

Wisdom & Power

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Wisdom & Power is mailed free to all who requests it. We send it with the prayerful desire to help establish and strengthen people in the hope of the kingdom of God and the reign of Messiah Jesus, as found in the Abrahamic Faith.

We hope each issue gives you something to think about, laugh over, pray on, and pass around.

Readers are urged to submit articles for publication. We can't guarantee that they will be used, however.

We gladly receive mail from you. Tell us what you think of the magazine.

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On The Cover: A beautiful picture taken by Alice Railton of the Grand Canyon.

First Words

The Everlasting Gospel

In one of our Tuesday evening Bible studies we were going through Revelation 14. Two of the interesting verses (among many) are; *“Then I saw another angel flying into the midst of heaven having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth – to every tribe, tongue, and people – saying, with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him. For the hour of His judgment has come. And worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sun and springs of water’”* (verses 6-7).

From these verses notice these things:

First. It is an everlasting gospel, it won’t change. Some have said that after Christ’s resurrection it only involves his death as a sacrifice. It involves that, but also included in the gospel is the kingdom of God. Those two elements, the kingdom of God and the things concerning Jesus, constitute the whole gospel.

Second. The need to hear that gospel is universal. Everyone who lives on the earth is a potential target for the message. As we preach this gospel, don’t prejudge anyone of not being worthy to decide (for or against) for themselves.

Third. Jehovah is the originator of our salvation. He is the One to be feared above all and the One to whom glory should be given. It is a fearful thing to give God’s glory to another!

Fourth. The reason for this is the impending judgment that will come upon the earth. This is the same sort of message Jonah preached in Nineveh. That message of destruction was believed and the people repented and God turned away His wrath. A brief glance at the condition of our world is all that is needed to realize that the judgment can’t be far off.

Fifth. The last point concerns worship. At this point in Revelation worship of the beast has been instituted. This call to worship comes as a reminder of Who we should worship. Worship and service are connected (see Matthew 4:10).

Were these five points mentioned the last time you remember the gospel being presented? My experienced guess would be “No”. Another gospel is coming into vogue. It is a counterfeit of the real thing. Here are the five points again.

First the fear of God has been replaced by the fear of not being loved, pitied or the fear that our lives are meaningless. That lesser fears are addressed while the greatest fear is ignored.

Second. The universal nature of the gospel has been trimmed down for only those with unmet felt needs. Those who haven’t been loved enough or suffer from some other psychological short coming. If you have a good income, respectable home, good family, you don’t need the gospel.

Third. Rather than looking to Jehovah for salvation, getting one’s needs met is the answer. People are presented with relationship cures, physical wants achieved, or the better life, as salvation. There are greater life and death issues than what we will eat, drink or wear.

Fourth. The impending judgment is forgotten. Rather the important thing is getting what the world has to offer. A concern over recovery from boredom, a life of happiness, or getting our personal felt needs met has replaced the healthy concern about God’s judgment.

Last. This counterfeit gospel worships the good things of the world, more than the One who created all things. That worship leads them to strive to get out of life all they can now.

There are subtle differences, but the differences bring death.

As recorded, the message Jesus preached stated; “The kingdom is at hand, repent and believe that gospel.” God’s empire is approaching, fear Him (that’s the beginning of wisdom) and give Him glory. His kingdom turns the world system upside down; reverses it. That’s why repentance is necessary. Turn from the world and seek God’s kingdom and righteousness, and the other things will follow. Be on alert for that “other gospel”.

Read On!

Chuck Jones

Wonderful, Counselor

by Chuck Jones

Authors note: I was asked a question about Isaiah 9:6 by a faithful Church member. He wanted to know what these names tell us about who Jesus is. My first intention was to give a sermon on the whole verse and move on to another topic. That plan was changed as I began to study the text. It became apparent that more than one study was needed. These four articles are the fruit of my study.

Let me lay a little background for Isaiah 9:1-7. The first five verses paint a picture of distress and oppression. The people are described as walking in darkness and having a great light shine on them (vs 2). As a result of that light, the nation's joy has increased and they rejoice before God (vs 3). The burden they once lived under is broken (vs 4), and the implements of war have been burned (vs 5).

These verses imply the time of the end. They point to the final deliverance of Israel, not principally to the birth of Christ. If verse 6 is taken out of context it does appear to be talking about Jesus' birth. This verse carries the good news that a child would be born who would receive the government and be given a name by the people. The names in verse six are the people's assessment of him.

Verse 7 is definitely pointing to the future as it says, "from that time

forward, even forever." With this background in place, let's go to the name that this child will be called.

The title "wonderful counselor" can be understood as two separate names or combined as one. It depends on a small mark in the Hebrew language. I'll take them separately and combined.

Wonderful

The Hebrew word here translated wonderful is an adjective, a description of a person or thing. "In the Old Testament it refers to things that are unusual, beyond human capabilities, and as such awakens astonishment" (TWOT, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament). We use the word "wonderful" in the same way. We say that things, people, panoramic views, or sunsets are wonderful.

From scripture we see it used in much the same way. "Your testimonies are wonderful [beyond human understanding] therefore my soul keeps them" (Psalm 19:129). Here the adjective, "wonderful", is describing the testimonies of God. Those wonderful testimonies, when kept, have a "wonderful" outcome. "I understand more than the ancients, Because I keep Your precepts" (Psalm 119:100).

This takes us to the son who would be the king. Jesus did many things that cause people to be filled

with wonder and amazement. Here are a couple of examples:

Luke 8:25 "But He said to them, Where is your faith? And they were **afraid, and marveled**, saying to one another, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"

Matthew 7:28-29 "And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were **astonished** at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

In all that Jesus did he was (and remains) wonderful. It's more than just in counsel. When you see Jesus, if you are able to speak, you may hear yourself say, "You are Wonderful".

Counselor

This is a term which is applied to one who gives counsel. The word in itself does not distinguish between good and bad advice, just that advice is given. You have probably received both types and after the fact found out which type it was. How can you know before? Where does good counsel come from?

The short answer is that it comes from God's mind and heart. We are told, "By pride comes nothing but strife. But with the well advised is wisdom" (Proverbs 13:16). What a powerful verse! It

displays both good and bad counsel. It can also be directly applied to Jesus.

Jesus is the chief counselor because God's spirit was in him. Notice, "*There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, **The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.** His delight is in the fear of the Lord, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked*" (Isaiah 11:1-3).

Absolutely, the best counsel originates with God, because, "*The counsel of the Lord stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations*" (Psalm 33:11). Jehovah's word or counsel, which is His purpose and design stands forever. It may go out of fashion for us, but it is always the best. Wise counsel comes from the word of God.

John's gospel opens with; "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. It was in the beginning with God*" (John 1:1-2). John is simply rephrasing Psalm 33:11. Some have inserted "Jesus" in John first two verses, but that doesn't fit with "*By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by **the breath of His mouth***" (Psalm 33:6).

The "word" is the counsel of Jehovah that stands forever. Jesus comes into the text of John 1 in verse 14, "*And the Word became*

flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth". The word, purpose, counsel, decrees, plans and design of God inhabited a man. Notice the results; "*No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, **He has declared Him***" (Vs 18). Just as Moses received the law (and passed it on), Jesus showed us

Because Jesus spoke the counsel of God, he is the Wonderful Counselor.

grace and truth (Vs 17).

We can look further into John's gospel to see how he explains this to us.

"*Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner*" (John 5:19).

"*I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me*" (John 5:30).

"*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life*" (John 6:63).

"*Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who **dwells in Me** does*

the works" (John 14:10).

Because Jesus spoke the counsel of God, he is the Wonderful Counselor. Indeed he was wonderful in everything he did.

The Apostle Paul followed this example, "*Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you **the whole counsel of God***" (Acts 20:26-27). Dispensing the whole counsel of God is not an easy task. All of the Apostles, and countless believers after them, suffered for doing just that.

