

UPON THE ROCK

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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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Christ, Excellent Teacher

Skip Andrews

Jesus Christ was the greatest teacher the world has ever known. His character and methods are the subject of prophecy, they are recorded in the four books about His life (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), and they are seen in the lives and teaching of His students. The main points of this lesson will be found in the books written about His life. We will note four things that can be learned about Christ as The Excellent Teacher.

Jesus as a teacher was in complete control of His subject He knew exactly what He was supposed to teach. In John 7:16,17, He said, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." It was accurately said of Him that no man ever spoke as He did (John 7:33-46). After the abrupt end of the famous sermon on the mount, Matthew recorded the response of the hearers, "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:28,29). He was also so able to teach His subject that He easily held up when confronted by enemies of His doctrine. He confounded them every time. An example of this is in Matthew 22:34-46. Jesus answered a question about the great commandment, and then asked His questioners a question regarding the sonship of the Christ. They were not able to answer the question without embarrassing themselves, so Matthew tells us, "And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him anymore questions."

Jesus as a teacher was perfectly aware of the needs of His students. This point can be made by noting His words in any situation where He taught! There was never a time when He needed any help in determining what was needed or what to say! A simple and clear claim regarding this point is found in John 2:25b, "...for he knew what was in man." This claim is found early in the gospel of John, and it is demonstrated in every situation until the end of the book. Let us note one of them—the woman at the well in John 4. She needed to know that He was divine, that she needed living water, that her sins were

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

- 1 Hear THE WORD OF GOD - (Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:24-27).
2. Believe THE WORD OF GOD - (Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:15-16).
3. Repent OF YOUR SINS - (Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 13:3).
4. Confess THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD - (Matthew 10:32,33; Acts 8:36).
5. Be baptized FOR THE REMISSION OF YOUR SINS- (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4).
6. Live faithfully unto death - (Rev. 2:10).

repentance. It is there that the believer makes a conscious decision to follow Christ, and by implication, the believer renounces his/her own system of values and objectives. Sorrow for sin is not enough! The Pentecostians were sorry for their deeds relating to the death of Jesus but they still needed to repent. The affections of one's heart changes at repentance as does the direction of one's life. Repentance is dying to sin and self; it is as essential as the Cross itself. Man can no more be saved without his death to sin than he could without the Lord's death upon the tree!

But death is the antithesis of life! Man's death to sin is not life any more than Jesus' death was life. For life to emerge from the scenes of death, resurrection must occur. Had Jesus not broken the bars of death on that early Sunday morning, there would be no remembrance of Him today. But, the tomb was found empty! There was resurrection and the hope of life remained! The believer is buried in baptism and it is there that he is raised to "walk in newness of life." When the penitent believer obeys God's commands to be baptized, he does so with no belief that the water itself has any efficacy. Rather, he knows that all power resides in Him whose death, burial, and resurrection is being reenacted. Water cannot save but the blood of Christ can! It is in the watery grave of baptism that the believer contacts that blood. Man can no more be saved without resurrection than he could be saved had the tomb of Jesus been our Lord's final resting place!

Jesus bore our sins on the tree! We receive that blessing when we obey His Gospel.

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Editor's Note: This article was copied from Jim's daily devotional, *Today's Little Lift*, www.studyight.org/col/tll

known of God, that true worship is essential, and that He is the Messiah. He knew that she needed all of this before he even met her!

Jesus as a teacher was no respecter of persons. He came to this earth to offer salvation to all people because all people are lost without Him (Luke 19:1-10). But they cannot be saved without His teaching—they must hear it and respond acceptably to it (Matthew 28:18-20; Hebrews 5:8,9). Therefore, He was willing to make every effort to instruct people in all sorts of circumstances—even while dying on the cross!

Jesus as a teacher lived in harmony with His teaching. He claimed to be the way, the truth and the life. This claim was made on the night of His betrayal—after He was nearly through living on earth! The challenge to any person is to examine the life He lived and see if He measures up to such a claim. New Testament writers repeat the claim that He lived perfectly (1 John 3:5; Hebrews 4:14-16). No one could convict Him of sin (John 8:46).

Christ fulfilled all possible qualifications for being The Excellent Teacher. Investigate His life and teachings, please! Give the material that is in the Bible an opportunity to show you that He is the teacher you need to hear. Then realize that this same teacher is also your Savior and obey His every command.

