

UPON THE ROCK

Jan/Feb, 2004



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Upon the Rock is published bimonthly 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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GIVE ME THE BIBLE

Phil Grear

Suppose you gave someone a gift they never used. Although they gave it a place of honor in the living room, and perhaps even talked about how much they liked it, they never actually used it. Suppose you found out they buried it in the back of a closet or deep in some box in the basement and forgot about it. When asked about it, the best they could say was, "Oh, it's around here someplace." Would you believe them when they said they loved and appreciated that gift? Or would their actions belie their words?

God has given us a tremendous gift. He has given us a marvelous book containing his plan for saving us from our sins. It tells us how to live every day of our lives. It is a guidebook, a spiritual map that leads us safely through life, helping us avoid the pitfalls and traps that bring heartache and misery to so many people. And yet, most of the world is completely ignorant of that book. What a tragic, heartbreaking situation,—they are ignoring the only book that truly guides us toward God.

Give me the Bible because it is the only book that reveals the mind of God. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). The Holy Spirit searched the deep things of the mind of God, then revealed those things to the writers of the Bible in words He chose. When we read the Bible we are not reading the thoughts and ideas of mere human beings, but we are reading the mind of God in human language.

Give me the Bible because it has withstood the test of time. The Bible was completed over nineteen hundred years ago, and yet it is still the only infallible guide for our lives. Repeatedly, throughout the

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

Hear - (Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:24-27).

Believe - (Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:15-16).

Repent - (Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 13:3).

Confess - (Matthew 10:32,33; Acts 8:36).

Be baptized - (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27).

Live faithfully unto death - (Rev. 2:10).

Mark Reynolds, editor

UPON THE ROCK LECTURESHIP

February 28, 29, 2004

West Side Church of Christ

6600W. Kilgore Ave.

Yorktown, IN. 47396

(765) 759-5984

THE EPHESIAN WALK

February 28, 2004

9:00 am “Ye Walked According To the World”

AJ. Cox

10:00 am “Walk In Good Works”

Larry Cox

10:00 am “The Walk of the Christian Woman” (Ladies’
Class)

Connie Reynolds

11:00 am “Walk in Love”

Brandon Briton

12:00—1:00 LUNCH IS PROVIDED

1:00 pm “Walk Not As Other Gentiles”

Jerry Reynolds

February 29, 2004

9:30 am “Walk As Children of Light”

Jim Bullington

10:30 am “Walk Worthy of the Calling”

Ryan Tuten

1:30 pm “Walk Circumspectly”

Mike Gors

centuries, there have been attempts to eliminate it, but it stands solid. Its enemies have attacked it. It's “friends” have betrayed it. Its followers have ignored it. But it is still here. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:23-25).

Give me the Bible because it is the only way to God. Bookstores are full of books that claim they can help find God. Nearly ever religion in the world has its “scriptures” that supposedly lead people to whatever god they choose. But only the Bible points us to the only true and living God. Without it we can do nothing but wander aimlessly through the religious desert, looking for the direction in life. Only the Bible leads us to Jesus and “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead....Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:10-12). Of all the books in the world, only the Bible points us to God.

Give me the Bible because the ways of men just do not work. Left to his own devices man tends to make a mess of things. Morally he justifies, explains, and rationalizes the most perverted behavior as “good”. He ignores his family in pursuit of wealth and pleasure. He steals from his neighbor, cheats on his wife, and kills those he does not like. He destroys his body and mind with drugs and alcohol, and tells himself he is living the “good life”. Without the Bible there is nothing a person cannot justify in his own mind.

Religiously he conjures up the most far-out concepts and passes them off as equally valid to what God has said. Man believes anything he wants to believe, practices anything he wants to practice, and convinces himself that it is all acceptable to God. The most evil acts imaginable have been committed in the name of religion.

Only the Bible curtails man's excesses God's way. Only the Bible provides God's instruction as to how we should live. We ignore those instructions at our own peril. "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105).

Give me the Bible because it answers life's most important questions. "Where did we come from?" "Why are we here?" "Where are we going?" These questions have occupied man's thoughts since time began. Thousands of volumes have been written probing these vitally important concerns, but only the Bible gives God's answers. Everything else is merely the speculation of human minds, and those speculations are wrong more often than not.