You too, can be a wonderful counselor. You can speak the whole counsel of God. First, you have to let God's counsel invade your life and let it take over, as Jesus did. We are told, "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord*" (Colossians 3:16).

When the word of Christ takes effect you will be, as the Apostle Paul says, "*Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another*" (Romans 15:14).

Follow the example of Jesus, as Paul and others have. Let the word of God become flesh in you! 🍷

Mighty God

by Chuck Jones

Most of us, when we read the Bible, are at the mercy of the translators, those fluent in the Hebrew and Greek languages that our scriptures were originally written in. It isn't beyond reason to think that they may have chosen words that highlight their theological leaning. They, like us, want to put a positive theological spin on scripture to prove points.

To point at a verse and say, "See here? That proves it" is not a good model of Bible teaching to follow. Many Bible students (and, by extension, teachers) like to line up questionable verses with other scripture texts to gain a broader understanding and foundation from which to teach.

A good case in point is the two word title found in Isaiah 9:6, "Mighty God". I don't want to be understood as saying this is a mistranslation, but I do think it is a theologically spun translation. It is used therefore as a proof text by some to drive home their point. Let's compare this text with other scriptures to see what we can learn.

Mighty God

This name comes from Isaiah 9:6. The expression, "and he shall be called" indicates that the title is given to this son by the people as they rejoice in or celebrate him. The Hebrew words are "el gibbor". My preferred spin translation is "mighty champion". I'll explain why I think

this works best.

Beginning with the first of this two-part title, let's explore how it is used in scripture. "El" is translated several ways, such as God, gods, mighty one, strength and power. "El" is not always used in reference to Jehovah. Note the following examples.

Proverbs 3:27 *"Don't withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in the power of your hand to do it."* "El" is descriptive of your hand when it has the power (el) to do good for others.

Psalms 89:6 *"For who in the skies can be compared unto Jehovah? Who among the sons of the mighty is like unto Jehovah?"* Here "el" is a reference to the sons of the influential and powerful of society.

Psalms 29:1 *"Ascribe unto Jehovah, O ye sons of the mighty, Ascribe unto Jehovah glory and strength."* Those who are influential and wield power are directed to acknowledge the Almighty Jehovah.

Daniel 11:3 *"And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will."* Here the term "el" is used to describe an ungodly king because of the power he exercises.

So the term "el," although it is used to describe our Heavenly Father, also shows God's presence or confirmation. It is also used to describe the ability, power, or prominence of someone or something.

Names with "El"

Here are some other names that contain the description "el". The name Immanuel is literally "with us is God" or "on our side is God." This descriptive name implies that because Jesus was born, God is showing kindness toward us. Jehovah has acted on our behalf it does not state that the individual is actually God Himself.

Another name found in scripture with "el" is Joel. This name means, "Jehovah is mighty". This, too, is descriptive of the nature of the prophecies Joel proclaimed. Samuel means "Hear from God", and Ezekiel means "Judgement of God". We certainly wouldn't mistake Joel, or the other prophets as God.

The son that would be born would be "el" or mighty. But a mighty what? That's where the second part of the name comes in. He will be called a mighty "gibbor."

Gibbor

This Hebrew title is used mainly "to denote one who is mighty, strong, or valiant in war time. It is typical of a warrior. "Gibbor" is the hero or champion of the armed forces." (TWOT)

One infamous individual has this title—Goliath. In 1 Samuel 17:4 we read that he was considered the champion of the Philistine Army. Certainly it was a title that he earned.

The word “gibbor” appears over 150 times in the Old Testament, of which perhaps five refer to Jehovah. But in each case, it carries the idea of a valiant warrior, one who is capable of overcoming the enemy.

That’s why I think a better (in my humble opinion) translation would be “mighty champion” or even “God’s champion.”

The Man Jesus

Does this description fit the man, Jesus of Nazareth? Would we rightly give him this title as we celebrate what he has done? Let’s see.

Hebrews 5:7-9 *“Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of*

eternal salvation;”

Jesus should be considered our champion. Do you? He is the one who made salvation available to us. He is the one who brought it near enough to grab on to. It was through his work that we can expect God’s great salvation, now and in the future.

Hebrews 2:10-11 *“For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,”*

Jesus is the captain of our faith. Just as in many sports a captain is chosen to encourage, be an example for, and spur the other team members on to do their best, Jesus does that for us. The man, Jesus of Nazareth is our champion of God. Because of all we have in Christ we can truly say God is on our side, Immanuel.

The faith that Jesus championed, the faith of Jesus, can be yours. You can be mighty, through God, and be an overcomer just as Jesus was.

1 John 5:4-5 *“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”*

You see, it’s believing in God as Jesus did. That’s having the faith of Jesus. Having faith (or trust) in God as Jesus did is what overcomes the world. You can be a mighty champion of faith by following in the footsteps of our mighty champion.

We all can put away childish behavior and learn to trust God more than the lust of the flesh. It’s hard, I know, but still keep practicing. Jesus is our prime example of total trust in God. He invites us to follow Him. ☺

How to stay safe in the world today.

- 1.. Avoid riding in automobiles, because they are responsible for 20% of all fatal accidents.
2. Do not stay home, because 17% of all accidents occur in the home.
3. Avoid walking on streets or sidewalks, because 14% of all accidents occur to pedestrians.
4. Avoid traveling by air, rail, or water, because 16% of all accidents involve these forms of transportation.
5. Of the remaining 33%, 32% of all deaths occur in hospitals. So, ... above all else, avoid hospitals.

BUT, You will be pleased to learn that only .001% of all deaths occur in worship services in church, and these are usually related to previous physical disorders. Therefore, logic tells us that the safest place for you to be at any given point in time is at church! And Bible study is safe too. The percentage of deaths during Bible study is even less.

So, for SAFETY'S sake - Attend church, and read your Bible, it could save your life!

Everlasting Father

by Chuck Jones

As mentioned before, we are left at the mercy of the translators in giving us what the ancient manuscripts said. In this article the point of interest is, I think, properly translated. Here we will find it isn't what the text says, but our understanding of what we are presented with that makes the difference.

From Isaiah 9:6, I will be writing about one of the names that the son who would be king will be called; "Everlasting Father". Although this may be a proper translation from the Hebrew, I don't think we can make an immediate jump to connect this name to the Creator of all things. To do that would be to ignore some of the basic usages of the words that make up this name. It would also cause us to miss some aspects of the work the Son has done. Let's investigate "Everlasting Father" and see if you don't agree with me.

Everlasting

Our English word, everlasting, carries a meaning which may be quite different than the Hebrew word it is translated from. This is also true in the New Testament as well. The Hebrew word "olam" or "alom" and the Greek word "aeon" all refer to long periods of time. We

use the word "age" often to reference this, such as "the age of dinosaurs" or the "bronze age", this present age, or the age to come.

"Olam" indicates distant time whether past, present, or future. It is a term of perpetuity or a perpetual time. We can find this sort of usage throughout the Old Testament. Some examples are:

*"The Nephilim were in the earth in those days, and also after that, when God's sons came to men's daughters. They bore children to them: the same were the mighty men who **were of old, men of renown**"* (Genesis 6:4). Here "olam" makes reference to the distant past. These mighty men were from a remote time long gone.

*"I will establish my covenant with you; neither will all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of the flood; neither will there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. God said, "This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, **for perpetual generations**: I set my rainbow in the cloud, and it will be for a sign of a covenant between me and the earth"* (Genesis 9:11-13). We still can see the rainbow in the sky because this covenant was made for "olam" generations. From that time and long into the future.

*"I will make you exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of you. Kings will come out of you. I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you throughout their generations **for an everlasting covenant**, to be a God to you and to your seed after you. I will give to you, and to your seed after you, the land where you are traveling, all the land of Canaan, **for an everlasting possession**. I will be their God"* (Genesis 17:6-8). These two promises given to Abraham were from old, and will last on into the future.