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Christ, Excellent Disputant

Mark Reynolds

Jesus is our perfect example in ALL things. Because Jesus is perfect in all ways, we can feel confident following His lead and example. We need a leader in all walks of life. When making a journey into some remote wilderness one needs a guide. When preparing for battle, nothing is more important than a leader. Since a guide is of so much

importance in things of this life, doesn't it stand to reason that we need a leader in matters of religion? In temporal things one may be led in some wrong directions, and even if he fails several times, he can start over and try again. But we live this life only one time. We are passing through this earth for the first time and the last, and if we fail, all is lost. We need Jesus as our guide in ALL things.

One of the things in which we can feel confident following our Lord is the way He disputed the false ideas of others. That Jesus was considered a man of controversy is hard for many to believe, but a look at His life will prove it beyond a shadow of doubt. He constantly disputed the false ideas and teachings of the Jews of His day, especially the Scribes and Pharisees who were thought to be the religious "elite" of the first century. The question is not, "Did Jesus Dispute?" But rather, the questions are "What did Jesus dispute?" "How did He do it?" "Where did He dispute?" And, finally, "Why did He engage in disputing the false ideas of others?"

What Did Jesus Dispute?

Have you ever just been in the mood to argue? Maybe this is a quality unique just to me, but if it is late at night and I am tired I can become short tempered and be more prone to argue over trivial matters. Perhaps certain things or certain people bring our "arguing side" out in us; when we are more than ready to "have it out." It becomes not what we are arguing, because many times we cannot even remember the next day, but just the feeling that it will make me feel better to "put someone in his place." The things that Jesus disputed were NEVER trivial, nor did He argue just to get things off His chest. The reason He disputed is paramount.

The disciples of Jesus correctly spoke of the knowledge of Christ: "Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest from God" (John 16:30). The disciples, based on Jesus' teaching and supreme example, were positive that Jesus was the Son of God, and because He was God in the flesh, knew all things. And, because it is the case that Jesus knew all things, can you just imagine the absurdities that He heard on a daily basis? Imagine having a knowledge of EVERYTHING and hearing two people pontificate on the

receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:36). Since our goal in life is to live according to God's will, let us do so with all the power of our being. Let us strive daily for the patience that will cause us to endure to the end.

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Christ Bore Our Sins

Jim Bullington

"...[W]ho Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to our sins, might live for righteousness" (1 Peter 2:24).

Christ had authority to command any one of His creatures to do whatever was in the Divine will. He could have sentenced 10,000 men to the cross with a single spoken edict. However, Peter wrote that He bore our sins "Himself...in His own body." He did not order someone else to suffer but willingly accepted the sin-penalty that belonged upon the head of every accountable man, woman, boy, and girl. In choosing to die Himself, He demonstrated the Supreme love that He had/has for humanity and His over-arching willingness for mankind to be saved.

Christ died and yet He lives. Likewise for every believer who resides spiritually in Christ there has been a death and there has been a resurrection. Peter says that we "died to sins" and that "live for righteousness." Notice that there is a death and there is a resurrection in his statement. Paul also spoke of death and resurrection in regards to the believer. Believers "die to sin" and are ".baptized into Christ Jesus." Paul continued, "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4). Christ died and yet He lives; every believer dies to sin and self and yet lives unto Christ.

The death of the cross was essential to God's purposes and so is the believer's death to sin. This metaphor finds its literal actions in

toward trials helped him to be faithful and steadfast in his walk with the Lord. The things that happened in his life could have caused him to be a bitter old man, but he turned his trials into triumphs and thanked God for each day.

James, in admonishing his brethren to be patient, spoke of Job. *“Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord that the Lord is compassionate and merciful”* (James 5:11). There must have been many times that this great man of patience wanted to give up. All of his possessions were taken away, and all of his children were killed, but he continued to worship God and said, *“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there, The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away blessed be the name of the Lord”* (Job 1:21).

When Job suffered physically beyond anything we can imagine, he kept his faith in God even when His wife said, *Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die”* (Job 2:9). In all of this, Job did not sin. There are many people today who collapse like a wet noodle and lose heart when the slightest difficulty appears. However, the enduring patience of the patient man, who refused to distrust God, was rewarded and the latter part of his life was much better than the beginning. If we will faithfully serve God and endure the hardships, God will reward us with eternal life.

