

# THE CRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

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*of the Kingdom of God*

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No. 9

Editorial — What I don't know (Part 2) .....	419
Exhortation — "Crucify Him!", <i>David Caudery</i> .....	423
Exposition — Paul's Letter to the Ephesians:	
(9) Jew and Gentile one in the Lord Jesus, <i>Tom Barling</i> .....	426
Article — The Search for Wisdom, <i>Colin Edwards</i> .....	431
Bible Study — Little Words that Mean a Lot:	
(2) Forgiveness, <i>John C. Bilello</i> .....	434
Music in Worship:	
The Trumpet's "Uncertain Sound", <i>Bob Burr</i> .....	441
"We give Thee, but Thine own", <i>Joan and Ken Curry</i> .....	443
CD Recordings by Sister Julia Baines .....	444
Reflections:	
The Oyster, <i>Ann Crouse</i> .....	445
Calming a Quarrel, <i>George Booker</i> .....	447
Famous Last Words:	
(12) Abraham, <i>Chris Sales</i> .....	448
"Out of her poverty, she put in everything" .....	449
Jesus' Unlikely Conversions:	
(3) The centurion, <i>Wesley Booker</i> .....	450
Letter — Johnson Family Cemetery .....	452
Current Events — Jerusalem Escape Tunnel .....	453
Bible Mission News — Bolivia, Missionaries in the Field,	
Thisisyourbible.com .....	455
News & Notices .....	460
Minute Meditation — Halftime, <i>Robert J. Lloyd</i> .....	465
Coming Events .....	467

# The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

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## *More springs in the garden...*

*This [proverb] is found in so many tongues, that it can hardly be ascribed to one rather than another:*

***“More springs in the garden than the gardener ever sowed.”***

*It is a proverb for many, but most of all for parents and teachers, that they [indulge] not themselves in a false dream of security, as though nothing was at work or growing in the minds of the young under their charge, but what they themselves had sown there; as though there was not another who might very well be sowing his tares beside and among any good seed of their sowing. But this proverb has also its happier side. There may be, there often are, **better** things also in this garden of the heart than ever the earthly gardener set there, seeds of the more immediate sowing of God. In either of these aspects this proverb deserves to be laid to heart.*

R.C. Trench

## Editorial

### What I Don't Know (Part 2)

Last month I discussed some of the things in the Bible that I don't know. This month we shall consider more (continuing with the numbering system started last month).

#### 2. *What will happen tomorrow:*

*"Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1).*

*"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes" (James 4:13,14).*

Far from knowing the day or the hour, the time or the season, when Christ will return [see Editorial, last month]... I don't even know "what will happen tomorrow", even in the most mundane matters — even in those matters with which I am personally concerned. Such is the extent of what I **don't** know.

But the fact that I **don't** know these things (if I will but admit it to myself) teaches me something extraordinarily important. It teaches me to avoid the proud, presumptuous attitudes of the Israelites described by Isaiah. The prophet pictures them calling to one another:

*"Come... let me get wine! Let us drink our fill of beer! And tomorrow will be like today, or even far better" (Isa. 56:12).*

They are the same sort of which the apostle Peter writes, the last-days scoffers who say:

*"Where is the 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation" (2 Pet. 3:4) —*

implying they can count on everything continuing on the same, day after day, and year after year. What folly!

What may I learn from "what I don't know"? I may learn:

- a. to avoid setting dates as though I have some "private line" to God's inner counsel;
- b. to refrain from planning out my life to the last detail, thus leaving room for God to give me guidance and direction (by whatever method He might use);
- c. to hold with a light grasp all material "things", which are temporary and passing away (1 Cor. 7:30,31; 1 John 2:17), and to cling more fiercely to all spiritual things, which even if unseen are eternal (2 Cor. 4:18); and

- d. to value life, each day, as a gift from God, and an irreplaceable opportunity — rather than simply one more day to “build bigger barns” (Luke 12:16-21) in preparation for a “tomorrow” that may never come!

I **do** know something much more profound than exactly what will happen tomorrow, or the day after. I know that — whatever happens — “the Lord’s will” **will** be done:

*“Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that’ ” (James 4:15)!*

I do not know what tomorrow holds, but I do know **Who** holds tomorrow!

I think that’s a fair trade-off.

### **3. How the “seed” planted by the farmer grows in the earth:**

Firstly, there is the natural wonder of the planted seed, and its growth:

*“A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how” (Mark 4:26,27).*

Secondly, since the sowing of seed is the basis of Christ’s parable, neither can I know how the “seed” of God’s word, once planted in human “soil”, grows to produce faith and righteousness, to His honor and glory. Like the farmer, even if we plant the seed and water it diligently, it is not within our power to determine whether it sprouts and produces fruit. No matter who plants or waters, or how they do it, God alone gives the increase as He chooses (1 Cor. 3:6). And he does so in His own time and in His own way.

And, thirdly — such a wonder is the parable of the “seed” in the Bible! — God intends this transformation and growth of the planted seed to give us one more picture. Dimly though we might perceive it, the process describes how the natural body, dead and buried, becomes — in God’s own time — the spiritual body, revived and immortalized!

*“What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body” (1 Cor. 15:36-38).*

How simple it sounds! But still we can scarcely comprehend its meaning.

So, while I do not know how the seed germinates and multiplies, one thing I do know: it is not by my wisdom or effort — nor even by the wisdom of the greatest botanist or geneticist — that it is accomplished. It is only by the power of God.

### **4. What I ought to pray for**

*“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express” (Rom. 8:26).*

First of all, let's have a bit of explanation. Instead of "the Spirit itself" (KJV), most modern versions render "the Spirit *himself*" (the NIV, cited above, as well as the RV, RSV, and NEB). There seems to be no textual reason why the newer rendering should not be allowed. The only problem in this translation would be a presumed support for the personality of the Holy Spirit, and the belief in a three-person 'Trinity'. But if we understand that "the Spirit" may refer to Christ, then the "himself" is perfectly natural.

May Christ be referred to as "the Spirit himself"?

- a. Christ is called "Spirit" in other New Testament passages, such as 1 Corinthians 15:45 ("The last Adam [became] a life-giving spirit"). It is to this verse John Thomas refers when he writes of Christ, who "as the Quickening Spirit, makes intercession for (believers) according to the Divine Will — Rom. 8:26,27" (*Eureka*, vol. 2, p. 356).
- b. That this view was held by at least some of the other pioneer Christadelphians is shown by the first verse of one of Bro. David Brown's hymns (Number 174 in the new book):

*"We come, O God, to bow  
Before Thy throne;  
To pay our solemn vow  
Through Thy dear Son.  
He is our High Priest there  
To incense faithful prayer;  
Hear, gracious Father, hear  
His spirit's groan" —*

which is of course a further reference to Romans 8:26.

- c. In the letters to the seven ecclesias in Asia Minor (e.g., Rev. 2:7,11,17, etc.), Christ refers to himself repeatedly as "the Spirit".
- d. Romans 8:26, in which "the Spirit" intercedes for believers, is parallel to verses 27 and 34, where Christ is undoubtedly the intercessor. The Holy Spirit, as a separate entity, can no more be the intercessor for believers than can the mythical Virgin, "Mary, Mother of God"!
- e. The "sighs of compassion" (Rom. 8:26) are a reflection of Christ's humanity and intense fellow-feeling with us. Related Greek words elsewhere describe such feelings: "Then some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk... Then he spit, and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep *sigh* said to him... 'Be opened' " (Mark 7:32-34). "The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. He *sighed* deeply..." (Mark 8:11,12).

We have good reason, then, to see Jesus Christ as the one who "helps" or "sympathizes with" us in our weaknesses (cp. Heb. 2:18; 4:15; 5:2), as well as our only mediator and intercessor (1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Cor. 8:6; Gal. 3:19,20; Heb. 7:25; 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). So there is good reason also to see him as "the Spirit" in Romans 8:26.

Continuing, then, with Paul's words:

*“We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us.”*

This brings us to the “thing I don’t know”. I don’t (always? ever?) know exactly for what I should pray. For example, should I — in an intense trial — pray for that trial to be removed, or should I pray for greater faith and strength to withstand it? Should I pray for recovery for the sister who is grievously ill, or for her peaceful departure in “sleep”? How can I know for certain which is the will of God? It may be either. In such uncertainties, must I always guess rightly before my God will hear my prayer? Or must I never articulate any particular prayer, for fear it will be against God’s will? Must I always pray, simply and without embellishment, “Dear Father, may all things be according to Your will...”?

Here, I believe, “what I *don’t* know” is offset by “what I *do* know” — that Christ — “the Quickening Spirit” in Dr. Thomas’ words — will himself intercede for me. He will do this with “groans that words cannot express” (NIV), “with sighs too deep for words” (RSV), or perhaps “in sighs of compassion *that I cannot hear.*” My feeble attempts to pray may well be inadequate to express all that I know, or all that I wish, or all that I hope for. But when that is the case, then *he* — *my Savior, my intercessor, my friend* — will, like the priest that he is, take the offering of my prayer, imperfect as it is, and prepare it properly to be placed on his Father’s “altar”... so that it will be an acceptable gift to Him. This I believe.

*“As the priest arranged upon the altar the sacrifices of men, so our Lord rearranges our feeble utterances so that they are in accordance with the will of God — if in faith we pray through him” (Cyril Tennant, **Prayer: Studies in Principle and Practice**, pp. 93,94).*

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*There are yet more things that “I don’t know”... Lord willing, we shall consider them next month.*

*George Booker*

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*A kindergarten teacher was observing her children while they were drawing. She would occasionally walk around to see each child’s work.*

*When she arrived at one little girl who was working quite seriously, she asked what she was drawing.*

*The little girl answered, “I’m drawing a picture of God.”*

*The teacher thought for a moment, and then said,  
“But no one knows exactly what God looks like.”*

*Still working industriously, the little girl didn’t even look up,  
but briskly replied, “They will in a minute.”*

## Exhortation

### “Crucify Him!”

Eight times each year we read of the crucifixion of our Master. Can this story lose its impact for us? The accounts invite our imaginations to start exploring... We ponder how these people who had heard his gracious words, witnessed many remarkable miracles, acknowledged that “never man spake like this man” — how they could have been persuaded to cry, “Crucify Him!” Perhaps most of them had not, but nevertheless they had stood dumb, uncertain, as the envious leaders stirred up the mob leaders to cry, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” But it had to be, and the Almighty, in His foreknowledge, caused the “right people” to be in the “right place” at the “right time.” Mass emotion can be a frightening thing — as the world keeps witnessing.

We can look at these events intellectually, focusing our minds on why it had to happen and what the event accomplished. We can see that Christ’s death, as the climax of the offerings under the Law, had to take the form of a sacrifice. We can also see that the mortality of the Messiah, who was one with us, had to be demonstrated while the clash of wills — his and his Father’s — took place. His obedience to the end completed a sinless mortal life. But are these factors the essential heart of the message of the Cross?

The appreciation of these factors came later. The conversions and conversations recorded in the opening chapters of Acts strongly suggest that the natural emotions that led to the cross were then counterbalanced by heart-felt spiritual emotions. These emotions were manifest in those whom the Lord was drawing to himself, so as to become the first fruits of the ingathering into Christ.

### **Purging the conscience**

This point is wonderfully apparent in the Letter to the Hebrews. In the ninth chapter, after describing the appointments in the tabernacle and the duties of the high priest and what they symbolized, the writer draws a pointed contrast between the offering of Christ and the offering of animals (vv. 1-13). This leads to the writer’s conclusion: that the offering of Christ was to “purge (or cleanse) your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (v. 14). He makes the same point in the next chapter where, after stating that we can enter the spiritual holy of holies, he tells us what that will accomplish! “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” (v. 22).

The record in Acts explains how this happened. For the Jews, the collective and individual memories of the crucifixion itself provoked a supreme and overwhelming emotional reaction. Just as baptism (and what it symbolizes) is the “answer of a good conscience” (1 Pet. 3:21), so a contemplation of the sacrifice of Christ must act upon the emotions as well as the intellect. Indeed, the former should

be the greatest! All too often we are afraid of emotions, but we push them to the back of our thinking at our peril. The cross cannot be appreciated purely in the dimension of intellectual understanding; in fact, this ought to be a secondary factor, following on after the emotions have been engaged.

Consider the text of Acts. The speech of Peter on the day of Pentecost was intensely personal. Look at how many times “you” and “ye” occur. Jesus was “a man attested by God *to you*, by miracles, wonders and signs which God did through Him *in your midst*, as *you yourselves also know... you have taken* by lawless hands...” (2:22,23). Peter culminates his speech in v. 36: “God has made this Jesus, *whom you crucified*, both Lord and Christ.” The result was that “*they were cut to the heart*.” This is what Peter, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, intended — this challenge to their emotions, their consciences. He had gone through the same traumas of mind for the three heart-wrenching days of soul-bitterness after he denied he ever knew his Lord.

### **“First... repent!”**

Notice the response of Peter when they cried, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” He does not respond by saying first, “Be baptized” — but by crying, “Repent!” Meditate on the absolute dimension of repentance they felt, those who had been “cut to the heart” on that day of Pentecost. The overflow of joy and commitment that was experienced in the early weeks and months of the first ecclesia surely gave evidence of the full degree of their repentance. We read, “All who believed were together and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all, as anyone had need. And so [they continued] daily in the temple... with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God...” (Acts 2:44-47).

### **Turning away from iniquities**

Likewise in Acts 3. Peter concludes a straight-from-the-shoulder message about the reality of the death and resurrection of their Messiah by saying, “Repent therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out” (v. 19). He then declares, “To you first, God having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent him to bless you, *in turning away every one of you from your iniquities*” (v. 26). So the purpose of the crucifixion was much more than to create a meaning for their baptism. It not only afforded them the blotting out of their sins, but also and especially provided them the impetus to “turn away” from their former fleshly ways of thinking. The purging of conscience was intended to be permanent.