The Bible tells us that God is our origin. We are here to serve him, and thus prepare ourselves to live with him forever. An eternal destiny in either heaven or hell waits at life's end. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Give me the Bible because of the lofty principles it demands. In a world that tells us it is all right to be less than we could be, the Bible demands that we live on a higher plain. It calls for a life of selflessness, giving, and sacrifice. It demands a life of purity, honesty, and integrity. It allows for no excuses. It refuses to allow us to accept our sinful ways, but demands that we outgrow those things that are wrong. It does not instruct us to "accept ourselves for who we are", but calls for us to become what God wants us to be. It will not allow us to excuse ourselves as "only human", but demands that we become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). Living by the principles of the Bible will make us better people.

Give me the Bible because it tells of God's love. Our world is filled with hatred, but the Bible tells of God who loves us. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Only in the Bible do we learn of that great, unselfish love.

to such a wonderful place and not wanting to take their loved ones and friends with them?

Will Montgomery may be reached at scacoc@valunet.com.

A GREAT WORK

Light for Mbeya, a work of the Towne Acres Church of Christ and West Side Church of Christ, is looking for opportunities to tell congregations more about the work in Mbeya, Tanzania, East Africa. We have now been involved in this work for over four years, and are seeing great results. Matthew Tusekelege, a 2002 graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching is the capable evangelist for the church in Mbeya. Our goals for 2004 follow:

- (1) Continue to spread the gospel in Mbeya by supporting another preacher to help Matthew. We need congregations or individuals to donate \$300 a month for this cause.
- (2) Continue edifying the Mbeya brethren by supporting the summer campaign. Our proposed campaign will run from late June to early July. We need teachers, preachers and workers willing to obey the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and travel to Mbeya.
- (3) Locate and fund a full-time missionary who will live in Mbeya for 3-5 years.

We realize that these are lofty goals, but we believe that with God's help we will accomplish this and more. We would love to have the congregation you attend be a part of this tremendous work. I could write page after page of wonderful things that are happening there, but will resist that temptation, hoping to be able to talk with you in person. If you are interested, please contact Mark Reynolds at 2411 E. Rigglin Rd., Muncie, IN. 47303, or by phone at (765) 289-5138, or by email at mreyn8391@aol.com. We look forward to hearing from you soon!

sorrow, no crying and no more pain. What right thinking person would not want to go to a paradise such as this?

Heaven is also described as a place of rest (Revelation 14:13). "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed [are] the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." We must work here on earth so that we may enter into the glorious rest promised to the faithful. Heaven is also described as a place of no nighttime or darkness. (Revelation 21:25 and 22:5).

Matthew tells us that we will want to enter into Heaven because we have been laying up treasures there during our lifetime by our obedience and good works. In order to receive these treasures we must go where they are. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matthew 6:19-21). We begin laying up treasures in Heaven when we do as those in Acts 2:41-42 did when they "gladly received the Word and were baptized". We continue to add to those treasures when we "deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily and follow Christ" (Luke 9:23), and when we remain steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (I Corinthians 15:58). And, when we "seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). We need to be faithful in order to go to Heaven. Baptism puts us in a right relationship to Christ and allows us to begin to prepare for that journey to Heaven, but faithfulness is what will eventually take us there. This faithfulness will cause us to assemble with the saints to worship God and will not allow us to "forsake the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25-26).

Let us look again at the reasons why we want to enter into Heaven, the Haven of Rest. 1. It is a prepared place, prepared by Christ for His children. 2. It has been promised to the faithful as an inheritance. 3. We will be afforded an abundant entrance. 4. There will be no tears there. 5. My treasures are there. 6. There is no night or darkness there. What possible reason could any one have for not wanting to go

Of all the blessings that God gives us, certainly the Bible is high on the list. May we ever be grateful for that wonderful book. And may we become always more diligent in our study of it.

Phil Grear may be reached at 2863 E. High St Springfield, OH. 45505, or by email at Ehighcoc@juno.com.