As we live our lives we will be tempted to give up, but if I have patience that I should have, no temptation is so great that I cannot withstand it, no burden too heavy that I cannot bear it. I must remember that in every step I take, my God is with me. His word will encourage me and sustain me. Even my friends may disappoint me, but I will try always to keep in mind the longsuffering of my God and try to be patient (James 1:2-3). We are all to strive for eternal life, and if we miss that, we have lived in vain.

We conclude this article where we began by encouraging all to keep your focus on the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2). The Hebrew writer shows us how necessary it is to be patient He shows us that we must keep on keeping on if we want to receive the promise. *“For ye have need of patience, that having done the will of God, ye may*

weather, or why grass is green, the sky is blue; or why a black cow eats green grass, gives white milk from which we get yellow butter? Jesus, however, did not busy Himself meddling in trivial matters. When He disputed there was a reason.

Jesus disputed things that affected the eternal souls of men. In the great “Woe” chapter, Matthew 23, listen to the things that Jesus was prepared to argue: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men (Matthew 23:13). “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves” (Matthew 23:14-15).

The accusations go on in the chapter, but these few examples are enough to show that what Jesus argued was not trivial, but rather, it was of eternal consequence.

How Did Jesus Dispute?

When most of us argue we state our opinion/fact then while the other is stating his opinion/fact, we are not listening to his side, but rather, we are trying to decide what we will say next. Jesus did not do this even when His enemies came at Him with their fiercest most bitter arguments. Jesus calmly listened then answered their false views. How badly did the enemies of Christ hate Him?

Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But, Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar’s. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God

the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left him, and went their way (Matthew 22:15-22).

There are several things to point out here. First of all, notice the way that the enemies of Jesus entered into a debate. There were many different beliefs during the days of Jesus on this earth, much like there is today. But the three most prominent were: the Pharisees, the Herodians and the Sadducees. Normally, these three groups were busy debating each other. The Pharisees were the traditionalists of their day. They are the ones that Jesus most often condemned in His teaching. The Herodians' religion was a mix of politics and religion. They were "politically religious." They believed, contrary to the Pharisees and Sadducees, that the best thing for the Jewish people was to harmonize with the Romans. The Pharisees and Sadducees could not disagree with this more; in fact they hated the Roman presence in their "sacred city." The Sadducees had no interest in the political aspect of matters. They were the materialists of that day. They did not believe in the resurrection, nor did they believe in spirits. They thought man was wholly moral and all there was in man was matter. Normally these three groups were completely at odds with one another, but when Jesus comes into their area we find that they "team up" with one another to attack Jesus. How would you feel if most of the religious world was against you, and came together to try to entrap you? Would it not be tempting to lash out and stoop to their level?

Second, notice the motive behind their entering into this dispute with Christ "Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk" (Matthew 22:15, emphasis mine MER?). The question they asked Jesus was potentially very explosive. They thought that they had Jesus any way He answered. If He would have answered that they did not have to pay taxes to Caesar this would have certainly gotten Jesus arrested for treason. If, on the other hand, he said that Jews were indebted to the Romans, the Jews who longed for the day the Romans would be defeated, would have been greatly offended at this saying. They thought they had Him either way He answered. There was their motivation; not to reach a truth, but to catch Jesus in a trap.

The word patience that we are discussing comes from the Greek word *Hupomone*, which means to "abide under". In the New Testament the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings. (Thayer) From this definition, we find that in order to be patient, it will take will power and determination. The Hebrew Christians needed to have endurance if they were to receive the promise. "*For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise*" (Hebrews 10:36). We are exhorted in the first Corinthian letter by Paul, "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*" (I Corinthians 15:58). It is part of the Christ-like attitude we are to develop in our spiritual growth (II Peter 1:6). There are things that we can do to help develop the type of patience that we need to finish our course.

We can study the character of God and learn a great deal about patience. God is described throughout the Bible as being "*longsuffering*" which has the same meaning as patience. When we see how patient God has been and is being, surely we will want to imitate Him in our lives. God's patience is evidence of his ultimate and supreme goodness. Men often take a dim view of the longsuffering of our God. They want to think it is weakness and indifference. Peter tells us that mockers would come and ask, "*Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation*" (II Peter 3:4). The delay of the Lord's return is certainly not due to indecision, but is testimony of his patience. Our God patiently waits for he is not willing that any be lost. We must never mistake God's patience for forgetfulness or indifference.