Is this point too simple and obvious? Do our minds tend to pass over it? Perhaps. We so like to move on, into the meaning and symbolism of our Master’s atoning sacrifice. But is there a point we are missing here? The relevant Scripture texts in Romans, Hebrews, and other letters were written to believers so that they could understand the meaning of all the ways of God more perfectly. They were not written to potential converts for them to digest fully *before* they were ready for baptism.

When Peter was sent to preach to Cornelius, the Holy Spirit fell on the hearers to the astonishment of Peter — this caused him to baptize them. Notice that the



last point Peter was making before the Spirit was manifested, was, “To him all the prophets witness that, through his name, whoever believes in him *will receive remission of sins*” (10:43).

Paul’s discourse at Antioch in Pisidia includes strong emotional appeals. Notice how it concludes (Acts 13:37-41). After stressing the resurrection of Christ, that he saw no corruption, Paul says, “Therefore let it be known to you brethren, that through this man is preached unto you *forgiveness of sins*; and by him everyone is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses.” First and foremost, Paul’s appeal was an appeal for an emotional appreciation to realize how they could become right (justified) before God. Paul’s quote from Habakkuk (Hab. 1:5; Acts 13:41) is obviously appropriate in challenging the emotional rejection of those who despised Paul’s message.

### **Trembling!**

Paul’s tactics with Felix fit into this pattern. As Paul “reasoned about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid (AV, he trembled)” (Acts 24:25). We would like to know more of Paul’s reasoning, but undoubtedly it targeted the emotions of Felix, challenging him to put himself in “the right” before God! He was not capable of facing that challenge! How many of us are? We are not challenged openly or audibly, but we are challenged in our thought processes and meditations! How easy to turn an inner deaf ear to that challenge.

Every time we sit and wait for the emblems to be passed to us, we need to meditate on the nature of the emotions the sacrifice of our Master arouses in us. And having meditated and partaken of the emblems, we remember that Paul wrote, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor. 11:26). This proclaiming, or shewing forth, is an acknowledging to ourselves and our fellow brethren and sisters that we are *remembering*. But what are we remembering? The subsequent actions and attitude of the first Christians in Jerusalem demonstrated what they remembered.

Will our actions and attitudes, after we leave this place, demonstrate what we remember?

*David Caudery (Dandenong, VIC, Australia)*

### **Felix**

*“Felix was a naturally violent and headstrong man, used to exercising power, and getting his own way. If men revolted against his authority, he destroyed them. If the High Priest remonstrated with him, he had him put to death. If he fancied another man’s wife, he took her. But if he wanted to be a Christian, he would have to get down off his high horse and learn to control his passions. ‘Except a man be converted, and become as a little child,’ the founder of Christianity had laid down, ‘he cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven.’ And neither Felix nor anybody else is exempted. There is no place for people on hand-made pedestals in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God” (Len Richardson).*

## Exposition

### Paul's Letter to the Ephesians: (9) Jew and Gentile one in the Lord Jesus

#### **"Circumcision" and "uncircumcision"**

Having already brought out the unique privileges of those who have accepted the Lord Jesus, and having also emphasized the need for good works (in Eph. 2:10), the Apostle addresses the Gentiles among his readers, and reminds them they had been called the uncircumcision by circumcised Israelites (v. 11). He then proceeds in verse 12 to remind converted Gentiles of what their previous position had been, and to this we shall presently come. The whole issue of circumcision had threatened to be divisive as soon as Gentiles accepted the gospel (see Acts 15:1), and we can understand why: it was instituted by God, who required Abraham to submit to circumcision himself, and who also required circumcision to be a continuing practice for subsequent generations (see Gen. 17:9-14). After the birth of the Lord, his mother Mary faithfully saw that he was circumcised the eighth day (Luke 2:21, see also Gal. 4:4).

But long before, it had been recognized that circumcision in itself, despite all the privileges by which it could be attended, was potentially meaningless. Moses stressed this in the wilderness: he called upon the people to circumcise the foreskin of the heart and no longer to be rebellious. This same call was later taken up by Jeremiah (in 4:4) and by Paul in Romans 2:29. These reflections and passages were considered at an earlier stage in our studies (see *Tidings*, July, 2007, pp. 277,278).

One might well ask with Paul: what advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Paul answers his own question: "much in every way!" First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God (see Rom. 3:1,2, NIV). There could surely be no more resounding endorsement of the unique value of the Old Testament than this.

Paul then turns to what is tantamount to boasting on the part of so many Jews: the latter knew they are members of a people who practice circumcision by divine appointment (as we have brought out above), and that was why their descent from Abraham became too often a subject of pride on their part and of disdain for the uncircumcised Gentile. Yet, as Paul declares, it was a practice carried out by human hands (v. 11). At the same time, in verse 12, the Apostle goes on to spell out the position of the Gentiles.

Understandably, the subject of circumcision occurs also in Colossians, because the heresy in the Lycus valley had a Jewish origin. There Paul boldly affirms the baptized believers had been "circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:11), while in Philippians the Apostle uses withering terms to describe the

advocates of the circumcision made with hands: “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision” (Phil. 3:2).

We recall “dogs” was an expression which orthodox Jews could employ about Gentiles (see Matt. 15:26, where the Lord uses the word ironically). Paul’s “con-cision” can carry the sense of “mutilation”. Having thus suitably stressed the vanity of pride merely in being circumcised, but also emphasizing what Gentiles had been deprived of by not being circumcised, Paul then spells out in detail the position of the Gentile before he had embraced the hope of life in the Lord Jesus. First, as we would expect, they had been separate from Christ, and this is a reminder from the Apostle of what it had meant for him before the Lord made his dramatic revelation on the Damascus road. Then, the Apostle declares the uncircumcised Gentiles had been “alienated from the commonwealth of Israel” (“excluded from citizenship in Israel”: NIV), by which declaration the unique status of Israel is reaffirmed.

We recall in this connection how the Lord Jesus, in a truly remarkable declaration to the Samaritan woman, affirmed that Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim in Samaria could no longer compete in claims that they were the places where God was to be worshipped. Rather, Jesus said, true worshippers, everywhere, would worship the Father “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23). At the same time, the Lord was careful to declare, “salvation is from the Jews” (v. 22). It is thus that the Lord and his apostle are united in their teaching.

### **Strangers from the covenants of promise**

Because they had not been circumcised Israelites, the Gentiles had known nothing about the “covenants of promise”, and as such they had been in a hopeless position, without hope and without God in their lives. The reference to the covenants is highly significant. There is a first clue of their importance in the divine purpose in the opening verse of the New Testament: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt. 1:1). Indeed, we are justified in affirming it is impossible to understand God’s purpose in the Lord if we are ignorant of the Old Testament covenants.

There is independent witness to this in the earliest apostolic teaching in the Book of Acts. David figures prominently in Acts 2, for there we find a first mention of him in verse 25, in connection with the physical resurrection of the Lord. Then, in verse 30, Peter asserts that God had sworn by an oath to David that one of his descendants would occupy his throne (see 2 Samuel 23:5, where the expression “everlasting covenant” occurs; see also 2 Samuel 7:12-16).

As for Abraham, he figures in Acts 3 and there is a precise mention of the covenant God made with him. To his audience the apostle declares: “Ye are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the families be blessed” (v. 25). The further comment by Peter is enlightening: “Unto you first God, having raised up his Servant, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.”

This interpretation of the nature of the blessing to be bestowed upon Abraham and his posterity is significant in the highest degree: the covenant is universal in its scope and relates not to material blessings but to the forgiveness of sins. Could there possibly be a more explicit anticipation of the saving work of the Lord Jesus? That this is not confined to Israelites, but to all who share the faith of Abraham, is a fundamental New Testament message. John the Baptist denounces roundly any pride in physical descent from Abraham (Matt. 3:9). Likewise, the Lord, full of admiration for the centurion's faith, effectively declares that those who share his faith will be with the Lord in his kingdom (Matt. 8:10,11). This pronouncement is confirmed by Paul in the chapter on faith (see Rom. 4).

It is thus that so often we can discern the unity of God's Word. A sustained study of the Scriptures serves to deepen and confirm our conviction in their truth. When the Gentiles to whom Paul is specifically addressing himself in Ephesians 2:12 became increasingly familiar with apostolic teaching, they would appreciate the wonder of the new world to which they were being introduced.

### **Brought near in the blood of Christ**

Paul proceeds to inform his Gentile readers that, before they had been baptized into the saving Name of the Lord, they had been "far off" (v. 13), but now they have been brought near "in the blood of Christ". Thus Paul stresses the universal character of the cross, in reconciling the world to God (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19). The expression "far off" occurs in Isaiah 57:19; and the same expression recurs in Ephesians 2:17. We hope to give it more extended treatment when we come to that passage.

### **"Our peace"**

When the Apostle, following the mention of the blood of Christ, declares the Lord to be "our peace", he is again evoking the passage in Isaiah 57: "I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him that is far off and to him that is near" (v. 19). While peace can be a situation in which there is no war, what Paul here is thinking of is the removal of the estrangement between God and mankind, an estrangement that arose because of human transgressions. This applied with full force to the Israelites, for interestingly we read in Isaiah 59:2: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." It is the same prophet who twice declares, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 48:22; 57:21).

The one who is called "Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6) is the same one of whom it was prophesied that "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). We encounter here a special use of the term "peace": it speaks of the alienation between God and mankind through human sin and its removal in the person of our Lord, both by his blameless life and his eventual submission to the cross. Thus the unity of mankind with their God has been brought about by God, acting through His Son. There is a recurring expression in John's Gospel: "lifted up" (see 3:14,15; 8:28) and then in 12:32,33: "And I, if I be lifted up from

the earth, will draw all men unto myself.' But this he said signifying by what manner of death he should die." This latter momentous declaration was made in the presence of Greeks who had sought to be introduced to him (vv. 20,21). It was by this chain of passages that the Lord throws a flood of light upon the strange episode in Numbers 21:9. There the Hebrew word for "standard" (RV) is "nes", and it recurs in Isaiah 11:12: "And he shall set up an ensign ('nes') for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel..." That standard or ensign was the Lord Jesus, and he understood perfectly the significance of that strange episode in the wilderness and its relevance to his own work of redemption.

### **The dividing wall of hostility**

When Paul wrote his Ephesian letter, the Temple and its associated ceremonies had been superseded. However, Herod's imposing architectural achievement was still commanding the wonder of Jew and Gentile. There was a highly visible sign of the distinction between Jew and Gentile, the so-called wall of separation (RV), "the dividing wall of hostility" (NIV) (see 2:14). Jack Finegan has much useful information concerning the Temple of this period, and he draws on Josephus for some of his information: "Proceeding... toward the second court of the Temple, one found it surrounded by a stone balustrade three cubits [about 4 and a half feet] high and of exquisite workmanship; in this at regular intervals stood slabs giving warning, some in Greek, others in Latin characters, of the law of purification, to wit, that no foreigner was permitted to enter the holy place, for so the second enclosure of the Temple was called".<sup>1</sup> Finegan then recounts how Clermont-Ganneau found an inscription in 1871 testifying to the truth of Josephus' description. It is now in a museum in Istanbul and, according to Finegan, part of a similar inscription has been subsequently discovered.

Paul was very familiar with the barrier between Jew and Gentile; apart from the time he spent at the feet of Gamaliel, he had subsequently spent time in the Jewish capital. It was the unfounded suspicion that Paul had taken Trophimus beyond the barrier which led to the riot in Jerusalem, and the whole train of events which led eventually to his confinement in Rome, and the writing of the Ephesian letter (see Acts, especially 21:27-29).

When we reflect on the fact that Ephesians was written in the early 60s AD, and Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed in AD 70, history had fully vindicated Paul. Indeed, by the end of the century, the great prophecy uttered by our Lord shortly before his death had become a historical reality (see especially Matt. 21:43). One wonders how the Judaizing party in Colosse and elsewhere reacted to the momentous events that marked the time covered by Acts and later during the first century.

### **Abolishing in his flesh the law**

We pass on to the consideration of verse 15 (in Eph. 2), where the Apostle enlarges on the teaching of verse 14: the distinction between Jews and Gentile, enshrined in the ordinance of circumcision and the practice of the Law, had been abolished by the Lord "in his flesh". This reminds us of the real humanity of our Lord (cf.

Heb. 2:14), where — while in a nature identical with ours — he had encountered sin and vanquished it. Thus he had also triumphed over the ordinances which, as Paul himself testifies, had served to exhibit human sinfulness (see Rom. 7:13). It was in this way, by triumphing over the very commandments separating Jews and Gentile, that he removed the distinction, as we have already seen, and so created “one new man”. We must not forget that these same vital truths figure in a crucial chapter (see Col. 2:13,14). In the Lord everything is “*new*” (a word which, if explored, would occupy much space).

As we work through Ephesians, and also look at Colossians, we can perceive how the situation of the Judaizers is exposed in all its weakness. When the two letters were read out to the disciples assembled in the home of Philemon (see Phm. 2 and Col. 4:16), we can only hope they had the humility and the grace to acknowledge their errors. As already mentioned, historical events were to undermine their case.

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**Note:**

1. See Jack Finegan, *Light from the Ancient Past (The Archaeological Background of the Hebrew-Christian Religion)*, Princeton University Press, 1954, pp. 246,247). Understandably, all modern commentators mention the discovery of the inscription so hostile to Gentiles. Armitage Robinson, in the commentary already quoted in this series, has a long passage on the discovery (see pp. 59,60). He informs us it was made in 1871 when Clermont Ganneau (sic) was acting for the Palestine Exploration Fund. He quotes this particular inscription which is in Greek characters: “NO MAN OF ANOTHER NATION TO ENTER WITHIN THE FENCE AND ENCLOSURE ROUND THE TEMPLE. AND WHOEVER IS CAUGHT WILL HAVE HIMSELF TO BLAME THAT HIS DEATH ENSUES.”