GIVE ME THE BIBLE TO CHEER THE WANDERER

Scott Spencer

"Give me the Bible," what a precious thing to desire. It is refreshing to know that God has not left man to his own devices to determine what is best for his life. As the prolific prophet Jeremiah said, "Oh Lord, I know the way of man is not within himself, it is not man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah.10:23). The Bible, God's revelation to man provides that direction. Of course, man will spend his days on this earth walking about and wandering aimlessly for fulfillment, joy, and happiness. He will sadly turn to many places and faces for gratification and pleasure. However, as the inspired preacher once said, "vanity of vanities, ... all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes.1:2).

Just where can the cheerless wanderer turn for hope, happiness, joy, comfort, etc.? The cheerless wanderer can turn to God's Word, and His precious promises. Knowledge is a beautiful thing. Peter says, "...His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue" (2 Peter.1:3). Peter freely used the word "knowledge" in his second epistle 1:2,3,5,8, 2:20, 3:18. God, when speaking through the prophet Hosea said, "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6).

Half of the battle in conquering an illness or resolving a problem comes by way of knowledge. Once we can identify the illness or problem, we then can make attempts at fixing it. The apostle Paul made a valiant effort in fixing or filling the emptiness of the wanderers in Athens. They were very religious. As Paul said they were indeed "groping" for God, evidence could be seen on an altar where the inscribed words "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD" were written.

How sad it is that many people do not know God. No, it's not written on an altar, but rather on their hearts and evidenced by way of their lives. Just how can one find fulfillment, hope, and happiness? Give them the Bible. Share with them from God's inspired word His purpose, plan, and promises. Isn't that what Paul did with those cheerless wanderers in Athens? Look at his approach in Acts 17:24-28, "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is the Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is he worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, "For we are also His offspring."

The apostle Paul went all the way back to creation. He was putting his finger on the real problem of man's desire for fulfillment, a sense of being, and belonging. Man is made in the image of God, and God's desire is that man will be saved and come to the knowledge about the truth (James 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4). Hence, the cheerless wanderer needs the Bible, he or she needs the truth, for it is only obedience according to the truth that will set them free from their sins and place them in a loving relationship with the Father (John 8:32; 17:17-21). The Unknown suddenly becomes well known. That which is void is filled with life and light.

Scott Spencer preaches in Fairborn, Ohio.

GIVE ME THE BIBLE WHEN MY HEART IS BROKEN

Keith Kress

Our world is full of broken-hearted people. If only we would learn to turn to the Lord and His comforting Word, those broken hearts could often be healed more quickly. We only have three avenues of

The Bible reveals a great deal to us about Heaven. Since it is the ultimate goal for all Christians we need to know about it and how to gain an entrance into it. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. If you miss Heaven you have missed it all. In order to prepare to go to that beautiful place we must first of all be obedient to the plan of salvation revealed to us in the Scriptures. We must Hear God's Word. Believe it. Repent of our past sins. Confess that Christ is truly the Son of God. Be baptized and remain faithful all the days of our lives.

Not only is Heaven a prepared place, but I Peter 1:3-4 tells us that we have an inheritance reserved for us there. When a person dies and leaves a will, or an inheritance, many times there are stipulations as to what must be done to receive that inheritance. The same is true regarding our receiving the inheritance promised to us. We must come into a right relationship with God. We must be faithful unto death. We must worship faithfully and in Spirit and in Truth (John 4:24). We must be faithful in our personal lives (James 4:4). It matters how we worship and it matters how we live our lives before the world (Titus 2:11-12).

This entrance or portal into Heaven is an abundant one (II Peter 1:11). We do not enter into Heaven by mistake or accident, we will not just make it "by the skin of our teeth", we cannot enter in through a side or back door, we won't just slip in unnoticed nor will we go on someone else's coattails. We will enter heaven abundantly because we have prepared ourselves to go there.

Peter tells us some of the things that we must add to our lives to help us to prepare (II Peter 1:5-12). Why do we want to prepare ourselves to go to Heaven? There are many reasons to want to go. First, there will be no tears in Heaven (Revelation 21:4). "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Sorrow, sickness and pain are things that we must face daily in this life. Either for our loved ones or ourselves. Sometimes it is easier to endure these things ourselves than to see our children, parents, spouses and friends having to deal with them. Heaven is described as a place of no tears, no death, no

nothing else will do!