The book of James is a great source of help in developing patience. James teaches that the trials in our lives can produce patience. "*My brethren count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing*" (James 1:2-4). If we endure and hold up under the trials that come our way it can make us stronger. I knew a man that every day of his life would wake up each morning and say "*this is the greatest day of my life*". This man faced many hardships in his life, but his attitude

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Please be patient with us as we build up this website.

Christ, Excellent in Patience

Larry Reynolds

We often need to be reminded of what we have learned, for we are far too ready to forget. We are also slow to consider and meditate on what we have learned, and that it is profitable to have our memories refreshed. The writer of the book of Hebrews wrote to Christians to encourage them to faithfulness. They were forgetting the blessings they had in Christ. They had become weary in the work of the Lord. It was because of the extreme persecution that was wrought against the church. Some of them wanted to quit, some were turning back to the old way of life unto the Law of Moses. In the twelfth chapter he challenges them to, *“look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Hebrews 12:2). He tells them to “look”, remember the suffering Christ and that He endured the death of the cross. Christ is an excellent example of patience.

With all of this before Jesus, their ganging up on Him and coming to Him with an impure motive, Jesus still takes the time to answer their argument and question. With great and infinite wisdom Jesus took a coin, asked them whose image was on it. They answered, “Caesar.” Jesus said, “Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are Gods.” When they heard His answer they marveled and went away. They had been completely answered and defeated, but rather than repent, they just left.

Jesus did not stoop to the level of His enemies when He disputed their false ideas. Instead, Jesus lovingly, patiently and thoroughly answered them.

Where Did Jesus Dispute?

Jesus debated Satan in the wilderness; He debated the Pharisees by a cornfield (Matthew 12); He drove the moneychangers out of the temple (Matthew 21). One can see that Jesus was ready and willing to stand for the truth anywhere and everywhere. There is one occasion, however, that truly shows Jesus’ willingness to defend the truth; and the place where He disputed helps to show His sacrifice.

“And he [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, as his custom was he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read” (Luke 4:16). Jesus came back to His hometown to try to teach His friends and neighbors and possibly even His family. How did His hometown react to His teaching? “And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way” (Luke 4:28-30). Anger took over their minds. They had one thing, and one thing only, in mind: To destroy this teacher.

The “where” that Jesus disputed in this case is quite significant; the “where” he disputed on that day affected the rest of His earthly existence. When He was thrown out of Nazareth on that fateful day, there is no record that He ever returned. Never returned to His hometown!

Think about that! Why did He have to go back? Why did He not just "hold His tongue" in this one place? Had He held His tongue, He could have had at least one place on earth where He would be welcomed. Why? "Because Jesus knew His neighbors needed to hear the words that He had to say even if it meant that He could no longer live and work in Nazareth. They needed to hear because this was perhaps the only way that some of them could be reached with the message of the coming kingdom" (Jim Bullington in *Today's Little Lift*, studylight.org).

Why Did Jesus Dispute?

The answer to this final question has really been answered in each of the previous points. What did Jesus dispute? Those things that affected the eternal souls of men. How did he dispute? In a way that would force His listeners to make a decision regarding the eternal destiny of their souls? Where did Jesus dispute? In every place where there were lost souls in need of hearing His saving message. Finally, why did Jesus dispute? "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

Jesus disputed, not because He enjoyed controversy; not because He just loved a good fight; not because He just loved to win an argument. Jesus argued to try to save the souls of men. In the early days of His ministry when Jesus was simply laying out the principles of His ministry, large crowds followed Him. When He began to expose the false teachers, however, antagonism quickly arose, and the crowds fell away. Toward the end of His ministry, those who loved the truth and His cause were the only ones who remained with Him. It was true in His day and is true today (Harrell Davidson in *Jesus Christ, The Gift of God's Grace and the Object of Man's Faith*, Memphis School of Preaching, 1992, ed. Curtis Cates).

Conclusion

What can we learn and apply to ourselves from the example that Jesus left in disputing with others? First, we should always strive to live peaceably with our fellow man. There are times, however, when we must stand against their false beliefs. If I am lost in my false beliefs, you do me no favors by just agreeing with everything I teach

the street. Since no slave washed their feet, Jesus raises from the supper to do the work of a slave. At this time the disciples were jealous and were willing to fight for the best seat in the kingdom. Jesus teaches a valuable lesson concerning the coming kingdom. To be great in the kingdom is to become a servant and serve others. Though Christ was of superior nature His love reached the lowest of mankind.