*“I advise you, in whatever you read, and most of all in reading the Bible, to remember that it is for the purpose of making you wiser and more virtuous. I have myself, for many years, made it a practice to read through the Bible once every year. I have always endeavored to read it with the same spirit and temper of mind, which I now recommend to you: that is, with the intention and desire that it may contribute to my advancement in wisdom and virtue. My desire is indeed very imperfectly successful; for, like you, and like the Apostle Paul, ‘I find a law in my nature’ to be imperfect, so I know that it is my duty to aim at perfection; and feeling and deploring my own frailties, I can only pray Almighty God, for the aid of His Spirit to strengthen my good desires, and to subdue my propensities to evil; for it is from Him that every good and every perfect gift descends. My custom is to read four or five chapters every morning, immediately after rising from my bed. It employs about an hour of my time, and seems to me the most suitable manner of beginning the day” (John Quincy Adams, sixth President of the United States, **Letters to My Son**).*

*[Elsewhere it is recorded that President Adams read the Bible primarily in the original Hebrew and Greek.]*

## Article

### The Search for Wisdom

Mining is an ancient art. It requires knowledge, skill, the necessary equipment and the zeal to seek and to find. It is labour-intensive, it is heavy industry, and it is a work for strong hands and good muscles. However, it also requires a keen brain, a sharp eye and a knowledge of geology to be successful. Mining is not for the fainthearted, nor for the work-shy. It is for men who are prepared to risk all in the pursuit of the ultimate goal. Searching for wisdom is like searching for silver. Both objects are difficult to find but worth the effort.

The search for wisdom is a lifelong activity, the component parts of which occupy a large part of the teaching of the book of Proverbs. Some of these are listed in the long conditional sentence which forms the first part of Proverbs 2. The sentence begins with the phrase: "My son, if..." and ends with: "then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." In other words, if you do 'x and y' then 'z' will follow. We are told elsewhere that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; therefore, if we would seek to find wisdom then we need to follow the instructions given to us. The instructions are as follows:

To receive (the Word of God):

1. incline your ear,
2. apply your heart,
3. cry after it,
4. lift up your voice,
5. seek for it, and
6. search for it (Prov. 2:2-4).

The first four instructions have to do with the response of the senses. They describe the action of the mind and the heart in regard to the things of God:

- a. to receive the Word of God,
- b. to hide it within the mind by learning its words, phrases and messages,
- c. to apply the ear with concentration in order to apply the heart to the things of God, and finally
- d. to cry and lift up the voice in prayer and praise.

The last two items on the list are of a different order, for they are linked to the work of mining. The search for wisdom is like searching for silver, like going on a "mining expedition".

While there are very few references in the Scriptures to mining, one significant passage is contained in the Book of Job:

*"Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold which they refine. Iron is taken out of the earth, and copper is smelted from the ore. Men put an end to darkness and search out to the farthest bound the ore in gloom and deep darkness. They open shafts in a valley away from where men live... As for*

*the earth, out of it comes bread; but underneath it is turned up as by fire. Its stones are the place of sapphires and it has the dust of gold... Man puts his hand to the flinty rock, and overturns mountains by the roots. He cuts out channels in the rocks, and his eye sees every precious thing. He binds up the streams so that they do not trickle, and the thing that is hid he brings forth to light” (Job 28:1-11, RSV).*

We have in this passage a detailed description of mining. However, it is interesting to note that the process of mining is compared, even in Job, to the process of searching for wisdom:

*“Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold” (vv. 12-17).*

Wisdom is even more difficult to search out than silver; its value, consequently, is even greater.

The search for wisdom is like a “mining expedition”, but for far greater riches, and with far greater difficulties and far greater cost. It is therefore important that we know what wisdom is. Like the miner, it is imperative that we learn how to recognize the precious metals, or at least, the characteristics of the ore-bearing rock. Or, to change the figure, we need to be able to recognize the characteristics which demonstrate wisdom.

What is wisdom? It cannot be easily defined; it is multi-faceted, discerned in different ways by different people. However, there are certain features which, once described, can be easily identified by all of us.

Wisdom is essentially practical, seen in the workshop rather than the study, seen in others but rarely in oneself. Wisdom is demonstrated by contact with other people rather than in isolation. Wisdom is the product of instruction. It is an awareness of the lessons taught in the school of life and a willingness to learn from them. Wisdom is learned by looking at life and seeking to modify one’s own life accordingly.

Wisdom is insight — the ability to discern between good and evil. It is also an awareness of the consequences of particular actions. It is relatively easy to perceive the difference between good and evil, but it is much more difficult to think ahead regarding the possible outcomes of different courses of action.

Wisdom is wise behaviour — shrewdness and good judgment in the face of foolishness. When all others are committed to a course of action which is foolhardy, the wise person maintains his composure, his judgment, and his principles.

Wisdom is understanding — the ability to decide what is important and what is unimportant. It is distinguishing between what is central and what is peripheral.



Our beliefs are important, and what we say and do is important. But what society — our employers, politicians, and the like — deem to be important is often unimportant. Wisdom perceives the difference between these things and seeks to ensure that a true perspective is maintained.

Wisdom is 'knowing the ways of God'. By learning about God, His thoughts and actions, we learn to adopt a different response. We learn to be wise by fearing His Name, not in the sense of being frightened, but by learning to respect the guidance in His Word.

How can we find wisdom? How can we search more effectively to find that which is more valuable and elusive than silver?

Look to the Master, to the Lord Jesus Christ, he who was the personification of Wisdom. Listen to his words, think about his responses, watch his actions, and try to follow in his footsteps. It was predicted of him that: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding... and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears" (Isa. 11:2,3).

These characteristics enable one, on the one hand, to quickly discern the ways of God and, on the other, to respond slowly to what is seen and heard about our fellow men and women. The search for wisdom requires:

1. more listening and less talking,
2. more thoughtful consideration for others, and less carping criticism,
3. more thankful praise of each other, and less self-congratulation.

In other words, wisdom is the motivation of the spiritual life, the driving force for the person who would be like his Master.

Just as the miner requires knowledge and skill, the necessary equipment and — above all — a preparedness to risk all in the search for silver and gold, so does the disciple in the search for wisdom. The total commitment, the absolute resolution, the utter preoccupation with one is a parable of the other.

No wonder that the book of Proverbs places such stress on wisdom:

*"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom" (Prov. 4:7).*

*Colin Edwards (Newbury, UK)*

***"How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver!" (Prov. 16:16).***

*"Make no mistake: each one faces this choice. It would be tragic if this rather simple proverb were to be recited at the judgment seat, and we were informed that we chose gold rather than wisdom. How would you respond in your defense? Do you think he would be sympathetic if you 'explained' how it all got too complicated and involved, and that it just didn't quite work out as planned? He might well say you despised his advice. He might well say his way was too simple for you. He might well say, 'Depart from me; I never knew you!' " (Barry Bowen).*

# Bible Study

## Little Words that Mean a Lot (2) Forgiveness

*“For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee” (Psa. 86:5).*

Our thoughts for this particular essay will focus on the word **forgiveness**. When our Lord Jesus Christ taught us how to pray, the principle of *forgiveness* was the centerpiece of his teaching. Notice how the prayer covers all the main Biblical principles, from:

- (a) honoring the Lord our God in its opening words (echoing the greatness of His being, spoken of many times in the Old Testament: Exod. 20:1-7; Psa. 8:1,9; 36:7; 148:13; 150:2; and many others), to
- (b) praying for His kingdom to come (e.g., Rev. 22:20), to
- (c) asking Him to meet our simplest needs (daily bread — not steak!), to
- (d) keeping us from sin (e.g., 1 Cor. 10:13), to
- (e) imploring Him for forgiveness, *as we forgive others*.

We cannot help but notice that Jesus is instructing us that his *forgiveness* towards us is “conditional”, in the sense that it is entirely dependent on our willingness to grant *forgiveness* to others. With all the depth of meaning condensed into the Lord’s Prayer, it is instructive that the only point that Jesus chooses to expand upon is the one on *forgiveness*.

*“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:14,15, NKJV).*

It is obvious that this is a first principle because, if the Lord God does not forgive our trespasses, we surely will not be in the kingdom. We will be cast aside at the Judgment Seat, and the same quality of mercy that we offered to those who sinned against us will be poured out upon us.

There is a very strong emphasis on *forgiveness* in the teachings of our Messiah. Yet in my life experience it has been one of the hardest lessons for me to learn personally. My observation convinces me that *forgiveness* is also one of the most difficult virtues for others to practice when they feel sinned against. The disciples also had a hard time accepting the principle of *forgiveness*; this led Peter to ask the question:

*“Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” (Matt. 18:21).*

There is an apparent justification for Peter trying to limit *forgiveness* to “seven times”. Under Jewish custom, in the first century, the number seven stood for completeness (i.e., the seven days of creation); hence forgiving seven times seemed

a reasonable way to deal with a sinner. We shouldn't be critical of the disciple's expectation that seven was a perfectly respectable number of times to offer *forgiveness*, because forgiving even once is an extremely difficult task for most of us to accomplish. Before examining the response of the Lord Jesus Christ to Peter's query, it would pay for us to look further at Peter's cultural environment.

### **Jewish "forgiveness"**

It would be grossly unfair to assume that the Jews were less forgiving than others, and that Peter was looking for a way out — so as to limit the quality and quantity of his *forgiveness* (some Christian commentators have insinuated this). Nothing could be further from the truth, because *forgiveness* was, and is, hallowed as an extremely important first principle for faithful Jews. The Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, is the most sacred holiday in the Jewish calendar. Even if a Jew doesn't feel much like going to synagogue on any other day of the year, one might expect to find him or her there on this most holy day. To realize how important Yom Kippur is to contemporary Jews, and exactly what it means to their religion, I quote from a recent source:

*"The holiday [i.e., Yom Kippur] is important because it is about asking for forgiveness from those you have wronged in the past year. The Jewish new year Rosh Hashanah... marks the beginning of the Days of Awe. Shifron added that during this time forgiveness should be asked from the people you've wronged in the past."*<sup>1</sup>

First century Jews were also strongly influenced by the teachings of the famous Rabbi Hillel who was a partial contemporary of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> One of his most often repeated teachings reflects concern not only for one's own well being, but also for the welfare of others:

*"If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?"*

A modern derivative on Hillel's philosophy has specifically tied this to *forgiveness*:

*"It also helps me to put the issue of forgiveness in the framework so many have borrowed from Hillel: 'If I am not going to forgive, who will?' (Not God.) I can't necessarily wait for the other person's apology. If I am only for myself — focusing solely on my own resentments, and not on the needs of my family or colleagues or community — what am I? And if not now, when will I be ready? When will enough time have passed for necessary scar tissue to have formed, but not too much so that the scar is too impenetrable?"*<sup>3</sup>

Hence to claim that *forgiveness* is a principle owned only by Christians is a misconception. Certainly the Apostle Peter must have been taught the virtues of *forgiveness* in his upbringing.

### **Roman "forgiveness"**

The Romans on the other hand had little use for the concept of *forgiveness*. Preserving honor and wreaking vengeance for perceived sins against one's person

were the rule. It is no accident that the English word “vendetta,” for vengeance, is carried over from the Italian — who had adopted it from the Latin *vindicta*.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, many people still follow “vendetta” rather than *forgiveness* when they have been wronged. There is an old Sicilian<sup>5</sup> folk saying that goes something like this: “*When you set out on vendetta dig two graves!*” The implication being that you will probably also need one for yourself. Indeed this is often the consequence of our unwillingness to offer *forgiveness*; it not only harms others, but it can also be self-destructive. A person who harbors revenge is eaten up inside, and his life becomes bitter. He doesn’t know how to let go and move on with his own life. In the end the person who has wronged him has won!

### Modern “forgiveness”

Many of the ills that cause conflict in our world today come from the thirst for revenge rather than *forgiveness* — such tragedies as the bitter Israeli/Arab conflict, ongoing world terrorism, the atrocities in the Balkan wars, and many others. These stem from wanting an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, rather than the loving *forgiveness* embodied in the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ:

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also...” (Matt. 5:38-42, NKJV).*

One of the few positive examples of literally obeying this teaching of our Master under the most trying circumstances was the *forgiveness* offered recently by the Amish community. After the shocking slayings of the young girls at the Nickels Mines, Pennsylvania, one-room schoolhouse on October 2, 2006, ABC.com reported: “Amish Say They ‘Forgive’ School Shooter”. The story went on to say:

*“It didn’t take long for us to learn that the Amish families most affected by this tragedy have responded in a way that might seem foreign to most of us: They talk about Monday’s school shooting only in terms of forgiveness.”*

I wonder how many of us would react this way if we were faced with comparable circumstances.

### “How many times?”

We return to Peter’s question. In answer, Jesus, as he so often taught in the Gospel message, takes a principle of the Law of Moses and expands it so that the spirit is now one that is completely reflective of the character of the LORD God. God’s mercy is without limit; likewise, seventy times seven suggests the uncountable number of times that we are expected to forgive. Surely we do not want God to forgive only seven of our trespasses! If that were the case we are lost and our life has been in vain. The emphasis in Jesus’ teaching is completely on mercy not justice: “*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy*” (Matt. 5:7).

The beatitudes have nothing to say about justice, although I sometimes think that we interpret this passage as meaning: “*Blessed are those who offer justice, for they shall obtain justice.*” In the KJV Bible the word “justice” is completely absent from the New Testament text (it appears 28 times in the Old Testament). We should be

extremely thankful that the Lord God offers us mercy, not justice, as is evident from the well-known passage in Romans 6:23:

*“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

We cannot justly earn eternal life; it can only be obtained as a wonderful gift, by the mercy and grace of our Lord.

### **Forgiveness without repentance?**

Nevertheless, one might recoil at the idea of offering *forgiveness* without repentance. As if to say: ‘Doesn’t Isaiah teach that the wicked must forsake his way and return... before the LORD can have mercy (Isa. 55:7)?’ Or, ‘Only those who are rebuked and who repent may be forgiven (Luke 17:3,4).’