"Olam" is used in a wide variety of ways and a connection can be made to Jesus of Nazareth. In 2 Samuel 7 we have the record of God speaking through Nathan the prophet to King David about his son Solomon, and beyond.

*"When your days are fulfilled, and you shall sleep with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who shall proceed out of your bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish **the throne of his kingdom forever**. I will be his father, and he shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; but my loving kindness shall not depart from him, as I took it*

from Saul, whom I put away before you. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before you: your **throne shall be established forever**" (Verses 12-16).

Both references to the throne being "olam" refers to the distant future king – Jesus. The reign of Christ on the throne of his father David is perpetual; on into the age to come. Usually, when we use the term, forever, it has reference to a starting time, but no end. So, it is easy to see how the word "olam" can be used for Jesus, as everlasting on into the future.

Father

The second part of the name I found to be very interesting. I want to explain this part first and then put the two together.

Our English word "father" is used for the Hebrew word, "ab". You may more readily recognize the Aramaic form, "abba". In its simplest use it is the designation for a biological father. It is also used to identify a principle person. We use the term "father of our country" for George Washington. "Ab" is a title used of both Jehovah and men.

Since we are familiar with the term, as used for biological fathers, here are some ways it's used in non-biological terms:

The father of a servant is his master. Elisha use this title for Elijah in 2 Kings 2:12. The protector of the poor is their father. Job classified himself as a father of the needy, looking into the cases of those he didn't know (Job 29:16). The governor of Jerusalem is father to the inhabitants. As Isaiah tells us, "It shall happen in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah: and I will cloth him with your robe, and strengthen him with

your belt, and I will commit your government into his hand; **and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah** (Cp 22:20-21).

The title father is used for one in authority whether it be prophet, priest, king, or founder of a tribal unit. Perhaps the most familiar is Abraham as the founder of a tribal unit. He is called the father of those who are of faith. "For this cause it is of faith, that it may be according to grace, to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, **who is the father of us all**" (Romans 4:16).

We have the privilege of being counted as sons of Abraham, "Know therefore that those who are of faith, **the same are sons of Abraham**. The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you will all the nations be blessed. So then, those who are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham" (Galatians 3:7-9).

Now To Jesus

As promised, I want to make the application to Jesus. Using Jesus' own words we read in John 8:56-58; "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day. He saw it, and was glad. The Jews therefore said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, Most assuredly, I tell you, before Abraham was born, I am."

In the same way as Abraham is a father of the faithful, Jesus is for his people. "Before Abraham was" Jesus said, "I am." Before Abraham received the covenant Jesus was already in God's plan. As Paul

explains, the gospel was preached to Abraham. The plan was already, in Abraham's day, in place.

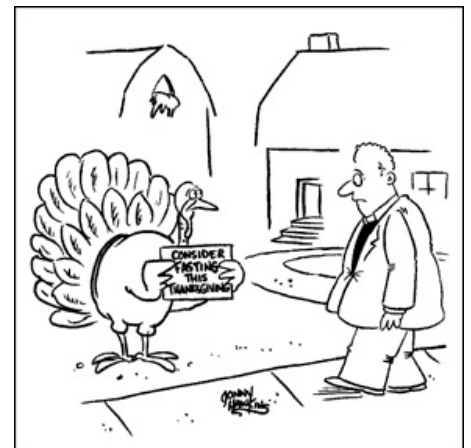
It may be best explained here, "But you, Beth-lehem Ephrathah, which are little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of you shall one come forth to me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" ((Micah 5:2).

Jesus of Nazareth was in God's plan from the beginning, from "olam" the long distant past. Yahweh has established the throne of David forever, and Jesus will occupy it.

Jesus is the founder of our "tribal" unit, the church. He is our protector, our master, our governor, and our King into the ages to come. He is our Everlasting Father. His position with Yahweh will remain in the age to come. We can be secure in that.

Now is a good time to join with Jesus and his "tribe". Turn from the world, agree with Yahweh that Jesus is indeed our Everlasting Father and seek the perpetual kingdom to come. 🍀

Note: These messages are available on CDs. Request them from Chuck Jones. openbiblechurch@dslexteme.com



Prince of Peace

by Chuck Jones

In this concluding article from Isaiah 9:6 I want to write about the “Prince of Peace”. It would be easy to simply take this name at face value and agree that Jesus is that prince. I don’t want to do that. I want to give this name the same treatment as the others. I think that it will help our understanding and appreciation of Jesus grow. It will also have an effect on how we conduct ourselves in life.

Prince

In Isaiah 9:6, the Hebrew word “sar” is translated for us as prince. It is a masculine form of the word. It is used in reference to men. The feminine form is “sara”. Abraham’s wife’s name was changed from Sarai to Sarah (Genesis 17:15) which means princess. But it is the masculine name that we are interested in here.

“Sar” as found in the Old Testament is translated in various ways. To be sure, the majority of occurrences is translated prince, but it is also translated in other ways. In each case it carries the idea of authority conferred because of competence, or a position inherited, as in the case of prince.

Here are some of the various ways “sar” is used in the Hebrew text. Those words are in bold:

Exodus 1:11, “*Therefore they set **taskmasters** over them to afflict them with their burdens. They built storage cities for Pharaoh: Pithom and Raamses.*”

Exodus 18:21, “*Moreover you shall provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God: men of truth, hating unjust gain; and place such over them, to be **rulers** of thousands, **rulers** of hundreds, **rulers** of fifties, and **rulers** of tens.*”

1 Samuel 8:11-12, “*He said, This will be the manner of the king who shall reign over you: he will take your sons, and appoint them to him, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and they shall run before his chariots; and he will appoint them to him for **captains** of thousands, and **captains** of fifties; and [he will set some] to plow his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and the instruments of his chariots.*”

1 Kings 5:16, “*besides Solomon’s chief officers who were over the work, three thousand and three hundred, who **bore rule** over the people who labored in the work.*”

1 Chronicles 15:27, “*David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites who bore the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah **the master** of the song [with] the singers: and David had on him an ephod of linen.*”

1 Chronicles 25:5, “*Thus they were divided by lot, one group as another, for there were **officials** of the sanctuary and **officials** of the house of God, from the sons of Eleazar and from the sons of Ithamar.*”

In all these uses we can make application to Jesus of Nazareth.

Basically, “sar” is a title given, in its various forms, to a person who has either been appointed or has inherited the position. Both of these certainly apply to Jesus. Here is more scriptural evidence.

“*Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,*” (Acts 2:30)
“*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:36).

“*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth*” (Philippians 2:9-10).

From this testimony we can see that Jesus has received his throne by way of inheritance, and by appointment from God. He has manifested competence to rule as prince.

Peace

The second part of this name tells us about the reign of this prince. The English word peace is translated from the Hebrew word “Shalem” or “Shalom”. This word is found in the name of the great city, Jerusalem. It means, “founded on peace” or “flowing in peace”.

When we are urged to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, we can pray that its name would be fulfilled!

Shalom” is a state of being where there is an absence of strife of any kind. Whether that strife comes from those we live and work with (or drive on the freeway with), and strife of a personal nature. That could be not having enough money in the check book or the turmoil over the presence of sin in our lives.

Shalom, can be used as a greeting. It would be like asking, “How is it going”. Notice this in 2 Kings 4:26, “*Please run now to meet her, and say to her, 'Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?' And she answered, It is well.*” The “Is it well?” is the word “shalom”. The prophet Elisha wanted to know if all was well with the women. So the greeting “Shalom?” could be responded to in the affirmative, “Shalom!” if there were no problems.

Shalom carries the idea of safety, harmony, wellness, prosperity, health, and completeness. At the pinnacle, shalom describes the state of fulfillment as a result of God’s presence. The God of peace. The condition of shalom is something I think all people hunger for. In our war torn, violently ravaged world, peace is longed for. It is however, in our present time, illusive. Man cannot broker this kind of peace.

