paul, James, Peter, Jude and John all refer to themselves as servants (Romans 1:1; James 1:1; II Peter 1:1; Jude 1:1; Revelation 1:1) and called Moses the same (Hebrews 3:5). Clearly it is the intention of Christ that His followers be servants because He wants us to have a good and beautiful life (John 10:10).

Jesus is the perfect example of the beautiful life through service. Paul exhorts Christians to, “let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 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...wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name” (Philippians 2:5-9). It was Jesus who, on the night before His death, got on His Divine knees and washed the feet of His sinful, and soon to be deserting, followers (John 13:1-17). He taught them by His example that what made the Master so exalted was His willingness to serve (Matthew 20:26-28). Jesus closes this event by telling them, “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17). He would also teach that those who serve others are servants of His (Matthew 25:34-40), and those who serve Him are given honor by the Father (John 12:26). His message, that of the Scriptures and that of

The Beautiful Life

The songs we sing when we assemble to worship God are not inspired and are not to be equated with Scripture. However, the lyrics to these songs should be in harmony with the teachings of the Bible. Spiritual songs are to convey the same message as the Word of God because the Lord intended for them to be teaching tools. We are not to tolerate or support false teaching in the classroom or in the pulpit (Titus 1:10-11; Ephesians 5:11) and we should not allow it to be taught in songs.

When I was a child I erroneously focused on how “good” or “bad” the singing was in our assemblies, but as I grew older I was taught that the emphasis was not to be placed on the voices, but on the words and teaching of the songs. On two occasions Paul explained that our singing was to teach and admonish one another (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). When I focus on my voice or the voices of others I miss the purpose of the song, which is teaching and uplifting me as I praise God. With all of this being said, what is the message, what are we being taught in William M. Golden’s song, “A Beautiful Life”? If only one word could be employed to summarize the primary teaching of “A Beautiful Life,” it would be **servant**. What a beautiful and timely message it is for America in the twenty-first century. We live in the midst of a self-serving society. By self-serving I am not referring to pumping our own gas or fixing our own drinks at a fast food restaurant, but to a people who, more often than not, choose to serve self first and others last, if at all. In our society a servant is viewed as being inferior and of little worth or someone who is unqualified and therefore their only option is to serve others.

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disparaging end. Why?!? We all know the quick and most obvious answer - it was for us.

Through the life and death of Jesus the Christ we are given lessons of endurance, loyalty to God, and sacrifice. Why did my savior come to earth? To teach us about sacrifice and suffering and to teach us about the Christ who set us free.

Sacrifice. Why did my savior come to earth? He had to. A promise was made some four thousand years before. When man, by his own volition, turned aside from God’s law to walk in his own way. He ate the forbidden fruit and at that point fell out of favor with God. He adversely affected the pure relationship he had with his Creator. Therefore, God, having a desire to restore the coveted relationship, announced his plan to buy them back. God speaking to Satan said, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). Come what may the promise would come to pass.

In order to carry out his promise a perfect sacrifice had to be made to atone for the sins of the people. The sacrifice of the body of Jesus teaches us many things. First, God hates sin. The Roman cross sent a message to the people that rang loud and clear not to cross the government. The cross of Christ sends a message loud and clear to the people of every era of time and every land on the earth that God hates sin. Life had to be taken to atone for sin. Secondly, it is a message of love. Everyone knows John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...”. Also note Romans 8:32, “He (God) that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all...” In this verse one can clearly see that God spared nothing for us. Nothing was too good nor too expensive in order to have the desired relationship that he wanted to have with man from the beginning. Not even the very life and blood of his only begotten son. Meditate upon and give yourself wholly to that thought (I Tim. 4:15). Finally, the greatest lesson of the life of Christ and the cross is it shows what it means to give oneself 100 % to God. Give all of self, whether it be money, time or loyalty to the cause. Many churches across our land will leave large portions of the Lord’s money in the bank, many members will find “better things to do” with their time other than

assembling with the saints and engaging in spiritual activity, and yet others, who know better, will compromise truth and/or extend the right hand of fellowship to denominations. All of this will crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame, making the death of Christ vain. Remember, God spared nothing for us neither should we spare anything for him (Galatians 2:20, 6:14; II Cor. 11:23-27).

Sanctified soldiers and servants. The life that Jesus led in the flesh was one of fierce loyalty and endurance. He showed us how to be in the world but not of the world: that one must engage and interface with human beings that are sinners. We must be holy as he is holy (I Peter 2:9). We are to be soldiers on the front lines fighting a war, while at the same time and with as much zeal be servants, even to the unlovable. Jesus said “I am the way.. .the truth.. .the life” John 14:6.

Jesus was a soldier. Some think of Christ as a soft mild-mannered person who never raised his voice and let people walk all over him. That was not Jesus. When he was attacked personally, “he took it on the chin” and practiced what he preached. He turned the other cheek- when reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not (I Peter 2:22,23). He would not lower himself to his enemies level when personally attacked. However, when the sacred things of God and godliness were under attack, the things That can cause one to lose his soul, Jesus became a fearless, steadfast and unmovable soldier who could use the weapon of choice, the scriptures, with matchless precision. For example; John chapter 2, the cleansing of the temple; or Matthew 23, the rebuking of the hypocrisy and false piety of the Pharisees; or yet again the silencing of his critics in John 12:37-50.

Jesus was a servant. “The son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister...” Matthew 20:28. Found in John chapter thirteen is perhaps the greatest example of Jesus showing his disciples and thereby us how to serve with extreme humility. In that chapter Jesus eats with his disciples then “girded himself” (13:4) to take on the form of a slave. He gets a basin of water and begins to wash the feet of the disciples. Deity washing mere men’s feet. A great example of service and humility. It is not recorded but lightly implied he washed all the

disciples feet even Peter who would later deny him and Judas who would betray him. How far does our humble service stretch? To our enemies, to those who betray our trust, or those who deny knowing us? Let’s follow the example of the master teacher and learn to engage in the spiritual warfare at hand and learn to serve our fellow man. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...” (Philippians 2:5).

Set us free from sin and death. The selflessness of Christ to come to the earth and die on the cross changed God’s relationship with man. Christ paid the price and redeemed all of mankind who will obey the Lord (Hebrews 5:8,9; 2 Corinthians 5:18). He has given us an opportunity to come into a relationship with the Almighty Creator of this universe.

He set man free from sin by the cleansing power of his blood (Heb. 9:22; Rev. 1:5; Rom. 8:2), By being the Lamb of God that would bare the sins of all the people that were, are and will be (Hebrews 9:28; 2 Cor.5:21). We are free of all debt or guilt of sin as for as long as we walk in the light as he is in the light. Also, he set man free from the fear of death. One of the most frightening parts of life is dying. Christ took that away (Hebrews 2:14; Romans 8:2). He solidified our hope when on the third day after his death he arose. He became the first to ever die, be raised, then never die again. Now, His faithful followers have hope past death Romans 8:24; I Cor. 15:20-23,52,55,57). Those who obey the gospel are liberated from the bonds of sin and given freedom from the fear of death by the resurrection of Christ.

Why did my savior come to earth? To live a life that exemplified a loyal soldier, one who will stand for what is right and good and be a faithful servant. Also, to show us what true sacrifice really means. And finally, the fullness of his purpose: to set all of mankind free from the bonds of sin and fear of death and restore man to his loving Father who so dearly loved him and missed that pure relationship that once was some four thousand years before Christ died.