Certainly for *forgiveness* to profit the sinner, there must be true repentance. But *forgiveness* can benefit the wronged person even if the sinner hasn’t repented (cp. Matt. 5:38-48; John 8:1-11).<sup>6</sup>

The very act of offering our *forgiveness* may turn that sinner around. In the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessing is upon the person being merciful — whether or not the person receiving mercy appreciates it. He will have to answer to God for his sins, of course: “Vengeance is mine, saith the LORD!” But we don’t have to demand it ourselves before we offer forgiveness.

The greatest example of this offer of unmerited *forgiveness* is that given by our Lord Jesus Christ as he was dying on the cross:

*“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34, NKJV).*

What had the Jews, who had falsely accused him, or the Roman authorities, who condemned him for expediency, done to deserve his *forgiveness*? Jesus was content to leave it in the Father’s hands — and so should we.

The parable of the “Wicked Servant” offers us further insight into the weakness of human nature in dealing with *forgiveness* (Matt. 18:23-35). In this parable the king forgives his servant a huge debt equivalent today to billions of dollars.<sup>7</sup> The servant throws himself completely at the mercy of his king, and with great compassion the king releases him of all debt. Unfortunately, immediately the servant is faced with similar difficulty with one of his own colleagues who owed him an extremely trivial sum.<sup>8</sup> The comparison in the relative debt is staggering, as it was meant to be. The Lord Jesus Christ is drawing an exact analogy: we are the “wicked servant”, and our debt of sins is monumental compared to the sin any individual can commit against us. However, human nature is very deceitful; just like the wicked servant we can be blind to our own failings yet see very clearly the mote in the other fellow’s eye (Matt. 7:1-5).

### **‘What sin?’**

This failure fully to perceive our own sins is evident even in a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam. 13:14).

We are no doubt familiar with the story of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11; 12). King David was carried away with lust and committed adultery. He then (mis)used his power as ruler of Israel to betray the trust of his loyal servant Uriah. David's subterfuge was responsible for the death of Uriah. He was as guilty of murder as if he had struck the fatal blow himself. Furthermore, there is no Scriptural evidence that David showed any remorse; he seemed perfectly content to cover up his crimes *until* Nathan confronted him. I have no doubt that David would be out of fellowship in our ecclesial world today. Would we reach out to such a person, as God did through the prophet Nathan? Or would we simply sit back and say: *'When that brother or sister is ready, of a free will, to acknowledge his or her crimes, and repent, then we will think about it?'*

King David was blind to the horrible sins he had committed in his lust for Bathsheba. He had to be forced to confront his corrupt acts through a parable told him by the prophet Nathan. David's indignation at the act of a rich man robbing a poor man is powerfully voiced:

*"So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, 'As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die!' "* (2 Sam. 12:5, NKJV).

He was apparently oblivious to the fact that he was, in effect, passing sentence upon himself. One can only wonder what the expression must have been on David's face when the prophet made the pronouncement:

*"Then Nathan said to David, 'You are the man!' "* (v. 7).

To David's everlasting credit he doesn't do what we have so often seen in public affairs in our own age, i.e., attempt to equivocate or — worse yet — cover up. The cover-up has often turned out to be more horrendous than the original crime.

### **The steps of forgiveness**

In Psalm 51 we gain a powerful insight into the mind of David in reaction to Nathan's indictment. This psalm is a primer in how we can recover from our sins. Notice the progression of David's thoughts.

- a. He pleads for mercy, not justice, knowing that he is entirely unworthy of the latter (v. 1).
- b. He acknowledges his sin (v. 3).
- c. He realizes that ultimately all sin is not only against others, but an affront to the Lord God (v. 4).
- d. He puts aside pride and pleads for God's *forgiveness*, acknowledging the weakness of human flesh (vv. 5-8).
- e. He asks God not only to forgive his sins, but also to forget them, i.e., *'blot out all mine iniquities'*.

This is a lesson we can all take to heart. We have not truly forgiven until we can also forget any abuse we have taken. We are promised that this is exactly what God will do:

*“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19, NKJV).*

It would be incongruous indeed if in the kingdom age our sins were forgiven yet we were to be constantly reminded what they were. Likewise, we have never truly forgiven someone until we completely put the pain of the sin out of our thoughts and move on with our lives.

The final verses of Psalm 51 plead for a renewed spirit, and teach us exactly what frame of mind we need in order to be forgiven by both man and God:

*“Renew a right spirit within me... The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart — These, O God, You will not despise” (vv. 10,17, NKJV).*

We all sin, but we should not despair. The Scriptures teach us that, with only one exception, all sin can be forgiven. The only exception, of course, is *blasphemy against the Holy Spirit* (Matt. 12:31). In that case a person has denied the authority of God, and under such circumstances one cannot ask for the power of *forgiveness* while at the same time refusing to believe in the omnipotence of the LORD.

### **The key points**

To summarize the key points that we have learned about *forgiveness*:

1. It is a first principle (Matt. 6:14,15).
2. It is conditional — we will only receive as much we give (Matt. 6:12).
3. It can be given irrespective of any repentance by the party offending us (Luke 23:34).
4. It must be offered even under the most trying circumstances (Matt. 5:38-42).
5. It will only benefit the one committing the sin if accompanied by repentance (Psa. 51).
6. It is possible to forgive all sins except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:31).

*“But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth (Psa. 86:15, NKJV).”*

*John C. Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI)*

### **Notes:**

1. <http://www.idsnews.com/news/story.aspx?id=37968>
2. The actual dates of Rabbi Hillel's birth and death are somewhat obscure, and various sources are not in agreement. The best estimate I have found is that he probably passed away in 10 AD, when Jesus was a young teenager.
3. S. Cohen, “Forgiveness — The Challenges of Living with Ambivalence”, Autumn 2002 issue of the *JRF Quarterly Reconstructionism Today*.
4. *Compact Oxford Dictionary of Everyday English*.
5. Some sources claim that this is a Chinese folk saying, but my Italian grandmother would have disagreed. The Chinese also claim to have invented spaghetti!
6. The woman is caught in the act of adultery (what about her male companion?). It is clear that

Jesus forgives her and counts on this generosity turning her life around. There is no evidence in this story of the woman first repenting before Jesus took her side of the case.

7. We are not told whether this was a gold or silver talent, in either case the sum was huge. From WEB notes: "A talent is a weight of about 34 kilograms or 75 pounds." As of May 22, 2007, gold was trading at \$659 per oz. and silver at \$13.10 per oz. This would place the current value of 10,000 talents at almost \$8 billion for gold and approximate \$157 million for silver. Note: Other sources give the weight of a talent from 60 to 90 pounds.
8. "Authorized Version 'penny', Matt.18:28; 20:2,9,13, a Roman silver coin... worth about 16 cents" (*Peloubet's Bible Dictionary, The John C. Winston Co., Philadelphia, PA, 1947 ed., p. 146*). Using Peloubet's valuation the servant owed about \$16. Values from 14 cents to \$20 have been placed on this coin from other sources. The important point is that the amount was trivial compared to 10,000 talents.

### ***"They need praying for!"***

*In **Christianity Today**, psychiatrist Robert Coles told an amazing story of a girl who had learned to pray for those who were hostile to her. Coles was in New Orleans in 1960 when a federal judge ruled that the city schools must be integrated. A six-year-old girl, Ruby Bridges, was the only black child to attend the William T. Frantz School. Every day for weeks as she entered and left the building, a mob would be standing outside to scream at her and threaten her. They shook their fists, shouted obscenities, and threatened to kill her. One day her teacher saw her lips moving as she walked through the crowd, flanked by burly federal marshals.*

*When the teacher told Coles about it, he asked Ruby if she was talking to the people. "I wasn't talking to them," she replied. "I was just saying a prayer for them."*

*Coles asked her, "Why do you do that?"*

*"Because they need praying for," came her reply.*

\* \* \* \* \*

*"Forgiveness is unlocking the door to set someone free and realizing you were the prisoner!" (Max Lucado).*

\* \* \* \* \*

*"Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hate. It is a power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness" (William Arthur Ward).*

\* \* \* \* \*

*"My salvation will be complete only when I cease to resent God's forgiveness of those who have hurt me" (John Leax).*

\* \* \* \* \*

*"Never does the human soul appear so strong as when it forgoes revenge, and dares forgive an injury" (Edwin Chapin).*



## Music in Worship

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### The Trumpet's "Uncertain Sound"

*"If the trumpet give an uncertain sound,  
who shall prepare himself for the battle?"  
(1 Corinthians 14:8)*

The trumpet has a very long history, having been used in ancient Egypt, the Near East, and Greece. The trumpet used by Israel at the time of Moses (and in other nearby countries) was used as a signaling device sounding only one or two tones. During this period the trumpet's few tones were used for signaling, announcing, commanding, and military purposes. Today a trumpet can be sounded to give recognizably different signals, and is also used for musical purposes.<sup>1</sup>

When Israel was in the wilderness, silver trumpets were used for signaling the people to prepare for certain specific actions. Depending on the occasion the calls produced were different. For example, both trumpets were blown when all the assembly was called together and "...for the journeying of the camps" (Num. 10:3-7). But different sounds were produced for each occasion. When Israel was to break camp, the trumpet produced a penetrating sound, called "an alarm" in the King James Version [*'a loud noise': Strong's*] that summoned camps from the east or west to set out.

*"When you blow an alarm, the camps that are on the east side shall set out. And when you blow an alarm the second time, the camps that are on the south side shall set out. An alarm is to be blown whenever they are to set out. But when the assembly is to be gathered together, you shall blow a long blast, but you shall not sound an alarm" (Num. 10:5-7).*

Only one trumpet was blown to call Israel's tribal leaders together.

*"But if they blow only one (trumpet) then the chiefs, the heads of the tribes of Israel, shall gather themselves to you (Moses)" (Num 10:4).*

Similarly the trumpet was used to issue both a call to arms (1 Sam. 13:3) and to stop fighting.

*"So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more" (2 Sam 2:28).*

It was essential to know, from the sound, what message was intended.

In the New Testament, in the early church, the Holy Spirit was actively at work through a variety of supernatural gifts bestowed on individuals.

*“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal” (1 Cor. 12:4-7).*

Unfortunately, in Corinth, what should have been a blessing had become a source of rivalry, discord and disordered meetings (1 Cor. 14:33,40).

One of the most coveted of these gifts was that of “tongues”. Impressive as it was, however, it was without meaning to the speaker:

*“For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful” (1 Cor. 14:14).*

Speaking in tongues was also without understanding to the hearers:

*“For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries” (1 Cor. 14:2).*

However, if the tongue could be interpreted, then it was of benefit:

*“Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret... If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church: and let him speak to himself and to God” (1 Cor. 14:13,27,28).*

It was as meaningless as listening to someone whose language we haven’t learned or as unrecognizable as the efforts of an incompetent player on lute or flute or military trumpet:

*“Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?” (1 Cor. 14:6,7).*

Paul stressed the need to concentrate on what benefited the community:

*“The one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation... When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up” (1 Cor. 14:3,26, ESV).*

Words are for meaningful and, if possible, helpful communication. Sounds without meaning are jangle or gibberish. Is it always our aim to be understood? If we are teaching, preaching or talking in private, are our words and illustrations understandable to our hearers? Do we consider their needs and their existing knowledge and interests? Is our message relevant, comprehensible and helpful?

For, as Paul reminds us, “If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (1 Cor. 14:8).

Bob Burr  
(Barnt Green, Birmingham, UK)

**Note:**

1. *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, Editor, Don Randel, 1986, p. 880.

*“Worship must be intelligible. The great things are essentially the simple things; the noblest language is essentially the simplest language. In the end only what satisfies my mind can comfort my heart, and only what my mind can grasp can bring strength to my life” (William Barclay).*

## **“We give Thee but Thine own”**

William Walsham How wrote the words for the hymn “We give Thee but Thine own”, which is Hymn 175 in the 2002 Christadelphian hymnbook. William How was born in England in 1823 and died in 1897. At the time of the Industrial Revolution a substantial number of people left rural areas in England and moved to the cities in order to obtain employment in factories and dockyards. Many of these people endured long work hours with little remuneration. Child labor, poverty and difficult living conditions were common issues for working-class people in London in the mid-nineteenth century. William How took an active interest in assisting many of the poor people with whom he came in contact.

William How was prompted to write the words of Hymn 175 by David’s prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:14:

*“But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.”*

David’s prayer was offered in thankfulness to God for the willing offerings made for the house of God. David recognized that it was because God had first abundantly blessed him and the people of Israel that they were now able to give back to God. What they gave were contributions for the House of the LORD that Solomon, David’s son, would build.

With the words of David in his heart and the dire, physical distress of numerous people on his mind, William How wrote the words of Hymn 175. In our hymnbook there are only two verses, but How wrote six verses for this hymn:

*We give Thee but Thine own,  
Whate’er the gift may be;  
All that we have is Thine alone,  
A trust, O Lord, from Thee.*

*May we Thy bounties thus  
As stewards true receive,  
And gladly, as Thou blessest us,  
To Thee our firstfruits give.*

*O hearts are bruised and dead,  
And homes are bare and cold,  
And lambs for whom the Shepherd bled  
Are straying from the fold.*

*To comfort and to bless,  
To find a balm for woe,  
To tend the lone and fatherless  
Is angels' work below.*

*The captive to release,  
To God the lost to bring,  
To teach the way of life and peace,  
It is a Christ-like thing.*

*And we believe Thy Word,  
Though dim our faith may be;  
Whate'er for Thine we do, O Lord,  
We do it unto Thee.*

This hymn is sung to at least three well-known hymn tunes. The tune used in the 2002 hymnbook was written by Sir Arthur Somervell and is called "Windermere", after the town in the United Kingdom where he was born.

*Joan and Ken Curry*

**Resources:**

1. [www.cyberhymnal.org](http://www.cyberhymnal.org)
2. *Then Sings My Soul*, Book 2, Robert J. Morgan, 2004, pp. 100,101

## **CD Recordings by Sister Julia Baines**

Sis. Julia Baines has produced two CD recordings of music she has written on Bible themes. The titles of these CDs are "Meditations of My Heart" and "On Eagles' Wings". All proceeds from the sale of these recordings go to benefit brethren and sisters in mission areas, and is donated to various branches of the CBM.