Fourth, love cleanses. While Jesus was washing the disciples feet, Peter at first denied the Lord to wash his feet "*Then He came to Simon Peter, and Peter said to Him, 'Lord, are you washing my feet? Jesus answered and said to him, What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this. Peter said to Him, You shall never wash my feet! Jesus answered him, If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.'*" (v.6-B). Later the meaning would be understood in the light of the cross which provided a cleansing for all men, without which no one could have a part in the heritage of the saints. The blood of Christ is what cleanses us from our sins. "*And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth, To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood*" (Revelation 1:5). When Paul was converted Ananias said to him, "*And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*" (Acts 22:16). It is in baptism that a person comes in contact with the blood of Christ If a person is not baptized for the remission of sins that person remains unclean and lost in his sins. When the Jews heard Peter and the apostles preach concerning the death of Christ, they were pricked in their hearts. "*Then Peter said to them, '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 2:38).

Conclusion

The washing of the disciples feet in John thirteen was done in view of the cross. Our Lord humbled himself and died on the cross so that we could be clean. We must never forget the sacrifice and love that He had for us and what it took to make us free from sin.

for His disciples was offered in spite of His full knowledge of the coming betrayal by Judas. Also sitting at the table is Peter the one that would deny Him three times (v.38). Christ the servant loved them to the end. The cross was a demonstration of Christ's love for us. *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8). While we were still sinners, living in rebellion to God and the heavenly way. Think back to the time when Christ was crucified on the cross there were those that cried out "crucify Him, crucify Him", spat in His face, placed a crown of thorns on His head and then nailed Him to a cross. Now think about our sins and things that we have so shamefully done to our Lord. *"Love so amazing, so divine"*.

Second, it was a love that caused Jesus to subject Himself to the needs of His disciples. He was willing to sacrifice Himself by submitting to an authority which was beneath Him. *"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands and that He had come from God and was going to God"* (v.3). Christ the divine Son of God had all authority in heaven as well as on the earth (Matthew 28:18). Yet He was willing to subject Himself to a shameful death on the cross so that we could have the forgiveness of sins. He could have called ten thousand angels to deliver Him at any given time, *"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross"* (Philippians 2:5-8). This passage teaches us that Christ was equal with God and that He gave up that equality and became of no reputation. When He took on the form of flesh He did not come as royalty to be exalted by man in an earthly fashion. He came as a humble servant to do His Father's will. *"Love so amazing, so divine"*.

Third, the love of Christ transcended the barriers of social class. He came forth from God, and was going unto God (v.3). He was fully conscious of divine origin and of divine destiny. Nevertheless He ministered to those who were inferior. The act of foot-washing was an amazing example of love that showed Jesus was not a respecter of person. According to custom in the oriental household, a slave washed the feet of guests who had come through the dust and filth of

and believe. If you love me, you will teach me. Second, while it is true that we must stand against false teachers and their teachings, it is NOT the case that we must do it in a hateful way. Yes, Jesus raised His voice, yes, He turned over the tables of moneychangers; but what was His motive? There is no better passage, in my opinion, to show His motive than Matthew 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Though they killed the prophets and stoned those who tried to help, Jesus was still willing to forgive and gather them under His wing of protection. Let us always make sure that our motive is love! Last, it might sometimes mean that if you make a stand for truth that it will cost you your friends and family, but still it must be said if you have any hope of their obeying the gospel.

Let us gain strength from the courage of Jesus and be willing to stand up for the cause of Christ in the right way and with the right motives. Life is too short and eternity is too long to do anything less.

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7:00 pm .The Stairway to Heaven (2 Peter 1)

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7:00 pm .What Would It Take to Get You to Leave the Church?