God has, on behalf of men, appointed one to be “Sar-Shalom”, Prince of Peace. This man is the one who will bring fulfillment, completeness, harmony, and safety to the whole earth. At that time he will be call the “Prince of Peace.”

Now, even in this present world with too many prideful and wicked people, we can have peace. Here is how the Apostle Paul describes it in

Ephesians 2. “*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace*” (Verses 13-15).

Because of what Jesus has done, we can be at peace with God and each other. Whatever that “middle wall of separation” may have been between you and others, it has been broken down. This is especially true of believers. Race is no barrier, family feuds are no barrier, disagreements, or grudges can not keep us from being in harmony with those who confess the Lordship of Jesus. He is our Prince of Peace.

Looking further, “*and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near*” (Verses 16-17). Reconciliation and peace go together. How can we say we are reconciled to God when we are not reconciled with our brothers and sisters? Indeed we are called to make peace, as much as it is within our power to do so. “*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men*” (Romans 12:18).

The establishment of peace between God and men was made by our “Sar-shalom.” This peace and reconciliation we can enjoy now is because of God’s presence among us. Whatever it is that’s keeping you from being reconciled with another can be overcome. Go, with God being present, and confess that

wall of separation as having no more influence in your life. The peace we have now between us is a reflection of what is to come.

Worldwide peace is not yet realized. Because of this Jesus said, “*Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword*” (Matthew 10:34). There is a great conflict between the kingdom of God and this present world. It is a conflict of ideologies and until our Prince of Peace returns there will be conflict.

Now however, those who belong to Jesus have his promise, “*Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*” (John 14:27). When Jesus returns all his enemies will be eradicated. Peace will reign!

Until then we can be reconciled to each other and God by faith in what our “Sar-shalom” has done. If you are not at peace with someone, seek it now whether with God or people. That will show where your loyalty is.

We can rightly call Jesus of Nazareth Wonderful counselor because he is wonderful and the word of God was in him. He is our Mighty Champion by winning a great victory for us and calling us to follow. The “tribe” he has founded is perpetual, rightly giving him the title Everlasting Father. We know Jesus as the Prince of Peace as we live in peace with God and each other.

Let’s all look forward to the day when we can praise him in this many faceted title. Let’s show our anticipation by living in what he’s given us now, as a preview of that glorious day. Amen. 🙏

Faith Is...!

By Pastor Gary Turner

In Christian circles the word “faith” is used a lot because it is a component part of Christianity. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God. The Word of God also tells us what faith is. In Hebrews 11:1 the writer says that “faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.” It’s hard to put meaning on spiritual things by using the physical realm, but, let’s give it a try. Everything in the physical realm has substance to it. The chair that I am sitting in is made up of plastic and metal. The button on my shirt has a substance of some sort of plastic. The shirt itself is made of 50% cotton and 50% polyester.

Faith is made up of things hoped for. What is your hope? Do you hope for a better life today? Do you hope for eternal life with God? Do you hope for greater power to overcome temptation? God has made us promises, for both here and now and for eternity, to give us hope. When we live our life based on that hope, we demonstrate the spiritual concept of faith. But the substance of things hoped for is not all there is to faith. When we first give our heart to Jesus and we begin to change our attitudes about life, we might not see changes take place right away. Many people accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and then get baptized. They come up out of the waters of baptism, and

nothing feels different. We can’t base our faith on feelings or what we see. We have to base it on the evidence that is given to us from past deeds. Let me explain that a little further.

A little while ago I made a reservation at a major hotel chain. They gave me a confirmation number. They said if there were any problems when I checked in to use the confirmation number. I had never had any problems checking into a hotel before and didn’t give it another thought. When Glenda and I got to our destination, they said, “I’m sorry, Mr. Turner. We have no record of a room reserved for you this week.” There was a convention in town that week, and I knew that none of the other hotels had a room available. I repeated that I had called in and was given a room. That meant absolutely nothing to them. They insisted that I was going to have to go somewhere else, because they didn’t have any rooms available. Suddenly, I remembered the confirmation number in my billfold. I got it out! I told them I had a confirmation number, and I was expecting to go to my room to get ready for the meetings that night. As soon as I pulled out a confirmation number, evidence that I did in fact have a room, one suddenly appeared out of no where. Upon seeing my confirmation number, the conversation went like

this. “Oh, yes, Mr. Turner. We do have a room for you. Would you like a king size or two queen size beds?” Not only did they now find a room for me that only moments before wasn’t there, but now I had my choice of what kind of bed I wanted in the room. I presented evidence of things not seen!

Is your hope in the return of Jesus and the resurrection from the dead? Then your confirmation number is Acts 1:11 and I Thessalonians 4:16! Is your hope in a changed life once you give your life to Jesus? Then your confirmation number is Romans 6:4 and 2 Corinthians 5:17! Are you looking for peace and joy and victory in Jesus Christ as you serve him? Your confirmation number is Galatians 5:22-25 and I Corinthians 15:57!

When we walk by faith and not by sight, the enemy is going to do everything he can to destroy any hope that we have. He is going to do that because our faith is based on hope as its substance. When we can’t see the substance (just like I couldn’t see a room in that hotel) we get nervous and less confident in our God and His promises. But, when we pull out our confirmation numbers from the Word of God, and use them like they are meant to be used, we will not be shaken.

Romans 10:17 tells us “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by

the Word of God.” When we pull out the evidence of things we can’t see, it moves things, both inside of us and in the spiritual realm around us. When we build our faith and become totally confident in the things God says to us, we become people of strong faith. God uses people of strong faith to get things done for Him on this earth. We can build our faith by putting the Word of God into our heart. With stronger faith, we build our service to God by using the faith that is coming from His Word. Building faith and service makes us an influential person in God’s kingdom.

Let me continue this point about being influential in the kingdom of God with our faith. Money is the

currency of the kingdom of the world. We don’t do anything in the world without money. If Glenda says to me, “Pick up a loaf of bread on the way home,” I had better have some form of payment with me before I take it out of the store. The world moves around money. In the world’s system, we measure the worth of man by the amount of money that he has. We look at his clothes and see he is well dressed. We look at his car and see he is driving an expensive one. We instantly assume he is an influential person without even knowing who he is.

The currency of the kingdom is faith. Nothing happens without it. In God’s system, we can judge a

person by the amount of faith he has. Jesus did that in his dealings with the Centurion! He said in Matthew 8:10, “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with *such great* faith.” In Matthew 6:30, Jesus referred to those of *little faith*. A person of great faith is of great value to the work that takes place in the kingdom of God.

Are you influential for the kingdom of God? Are you working to build your faith by reading the Word of God, or are you limping through life weak and unstable? Does God constantly have to spend His time working for you, or can He trust you to work for others? We should make a positive kingdom difference through our faith! 🍀

Rise High

One day I decided to quit.... I quit my job, my relationship, my spirituality..... I wanted to quit my life. I went to the woods to have one last talk with God. "God", I said. "Can you give me one good reason not to quit?"

His answer surprised me. "Look around", He said. "Do you see the fern and the bamboo?"

"Yes", I replied.

"When I planted the fern and the bamboo seeds, I took very good care of them. I gave them light. I gave them water. The fern quickly grew from the earth. Its brilliant green covered the floor. Yet nothing came from the bamboo seed. But I did not quit on the bamboo. In the second year the Fern grew more vibrant and plentiful. And again, nothing came from the bamboo seed. But I did not quit on the bamboo.

"In the third year, there was still nothing from the bamboo seed, but I would not quit. In the fourth year, again, there was nothing from the bamboo seed. But I would not quit. Then in the fifth year a tiny sprout emerged from the earth. Compared to the fern it was seemingly small and insignificant. But just 6 months later the bamboo rose to over 100 feet tall.

"It had spent the five years growing roots. Those roots made it strong and gave it what it needed to survive. I would not give any of my creations a challenge it could not handle."