For further information contact Sis. Julia by email at [christad@nbnet.nb.ca](mailto:christad@nbnet.nb.ca) or write to:

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# Reflections

## The Oyster

### Developing strength in adversity

Some gardeners start their plants inside to get them established. Then, when the danger of frost is over, they transplant them to the garden outside. My little seedlings have been growing in a plastic hothouse and are now too big. They will most certainly wither if they don't get more earth to develop fully. My plants have enjoyed the warmth inside and the special care they have received, but they can't stay "strong" unless their roots grow and spread out. I must transplant them soon.

We are like the delicate sprouts! When we first come to a full understanding of the truth, we are like seedlings without much strength, babes in Christ, roots not fully developed (as in Matt. 13:21, some never get strong roots). New babes in Christ need special attention from their brothers and sisters. Some ecclesias have classes for the newly baptized, and appoint or divide among themselves the duties of overseeing their growth. Eventually though, the new ones will need to learn to derive their strength from God through their own Bible study — thus turning to God for their greatest strength.

### Seeds are like oysters

Just as seeds have shells, so do the oysters in the sea. Remarkably, there are more similarities. Oysters are soft-bodied animals. They have two hard, protective shells and they spend their entire life in one underwater location, usually near land. Precious pearls are sometimes found inside oysters, but not in all. Pearls are formed when a grain of sand or some other irritating substance gets inside the oyster's shell. A shiny substance called "nacre" coats the intruding irritant over and over, and after years of this layered substance, the oyster forms a lustrous pearl! Pearls are rather soft and they absorb as well as reflect light, whereas mineral gems differ in that they are usually hard and only reflect light.

The layers of the nacre build up around the grain of sand, making little crystals of a mineral called "aragonite". These crystals overlap and break up light that falls on them into little "rainbows of color". This gives the pearl its iridescence. Cultured pearls are ones that have been specially planted — a tiny pellet inside the oyster. When the oysters are about seven years old, they are opened up to harvest the cultured pearls.

### Shape of pearls

When pearls are evaluated, the shape is just as important as the color. The round ones are the most sought for necklaces. The button-shaped and the drop-shaped pearls are used for earrings. Matching pairs are more valuable than unmatched pearls. All pearls have flaws!

## What does this teach us?

We are told by Paul the Apostle in Acts 14:22 that it is through *much tribulation* that we enter the Kingdom of God. This is like the oyster that finds an irritating grain of sand inside (a trial) and immediately it covers it over and over again with its special ingredient of nacre (prayer). Oysters will slam their shells shut whenever an enemy approaches, and they will stay shut for up to two weeks. Likewise, we too must learn to turn from temptation that will cause us to sin.

## Proverbs 24:10

We are told, *“If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.”* Just as the pearl with the irritating grain of sand, our adversities may be small, but after layers and layers of prayer, our character will develop into one that reflects Christ. We become a lustrous pearl of great price! Just as little seeds grow into large trees, if we learn to deal with our adversity, depend on God for our strength, surround ourselves with support, and avoid the enemies that surround us, we will become a strong tree. False friends, wolves in sheep’s clothing, may deceive us, but by separating and “slamming our shells shut” as does the oyster, and choosing what is beneficial for our salvation, we will condition our hearts and our behavior and become strong in Christ.

## Reactions to life

It is obvious that we must make good choices early on in our discipleship to become strong followers of Christ. We must know the commandments and practice them. We must decide to do the Bible readings... to support and encourage others... to choose good friendships in the truth... to consider our employment and how it affects us or if it conflicts with our walk in Christ.

All decisions are important, and especially our reactions to trial and temptation. We will be judged by our character... by the pearl we have become. The pearl developed in adversity, through much tribulation, will become valuable in the Kingdom of God. Its beauty will never fade. It will be like its Latin name, “*unio*” — unity! — for it will express unity in diversity. No two pearls are exactly alike — each is different.

We look forward to that time when we shall be united as one in Christ — reflecting the glory of God, becoming that one pearl that adorns the gates of New Jerusalem, where the nations will be ushered in to learn about and worship the LORD.

*“And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him” (Mal. 3:17).*

Ann Crouse  
(North County San Luis Obispo, CA)

*“The heroes of the Bible make up such a group of pearls as never before in history were strung upon one string. Christianity is the only queen that ever wore such a collection of pearls” (Anonymous).*

## Calming a Quarrel

*“A patient man calms a quarrel” (Prov. 15:18).*

How does one go about calming a quarrel? By being patient. As this verse implies, several actions are very useful:

1. Start out by refusing to get angry: far better to have no answer, no response, and no action whatsoever... if it cannot be carried off without returning anger for anger. The perfect — and perfectly logical — response, if offered in an angry manner, is worse than no response at all.
2. If necessary (and it often can be), *wait* until you have rid yourself of all vestige of emotion before attempting to solve the problem. (The old adage, “Count to one hundred”, was invented for this!) If this cannot be managed at the time the “quarrel” begins, it is better to say nothing at all, or to walk away, than to retaliate in any way.
3. Never, ever bring in extraneous matters: this only adds fuel to the fire. If your “antagonist” speaks with a funny accent, or reads the NIV instead of the KJV, or simply forgot your birthday after you remembered his... then just forget it: it doesn’t help to mention that now! And...
4. If it will help — or even if you don’t think it will — concede all but the really important issues. Like Paul in the storm-tossed sea, throw overboard all the excess baggage. Be prepared to say you are “wrong” on a dozen unimportant matters (or to agree, at least, that those matters are of no consequence to the main issue). This makes it easier to achieve the important objective.

Why can’t all this be done?

Is it a matter of pride? If so, then surely humility is better than pride.

Is it a matter of one’s ‘reputation’? If so, then isn’t a reputation for patience and calmness and love far better than a reputation for always being right, and being eager to prove it?

Is it a matter of simply *needing* to win? Then remember Christ’s teaching about “peacemakers” (Matt. 5:9), and “turning the other cheek” (Matt. 5:39; Luke 6:29).

And while contemplating whether such action (or inaction!) can work, or whether you can do it, then spend a bit of time remembering Christ’s example — especially at the most crucial point of his life, his trial. There he was beset by hateful men, with grossly unfair charges, determined to see him dead. What did he do?

*“Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth’ [Isa. 53:9]. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly” (1 Pet. 2:21-23).*

George Booker  
(Austin Leander, TX)

## Famous Last Words

### (12) Abraham

Our last article looked at the last words of Sarah, as she restored order and harmony to the ecclesial family by “casting out the bondwoman and her son.” Paul picks up her words to remind us that we are the children of promise, not the children of bondage. We need to be harsh with ourselves, casting out from our life all that might offend or grieve.

The last recorded words of Abraham are found in Genesis 24:2-8, where he gives charge to his steward concerning finding a wife for Isaac. What a crucial time this was! The promised seed had not yet produced the next generation — yet the line of the “seed of the woman” had to continue. Choosing a suitable wife for Isaac was extremely important. Abraham was too old and frail to accomplish the task, so he gives a charge to his faithful steward.

It is interesting to note that this man may be the very same steward named Eliezer, who in Genesis 15:2 was considered by Abraham to be the heir, since Abraham at that point had no son. Now he was being asked to seek a wife for the true heir and preserve the lineage. He could have been jealous like Ishmael, since Isaac had in a sense replaced him. However, the record bears out his faithfulness, as he puts his own needs second to the needs of his master. It may have been this loyal example that Jesus so often referred to when he called upon us to be “faithful stewards” in our Master’s house.

*“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?” (Matt. 24:45).*

We also are called to suppress our own desires in order to serve others.

Abraham wisely instructs his steward in the ways of God. In Genesis 24:7 he tells him that God will “send his angel” before him to make his journey prosperous. Abraham must have emphasized the importance of this mission, explaining to his servant the truth about God’s promises. He assured him that God would guide him. Eliezer later demonstrates his own personal belief in Abraham’s God. In verse 12 he prays to God. He acknowledges the work of God in his mission in verse 27, and in verse 40 he echoes Abraham’s words about the guiding angel sent to prosper his journey.

It is interesting to note that the steward’s words in verse 27 contain the first Bible occurrence of the word “truth” (which means faithful or sure). The steward could see that the truth of God’s promises to Abraham necessitated finding a faithful wife for Isaac. He had now personally experienced God working in his life to fulfill that truth. (As an aside, what a wonderful woman Rebekah must have been to fulfill the “test” set up by Eliezer. Giving a stranger a drink is one thing, but volunteering to water his camels too! How many sisters reading this article [*Editor: or brothers, for that matter*] would have been successful candidates?)

Jesus says we must worship God in “spirit and truth”. Truth is a rare commodity in today’s world of ‘tolerance’, ‘non-discrimination’, and ‘ecumenism’. The popular



notion of ‘situational’ or ‘circumstantial’ ethics means there is no absolute truth, but a kind of moving target of ‘truth’. Right and wrong are said to depend upon the situation or circumstance in which we find ourselves. In fact, it’s seen by the world as wrong to believe in absolute or divine truth. It’s said to be a sign of intolerance, fanaticism and bigotry. But for believers Truth must be valued and guarded. Jesus came to bear witness to the Truth (a statement he made in reply to Pilate’s scoffing “What is truth?”), and he has asked us to likewise witness to the Truth, by letting our light shine.

In Abraham’s “Famous Last Words” we learn to acknowledge the working of God in our lives through His ministering angels. We see an example of walking and working with God. We are reminded to value Truth and allow it to rule our lives — guiding us as we face decisions in our walk Zionwards.

Chris Sales  
(Shelburne, ON)

### **“Out of her poverty, she put in everything” (Mark 12:44)**

“Weary with contention, the Master had left those to whom he had spoken in the Porches, and, while the crowd wrangled about his Words or his Person, had ascended the flight of steps which led from ‘the Terrace’ into the Temple-building. From these steps — whether those leading up to the ‘Beautiful Gate,’ or one of the side gates — he could gain full view into ‘The Court of the Women,’ into which they opened. On these steps, or within the gate (for in no other place was it lawful), he sat down, watching the multitude. The time of sacrifice was past, and those who still lingered had remained for private devotion, for private sacrifices, or to pay their vows and offerings. Although the topography of the Temple, especially of this part of it, is not without its difficulties, we know that under the colonnades, which surrounded ‘the Court of the Women,’ but still left in the middle room for more than 15,000 worshippers, provision was made for receiving religious and charitable contributions. All along these colonnades were the thirteen trumpet-shaped boxes (‘shopharoth’); somewhere here also we must locate two chambers: that of ‘the silent,’ for gifts to be distributed in secret to the children of the pious poor, and that where votive vessels were deposited. Perhaps there was here also a special chamber for offerings. These ‘trumpets’ bore each inscriptions, marking the objects of contribution — whether to make up for past neglect, to pay for certain sacrifices, to provide incense, wood, or for other gifts” (Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*).

Probably it was here that the poor widow paused, with two little coins in her purse (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4). It may be suggested that, on this occasion, she put one coin into one of the boxes for the service of the LORD, this being her usual custom. But this time, she paused also over the “shophar”, or trumpet-box, for gifts to the poor. She knew what poverty was like — she had felt the sting of being poor herself, of not quite having enough to eat. So this time she took the second

small coin out of her purse, the only coin she had left, and put it into the “poor box” — then quickly hurried away, but not before the Lord noticed.

What happened when she arrived home? Only a day or so earlier the rich man Zacchaeus had vowed to the Lord Jesus that he would give half of his wealth to the poor (Luke 19:2-8). Is it possible that some of that great contribution to the poor found its way, in short order, to the poor widow who had given all she had in the Temple that very day? And so:

*“He [or she!] who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and [the LORD] will reward [her] for what [she] has done” (Prov. 19:17).*

*[Thanks to Bre. Harry Whittaker and Anthony Oosthuizen for suggesting these brief thoughts.]*

### **Jesus’ Unlikely Conversions: (3) The centurion**

*“With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, ‘Surely this man was the Son of God’ ” (Mark 15:37-39).*

Consider how often a Roman soldier might have witnessed criminals dying on crosses. It would have become a common event, and a person might easily become callous about the nature of death. But there was something different about this man, this Jesus of Nazareth, and this day was so different from all the other days of judgment.

This soldier was a centurion, a Roman officer in command of 100 soldiers, more or less.

Apparently what the centurion saw made a huge impression on him and the other soldiers under him. The differences were significant:

- a. the demeanor of Jesus,
- b. the words of Jesus,
- c. the darkness, so unusual, from noonday to mid-afternoon, and
- d. the earthquake: was it a sign of God’s anger?

According to Luke these men had begun by joining in the general mockery of the suffering ‘criminals’, but now they feared exceedingly and declared that this man was surely innocent.

And finally — “Truly this man was the Son of God.” How could the centurion have understood this? Presumably, he was on duty when the priests shouted at Pilate: “He ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.” And then too he would have heard Jesus cry from the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Later, the centurion and his soldiers might have been delegated to guard the tomb of Jesus. If this were the case, they would surely have been in the best position to know the truth about the resurrection. But even if the centurion was not part of

that detail, he might easily have heard something of the fragmentary story from those who were there: that is, they were not sleeping; the angel rolled away the stone; and the body was no longer there in the tomb they had been guarding.

So what else could it be but that his Father had raised him from the dead?

Was it a coincidence that the first Gentile to accept the truth and respond by baptism into Christ was a centurion — Cornelius — along with his family? There is no specific evidence that directly links the centurion in Mark 15 with Cornelius, except their occupation and their faith, but it is surely a possibility.

But back to the main point here: given the circumstances we know, as well as what we can surmise, the centurion who presided at Jesus' crucifixion might well have been another unlikely convert. If this man did soon become a Christian, it was in large part due to the amazing strength of character and godliness of our Lord Jesus as he hung dying on the cross.