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7:00 pm .What Manner of Persons Ought You to Be? (2 Peter 3)

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Christ, Excellent Savior

A.J. Cox

Throughout that sad period from the death of Joshua to the time of the kings, God raised up saviors to deliver His oppressed people. (2 Kings 13:5; Nehemiah 9:27; Judges 2:16, 18; 3:9). Although the deeds done, and the powers possessed, by these deliverers might appear to some to be entirely mythical and more at home in a modern day comic book, the New Testament has authenticated both their existence and their exploits. (Hebrews 11:32-34). As remarkable as these figures and their mighty deeds are, it should be remembered

Although I cannot redeem the lost from their sins by dying for them, or heal those who are blind, I can take a few minutes out of my hectic life or busy day to show mercy to someone in need. And if I do, I just might be able to open their eyes and help them to see the One Who died to free them from sin. Who knows, they might even begin to follow Him in the way.

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Christ, Excellent in Love

Larry Reynolds

One of my favorite gospel songs is "When I Survey The Cross". The fourth verse says, "Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life my all." Truly the cross was a demonstration of just how much God loves us. It also demonstrated how God the Father and Christ our Savior were united in this love for us. Christ willingly left heaven and took on the form of flesh and died for us, that we might be saved. In the Gospel of John there is an amazing statement about our Lord. *"Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end"* (John 13:1). This statement is made while Jesus is assembled with His disciples at the last meal before His death. The significance of this statement is not that He loved them to the last of His life, but that He loved them to the uttermost degree of which He was capable. The scene that would follow in this chapter was a dramatic exposition of the greatness of Christ's love for the disciples. It was a preview of the meaning of the cross, in which the essential elements of the divine love for man were all represented.

First, it was a love that could not be quenched by evil. Jesus knew that His hour had come. Up to this time Jesus said repeatedly, "my hour is not yet come." But now He knew that it was time for Him to leave this world. God had a plan and hell itself could not alter that plan. Sitting at the table was Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, the one that would betray Him for thirty pieces of silver. Notice the words of verse four, *"rose up from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself."* The service by which Jesus expressed His care

merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7). This demonstration of mercy took place during a significant event in the life of Jesus, while He was at the height of His popularity among men.

Having preached in Jericho, Jesus, along with His disciples and a great number of other followers, began to make His way to Jerusalem (Mark 10:46). This was the beginning of what would later be described at His triumphant entry into Jerusalem and would signal the beginning of the last week of His life. Jesus had business to attend to and time was running out. Everyone understood this. Everyone but Bartimaeus. When he learned that Jesus would be passing by, “he began to cry out and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me” (Mark 10:47). Apparently his behavior was rude at worst or embarrassing at least because, “many charged him that he should hold his peace” (Mark 10:48). This is a polite way of saying that they told him to shut up. Certainly they felt like he was making a scene or making others feel uncomfortable. Perhaps they thought he was making a fool of himself by carrying on in such a way. Whatever their reasoning, Bartimaeus did not care. The fact that he was blind and his only hope of receiving his sight was passing by destroyed his inhibitions and he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me” (Mark 10:48). Although Jesus was a very busy and important man on a very tight schedule, all Bartimaeus was asking for was mercy; compassion on his affliction, pity for his wretched condition. And you know what? It worked.

In the midst of this throng of people, “Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called” (Mark 10:49). The Lord asked him a simple question, “What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?”, to which Bartimaeus replied, “Lord, that I might receive my sight” (Mark 10:51). No doctor could heal his blindness. Bartimaeus did not have it in his power to recover his sight, only the Lord could do what none else could. And that day, on the side of the road, in the midst of an ocean of people, Bartimaeus received mercy. “And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way” (Mark 10:52). It is no coincidence that having been the recipient of such excellent mercy, Bartimaeus became a follower of Jesus.

that these saviors were merely agents chosen and empowered by God. “The Spirit of the LORD came upon” these judges and the LORD wrought His deliverance through them. (Judges 3:9-10, 28; 6:14-16, 34; 11:29, 32-33; 13:24-25; 14:6; 15:14). It is God who is the true Deliverer, and there is no Savior beside Him. (Psalm 106:21; Isaiah 43:3, 11; 45:21; 49:26; Hosea 13:4). How wonderful, how marvelous, then, it is that Jesus Christ, the greatest Savior of all, should Himself be a divine being! (Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-3, 14; 8:23-24, 58; 20:26-29; Colossians 1:15-17; 2:9; Hebrews 1:5-8). Lest it ever be taken for granted, consider wherein Christ’s salvation excels that of all other deliverers.