Then He said to me. "Did you know, my child, that all this time you have been struggling, you have actually been growing roots. I would not quit on the bamboo. I will never quit on you. Don't compare yourself to others. The bamboo had a different purpose than the fern, yet, they both make the forest beautiful. Your time will come," God said to me. " You will rise high!"

"How high should I rise?" I asked.

"How high will the bamboo rise?" He asked in return.

"As high as it can?" I questioned.

"Yes." He said, "Give me glory by rising as high as you can."

I left the forest and brought back this story. I hope these words can help you see that God will never give up on you...

Faith Lived

By Vince Finnegan

As I pulled up to the traffic light, a four or five year old girl ran out from between the cars heading into the street. Her mother immediately ran after, gripping her hand, and pulling her to safety. My window was down, so I could hear the screaming words of this distraught woman. She shouted while vigorously shaking the child, "You stupid, ___ idiot. What the ___ is wrong with you! You could have ___ killed yourself. You dumb ___." The anger level was apparent by the volume of her vile words and the violence of her shaking this child. The light changed, and I drove away while looking at this crying, frightened child.

I prayed for God to heal her heart and to protect her life – not from the danger of cars but from the insanity of her mother. Indeed this mother might have saved her daughter from physical harm, although all the cars on the street were stopped at the light. However, I could not help but think of the miserable life that this sweet child was doomed to have under the tyrannical supervision of her mother.

Yes, all parents have the temptation to yell at their children, especially when they are in danger; but assaulting your own child with obscene, degrading profanity while physically abusing him or her is

merciless cruelty.

Over the years of counseling people, I cannot begin to count how many people identify their current problems with the ungodly influence of their parents during childhood. Just one incident, as described above, can traumatize a person and effect his entire life. Can you imagine how repeated incidents of a similar nature would effect the well-being of any human soul?

Yet, many children endure such treatment. A foundational Scripture for those parents concerned with raising their child the right way is Proverbs 22:6: "*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*"

The opposite is also true: train up a child in the wrong way, and when he is old he will have the effect of it. For many people, the only relief from the evil influences of ungodly parents is the supernatural intervention provided by God when they accept Christ as Lord. Parenting is an awesome privilege granted by a loving God. However, along with this privilege is the responsibility to train the children as God directs.

It is most difficult, if not impossible, to teach someone something that we do not know. It is also not likely that we can train our children to live godly lives if we fail to do so ourselves. Moses' exhortation is very logical:

Deuteronomy 4:9 "*Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them to thy sons, and thy sons' sons;*"

The beginning of training a child in the way he should go is to take heed to ourselves and keep our soul diligently. There are no absolute guarantees that our children will grow up to be believers, but the probability increases greatly if they have our example to follow. God said the following regarding Abraham; may He say the same of us; "*For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment...*" (Genesis 18:19)

Timothy was one of the great men who worked with the Apostle Paul and served the Church. Paul acknowledges, in a letter written to Timothy, the influence his grandmother and mother had on him; "*When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also*" (II Timothy 1:5). Faith lived, teaches our children much more than our words alone. 🍀

Contending for the Faith

Pastor Dave Hixon

I have been doing a great deal of reading in the book of Acts lately. It is a book of great inspiration for us today. When we look back at the early church, they were NOT a church of tolerance; they faced many of the problems we have today. Today tolerance is a popular buzz word. You hear “Oh, bless their hearts, they are so tolerant”. Is tolerance a good thing? Well let me see. We have many groups today, such as Promise Keepers, Life Builders, Faith Builders, etc., that tell us to “Put aside our differences and let’s just find some common ground”. What differences are they wishing us to put aside? The Kingdom message? Jesus as the Son of God? Baptism by immersion?

Over the past 30 years or so, many things have been tolerated by a great number of people. We wouldn’t want to offend anyone! Church of God?? NO, that language is too strong! Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith?? Absolutely not!! That is too narrow-minded! So we are left with “Bible Churches”. Although “Bible” is too harsh for some, so we end up with Community Churches. We want to fit in at all costs.

There was a time, not that many years ago, when men were passionate about the return of Jesus Christ. They couldn’t stop talking about the Kingdom! They were excited! What happened? Did we get caught up in tolerance? Did we

just want to fit in? We are fitting in all right, but at what cost?

Oh yes, we have learned many new things. We have learned how to be a purpose driven church, and we have learned how to use marketing and demographics. But what is sad is that we have also unlearned a few things as well. That we are called to serve. That we are called to preach the message of the coming kingdom of God to all people. That we are chosen to be kings and priest in that Kingdom. I think it is high time that we re-learned some of these things!

The early church contended for the faith! Jude spoke of this in Jude verse 3, “*contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.*” What faith is Jude talking about? The faith that was handed down to the saints! It wasn’t a faith of tolerance. It was

the faith of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! We need to regain that faith! We need to reach the lost! Jude later on in verse 23 said we must “snatch them out of the fire!” To me, this says we may get burned a little as well. Are we willing to go through this for people we do not even know?

I urge each and every one of you who reads these words to find that faith again. Become passionate again. Remember what brought you to Christ. Stop worrying about the world and do as Peter and the apostles said in Acts 5:29 “*Obey God rather than men.*” God has given us His message to proclaim. It’s time we stand up and Contend for the Faith! 🙏

And without faith it is not possible to be well-pleasing to him, for it is necessary for anyone who comes to God to have the belief that God is, and that he is a rewarder of all those who make a serious search for him.

Hebrews 11:6

Almost Overcome

Jeremiah, Job, and, US

by Jim Mattison

God chose Jeremiah to be His prophet before he was born (1:5), and Jeremiah faithfully spoke to God's sinful people the words of the Lord for 23 years (25:3). But the people would not listen or turn from their evil ways. He was beaten, put in stocks, and finally, carried to Egypt. The fact that his people were so hardhearted and evil caused him great anguish, until finally in the depths of despair, he cried out:

"I cannot endure it...Cursed be the day I was born. Let the day not be blessed when my mother bore me...why did I ever come forth from the womb to look on trouble and sorrow, so that my days have been spent in shame?" (Jer. 20:7-18)

Jeremiah was almost overcome. He was "at the end of his rope." He had preached God's word all his life and nobody listened. He was devastated. He was overwhelmed. Life had no joy. Life had no meaning anymore. Twenty-three years of faithfulness to God—and no results! He was ready to give it up.

Yet, in his anguish, he knew that God was the source of his strength: *"The LORD is with me...sing to the Lord, praise the LORD!"* (20:11,13)

That righteous man, Job, who *"was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil"* (1:1) was also so overwhelmed by his troubles that he *"cursed the day of his birth...Let the day perish on which I was born...let not God*

above care for it, nor light shine on it...why did I not die at birth...now I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept then, I would have been at rest...like a miscarriage...I would not be...why is light given to him that suffers? And life to the bitter of soul; who long for death, but there is none...my groaning comes at the sight of my food...my cries pour out like water...I am not at ease, nor am I quiet. I am not at rest, but turmoil comes." (Job 3:1-26).

Job had lost everything in a moment—oxen and donkeys taken, servants killed, fire from God had burnt up all the sheep and the servants, camels captured and servants dead. Then a great wind blew the house down on his seven sons and three daughters and they were all dead! No wonder Job was overwhelmed and in anguish. Even his wife said, *"Curse God and die."*

But Job, too, knew his hope was in God. *"Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God."* He told his wife, *"Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?"* *"In all this Job did not sin with his lips."* When his three friends came to comfort him he was such a pitiful sight they *"did not recognize him, they raised their voices and wept"* tearing their clothes. They sat down with him for seven days without speaking, so great was his loss. *"They saw that his pain was very great."*

Have you ever felt that way? I have. When I lost my first wife I was devastated. Then after God had given me happiness again, I lost my second wife, her daughter and our son-in-law in a 41-day period. I, too, was overwhelmed. Such a loss! My joy was gone. I cried a lot, and still do. But God is our stay. He will lift us up. He will give us comfort. We do not turn from our Creator and our God just because trouble comes. He is our rock and our salvation. He is the strength of our life. We must, through many trials, enter the Kingdom of God. Cry to the LORD in your troubles!