*Wesley Booker  
(Austin South, TX)*

### ***The Bridge Builder***

*An old man, going a lone highway,  
Came at the evening, cold and gray,  
To a chasm, vast and deep and wide,  
Through which was flowing a swollen tide.  
The old man crossed in the twilight dim;  
The sullen stream had no fears for him;  
But he turned when safe on the other side  
And built a bridge to span the tide.*

*"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,  
"You are wasting strength with building here;  
Your journey will end with the close of day;  
You will never again pass this way;  
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide —  
So why build a bridge at eventide?"*

*The builder lifted his old gray head:  
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,  
"There followeth after me today  
A youth whose feet must pass this way.  
This chasm that has been naught to me  
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.  
He too must cross in the twilight dim;  
Good friend, I'm building the bridge for him."*

*(Will Allen Dromgoole)*

## Letter

### Johnson Family Cemetery

It is interesting that so many Christadelphians, Johnson family members and others, are buried in the cemetery on the Pedernales. It is quite natural, though, when it is realized that the first family members interred there were indeed Christadelphians. Public interest in the place, of course, has to do with political prominence of some of the family members, notably the late President, and not with a connection to a small and obscure religious group.

I am reminded that some prominent brothers and sisters from the past are buried there — including Bro. Sam Johnson, of course, and also Bre. S. H. Oatman and T. F. Keele. Among them too was Bro. Clarence Martin, married to one of Bro. Johnson's daughters. Bro. Martin was in early life a prominent attorney and judge, and he abandoned political ambitions in accepting the Truth.

A Bro. and Sis. Isaac Forsythe, buried there, happen to be the grandparents of the late Sis. Marie Banta and Sis. Ellen Styles of Michigan — so it is a small Christadelphian world.

I have had some correspondence with descendants of Bro. S. H. Oatman — who are not Christadelphians. They were puzzled as to why their great-grandfather was buried in the Johnson family cemetery. They had conjectured that possibly Sis. Oatman had been Lyndon Johnson's nanny. But it was nothing like that. The Christadelphian members of the Johnson family were well aware that Bro. Clement Oatman had led their father and grandfather to the Truth. Bro. Sheppard Oatman was Bro. Clem's nephew and had himself been an active teacher of the Word.

There are also other cemeteries in central Texas where numbers of Christadelphians are buried. Any casual observer must notice the sentiments engraved upon many of the headstones. I have particularly noticed this in cemeteries in Rockdale and Lampasas County, Texas, where numbers of Christadelphians rest. The engraved sentiments are characteristic expressions of our hope, and reminders that the dead in Christ will soon live again. In their quiet way these burial places — whether in Brooklyn, N. Y.; Pomona, California; England; or Australia, witness to the hope of believers who have lived in these last centuries.

*Joseph Banta (Austin Leander, TX)*

*"It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart" (Eccl. 7:2).*

*"The best course is to buy a house across a road from a cemetery and look at it every morning. Reminding yourself where it all ends anyway, you'd never get upset about anything again" (Mildred Davis).*

## Current Events

### Ancient Escape Tunnel Found in Jerusalem

In late August, while searching for ancient Jerusalem's main road, Israeli archeologists have seemingly found the drainage channel that some Jews used to escape the Roman army in AD 70.

It is supposed that, under threat from Romans plundering Jerusalem 2,000 years ago, a number of the city's Jewish residents crowded into an underground drainage channel to hide. Later, they fled the chaos of the city, walking through this tunnel, and emerged unnoticed just south of Jerusalem.

The ancient tunnel was recently discovered buried beneath rubble, a monument to one of the great dramatic scenes of the destruction of Herod's Temple.

The channel was dug beneath what would become the main road of Jerusalem, said the directors of the archaeology dig, Ronny Reich of the University of Haifa and Eli Shukron of the Israel Antiquities Authority. Shukron said excavators looking for the road happened upon a small drainage channel that led them to the discovery of the massive tunnel.

The walls of the tunnel — made of great stone slabs three feet thick — reached a height of ten feet in some places. They are covered by other heavy stone slabs that were the road's paving stones. Several manholes are visible, and portions of the original plastering remain, Shukron said.

Pottery shards, vessel fragments, and coins from the appropriate time period (the late first century) were also discovered inside the tunnel, attesting to its age, Reich said.

The discovery of the drainage channel was quite illuminating in itself, said Reich. It showed how the city's rulers considered the welfare of their citizens in developing an infrastructure that drained the rainfall and prevented flooding.

But of course, what makes the channel especially significant is its role as an escape route for Jews desperate to flee the conquering Romans.

The Second Temple — as it is commonly called — was the center of Jewish worship during the second Jewish Commonwealth, which spanned the six centuries preceding the Roman conquest of Jerusalem. Its expansion was the most elaborate and the most famous construction project of Herod the Great, the Edomite ruler of the Holy Land at the time of the birth of Jesus.

In his *Wars of the Jews*, the Jewish historian Josephus wrote that, as the Romans destroyed the temple in AD 70, numerous people took shelter in a drainage channel and lived inside it until they fled Jerusalem. Many thousand people lived in Jerusalem at the time, but there seems to be no way of knowing how many used the channel to escape.

About 100 yards of the channel have been uncovered so far. Reich estimates its total length will reach more than half a mile, stretching from the Temple Mount compound south to the Pool of Siloam, and thence to the Kedron Valley itself.

*[Compiled from an Associated Press report, September 9, 2007.]*

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In his blog, Dr. Leen Ritmeyer (the foremost world authority on Jerusalem archaeology) comments: "Parts of this drain have been investigated by Charles Warren (1867-1870) and other sections have been excavated by Bliss and Dickie (1894-1897), Johns (1934), Kathleen Kenyon (1961-1967) and Benjamin Mazar (1968-1978). The section found by Mazar below Robinson's Arch was vaulted and believed to have been a relay of the original drain which had been cut by the southwest corner of Herod's Temple Mount...

"Warren also investigated a much earlier drain, lower down in the Tyropoeon Valley, so that we know of two different drainage systems. Together with the relay mentioned above, there are three different phases in this drainage system, which indicate three different building phases in the construction of the Temple Mount...

"The present excavators have not yet provided a map of the excavated drain, but only said that it was between the Temple Mount and the Siloam Pool... As the excavators have been digging in the vicinity of the Siloam Pool, the newly found drain is likely to be located just north of the pool. This find received a lot of media coverage because of the remarks made by the excavators that this drain may have been used by people who tried to escape the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD."

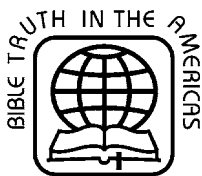
### ***Jerusalem — 3,000 Years of History***

*"Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, has always been a lodestone and a source of inspiration to people of different religions and to people from many cultures throughout the world.*

*"Many have longed to reach it — pilgrims, curious travelers, commanders of armies, and artists who have been enchanted by the city. They have visited it, have been captivated by its charms, have imprinted their impression upon it, and have created a marvelous and unique blend of influences.*

*"Since the time of King David, Jerusalem has written a central page in the history of mankind. The annals of this marvelous city are also fascinating chapters in the history of the world's nations, and exploring these also opens a window upon diverse art works of spectacular beauty.*

*"Jerusalem has not infrequently found itself at the center of regional and global disputes. I hope the day is not distant when Jerusalem, the 3,000-year-old city, will be a model for the solution of conflicts and a symbol of tolerance and co-existence" (Ezer Weizmann, President of the State of Israel).*



## Bible Mission News

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### Bolivia — Missionaries Helping Missionaries

People like babies. There is something about the helplessness of an infant that brings out the best in all of us — the protective father figure, the nurturing mother, the amusing uncle or the affectionate aunt.

Brother Jacob and Sister Fiona Styles, who have just moved to La Paz, Bolivia, to work for three years on behalf of the CBMA, have two youngsters to deal with. One is an endearing nine-month-old boy — Zadok. With his big blue eyes and shock of red hair — in this land of ubiquitous black hair and brown skin — he opens the door to more conversations about the truth than any amount of leaflets. ¡Qué lindo! (How handsome!) ¡Qué bello tu pelo! (How beautiful is your hair!) After such greetings, the conversation inevitably moves to the question: what are you doing here? Thus the ice is broken, and a conversation about the Bible begins.

The other “baby” Jacob and Fiona have to nurture is the ecclesia in La Paz. This is not a comment on the maturity of the brothers and sisters but on the age of the ecclesia. It is just over a year old. Our recent visit to La Paz was, primarily, to help the Styles settle in to this fascinating but often bewildering city as well as convey 16 months’ worth of local and ecclesial knowledge in less than a week. The secondary purpose — but equally important — was to encourage the ecclesia as it takes its first steps.

It was something of an intense week: how do you cram over a year’s worth of local knowledge and experience into a few days? Well, it’s not really possible — but we certainly gave it our best shot. Thus our “mission trip” consisted of house hunting; buying a mobile phone; locating the various places that Jacob and Fiona will later need to go — for example, to get an internet connection set up, leaflets printed, furniture and household goods bought; pointing out good places to eat, to shop, or to play with children; introducing them one moment to a good pediatrician and the next to the guy who can sort out their visas; getting a bank account set up; finding them a Spanish teacher; and so on. Beyond all these practical issues to be addressed was, of course, the introduction to the ecclesia and contacts and the work to be done in La Paz: the correspondence course; Sunday school; personal classes; ecclesial meetings and activities; outreach efforts. All this, in their first week, and at 3,500 meters (12,000 feet) high! The poor Styles must have hardly known what had hit them, but to their credit they have not flinched from the daunting tasks ahead of them: getting settled and getting to work in such a new and exciting environment.

Meanwhile the folks in La Paz are delighted with the new injection of support and energy. They have done a great job of keeping things going over the past year, supported by regular visits, emails and phone calls from CBMA workers. The weekly translations of the CIL exhortations and studies, sent to them by email, have been a tremendous help. However, an ecclesia of only five members — one of whom is living overseas in Madrid, and none of whom were baptized before February 2006 — can only do so much to move things forward. This is where Jacob and Fiona come in. Their first priority is to start learning Spanish so that they can fit into the ecclesial environment and work alongside the brethren and sisters here. As their Spanish improves, their task will be to bring their ecclesial and Bible experience to the established group and to focus on reaching other Truth-seekers in La Paz, so that the Word of God might grow and prosper in Bolivia.

Nurturing a baby with all its trials and fears can be daunting. It takes time, energy, dedicated care and attention — to be given consistently and unremittingly. Often the development of the child is barely perceptible in the week-in, week-out, month-in, month-out effort. The same can be said of caring for an ecclesia. The Styles will face many challenges; so we pray for God's blessing upon them as their family, in both senses of the word, develops and grows.

*Bro. Steve and Sis. Sally Jefferies (CBMA support workers for Bolivia)*

*(Note: the Jefferies are members of the Pershore Ecclesia in the UK and served as missionaries in La Paz from April 2005 to August 2006.)*



Left to right: Bro. Steve and Sis Sally Jefferies, Sis. Fiona and Bro. Jacob Styles, with Zadok Styles



## Missionaries in the Field: What equals 2 + 6 + 3 + 2 and possibly more?

We are pleased to announce that we now have 13 missionaries (including their families) in the field as of the end of August. The most recent additions in South America are:

Quito, Ecuador — Bro. Kevin and Sis. Rebekah Hunter (along with their four children) returned in August after spending a year or so at home. They plan to remain in Quito for at least a year, God willing, in order to support the ecclesia of 16 members and further the preaching activities in that country.

La Paz, Bolivia — Bro. Jacob and Sis. Fiona Styles (along with their 9-month-old son Zadok) arrived safely in mid-July from the Newcastle, Australia, Ecclesia. They have rented an apartment, started intensive Spanish language training and are becoming familiar with a new culture. God willing, they will assist the five-member ecclesia there, with its continuing preaching efforts throughout the country that Bro. Steve and Sis. Sally Jeffries were involved in before they returned home last year. One of the biggest initial challenges, though, is becoming accustomed to the 12,000-foot altitude!

In North America we are pleased to announce that Bro. Troy and Sis. Annette Haltom have relocated to the Moulton, AL, area and will be assisting the ecclesia there since Bro. Wesley Booker returned home.

Finally, we have the possibility of several other brothers and sisters joining the missionaries in these as well as other areas. So, through July, our budget was pretty well on track, but now that we have several missionaries in the field again, and the promise of more, we ask that you keep us in mind. You can either go to our website [www.cbma.net](http://www.cbma.net) to donate or look on the Addresses for Bequests and Donations page [page 459] to make donations by check.

*Jan Berneau*

## Thisisyourbible.com Website

The featured question of the month on the website during August was: “What does the Bible say about Jesus Christ?” About the same number of people responded to the survey (**approximately 600**), and the great opportunity that presents itself is that **430** answered that Jesus is God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. Thankfully, over **300** people took the time to download the pamphlet “Jesus: God the Son or Son of God?” It is exciting to see that there are still so many opportunities out there. We are able to monitor all sorts of statistics on the website each month, and the number of visits and of unique visitors is up over 300% compared to this same time a year ago.

We are also pleased to announce that Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT) has joined the TIYB team as Education Director. Bro. Jim will be revamping existing con-

tent and adding new content. This will include adding new levels of courses and improving and upgrading the current ones.

Now for the next baptismal story promised last month. This is a story about how the website works best when partnered with the efforts of personal contacts and an ecclesia. The first personal contact was Bro. Jim Glover (Reseda, CA), the TIYB tutor was Sis. Delores Fisher (Pomona, CA), and our students were (our now Brother) John and (Sister) Connie Palazzo (Reseda, CA). It seems that Bro. Jim worked together with John, where they each managed different departments. After several years of working together they started talking about religion, and this went on for months. As in many cases, once they got to the hard questions, John decided he was going to prove Bro. Jim wrong in his beliefs. John's first studies were with his wife and young boys — from the baptismal questions and *Christadelphian Instructor* that Bro. Jim had given him.