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**GIVE ME THE BIBLE TO SHOW ME HEAVEN'S
SHINING PORTAL**

Will Montgomery

"Let not *your* heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if [it were] not [so], I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, [there] ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:1-6).

assistance upon which we can rely in our Christian lives; our Christian brothers and sisters, talking to God in prayer, and allowing God to speak to us through His written Word. We cannot always depend upon other Christians, but we surely can depend upon the Lord. He has promised, "...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5b). Therefore, we must learn to lean upon the Lord in our daily walk of life, when times are good and when they are bad.

Prayer is perhaps one of the most neglected blessings which we enjoy as children of the Father in heaven. When bad things happen in our lives, it is most comforting to know that we can talk to God at any time. Paul encouraged us to "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Knowing that we can "...come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16) surely is an encouragement to every child of God. To be able to talk with the Almighty, our Creator, the One who has all power and can do all things, gives us confidence and courage to face the trials of life. We live in a frightening world, and it would be even more frightening if we were not able to talk to the One who is in control of all.

Talking to God is comforting and essential to a healthy Christian life. It is also important, however, to allow Him to speak to us by our study of His inspired Word. A one-way conversation usually does not achieve much. This is all we have if we talk to God in prayer, but fail to study His message to us. An inventor usually knows best how to operate and use his invention to achieve the best results. It is the same with our Creator. Who, but God, knows best how we should live our lives and how to heal our hearts when something goes amiss? He has given us many instructions concerning the healing process, as well as many examples in the Scriptures.

Our hearts are often broken by disease, injury, or some tragedy that occurs. I am reminded of Paul's example recorded in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. He tells of some physical malady (thorn in the flesh) that befalls him. He refers to it as a "messenger of Satan." He asked God three times to take it away. Instead of removing the problem, the Lord changed Paul's attitude toward the malady so that he might be able to tolerate it, and even use it to his advantage. When our hearts are

broken by disease or impairment of some form, Paul's example shows us how God makes us even stronger with the problem than without it.

When faced with the death of his young child, David overcame the grief and mourning by realizing that he could, in future time, be reunited with the child in heaven (2 Samuel 12:22-23). When a realization such as this enters our mind, it should bring us closer to God and make us more determined to live for Him each day. We receive comfort just knowing that the grave is not the end of everything, that we can be reconciled in heaven. Paul gave us instruction about the resurrection in I Corinthians 15. The entire chapter encourages us to overcome the broken heart brought on by the death of a loved one. In the last three verses, he tells us that the sting of death and the victory of the grave have been overcome and God gives us the victory through Christ.

Sometimes our hearts are broken by the loss of a home, a vehicle, or some other precious material blessing that we have. God's Word helps us to focus on the spiritual and enables us to put the material things in the background. It is not that material goods are unimportant, but the Scriptures help us to place our priorities properly. Paul tells us to put our minds on heavenly things rather than earthly things (Colossians 3:1-4). Jesus encourages us to build our treasure in heaven rather than on the earth where all things are temporary (Matthew 6:19-21). Paul further instructs us that we came into this world with nothing of a material nature, and we will leave it the same way (1 Timothy 6:6-8). His words help us learn contentment and priorities.

There are many passages of Scripture that give us comfort by telling us of God's care for us. I believe one of my favorite passages is Psalm 56. Within this Psalm, David is praying to God because of his enemies that are constantly after him trying to do harm to him. David's heart certainly must have been broken by King Saul's attitude toward him. It was, of course, David's music that soothed Saul on many occasions. It is obvious that David had much sorrow and shed many tears over King Saul, as well as many other enemies: "...put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?" (Psalm 56:8). It is easy

serving God by saying, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Speaking of the separation of "sheep" from "goats" in the judgment, Jesus said, "And these [goats—CA] will go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:46).

Give me the Bible by the open grave, for it alone tells what lies beyond. We hear about people who have suffered near-death experiences telling about "coming back from the dead" and having seen a great light or a tunnel of light and felt great peace or tranquility. Those people, however, did not actually die, or they would not be telling about it! People sometimes do "see light" (usually called "seeing stars") when they are banged on the head, but they are not dead, only unconscious. One man whom I knew said, when he had a heart attack and had to be shocked back to having a pulse, that he saw his mother "over on the other side." Many such cases could be cited, but they do not tell us what's really beyond the open grave, for those people had not actually gone beyond it. They probably imagined what they thought they would see and feel if they were to go into the hereafter.