So when the evil days come, when you have no joy in them, remember these words: *"Blessed be the LORD, because He has heard the voice of my supplication. The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart exults, and with my song I shall thank Him"* (Psalm 28:6-9).

Remember, the Kingdom is coming. Christ is coming to raise our loved ones. So take heart. Work faithfully for him until death. A better day is coming. That day will be a day of happiness and peace. We shall have rest for our souls, God will be magnified, His Son will be exalted, Their glory will fill the earth. Why, then, should we be sad? *"This is the day that the Lord has made, we can rejoice in it and be glad."* ☺

The Kingdom Inheritance

The Fulfillment of a Father's Promise

by Robin Todd

God has been consistent with His message to humanity: As His children, human beings are to inherit His kingdom on earth. Belief in this promise, from a God with the father-heart of grace to make it happen for an incomplete yet growing human being, is the core of a right relationship with him and the key to a healthy life. This belief is therefore, and always has been, God's standard of righteousness for men...the righteousness of faith.

This was His message to the first Adam, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the prophets, and finally to the rest of humanity through Jesus the Messiah and his apostles. God continues to pass this message along through His church to any who will listen, and believe this good news.

This is not primarily a message about a kingdom of the heart, or a kingdom of a church organization, but about the future coming kingdom of God on earth to be established at the return of Jesus the Christ. That kingdom has not yet been established as a reality on earth for all humanity, but Jesus currently sits at the right hand of God in that kingdom. He is preparing it for those who believe in this specific promise of the Father as he did, and who attempt to redirect their hearts, minds, and

lives according to that belief. The good news is the single most powerful hope of a life worth living for the person who realizes he or she has not lived the life he/she was meant to live.

This righteousness of faith that finds its practical outworking in a human being's belief in the Kingdom of God message starts with a trusting Father/son relationship. From within this relationship, the Father is perfect...the children are not. This is how it has always been meant to be understood. There was never intended to be any shame in this for the children, and no condemnation of this by the Father. Grace of the greater toward the lesser, out of a desire for a reciprocating love relationship, sustains that relationship as the children move toward maturity over the course of time. This was (and continues to be) the basis of life in the kingdom of God. This trust in the Father, and belief in His promise, comprised the system in force at the very beginning that would maintain a healthy environment where God's human children could become all that they were created to be within this kingdom on earth. As Saint Irenaeus said, "the glory of God is man fully alive." This system is simply but profoundly called "rest"

in Hebrews 4:1-10 and Genesis 2:2-3, and is the righteousness of faith the apostle Paul speaks about. Saying it yet another way, the righteousness of faith is a rest-based system where the incomplete and imperfect human creation perceives its value through the grace of the Father alone, and therefore trusts in the Father to faithfully and successfully deliver what He has promised...their inheritance of His Kingdom on earth.

But when the first Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was symbolic of his "agreement" with an insinuation of the adversary that being human was not good enough, he should therefore not trust the father-heart of God to accept and love Him in His morally imperfect, immature condition simply on the basis of grace alone. Instead, Adam and Eve now perceived the relationship to be based on perfect knowledge of right and wrong, and the appropriate implementation of that knowledge. In other words, it became a relationship based on performance, where righteousness and self-justification were perceived to be based on the keeping of moral codes. The children saw (wrongly) that their core value and worth in the eyes of their Father was dependent upon perfect

law-keeping. Thus the righteousness of faith, based on trust in God's promise of a worldwide kingdom ruled by His human children, was over-ruled and displaced by a false system of "works" right from the beginning. False religions and even a false Christian gospel have been the result, holding mankind in bondage to sin and death.

We are in bondage because the human mind and heart were not created to function optimally and to mature successfully under the false righteousness of the works system described immediately above. This system has fear at its base, and there is no fear in love. Fear leads to the bondage of sin. Sin is actually not accounted where there is no law...no one is perfect anyway. But once law is the basis for life, that is, once works becomes the

justification of one's core value and lovability, sin will overcome a person and hold him in bondage to it. Envy, jealousy, covetousness, adultery, hatred, murder, wars, are all the destructive patterns of life that develop when one is in bondage to sin. The power of sin is the law as a system of righteousness and justification of one's core value. According to Hebrews 4:1-11, we are to strive to leave this false system and enter back into the system of "rest" which is the basis for healthy and productive life in the kingdom of God.

Throughout the world today, there is a scattering of those who accept God's standard of righteousness through faith, and have thus retained the true gospel of the coming kingdom of God to this earth. They still believe in the one

God of Abraham and Jesus, which allows them to embrace their humanity just as Jesus did his, trusting in the one true God to accomplish His purposes in us. These are the brethren of the Church of God, Abrahamic Faith. "For if you are Christ's, you are Abraham's seed according to the promise." We would love to have you as a part of our family of faith.

If you would like to know more about the one true God and his miraculously conceived human son, Jesus the Messiah who was raised from the dead by his Father and ours, contact a congregation or group of believers near you. We are those who also preach the gospel of the kingdom of God as a witness unto all nations prior to the end of this present age. 🍀

Make the Best.

Submitted by Brian Atra

It was a busy morning, about 8:30 , when an elderly gentleman in his 80's arrived to have stitches removed from his thumb.

He said he was in a hurry as he had an appointment at 9:00 am.

I took his vital signs and had him take a seat, knowing it would be over an hour before someone would be able to see him. I saw him looking at his watch and decided, since I was not busy with another patient, I would evaluate his wound. On exam, it was well healed, so I talked to one of the doctors and got the needed supplies to remove his sutures and redress his wound.

While taking care of his wound, I asked him if he had another doctor's appointment this morning, as he was in such a hurry. The gentleman told me no, that he needed to go to the nursing home to eat breakfast with his wife.

I inquired as to her health.

He told me that she had been there for a while and that she was a victim of Alzheimer's Disease.

As we talked, I asked if she would be upset if he was a bit late.

He replied that she no longer knew who he was, that she had not recognized him in five years now.

I was surprised, and asked him, "And you still go every morning, even though she doesn't know who you are?"

He smiled as he patted my hand and said, "She doesn't know me, but I still know who she is."

I was really moved. As he left, I had goose bumps on my arm, and thought, "That is the kind of love I want in my life." True love is neither physical, nor romantic. True love is an acceptance of all that is, has been, will be, and will not be.

The happiest people don't necessarily have the best of everything; they just make the best of everything they have.

Predestination and Freedom

(Part two)

Robert Hach

Editor's note: This is the second part of a two part article. The first part appeared in the last issue.

What about those NT texts that seem to assert that God's will is inimical and unalterably opposed to human freedom? That God wills and does what he will do entirely apart from human choice?

Among the most notorious of these texts is Romans 9:13: "*As it is written, 'Joseph I loved, but Esau I hated'*" (quoted from Malachi 1:2-3).

In this text God is not expressing a negative attitude He had toward Esau before Esau was born, nor was God expressing a predetermination to damn Esau's soul or to save Jacob's. Rather, the writer used a Hebrew idiom to describe God's choosing of Jacob rather than Esau to be in the line of promise from Abraham, the Patriarch, to Jesus, the Messiah.

According to the same Hebrew idiom, Jesus warned his hearers: "*If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple*" (Luke 14:26). Rather than that his disciples must feel animosity toward their families—which would contradict all that Jesus instructed his disciples about their relationships with others—Jesus

employed the same Hebrew idiom to say that his disciples must choose to follow him even though their families might be offended or disappointed by their doing so.

An understanding of the biblical writers' metaphorical use of love and hatred makes clear, then, that God did not, before either were born, literally hate and, therefore, condemn Esau while loving and, therefore, saving Jacob. Their standing before God was not Paul's subject and was not at issue. Paul's subject was, in this case, God's sovereign right to choose according to his own purpose.