Then John and his family started attending a Bible seminar at the Reseda Ecclesia; there he picked up a card advertising the TIYB website. His tutor was Sis. Delores Fisher, who lives in isolation about 45 minutes from any ecclesia in southern California. So at the same time they were attending the Bible seminar, John would be online taking the correspondence courses with Sis. Delores. When the courses were completed, and the seminar was over, the next logical step was baptism. Bro. Rich Yung then took over the one-on-one classes, and Bro. John and Sis. Connie were baptized in March of 2007.

Sis. Delores writes: "Online correspondence is truly a grand way for a fast convenient lesson exchange. John always seemed to want his lessons coming quickly. After each lesson I would always send him an email letter of encouragement with discussions on how each lesson could apply to our lives. Additionally we had another source that benefited him and myself... that was sharing the same Internet provider. In the evenings when we were both online we were able to use the 'buddy chat' line for in-depth conversations dealing with the joy of belonging to the family of the Lord through baptism into his Name. My testimony is — being a Bible tutor with the great TIYB program is a grand fulfillment in one's life."

Next month we'll follow someone else who was baptized this year — and marvel at how God continues to work to call those who are looking for the way.

### **Want to help?**

- Visit the website and find out what it's all about ([www.thisisyourbible.com](http://www.thisisyourbible.com))
- Become an online tutor
- Hand out the business cards available in your ecclesia — let us know if you need more
- Advertise the website in your local newspaper or as a link on your ecclesia's website

*Jan Berneau*

## Addresses for Bequests and Donations

for tax ID numbers please contact the editor

**Christadelphian Bible Mission of the Americas (CBMA)** supports preaching work throughout the Americas, Domestic Truth Corps, etc. Visit [www.cbma.net](http://www.cbma.net) for an update on current activities as well as to make US dollar online donations. Donations by check should be sent c/o Charles Brinkerhoff, 15925 La Ronda Cir., Hacienda Heights, CA 91745-4244.

**Christadelphian Bible Mission Canada (CBMC)** supports preaching work throughout the Caribbean and bequests for similar activity. Visit [www.cbma.net](http://www.cbma.net) for an update on current activities as well as to make Canadian dollar online donations. Donations by cheque should be sent to Box 55541, Unit 119, 15280 101 Ave., Surrey, BC, Canada, V3R 0J7.

**Christadelphian Save the Children Fund** provides Bible learning materials, personal items, and scholarships to needy mission areas. For details see: [www.christadelphianchildren.com](http://www.christadelphianchildren.com).

**Christadelphian Indian Children's Homes (CICH)** donations in US dollars can be sent to CICH, c/o David & Connie Stiles, 3 Blue Acre Rd., Middletown, CT 06457-5012.

**Williamsburg Christadelphian Foundation (WCF)** supports pastoral and preaching activities throughout the world. c/o Ray Pratt, P.O. Box 86, Deland, IL 61839-0086.

**Christadelphian Tape Library** contact Reuben E. Washington, 196 E. Stearns St., Rahway, NJ 07065-4923. Phone: 732-381-4590. Fax: 732-499-8415. [christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net](mailto:christadelphiantapelibrary@verizon.net).

**Christadelphian Heritage College**  
Donations may be sent to Christadelphian Heritage College, c/o Brantford Ecclesia, 442 Dunsdon St., Brantford, ON, Canada, N3P 2B1.

**Christadelphian Tidings Publishing, Inc.**, publishes this magazine and other works on the truth. P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696.

**CBMA Overseas Book Service** welcomes gifts of used Bibles, reference books, and Christadelphian books. Please contact Jan Berneau, 1221 N. Whitnall Hwy., Burbank, CA 91505-2110. Phone: 818-842-2868. [jberneau@earthlink.net](mailto:jberneau@earthlink.net).

**Spanish language literature** is available at P.O. Box 947, Monrovia, CA 91017-0947. [jdhunter@gte.net](mailto:jdhunter@gte.net) 626-303-2222.

**Karolyn Andrews Memorial Fund (KAMF)** provides help in cases where brethren or families have been victims of persecution because of their faith. Checks in any currency to KAMF c/o P.O. Box 87371, Canton, MI 48187-0371.

**Christadelphian Care-Line** provides a service for those who need fully confidential help with emotional and spiritual problems as well as family issues. 866-823-1039.

**Alcohol Help Line** provides a service for those who need fully confidential help overcoming alcohol dependency. 866-823-1039.

**Joy Fund, Inc.**, provides grants to ecclesias, individuals, and families to assist with basic needs. c/o Stan Newton, 6861 Skyview Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647-2938.

## News & Notices

### **BROOKLYN, NY**

There have been some heart-warming occurrences this summer, of which the baptisms of ALEX CORBIN and ANASTASIA DUESBURY are most encouraging. Both young people are children of faithful families at our meeting and have grown through Sunday school and CYC.

Upstate Family Camp was the next significant activity, hosted by the Metro ecclesias and supported by over forty campers who spent a wonderful week at Lake Taghkanic. The theme was “Today’s Youths — Tomorrow’s Ecclesias”, and the five presentations were well received, triggering lively discussions each morning. The topic breakdown was “Passing the Baton”: Bro. Casmon; “Ambassadors for Christ”: Bro. Tyrone; “Choosing a Partner”: Bro. David; “Ecclesial Life”: Bro. Gideon; “The Goal of the Kingdom”: Bro. Clive.

Hosted by the South Ozone Park Ecclesia, Truth Corps came to the city, led by Bro. Bob and Sis. Diana Stodell. Brooklyn Ecclesia was able to give some support; additionally, we had the team for one day of witnessing and outreach, leaving us with about twelve new contacts!

Family rejoicing occurred at a different level, when many of us were at the Gamboa Rainforest Resort in Panama, celebrating with Bro. Ian Neblett and Sis. Nishla Sobers on their wedding day. While in Colon we did Bible classes, one with Bro. Don Luff which was a happy “coincidence”. At Panama City we met the other small struggling ecclesia at the Memorial Meeting on two Sundays. At the second Sunday, Bro. Luke, Bro. Don’s Latin American buddy, ministered the word in English and Spanish. Those of us who were lovingly accommodated at Sis. Alda Lackwood’s home have tasted the blessing of her relocation from the US.

Sis. Alda’s son, Bro. David, and his family are now completely relocated in Georgia. Bro. David and Sis. Sarah Corbin and their three girls have also relocated to Georgia. They will be attached, along with Bro. Alex from North Carolina University, to the Atlanta Ecclesia.

*Clive Drepaul*

## **MENDOCINO, CA**

These past few months we have truly been blessed. EVERETT and ANNE CREEKMORE, were baptized on May 17, and August 8, 2007, respectively. Bro. Everett had been studying for more than a year. Our ecclesia has been diminishing in numbers as our young people go back to college in other parts of the state; it is truly a blessing to welcome our new brother and sister into fellowship around the table of our Lord.

Many of our brethren attended Calaveras and Idyllwild in July. The Gaston family and Sis. Gail Walker went to Kids' Camp and said it was great. As always our brotherhood works endless hours preparing classes, activities, food and social functions to bring hundreds of families and friends together in fellowship. We know there are too many names to mention, but we extend our thanks to all who helped out. Over the past few months we have also had family nights of swimming at the Creekmores' pool and bowling.

Many visitors came our way these past few months: Bro. Don Robinson; Bro. Kelly and Sis. Kristy Robinson and children; Sis. Millie Robinson; Bro. Darius and Sis. Annette Clark and family; Sis. Susanna Yoshida and her son; and Bro. Steve Pursell and his daughter. Bro. Tom Hawksworth and family celebrated Sis. Alice Hawksworth's ninety-second birthday, quite a momentous occasion. Bro. John Tom Hawksworth visited, and Sis. Shari Bainbridge's parents also attended.

We are looking forward to the bridal shower for Sis. Allison Cedarholm and Bro. James Brown this month; many of us will travel for the wedding to be held September 1, 2007, Lord willing. Sis. Pricilla Gaston will bring back Sis. Velma Barber, Sis. Charline Hawksworth's mother, from Texas. After this homecoming, she will be attending our meeting.

We will have our sixth Lake Camp September 21-23, 2007. This year we will be at Clear Lake where we plan classes, a barbecue, boating and lots of fun. Bro. Terry Phenicie will lead an activity about kites. It should be a fun, spiritual weekend. Hope to see you there.

*Debra Phenicie*

## **MERIDEN, CT**

In recent months we have enjoyed the fellowship of brothers and sisters from Atlanta North (GA), Baltimore (MD), Boston (MA), Echo Lake (NJ), Hudson (NH), Maple Ridge (BC), Moorestown (NJ), Norfolk (VA), Oregon Coast (OR), Pittsburgh (PA), Sarasota (FL), Southern New Hampshire (NH), South Ozone Park (NY), Wachusett (MA), Washington (DC), and Westerly (RI). Our thanks are extended to Bre. Jim Boyko (Boston), Ron Hicks (Washington), Bruce Waite (Oregon Coast), and Joseph Badlu (South Ozone Park) for helpful words of instruction and exhortation. Bro. Andrew and Sis. Louise Taberner of the Boston Ecclesia visited us, with their daughter, India, in May. Bro. Andrew led our spring study weekend on "The Promises of the New Covenant". Bro. Mark and Sis. Jean Giordano visited in July, and Bro. Mark led a special Bible class on the Second Coming of Christ. We are grateful to Bro. Andrew and Bro. Mark for their ministrations on our behalf. Sis. Sue Demarest, who is a member of the Meriden Ecclesia in isolation in North Carolina and mother of our Bro. Dan Demarest, also visited us at the Lord's Table this past year.

Last September, Bro. Jimmy and Sis. Laleeta Hart and their family, Sis. Romona, Lisa,

and Marcy, made a life-changing move from Kilcoy, Guyana, to the United States. They are now settled in Hartford, CT, and have become members of the Meriden Ecclesia and Sunday School. We are delighted to have them with us. We welcomed Sis. Debby Ferraiolo back into fellowship in April and are happy to have her with us again. In July, Bro. Gary and Sis. Janet Chodkowski transferred membership from Meriden to the Springfield (MA) Ecclesia. We commend them to the love and fellowship of our brothers and sisters in Springfield.

We have lost some beloved members during the past year. Bro. Wesley Smith, a “real fixture” of the Meriden Ecclesia since the days of World War II, fell asleep in Christ last October. Our sympathies are with Sis. Rosamond and their family. Sis. Inez Houle, sister of our Sis. Dot Phillips, fell asleep in Christ in April. She was baptized in Meriden in 1980 and lived in isolation in New Hampshire. Sis. Ethel Schneider, wife of our late Bro. Henry (Harry) Schneider, fell asleep in Christ in June. Ethel and Harry were members of the Meriden Ecclesia from the time they were baptized together in 1947. Our sympathies are with Ethel’s family as well. Sis. Lali Hart’s father died last October, and Bro. David Stiles’ father died this past June. Our hearts are with them, too, in their family losses.

At the time of this writing we are looking forward to the start of our 2007 Learn to Read the Bible Effectively Seminar. This year’s effort will center in nearby Middletown, CT. May God grant an abundant blessing on our effort to share His Truth with others in this area.

*Jim Harper*

## **NANAIMO, BC**

We are blessed by the transfer of Bro. Joel and Sis. Diane Siegler from the Vernon, BC, Ecclesia. We pray that, as they join with our small ecclesia’s walk toward the kingdom, it will prove to be a mutually rewarding and uplifting experience.

*Tom Alexander*

## **SIMI HILLS, CA**

It was another busy summer in southern California. Our ecclesia hosted the Prepare To Preach program during the week of July 8-14, 2007. Thirty-five young people from all over North America spent a week in training, the better to present their beliefs to those around them. Half of these people plan to spend January in South Africa helping with the 2010 Project. Bre. John Pople (San Francisco, CA) and Shane Kirkwood and Adam Byrnes (Australia) led the program, and it was well received by all who attended.

We enjoyed a study day on June 9 by Bro. Brian Luke, “The Friends of Jeremiah”.

We welcome by transfer Bro. Erik, Sis. Sharon, Sis. Michelle, Sis. Robin and Michael Sternad from the Sacramento, CA, Ecclesia. We are also happy to welcome back into fellowship Sis. Alison Wisniewski. We commend Bro. Matt Link to the Washington, DC, Ecclesia and Sis. Molly Schmitt to the North Industry, OH, Ecclesia.

We were blessed with the confession and baptism of HEATHER WILCOX on July 15, 2007. May our Lord return soon, that her walk may be a short one

In addition to many visitors from California, we were also happy to welcome: Bro. Carl and Sis. Cindy Paiva (Guadalajara, Mexico); Bro. Nigel and Sis. Cynthia Patterson, Sis. Lily Heavyside, and Bro. Kitson and Sis. Alison Reid (UK); Bro. Nathan and

Sis. Antonia Giordano, and Bro. Andrew and Sis. Carlie Culver (Norfolk, VA); Bro. Matthew and Sis. Julie Smith, and Bro. Ben and Sis. Elaine deCaussin (Glendale, AZ); Bro. Jim and Sis. Esther Harper (Meriden, CT); Bro. Paul and Sis. Belinda Styles (Detroit Livonia, MI); Bro. Simon Gore (Australia); Sis. Beverly Barling, Sis. Sharon Bruhm, and Sis. Wendy Johnson (BC); Bro. Paul and Sis. Erin Bottomley, and Bro. Steve and Sis. Mindy Faver (Bozeman, MT); Sis. Kessid Mindorff (Calgary, AB); Sis. Chloe Sparacino (Ann Arbor, MI); Bro. Drew Lawrence (Guelph, ON); Bro. Brian and Sis. Sherry Walker (Prince George, BC); Bro. Gary and Sis. Shirley Smith (Brantford, ON); Bro. David Clubb (Wichita Falls, TX); Bro. Aaron McDonald (North Industry, OH); and Sis. Rachel Launchbury (Portland, OR).

We thank Bre. Kitson Reid, Ted Sleeper, Shane Kirkwood, John MacDougall, Brad Foltz, Max Wickham, Matthew Smith, and Jim Harper for their words of exhortation.