Without the Bible by the open grave, we would not know our destiny. Hindus and Buddhists think that beyond the open grave lie many other lives until they can earn the right to cease to exist by being absorbed into the world soul. Muslims think they (or at least their men) will have what they view as sexual paradise. Many think everyone will at death simply cease to exist. Some suppose that their spirits will wander around the earth and need their descendants to worship them. But because our Lord came from heaven to begin with, died and went to Paradise and came back again, and then went to heaven to be our Mediator, we have His word that "We shall not all sleep. But we shall all be changed this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:51,53). Thus with Paul we can say that "to be absent from the body" is "to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8) and that "to depart and be with Christ ... is far better" (Philippians 1:23). The Bible does not tell us every detail of life in heaven, but it shows us "the glory gilding Jordan's wave" — assures us that the glory of heaven lies beyond death for us if we will be servants of King Jesus. So, give me the Bible by the open grave;

didn't and still don't hear the One who did arise from the dead, Jesus the Christ and did warn everyone through the New Testament of what awaits them and how it depends on the life they live here on the earth.

We have the Bible to comfort us by the open grave— if the one whose body is being put in that grave has given heed to the Bible before it came time for the grave to be dug. Preparation time is during life, not in death. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). To put a Bible into the hands of a corpse in a casket serves only as a symbol to others of how it may have guided the deceased during his or her lifetime. If the Bible is the guide in our daily lives, then we are truly led by the Spirit of God and are children of God (Romans 8:14), “and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17). That is the case in which the Bible assures us of the glory gilding Jordan’s wave. Death is then the entrance to heaven’s shining portal, so give me the Bible...by the open grave.

Without the Bible by the open grave, we would be like Hamlet who said, “For in that sleep of death what dreams may come when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, must give us pause.” One man said he was “ashamed to live, and afraid to die.” It was because he had lived such a heathen life that he could not hold up his head among decent people, so he wished to not live any longer before them, yet he suspected that terrible consequences awaited him when he would die. How sad is such a dilemma!

But it doesn't have to be that way. We need to open our Bibles before someone has to open our graves. We need the Bible at the open grave, but first we need to read it as our manual for daily living, as our road map to heaven, as the truth that purifies our souls, as the only valid record of Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life by which men go to heaven.

The Bible outlines two eternal alternatives for one whose body is placed in the open grave, and one of those alternatives — eternal life or eternal death — must be chosen when we can still present our bodies as *living* sacrifices (Romans 12:1-2). Paul ended a chapter on

to imagine that God has a bottle in heaven with my name on it, into which He keeps a journal of my sorrows and tears. What a beautiful thought! God really does care for me! A similar sentiment is recorded in Revelation 5:8, “...having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.” Again, it is as though God keeps a vial, into which He puts our prayers. The point is that God does care and He can help us face our problems and get us through them mentally.

Other passages of comfort showing God’s care are found throughout the Bible. Peter tells us, “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you (1 Peter 5:7). Jesus taught “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Luke 12:6-7). Paul spoke of himself and his work, but surely he spoke of us as well when he wrote, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ..” (2 Corinthians 2:14a). Paul wrote to the saints in Rome, “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).

I think we can easily see the picture that the writers of the Bible have given us concerning God’s love and care for us as we live life here on earth. The Scriptures can help us to face any problem that might befall us in life. I recently received a bulletin from another congregation with an article entitled “Bible Emergency Numbers: Bible ‘911’ Index.” The author was unknown, but it contained some interesting thoughts. For instance, “When in sorrow, call John 14. When men fail you, call Psalm 27. When you worry, call Matthew 6:19-34. When you are in danger, call Psalm 91. When you are lonely and fearful call Psalm 23. When you are down and out, call Romans 8:31-39.” These are just a few, but it shows how God’s Word can help

when our hearts are broken. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5).

Keith W. Kress may be reached at 2707 Bird St. Parkersburg, WV. 26101, or by email at kwkress@juno.com.