The saviors of the period of the judges delivered God’s people out of the bondage of foreign oppressors. Othniel delivered Israel out of the hand of Chushanrishathaim, the king of Mesopotamia. (Judges 3:8-11). Ehud saved Israel from Eglon the king of Moab. (Judges 3:12-30). Deborah and Barak liberated Israel from her bondage to Jabin, the king of Canaan, and Sisera, the captain of his host (Judges 4-5). Gideon delivered Israel out of the hand of the Midianites. (Judges 6-8). And so on. As grievous as Israel’s bondage was to these nations, it was physical, and not to be compared to the utter hopelessness of the bondage out of which the Lord has delivered the elect.

The Nature of the Bondage

Never in the history of the world has each member of the human family been subject to the universal bondage of a military, political power. At the very least the oppressor would be exempt from said bondage. And yet, Jesus was sent to be the Savior of the world! (John 3:16; 4:42; 1 John 4:14). No accountable person is exempt from the shackles which Jesus came to loose. All men have sinned and have thereby come under the penalty of the law of sin and death. (Genesis 2:17; Romans 3:9-12, 23; 5:12; 8:2; 1 John 1:8, 10). Sin is indeed the hardest of all taskmasters, and those who serve sin must reap the wages of that service, which is death. (Romans 6:12-13, 16, 20, 23). The penalty for sin entails more than mere physical death. Whereas physical death is the separation of the body from the spirit, spiritual death is the separation of the sinner from his Creator. (James 2:26; Isaiah 59:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:14; 1 Timothy 5:6). A just

and holy God who cannot look on iniquity has no alternative but to pass the sentence of death upon those who willfully transgress His law. (Leviticus 11:45; Isaiah 6:3; Habakkuk 1:13; James 1:13; 1 John 1:5; 2:15-16; 3:4; Revelation 4:8). Without a savior to deliver him from the bondage of sin, man would be destined for an eternity of darkness, punishment, and torment (Matthew 10:28; 25:30, 46; Mark 9:43-44; Luke 16:23; Jude 6-7). With no hope of saving himself the sinner can but cry “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24).

The Means of Deliverance

The victories secured by Israel’s judges were spectacular displays of courage, strength, and strategy. The left-handed Ehud’s stealthy assassination of Eglon in his summer parlor precipitated Moab’s defeat. (Judges 3:12-30). Shamgar slew six hundred Philistines with a simple ox goad, which was an eight-foot pole with a spade on one end and a sharp point on the other for prodding oxen. (Judges 3:31). Gideon led an army of three hundred men against one hundred and thirty-five thousand Midianite soldiers. With some clever tactics, and the help of Jehovah, he routed the enemy. (Judges 6-8). Perhaps most notable of all the judges are the exploits of Samson. This Nazarite, possessed of superhuman strength, once slew a lion with his bare hands! (Judges 14:5-6). In his strength he could not be bound with cords, neither were the gates of a city too much for him to bear. (Judges 15:14; 16:1-14). In the end, as he was humiliated and forced to entertain his enemies at a celebration, he was empowered to dislodge the supporting pillars of the structure and literally brought down the house, killing more Philistines in his death than he had in his life. (Judges 16:21-31). As remarkable as the feats of these saviors are, no such methods could deliver man from the bondage of sin.

Man needs a savior who can take away his sin, but the weapons and strategies of the judges will not suffice. The Hebrews writer reveals that without the shedding of blood there can be no remission. (Hebrews 9:22). The shedding of animal blood was a common feature of both the Patriarchal and Mosaic systems. The blood of bulls and goats, however, could not take away man’s sin. (Hebrews 10:1-4). Only the Lamb of God could take away the sin of the world. (John 1

The first use of the word “mercy” is found in Genesis 19, in a statement made by Lot to the angels who delivered him from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. “Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die” (Genesis 19:19). Did you notice what Lot attributed to the saving of his life? The magnification of mercy shown to him resulted in the saving of his life. Lot understood the direct link between salvation and the mercy of God. While this is the first example, specifically mentioned, of God showing mercy, it is by no means the last, or even the greatest.

The greatest example of His mercy is seen on the cross. The law clearly states that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23); that is, the consequence or penalty for sin is death. Therefore, anyone who sins is worthy of death according to the law. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20). There are two other facts that we know that directly apply to the law of sin and death: 1) all have sinned (Romans 3:23) and 2) we are not dead. How then is it possible for us to have sinned and yet God has not required our lives as payment? The simple answer is mercy. In response to our sin, He offers forgiveness. As payment for our debt, He offers the blood of His Son. As punishment for our crimes, He offers Jesus on the cross. Why? Because of His mercy.