*Jeff Gelineau*

## **VICTORIA, BC**

Seniors' Housing has a one-bedroom unit available for low-cost rental by December 1, 2007. Individuals must be able to care for themselves. We also have a fully-furnished visitors' unit available year-round. The building is located behind the Victoria ecclesial hall. Contact Sis. Pat Williamson at 250-721-4938, or at [pwilliamson@telus.net](mailto:pwilliamson@telus.net).

*Pat Williamson*

## **Appeal for Bro. Grant Anderson**

On August 23, 2007, our Bro. Grant Anderson was in a near-fatal car accident on his way home from Manitoulin Youth Conference. He was immediately flown to a local hospital in London, ON. The local brethren and sisters in the London area played an integral part in supporting the Anderson family during this time. This past week, Bro. Grant was successfully transported back to a hospital near his home in the suburbs of Detroit, MI. Even though the doctors originally gave Bro. Grant a very bleak prognosis, he is now beginning to respond. He currently remains in a "semi-coma", has very limited motor skills, and is starting to breathe on his own — but still remains in very critical condition. Even though Bro. Grant is only 20, he seems to have touched the lives of so many. We ask that you continue to pray for God's blessing upon Bro. Grant and his family during this time (1 John 5:11-15).

The Anderson Family Support Fund has been established to help defray costs that may arise during this time (transportation, absence from work, food, etc.).

Fortunately, through the state of Michigan, the Andersons have unlimited medical coverage. With that said, there are two ways to donate financially:

- 1) Via online at [www.milfordroad.net/Andersons.html](http://www.milfordroad.net/Andersons.html) to pay via Credit Card of PayPal.
- 2) Via postal mail (checks payable to "Christadelphians") to: Anderson Family Support Fund, P.O. Box 530696, Livonia, MI 48153-0696

Once again, please keep Bro. Grant and the Anderson family in your prayers until the Lord returns.

*Paul Sparacino, On behalf of Detroit Milford Road, MI, Ecclesia*

## **Camp Hashawha**

The Washington, DC, Ecclesia extends a loving invitation for all to attend our family Bible study weekend, Lord willing, November 23-25, 2007, at Camp Hashawha,

Westminster, MD. Bro. Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ) is scheduled to lead us in classes entitled "Lessons for Future Kings — Life Lessons from the Kings of Israel". Bible classes for all ages will be held Saturday and Sunday, beginning at 8:45 am. A nursery for children four years old and under will be available.

Everyone, including day attendees, must pre-register. Mail registrations will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis and only with proper deposit. We cannot accept phone, email or walk-in reservations. Please register promptly.

The registration fee for those over four is \$50 in US funds only. A \$20 per person deposit is required with your registration. Make checks payable to Washington Christadelphian Ecclesia.

Mail registrations and deposit checks may be sent to Bro. David Fertig, 9703 Schmidt Drive, Burke, VA 22015. Registration deadline is November 12, 2007. A confirmation of your registration will be emailed or phoned to you. Guardians for those under 18, who are attending without their parents, must be staying on site at the camp and must be over 25 years old.

For forms or information, phone 703-644-6311 or email Bro. David at hashawha@cox.net. Forms should be available from your ecclesia, or at <http://www.Christadelphians.net/Adelphi>, or by contacting Bro. David Fertig.

Deposits will be refunded, after the camp, if we were able to fill your place with someone from our waiting list.

Day attendees must also pre-register. There will be a \$20 fee for those attending the classes but not staying at the camp. These will be accepted on a first-come basis and only to the extent that full-time registration has not exceeded classroom limitations.

Those desiring to attend classes or Sunday services, with or without meals, should send their registrations and deposits in as soon as possible. Classroom and Memorial service space is limited, and preference must be given to those staying at the camp.

We look forward to an uplifting weekend of fellowship and study around the word of God.

### **Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation**

The Fairhaven Christadelphian Charitable Foundation was incorporated in the province of Ontario in 1985. Its initial asset base consisted of the proceeds of the sale of Fairhaven House, a residential care facility in Toronto geared to assist elderly Christadelphians. The foundation's primary focus is to provide supplementary assistance to Canadian ecclesias dealing with the health and welfare issues of senior members. We also entertain requests from Canadian ecclesias to assist their broader membership.

As examples, recently a grant was provided for an ecclesial hall renovation to make the building wheelchair accessible; a rent subsidy was provided to a Christadelphian refugee family resettling in Canada; and support for living accommodations was provided for an elderly sister on limited income.

Canadian law does not allow us to provide grants to those outside of Canada. Donations can be sent c/o Clive Daniel, 8583 Sansum Park Drive, North Saanich, BC, V8L 4V7, Canada.

*Alan Ghent*



## India — Appeal for Calcutta

The ACBM [Australia Christadelphian Bible Mission] is particularly hoping and praying that fieldworkers will come forward to staff their Mission premises in Calcutta during 2008. This is a new arrangement aimed at strengthening the brotherhood of about 130 members in the northeast Indian state of West Bengal. Please give this appeal serious consideration.

If you believe you might be able to go, whether for several months, or only a month or two, please email Bro. David Caudery at [india@acbm.cc](mailto:india@acbm.cc)

The ACBM will give you more details of the kind of challenge and experiences that this location offers. Just to whet your appetite, Bro. David recently received an email from a brother in the Kirpai Ecclesia telling him that he had 30 people who have said they are interested in baptism.

Bro. David and other brethren are over there at the moment working on such openings as well as running a six-day Bible week for the brethren and sisters and young people. But that is what is happening this year. Can you be part of what might happen in 2008?

By the way, the Mission has leased a modern six-room third-floor apartment in Calcutta as a base for fieldworkers. Interested? If so, send an email of enquiry today — or by regular mail to:

David Caudery,  
35 Jeffery Street,  
Blackburn, Vic.,  
Australia 3130.

## Minute Meditation

### Halftime

John Glenn has said that there is no cure for the common birthday. As the days pass, we inexorably age, wrinkles appear, body parts wear out, and the birthdays continue to arrive until we die. Someone once noticed that after age 30 the body seems to have a mind of its own; instead of the quick deft motions that came almost effortlessly, we move slowly, sometimes painfully, and sometimes not at all.

In a book entitled *Halftime*, the author, Bob Buford, compares our life to a sport that has a break halfway through the game. He uses football as his example, but any sport that has two halves would do. The game begins with a plan for how to play the full game. In the middle is the halftime, when the coaches and players analyze what happened in the first half and make adjustments to improve and overcome the obstacles that occurred in the first half. Quite often there is a big difference between the first half and the second half. Many games are decided in that second half.

If our life is like a game of football, it begins with the kick-off. Childhood flies by quickly, and then there are the turbulent teens and the roaring twenties, and the thirties and forties come and go, and suddenly, halftime arrives. The first half has passed faster than we ever thought it would. What we sometimes forget is that the second half is played differently because so many birthdays have accumulated and the body is giving out. We may not be able to play as fast or as skillfully, especially in the last quarter. As we age we need to learn to work smarter rather than harder. It is important not to waste the time we may have left before the body stops cooperating.

We either go through all these stages of life or we die young. Every age has its benefits, and rather than wishing we were either younger or older, we should enjoy the age we are in. We need to accept the fact that if we were born the year we were born, then we are the age that we are right now or we are dead. There is nothing in between.

Wherever we are in this game called life, it is good to pause and reflect where we have been and how we can do better from here on to the end. For some of us, it is the fourth quarter and we have already received the two-minute warning, and so we know that the end of the game is in sight.

As long as there is still time on the clock, there is still time to score. Some games are won in the final seconds. Let us learn from the past while we concentrate on the future. We need to ask ourselves what has worked in our lives so far, and what changes do we need to make in order to improve the time we have left.

We want to avoid the woulda, coulda, shoulda routines — where we lament the mistakes we have made. We need to feel thankful for forgiveness. We should look back only to learn how to fix what was broken. Paul shows this mindset when he says, “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

The future is all any of us has left. It may be long or short, but we all need to plan to improve how we use the time left to our full advantage. So, with Paul, let us reach forward and press for the prize that the Lord is waiting to give to each of us at the end of the game of life.

Fortunately God wants us to succeed, for, as Peter tells us, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

We are all in this game of life, and with Paul we can say, “This one thing I do.” Let us charge back onto the field with renewed determination to “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

*Robert J. Lloyd*

## Coming Events (Lord Willing)

### OCTOBER

- 5-7 Vancouver, BC** Fraternal Gathering, Surrey Ecclesial Hall. Bro. Paul Billington (Brantford, ON): "Remember the Covenant". Contact Bro. Dan Orsetti dorsetti@telus.net 604-514-4704
- 6 Brantford, ON** Thanksgiving Fraternal Gathering, Copetown Community Centre. Bro. Brian Luke (Adelaide Brighton, Australia): "The Last Days of the Apostle Paul". 12:30 to 5 pm, three talks and dinner. Contact Bro. Mike Moore 519-756-0175 michael.l.moore@rogers.com
- 6,7 Petersburg, VA** Young people's gathering. Bro. Chris Sales (Shelburne, ON): "Joseph"
- 6,7 Regional Bible prophecy study weekend** New England. Bro. Roger Lewis (Christchurch, NZ): "From Eden Lost to Eden Restored: The Amazing Framework of God's Prophetic Purpose". Contact Bro. Joshua McInturff joshandtiff@gsinet.net 603-774-6237
- 6,7 Edmonton/Calgary** Thanksgiving fraternal, Edmonton, AB. Bro. Dana Kohlman (Calgary, AB). Contact Sis. Linda Ikle 780-406-2920 likle@telus.net or Bro. Jerome Toronchuk jeromet@telusplanet.net 780-453-1412
- 6,7 Atlanta, GA** Fraternal. Bro. Joseph Fordham (Arlington, VA): "Building Your Spiritual House". Contact Bro. Carlos Carter atlantaecclisia@hotmail.com 770-465-8915
- 6,7 Sussex, NB** Thanksgiving fraternal. Bro. Ken Styles (Detroit Royal Oak, MI): "Godly Love"
- 7 San Francisco Peninsula** Fraternal. Belmont Senior Center, 9:30 am to 3 pm. Bro. Dave Garnand. For accommodations contact Sis. Ruth Ann Gover 650-260-2694
- 12-14 Ventura, CA** Sisters' retreat. Sis. Wendy Johnsen (Nanaimo, BC). Contact Sis. Bonnie Sommerville kenandbonnie@simihills.org 19111 Kinzie St., Northridge, CA 91324. Registration deposit for \$50 non-refundable
- 13,14 Regional Bible prophecy study weekend** New Jersey/New York. Same as last week (above). Contact Bro. Jonathan Link jonlink@optonline.net 973-633-8534
- 13,14 Pittsburgh, PA** CYC study weekend. Bro. Jay Mayock (Hamilton Ewen Road, ON): "Into the Land of Promise: Lessons from the Children of Israel". Contact Sis. Sarah Telles 724-334-2333 sarah.telles@gmail.com
- 20 Bedford, NS** Study day on prophecy. Bro. Brian Luke (Adelaide Brighton, AU). Grand Lake, Oakfield Community Hall, NS 1:30-7:00 pm (supper included). Contact Bro. Michael Carr 902-820-2532 buxtoncarr@hotmail.com
- 20,21 Regional Bible prophecy study weekend** Williamsburg, VA. Same as last week (above). Contact Bro. Jordan Canady jordancanady5@hotmail.com 804-365-8512
- 26-28 Camp Kawartha** Kawartha Lakes, ON. Senior CYC young people's weekend. Bro. Ryan Mutter (Baltimore, MD): "James". Contact Bro. Darryl Rose darrylrose@rogers.com

## **NOVEMBER**

**3,4 Kouts, IN** Fraternal gathering, Woodland Community Center, Portage, IN. Bro. Jim Harper (Meriden, CT): "Men Who Changed the Church". Contact Bro. Joe Bennett 219-762-2704 purepro18@aol.com

**9-11 New England Bible Study Weekend** Barton Center, North Oxford, MA. Bro. Ron Kidd (London, ON): "Out of Weakness Made Strong: A Study in the Life of Samson". Contact Bro. Craig Nevers craignev@cox.net or Sis. Judith Nevers jnevers@verizon.net

**10,11 Largo and Sarasota, FL** Study weekend, Largo Ecclesial Hall in Largo, FL. Bro. Ken Curry (Toronto East, ON): "Seven Key Events in the Life of Jesus". Contact Bro. Walt Dodrill waltodrill@msn.com 727-528-1197

**10,11 Tulsa/Joplin, OK** Bible study weekend. Bro. Roger Long (UK)

**10,11 Victoria, BC Study weekend.** Bro. Christian Russell (Verdugo Hills, CA): "The Garden of the Lord". To help with catering or to arrange accommodation, please contact Sis. Pat Williamson 250-721-4938 pwilliamson@telus.net

**13-18 Galilee Bible School** Kibbutz Ma'agan, Israel. Bre. David Lloyd (Simi Hills, CA) and Don Pearce (Rugby, UK): "Walking in the Footsteps of the Master". Contact Sis. Betty Lou Lewis Liat727@aol.com 727-744-1872

**23-25 Camp Hashawha** Westminster, MD. Family Bible study weekend. Bro. Steve Cheetham (Moorestown, NJ): "Lessons for Future Kings— Life Lessons from the Kings of Israel". Contact Bro. David Fertig hashawah@cox.net 703-644-6311

## **JANUARY 2008**

**26 San Diego County Ecclesia** Annual Study Day. Bro. John Bilello (Ann Arbor, MI): "Little Words that Mean a Lot". 9:30 am Ecclesial Hall, lunch served. Contact Bro. Kent Ellis ellisk@san.rr.com 858-674-5645

## **FEBRUARY**

**3-8 Palm Springs Bible School.** Bre. Bill Link, Jr. (Baltimore, MD) and Michael Owen (Seaton, UK). Contact Bro. Jeff Gelineau register@christadelphianbibleschool.org. Or visit website [www.californiabibleschool.org](http://www.californiabibleschool.org)