BIBLE EMERGENCY NUMBERS BIBILE "911" INDEX

When in sorrow, call John 14.
 When men fail you, call Psalm 27.
 If you want to be fruitful, call John 15.
 When you have sinned, call Psalm 51.
 When you worry, call Matthew 6:19-34.
 When you are in danger, call Psalm 91.
 When God seems far away, call Psalm 139.
 When your faith needs stirring, call Hebrews 11.
 When you are lonely and fearful, call Psalm 23.
 When you grow bitter and critical, call I Corinthians 13.
 For the secret to happiness, call Colossians 3:12-17.
 When you feel down and out call Romans 8:31-39.
 When you want peace and rest call Matthew 11:25-30.
 When the world seems bigger than God, call Psalm 90.
 When you want Christian assurance, call Romans 8:1-30.
 When you leave home for work or travel, call Psalm 67.
 For a great invention/opportunity, call Isaiah 55.
 When you want courage for a task, call Joshua 1.
 To find out how to get along with your fellow man, call Romans 12.
 When you think of investments/returns, call Mark 10.
 If your pocketbook is empty, call Psalm 37.
 If you are losing confidence in people, call I Corinthians 13.
 If people seem unkind, call John 15.
 If discouraged about your work, call Psalm 126.
 If you find the world growing small and yourself great call Psalm 19.

shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

Read your Bible. It shows your Savior near.

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GIVE ME THE BIBLE BY THE OPEN GRAVE

Charles J. Aebi

Death is described by Shakespeare in Hamlet's Soliloquy as "the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns." Not quite true! Moses returned briefly, and Lazarus (of Bethany) and a few others came back from the grave to continue in this life for a time, but none of them said anything to us about what they had experienced after death. Of those who came back from the afterlife, only Jesus Christ tells us what awaits us there. He who is the heir of all things has been appointed by God to be His spokesman to us in these last days (Hebrews 1:1-2). Jesus inspired men by the Holy Spirit to deliver His New Testament to us, and it, combined with some glimpses of the hereafter in the Old Testament, make up the only reliable source that exists to tell us what lies beyond this life. So, give me the Bible by the open grave; it is the only way I have of knowing what awaits me and my loved ones when we die.

Jesus spoke of a rich man who died and found himself in torments in Hades, and of a sick beggar named Lazarus who died and was carried by angels into a place of comfort. The rich man asked Abraham to send Lazarus to relieve his torment, but was told that it was impossible because a great, impassible gulf was fixed between them. (Abraham had already pointed out that he was just receiving what was due him because of the way he had lived on earth, ignoring the needs of the poor beggar.) He then requested that Lazarus be sent back to earth to warn the rich man's five brothers so they didn't end up in torments when they would die. This request was also rejected, because the rich man's brothers had God's word through Moses and the prophets; if they wouldn't hear the Old Testament, they wouldn't be persuaded though one rise from the dead. And many

come at the close of a life that is lived in sin. The righteous will have eternal life while those who die in sin will have eternal punishment “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into life” (Matthew.25:46). The only way for us to receive remission of sins is to have a Savior who will remove our sins. God wants us to be saved. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15). Paul reminds us that God wants us to be saved. “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). Christ described His mission as coming to seek and to save those who are lost (Luke 19:10). The death of Christ on the cross makes it very clear that God and Christ have done their part in providing salvation for all mankind. We must do our part in appropriating this gift to our lives.

The Christian walks through life with the Savior’s presence at all times. We need His presence when we face the temptations that Satan uses on us. We are assured that He will help us through these hard times. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who 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” (1 Corinthians 10:13). Through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, Satan has the desire to make us fall but with the help of God we are able to resist these temptations and remain faithful to our God. This is a time in our life that we really appreciate having our Savior near.

We also appreciate the Savior’s nearness when the problems of life seem to overwhelm us. It is great to know that God’s ears are open to our prayers and that He will answer us in the way that is best for us. “For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil” (1 Peter 3:12). There is great peace in knowing that we can cast our cares on the Lord knowing that He cares for us. Paul encourages us to “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,

These emergency numbers may be dialed direct. No operator assistance is necessary. All lines are open 24 hours a day! Feed your faith, and doubt will starve to death!
Via Bellevue Church of Christ

GIVE ME THE BIBLE WHEN SIN HAS FILLED MY HEART

Bob Vincent

J.W. McGarvey once said, “I would esteem above every other gift that could be bestowed upon me as a preacher the power to adequately conceive what sin is and to adequately set it before the people.” Sin is a terrible reality of life. It is no respecter of persons. From the unnamed woman taken in the very act of adultery (cf. John 8), to the great and powerful King of Israel known as “the man after God’s own heart” (cf. 2 Samuel 11; Acts 13:22), sin affects everyone, no matter how great or small. The Bible declares, “There is none righteous, no, not one ... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:10, 23).