He set a precedent with the children of Israel that He maintains to this day. “The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation” (Numbers 14:18). “Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations” (Deuteronomy 7:9). “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (James 5:11).

While the cross is the supreme example of His mercy, there is a “smaller”, but still profound demonstration of His mercy, that we can imitate in our lives, which should be our focus. “Blessed are the

Christ, Excellent in Mercy

Brandon Britton

When I was a child we liked to play a game called "Mercy." The rules of the game were simple. Two people stand face to face and interlock the fingers on both hands. Each "combatant" would then try to bend the other person's fingers back until they said, "Mercy!" When the pain became unbearable and you cried "Mercy", the other person had to let go, or show mercy. Looking back I wonder why we ever took pleasure in such a foolish endeavor. However, it did teach us what is at the heart of the word "mercy", and that is alleviating suffering.

The word translated "mercy" means, "to have compassion, help one afflicted, have pity or bring help to the wretched." Implied in the word is that of one who possesses the ability to help another who cannot help themselves. The Scriptures are clear that, concerning the subject of salvation, man cannot help himself, but must rely upon the mercy of a benevolent God. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). "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).

It is not possible to read the sixty-six books which comprise the Word of God, without coming to an opinion that the Lord is excellent in mercy. The word "mercy" is found two hundred fifty-six times in the King James Version of the Bible. If you include the variations of the word, such as "merciful" or "mercies", the number swells to three hundred thirty-eight. In other words, the word mercy is used about every ninety verses.

The purpose of the aforementioned facts is not just for interesting statistics, but to emphasize that mercy is one of the major doctrines of the Bible and most dominant characteristics of God. The servant of God can be strengthened and encouraged by knowing that the Lord he serves is, "rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us" (Ephesians 2:4).

1:29). Only by the shedding of His precious blood has eternal redemption been obtained for the sinner. (Hebrews 9:12-14). Only Jesus saves! (Matthew 1:21; Luke 2:11; 19:10; John 14:6). He willingly bore our iniquity to release us from the law of sin and death. (Isaiah 53:4-12; Romans 8:2-3; 2 Corinthians 5:21). And by His unblemished sacrifice He satisfied the just requirements of a Holy God. (Isaiah 53:11; Hebrews 10:11-14). So that now the sinner who could only cry "who shall deliver me?" can lift his voice to the rafters and shout "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (emphasis added). (Romans 7:24-25).

The Duration of His Reign

To chart the sad cycle of Israel's rebellion, oppression, repentance, and deliverance one needs only to highlight the death of her judges. A judge's influence suppressed Israel's wickedness only so long as the judge lived. With the passing of each judge Israel returned to her idolatry and wickedness. (Judges 2:11-19; 3:11-12; 4:1-2; 8:32-33; 10:5-6; 12:15-13:1). Christ's reign, however, is not subject to such interruption.

Jesus Christ is a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec. (Hebrews 7:17, 21). Whereas the priests of the Levitical order, and the judges of Israel, were not suffered to continue in their respective offices by reason of death, Christ continues in His role as Priest and Savior forever. (Hebrews 7:23-24). He, therefore, is able to save to the uttermost, or, for evermore. (Hebrews 7:25). How wonderful and reassuring it is to know that as long as man needs a savior, Christ will be there!

Conclusion

For all of these reasons, and so many more, Christ is the excellent Savior. He alone can bring hope into a life of sin destined for an eternity of sorrow. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). If you are still a slave to sin won't you let Jesus set you free?

**Chestnut Mountain Lectures
October 8-9, 2005
Theme: The Excellence of Christ**

October 8, 2005

10:00 am - Christ, Excellent Teacher (Skip Andrews)
Christ, Excellent Disputant (Mark Reynolds)
Christ, Excellent Savior (A.J. Cox)
Christ, Excellent in Mercy (Brandon Britton)
Saturday's session will close at 2:00 pm
Lunch is provided

October 9, 2005

9:30 am - Christ, Excellent in Love (Larry Reynolds)
10:30 am - Christ, Excellent in Patience (Larry Reynolds)
6:00 pm - Christ, Excellent in Courage (Larry Reynolds)

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