That God chose Jacob over Esau not to be saved or damned but to be in the Abrahamic-Messianic line of promise that would eventually fulfill God's purpose, before either had a chance to do good or evil, is evidence for Paul's argument (made throughout Romans 9) that God does not choose based on works of law.

Paul's point is not that God's choices are arbitrary. God's choice of Jacob over Esau may seem arbitrary – after all, God had to choose someone to be in the physical line from Abraham to Jesus.

Nevertheless, Paul's argument is that God's choice of those who believe the Messianic gospel for a righteousness of faith over those who rely on their obedience to the

Mosaic law for a righteousness of works is based on the very purpose for which God chose Jacob over Esau: "*...in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call...*" (Rom. 9:11). When it comes to salvation and destruction, God has always exercised his sovereign will not capriciously but consistently with his righteousness, choosing believers in his Abrahamic promise, whether Jews or Gentiles. Whether Esau, or Jacob for that matter, died in the hope of salvation depended on their faith in God's promise to their grandfather Abraham, not on which of them God chose to be in the physical line of promise from Abraham to Jesus. Therefore, the case of Jacob and Esau is not an example of God's having predestined anyone to be saved or lost.

Equally subject to Calvinistic distortion has been Romans 9:17-18: "*For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.' So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills*" (from Exodus 9:16).

God predestined Pharaoh's role in the exodus of Israel from Egypt according to his original purpose and Abrahamic promise to make of

Abraham a great nation, through which God would ultimately bless all nations (Gen. 12:1-3; 18:18). God fulfilled his purpose and promise through Pharaoh by delivering the Israelites from Egypt and, thereby, making of Abraham a great nation through which God's "name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

Further, God hardened Pharaoh's heart not by means of a direct action but by means of "the word of God" that Moses spoke to Pharaoh, commanding Pharaoh to free his Israelite slaves. Pharaoh's pride in his own sovereignty would not allow him to submit to the sovereignty of God expressed in "the word" spoken by Moses. That the ruler of the Egyptian empire would resist a Hebrew's claim that the Hebrew "god" commanded that Pharaoh release a sizable portion of the slave labor that facilitated the maintenance of his kingdom is hardly surprising.

Most importantly, God did not harden Pharaoh's heart for the purpose of damning his soul but, instead, "*that my name be proclaimed in all the earth*" (Rom. 9:17). Which is to say, so that all nations might hear about the Hebrew God and eventually be prepared for the coming of his Anointed to fulfill the Abrahamic promise to bless all nations.

Again, God's hardening of Pharaoh was for the purpose of fulfilling his original purpose and Abrahamic promise, which would reach its ultimate fulfillment in the proclamation, crucifixion, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus. Neither of Paul's examples (Jacob and Esau nor Pharaoh) are intended to illustrate that God predestines all that occurs, nor that God predestines individuals to be saved or lost. Individuals are free to

choose whether or not to believe and are responsible for their own choices.

The difficulty Paul faced with his Jewish readers (his Roman letter having been written to a community of believing and unbelieving Jews along with Gentile believers who

God did not harden Pharaoh's heart for the purpose of damning his soul

had joined themselves to the Jewish community of Rome) was to persuade them that their election by God was not for the purpose of their own salvation and the destruction of the rest of the world, as (not Moses and the prophets but) their religious tradition had taught them. Rather, God's election of Israel was for the purpose of their becoming "a light for the nations" (Isa. 49:6; see also Isa. 60:1-3), that is, for the purpose of the salvation of the rest of the world, to fulfill God's Abrahamic promise. And that as they, through faith in the gospel, accepted the purpose of their election, they would enjoy the salvation that God intended for all nations, including Israel.

And so, God "*has mercy on whomever He wills,*" which is to say, God wills to have mercy on those who claim a righteousness of faith rather than of works, and "*He hardens whomever He wills,*" which is to say that God wills to harden those who reject his word of promise, who claim a righteousness of works.

Because of the failure to

distinguish between God's election of specific individuals, like Jacob and Pharaoh, on one hand, and God's election of whomever believes the gospel to be saved as the fulfillment of his purpose, on the other, Calvinism perverts and distorts the biblical knowledge of God.

Calvinism represents the failure to understand that God's sovereign will is that human beings be free to choose to believe "the word" or not, free to love their Creator or not, free to accept or reject the hope of salvation. All that occurs is God's will in the sense that God's sovereign will both purposes and permits. God's purposive will was expressed in his promise to give Abraham a son, through whom God would make of Abraham a great nation, through which God would bless all nations. God predestined this to occur and guaranteed its ultimate fulfillment in his Anointed because of his love for his human creation.

The significance of the biblical writings is that they preserve the progressive revelation of God's purposive will.

God's Permissive Will

All else that has occurred, does occur and will occur in human history is a matter of God's permissive will. Which is to say that it is God's will to permit human beings to exercise their freedom to reject his purpose and disbelieve his promise if they so choose.

World events or personal circumstances reveal God's permissive will: "*Again I saw that under the sun . . . time and chance happen to them all*" (Eccl. 9:11).

This does not mean that God is not sovereign but that God's sovereign will for the present age is

to permit events to run their natural course, leaving human circumstances to "time and chance." As Jesus said of his heavenly Father, "he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). Good fortune or misfortune are as likely to fall on believers as on unbelievers (to which the OT story of Job certainly attests). On the dark side of the coin, God permits both natural disasters and human atrocities.

Accordingly, "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (1 John 5:19), who is the lord of "all the kingdoms of the world" (Matt. 4:8), "the god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4) and "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). Which is to say that God permits Satan to be the administrator of the world of the present age—which makes Satan the face of God's wrath—until day of judgment, which Jesus called "the end of the age" (Matt. 13:39, 40, 49). God counters the evil one by means of the revelation of his purposive will for all nations in "the word," in the hope of persuading human beings away from the evils of both hatred and indifference and toward the goodness of love and servanthood. (This often seems insufficient in the face of injustice, but the only alternative God has to persuasion by means of "the word" is coercion by means of direct intervention, which could only be effected by God at the cost of human freedom.)

That the Creator of all things would permit evil, and all of its attendant human suffering, to occur is the problem of theodicy, which posits an either-or proposition: Either God is good but not all-powerful, or God is all-powerful but not good; God cannot be both good and all-powerful because in

that case God could and would not allow evil to have its way in the world.

The reply of Calvinism is that God is both good and all-powerful but that human depravity makes it impossible for fallen humanity to accept that God has the right to do as he will here and damn whomever he will hereafter. The creature has no right to question the will of the Creator. Instead, the creature must accept that the will of God is a mystery that will only be understood in the hereafter (if one happens, through no choice of her or his own, to be one of the chosen few who makes it to the hereafter).

The biblical answer is that God permits evil because his sovereign will includes his desire for the exercise of human freedom, even when the consequences of human freedom are destructive. The freedom to do good must also include the freedom to do evil, just as the freedom to love must also include the freedom to hate. Enough intelligent creatures joining together, however unwittingly, for evil and hateful purposes creates tidal waves of human suffering that engulf the earth.

Nevertheless, how else can God's human creatures grow into maturity except through the exercise of freedom?

Finally, God's permissive will is the framework within which God's purposive will—revealed in "the gospel" proclaimed by Jesus and his apostles—moves toward the day of judgment ("the end of the age") and the kingdom of God ("the age to come"). That what God purposes for creation is sure to prevail over all that God permits in the meantime is the meaning of biblical predestination. ☹

Here's a Bit of Humor from the Internet

Submitted by Mark Clarke

"You know your church is redneck if..."

When they learn that Jesus fed 5000 people with two fish, folks ask whether the two fish were bass or catfish, and what bait was used to catch 'em.

When the pastor says, "I'd like to ask Bubba to help take up the offering," five guys stand up.

Opening day of deer season is recognized as a church holiday.