What is sin? The apostle John defines sin as “transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). The New King James Version translates the passage as, “sin is lawlessness.” The “law” to which John referred is the highest law of all, that which transcends the laws of man. It is the law of God, His divine, inspired Word. The word in the original language generally translated as “sin,” means, “to miss the mark.” The problem with sin is that there is a wage to be received for having lived a life controlled by sin. Paul penned, “For the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). There is nothing positive about sin. It always leads down, not up. If we are not on our guard, sin can and will intertwine our lives and choke us to death spiritually. Truly, “the great dragon...that old serpent called the Devil, and Satan,” has the power through his ability to tempt mankind to sin, to deceive, dominate, deaden, and damn one’s soul for eternity!

Satan and sin can fill our hearts with fear! The problem of sin is threefold: It is power, it stains the soul, and leaves us with guilt Sin’s power is seen in its ability to allure, to deceive, and to enslave. Satan

tempts us to do things that are wrong by appealing to us with that which is desirable and pleasurable. He charms and allures us with sin, promising the pleasure that sin brings, while concealing the pain that it produces. Sin's pleasures are short lived, lasting only "for a season" (Hebrews 11:25).

Sin is deceptive. It is a lie concocted by "a liar" and "the father of lies" (John 8:44). In the Garden of Eden Satan lied to Eve by changing God's Word by just adding one little three-letter word to God's decree. God had said that the day that man ate of the forbidden tree, "you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Satan said, "You will *not* surely die" (Genesis 3:4). Mother Eve believed the lie, she ate that which had been forbidden by God, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Romans 5:12).

Satan has the power to enslave us in sin. Jesus said, "Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34). We have the choice in life to serve God or Satan. The one "to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness" (Romans 6:16). Many today are in bondage to drugs, alcohol, sex, pornography, and other such vices. The question is, whom are we allowing to be our Master in life: God and Christ, or Satan and sin?

After the action of sin there is a reaction. When we give in to temptation the soul becomes stained with sin. The law of sowing and reaping is a physical as well as a spiritual law of life. Paul reminds us, "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). Some folks want to sow their wild oats and then pray for a crop failure! Just as disease, flood, and fire all leave scars, so sin leaves its indelible marks. Sin contaminates us spiritually and leaves us feeling dirty. It stains the body as well as the soul. Sin is so easy to get into, but it is impossible to remove the stain of sin by yourself.

After sin comes the feeling of loneliness and separation because of the guilt of sin. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it

thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Ps. 23:1-4). Knowing that God will be with us even as we pass through the valley of death is of great comfort to mankind. The blessing of having God and Christ near us is also a part of the message of the New Testament. The eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews gives us a list of great men and women whose faith in God caused them to walk with God and in His presence.

Being near to God and knowing that the Son of God is with us depends on our manner of conduct. It is not unusual to hear someone say that they just do not feel as close to God as they used to. The indication is that God has moved away from them. This, however, is not the case. If we are far from God, we have done the moving. We are urged by the writer of the Hebrew letter to draw near to God. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:22). It is significant that after telling us Noah walked with God we are reminded that Noah was an obedient servant of the Lord. "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Gen. 6:22). Those who have the Savior near are those who see the need of walking in obedience to God and in accordance to His will. Amos asked if two could walk together when they were not in agreement. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). We must be in agreement with our God to walk with Him.

When we refer to God and Christ as our Savior we are recognizing the fact that we have been guilty of sin and are in need of a Savior. Our sin did not begin at our birth but rather began when we decided to do the wrong thing. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:13-15). We cannot blame God or our parents for our sin. We become guilty when we are drawn away of our own lust. Paul informs us that we all sin and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23). If we die in our sin we have no hope of a home in Heaven. "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come" (John 8:21). The wages of sin

GIVE ME THE BIBLE TO SHOW MY SAVIOR NEAR

Frank Higginbotham

One line in the great song, "Give Me The Bible" explains that through the Word Of God we are able to find the assurance that the Savior is near. The nearness of God and of His Son is a fact of Christianity that we should all hold near. God did not create us and then abandon us to care for our selves. The Deist tries to convince us that God just wound up the world much as we would wind up a clock and then abandoned us to await the time when it would wind down. This view is entirely contradictory to the view presented in the Bible. The Bible presents a God who is very active in the activities of His children.

The Bible presents to us many examples of men and women who lived their lives in very close relationships with their God. Enoch is described as a man who walked with God. "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not for God took him" (Gen. 5:24). A similar statement is made in regard to Noah. "These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man *and* perfect in his generations, *and* Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9). The Philistines presented a great challenge to the people of God. Among their champions was a giant named Goliath. He was a frightening figure who stood nearly 10 feet tall. He was persistent in challenging God's people. Great fear came over the Israelites. When David faced this great challenge to himself and to all of Israel he was able to respond in a positive way by remembering God's presence. "David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee" (1 Sam. 17:37). Following this statement we read about David slaying the giant, Goliath. The Lord's presence was indeed with David and he had no fear because of the realization that God was near. It is in the writings of this great Patriarch that we find this statement that has brought comfort to so many at the time of death. "The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for

cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that is cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1-2). It is our own personal sin that separates us from God. We cannot run from sin's consequences. Sin will make a coward of us. Adam and Eve, after their sin, because of their guilt and shame, tried to run and hide, but they could not escape the all-seeing eye of God. We too cannot escape the judgment of God. Like the apostle Paul, we cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24).

The Bible and the Bible alone gives us the answer to our sin problem. The Scriptures reveal that Jesus Christ is the solution! His precious blood was shed to atone for and redeem us from sin. The Bible reveals God's plan to save mankind through His Son. In "obeying the truth," the Word, we purify our souls and are "born again" (1 Peter 1:22-23). This new birth takes place in the waters of baptism (cf. John 3:5). As we are baptized into Christ for the remission of sins, His blood washes away our sins (cf. Galatians 3:27; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Revelation 1:5).

The story is told of a mother who gave her son a Bible for a gift. On the inside of the front cover she wrote, "Son, only this book can keep you from sin, and only sin will keep you from this book." We must learn how to handle the Word properly that we might successfully deal with temptation. The Psalmist penned the following words which not only demonstrated his love of God's Word, but the ability of the Word to keep us from sin, "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11). I can remember as a boy going on a family vacation to Gettysburg where we toured the famous Civil War battlefield and visited several of the museums. I can recall seeing a metal Bible that a bullet had dented that had been carried in the breast pocket of a Union soldier's jacket. Literally, the Word had saved his life as it covered his heart. We must hide God's Word in our heart, not by carrying it over our heart, but by reading, studying, meditating upon, and memorizing it. All of this is to be done with the view of living the teachings of the Word of our life!

As we fight in the spiritual war between good and evil, we can overcome Satan and his deceptions if we will look to the Word. Jesus is our perfect example of how to handle the devil. Following His baptism by John in the Jordan River, Jesus was led into the wilderness where He fasted and prayed for forty days. Jesus was there alone and the tempter came to Him with temptations uniquely suited for the Christ. Each time Jesus successfully fought off the devil by saying, "It is written...It is written...It is written" (Matthew 4:4,7,10). Jesus was not quoting the mere writings of men. He spoke the word of God! Jesus knew how to wield the sword of the Spirit mightily and, thus, put the devil to flight. Satan is a powerful foe, but he is really a coward at heart. If we will humbly submit ourselves to the teachings of God's Word and then resist the devil, he will flee from us! (cf. James 4:6-7). We too can have the victory over Satan and sin if we will diligently apply ourselves to the Word of God.

"Give me the Bible when sin has filled my soul with fear." Through Christ and the knowledge of His will we can be strong and courageous. In fact, we do not have to be afraid, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). Let us never forget, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Like the author of the book of Hebrews, remember the promise of God when He said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." We can then boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:5-6). May we ever look to God's Word for strength, guidance, and help, knowing that if we keep His commandments, we shall "have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

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