A member of the church requests to be buried in his 4-wheel-drive truck because "It ain't never been in a hole it couldn't get out of."

Baptism is referred to as "branding".

People think "rapture" is what you get when you lift something too heavy.

The baptismal pool is a #2 galvanized washtub.

The collection plates are really hub caps from a '56 Chevy.

Instead of a bell, you are called to service by a duck call.

The minister and his wife drive matching pickup trucks.

The final words of the benediction are, "Y'all come back now!! Ya Hear?" ☹

Jesus Wept

By Brian Atra.

Jesus wept. John 11:35, the shortest verse in the Bible. Yet C. M. Ward, to whom I owe much regarding the art of preaching, called it "The Shortest Verse With The Longest Reach." "Indeed, the weeping, passionate Christ has reached out to millions – and millions reach out to him.

Why did Jesus weep? Some answers are trite; others are speculative and lack a scriptural basis. The worst theory is: "Jesus was crying over the terrible prospect of bringing back Lazarus from heaven to the pains of earth." "First, the atonement was not even complete so how could Lazarus be in God's presence, described as heaven, which only the atonement could purchase? Secondly, the Old Testament, still a collection of scrolls, was the only Bible used by Jesus and Lazarus. It plainly taught that the dead are dead and their reward is yet to come -- in the Coming Kingdom inaugurated by the Messiah.

Jesus was that Messiah. He was the Son of God. Yet he was very human. I believe the most basic reason Jesus wept was, as a human, he felt pain at the separation death brings. It is a very human response and one that is better let out than stifled. Jesus loved Lazarus, deeply, as a friend and spiritual brother and now the man was dead – not enjoying unending bliss (that was yet to come), but dead. Death. Loss. Separation. Jesus wept.

Yet Jesus identified with the larger group, the sisters, those who also loved Lazarus deeply. He wept with and for them. The loud lamenting, and Jesus groaning in his spirit, only intensified the depth expressed by his love. Jesus cared. Jesus wept when his brothers and sisters wept and wished, "if only . . .". "He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

Still, I believe a third reason Jesus wept is likely the most important of all. Jesus, knowing that he had come not only to announce the Kingdom of God but to die on the horrible Cross, also knew that the Cross would precede the Crown. And the Cross was no small task.

It was required for our atonement. Without it there would be no basis for God to forgive. Without it, Lazarus would be raised only to die a second death. So would you and I. Let us never forget the atonement. God does not. Count how repeatedly Jesus is referred to as the "Lamb" in Revelation, God's final word. Oh, his infinite sacrifice!

Since "Jesus wept" is in John 11 and the passion of Christ does not begin until six chapters later in John, the average reader probably does not connect the time frame between the death of Lazarus and the death and resurrection of Jesus. The fact is: the death and resurrection of Lazarus occurred, at most, a few weeks before Jesus' own death and resurrection! And

many scholars would say days and not weeks. It was that close.

Now, here is the Christ, having ministered and proclaimed faithfully, facing the corpse of Lazarus. The stench of the fourth day was there. The smell of death wafted through the air, reminding Jesus not only of his own terrible death, but of the awful, tremendous price that would need to be paid for the resurrection of Lazarus.

Jesus, not far from Jerusalem, could look around at familiar sights, places to which his formerly faithful would scatter. Where howling, vicious mobs would wait their turn to help murder him, if nothing else than by insult. Jesus understood the necessity of his own death.

The atonement did not come cheap. It cost the Son of God his life, horribly taken from him in an unprecedented murder so dramatic that it caused a brutal Roman guard to testify: "Truly this was the son of God!" "Because Jesus died an atoning death, "God has given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow..."

I bow now. So do millions of others. Billions of others will bow later. Until then, do not ever misconstrue the value of the atonement. God considered it the greatest, most perfect act of obedience in history. How can we do less?

Yes, Jesus wept over a dear friend's death, the loss of life. Yes, Jesus wept over the suffering that finds its way into the crevices of all of humanity. Yes, Jesus wept because he realized how close he was to bearing that unbearable cup, the Cross of the atonement. That alone could secure a bright future for Lazarus. For you and me.

God will one day dry our tears. Until then, we may weep. And Jesus may be weeping for us, especially if

we are headed for darkness, deep into sin, hard-hearted. In such cases, you and I can repent, living obediently, and WE can, for now, dry HIS tears.

As I examine myself, my life, this day, I ask myself, in regard to my own life: "Is Jesus weeping over me?" What a powerful, deep love expressed in action so intense that it is captured in a mere two unforgettable words, Jesus wept. May that same Christ be equally as unforgettable to each of us. Let us not cause him to weep. Ever. ☺

Making Pancakes

Submitted by Jim Jannereth

Six -year-old Brandon decided one Saturday morning to fix his parents pancakes. He found a big bowl and spoon, pulled a chair to the counter, opened the cupboard and pulled out the heavy flour canister, spilling it on the floor.

He scooped some of the flour into the bowl with his hands, mixed in most of a cup of milk and added some sugar, leaving a floury trail on the floor which by now had a few tracks left by his kitten.

Brandon was covered with flour and getting frustrated. He wanted this to be something very good for Mom and Dad, but it was getting very bad. He didn't know what to do next, whether to put it all into the oven or on the stove and he didn't know how the stove worked! Suddenly he saw his kitten licking from the bowl of mix and reached to push her away, knocking the egg carton to the floor.

Frantically he tried to clean up this monumental mess but slipped on the eggs, getting his pajamas wet and sticky. And just then he saw Dad standing at the door. All he'd wanted to do was something good,

but he'd made a terrible mess. He was sure a scolding was coming, maybe even a spanking. But his father just watched him.

Then, walking through the mess, he picked up his crying son, hugged him and loved him, getting his own pajamas wet and sticky in the process!

That's how God deals with us. We try to do something good in life, but it turns into a mess. Our marriage gets all sticky, or we insult a friend, or we can't stand our job, or our health goes sour. Sometimes we just stand there in tears because we can't think of anything else to do. That's when God picks us up and loves us and forgives us, even though some of our mess gets all over Him. But just because we might mess up, we can't stop trying to "make pancakes" for God or for others. Sooner or later we'll get it right, and then they'll be glad we tried... ☺

The Conveyor Belt of Life

by Pastor Chuck Jones

When I was younger, I worked in a factory with an assembly line. Each part that came along needed an additional part that I attached. It was never ending and relentless, or so it seemed. The assembly line is used in countless ways in manufacturing and distribution.

Another line we all may be familiar with is the conveyor belt at the grocery store check out lane. Its never ending circuit brings the merchandise to the checker, customer after customer.

I've noticed how life is similar to these. There was a time when I was seven years old. Now we have grand children that age. If the Lord

tarries, they too, could have grand children who turn seven years old.

We are born and take our place on the conveyor belt of life and at some point, we will lose our place through death. This simplistic statement does sound fatalistic and one may wonder, "is it worthwhile?"

The getting on and getting off the conveyor are separated by a life lived. It is safe to say that all the wealth, possession, and status one can achieve during this life, can't be taken with us. The treasure we accumulate here, in this life, won't amount to any value for us when we die.

Fact is, that all we are able to save up now, could be taken away from us, lost, or destroyed. It's been said, "If you have your health, you have everything." Actually though, our health is the one thing we will lose before death.

Here is some good news. It is possible to store up treasure in heaven. This treasure, we are told, won't lose value, no one can steal it, nor can you lose it! It isn't subject to identity theft either.

Countless people have invested their lives in this hope. People who are no longer remembered by the living now. But God remembers.

Now you can begin to invest in your heavenly account. You can store up mercy, which is good when facing judgement. We can invest our lives by seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness through Jesus Christ. Which will pay off in life in the age to come.

Our generosity, kindness, and humility all add to our heavenly account. Remember that the meek will inherit the earth.

So, while you find yourself on the conveyor belt of life, put up treasures that will last long after your conveyor trip is finished. ☺