

# TIDINGS

Volume 87, Number 8, September, 2024

# WISDOM FOR DAILY LIFE

*Solomon's principles for righteous living in Proverbs can help us detangle the conflicts and wars among us and improve our relationships greatly.*

*On Life and Conduct*

15 The <sup>1a</sup>mind of the prudent acquires knowledge,  
And the <sup>b</sup>ear of the wise seeks knowledge.  
A man's <sup>a</sup>gift makes room for him,  
and brings him before great men.  
first <sup>1b</sup>to plead his case just,  
<sup>2</sup>another comes and examines him,  
t puts an end to contentions,  
cides between the mighty,  
offended is harder to be won than  
ntions are like the bars of a  
ruit of a man's mouth hi

PROVERBS 19

15 <sup>1</sup>Lit., heart  
<sup>a</sup>Prov. 15:14; Eph  
<sup>b</sup>Prov. 15:31  
16 <sup>a</sup>Gen  
<sup>1</sup>See

Building faith in the  
Christadelphian community.

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E D I T O R I A L

# WISDOM FOR DAILY LIFE

*Solomon's principles for righteous living in Proverbs can help us detangle the conflicts and wars among us and improve our relationships greatly.*

**WHENEVER** I read The Proverbs, I worry that we don't give it the time it deserves. Within its thirty-one chapters is a treasure chest filled with rubies and gems of understanding and wisdom, each to be unpacked and applied in our lives. As Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes, there is nothing new under the sun. Solomon's principles for righteous living in Proverbs can help us detangle the conflicts and wars among us and improve our relationships greatly.

Early in his days as king, Solomon made an important choice. Rather than ask for long life, riches, or control over his enemies, Solomon instead requested of God that he might have *"understanding to discern judgment."* (1 Kings 3:11). God was pleased with his election and gave him *"a wise and an understanding heart; so there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like thee."* (v.

12). Throughout Proverbs, Solomon elevates understanding and wisdom above all things we can pursue. When we can truly discern right from wrong, we may live lives of righteousness and peace. It offers us a new perspective on our human experience. It lifts us up from unwise behaviors and shortcuts and provides a spiritual roadmap. It permits us to live in the flesh by

applying Divine wisdom rather than the impulses of the fleshly mind.

Let's look at just a few of Solomon's counsels for believers, as we acknowledge there are so many we can't discuss here.

### **Temptation to Sin**

Unfortunately, we overestimate ourselves when it comes to resisting sin. Sometimes, we can become jaded by sin, for we see it almost inescapably around us. Our theory is that we know the risks of having objects of temptation around us, but we are confident we have sufficient knowledge and faith

to govern our behavior. Well, maybe! But Solomon, who certainly knew the hearts of men, had a vastly different exhortation.

*Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless*

*they cause some to fall. For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence. But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble. (Proverbs 4:14-19).*

If we want to be a holy people, having temptation in our bosom is no way to

**When we can truly discern right from wrong, we may live lives of righteousness and peace. It offers us a new perspective on our human experience.**

live. We need not legislate compliance for others, but rather, the responsibility of each brother and sister is to survey what is in their house, who they are associating with, and what their focus is in business pursuits. If these represent potential temptations, get them out of your life! If it is at the corner of your street, walk another way. Solomon encourages us to make a choice **well before** the sin occurs. At the core of this is how we see evil. Solomon writes:

*The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate. (Proverbs 8:13).*

As holy people, we can't just shake our heads at evil on our television or around us. We must hate it. We don't want any part of it.

Solomon speaks of addiction to wine in chapter 23. He describes how it begins in an innocuous way. The wine is attractive as it sparkles in the glass. It's pleasant to the taste. But in the end, it is like a serpent bite. Addiction to substances leads to only seeking another drink or another satisfaction of the desire. (v. 35). I've gone to this passage often when describing various addictions and the process of being overcome by them. But over time, I see Solomon wasn't exclusively talking about wine, or overeating, or other compulsive activities. It is a description of how sin enters our lives. It starts deceptively. We see the attraction, and it appears we have it all under control. But in time, it overcomes us. It can become the driving force for our minds to satisfy the urge again.

If we discern a spiritual risk, the time to

act is before it becomes a source of sin. Avoid it. Pass not by it. Be proactive!

### Control of Our Impulses

Typically, we think of the Epistle of James when we contemplate controlling our tongue. James has rightly been called the Proverbs of the New Testament. But it is Solomon who provides insights for controlling one's spirit, including the words we speak. How people speak is a key means of identification between the fool and the wise.

All of us will experience things being said or done to us that naturally produce an angry response. Deep inside, we want to lash back, to win the argument, to humble our adversary. These are all impulses of the flesh. However, saying nothing is, at times, the most powerful position. The Lord used it when he was being falsely accused. Solomon says that the wise use it regularly.

- *Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult. (Proverbs 12:16 NIV).*
- *Those who control their tongue will have a long life; opening your mouth can ruin everything. (Proverbs 13:3 NLT).*
- *A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife. (Proverbs 15:18).*
- *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city. (Proverbs 16:32).*

There are many more references in Proverbs to this principle. But one stuck out to me. We might find a way to control our tongue—not to lash out. But is that really the answer? If I still

hold a grudge against the offender, isn't just controlling my tongue an artificial behavior? Solomon addresses this, too.

*The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression. (Proverbs 19:11).*

James further develops this.

*But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. (James 3:8-11, 14-18).*



The wise don't bark back. They don't enter into the instability and disorder of intense arguments. They decide to defer their anger, to let it cool off. They don't fan the flames of conflict. But beyond that, they choose to pass over the transgression against them. They forgive.

In most cases, choosing not to be angry when an indiscretion is aimed at you will end the conflict right where it started. It suffocates the flame. James says this is the fruit of righteousness, for it is sowing peace. What do you want to grow in your garden? Envy, jealousy, and anger, or the fruit of righteousness?

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It suffocates the flame.**



### Turning Our Faces

I sometimes hear brothers and sisters inappropriately use the phrase, “Who are you to judge?” Now, there is some truth to this. We are never to be condemning judges. We shouldn’t have any part of that, as it is exclusively the authority of our Lord. We aren’t qualified to look into hearts or judge motives. It isn’t a role that the Lord has given us.

But we are to judge! The word “*judging*” confuses many because it sounds like it involves looking down at another in a self-righteous way. However, Proverbs (and all of Scripture) is replete with examples of how faithful men and women gave and accepted rebuke and correction from those who loved them. Solomon wrote:

*Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. (Proverbs 27:5-6).*

I don’t think that we can make much sense of New Testament teachings on correction and restoration without an appreciation for the purpose of rebuke.

Loving rebuke is a gift to the wise. Only fools despise it. It is part of the Divine judgment process. The foundation of judgment is our own self-examination. But, since we have deceitful hearts, sometimes self-examination fails us. We may not be aware of our sin, or like King David, we may feel we have carefully concealed it from others. Whether it be a close friend, like the Prophet Nathan, or one in your own ecclesia, the help and correction of loving brothers and sisters is irreplaceable. Rebuke should be about visible behaviors—such as blowing up in anger or moral violations. Loving rebuke saves the staggering who values righteousness and wisdom.

God expects us, in love, to provide correction and rebuke to one another. It’s also useful to commend when we see positive behaviors. All must be done as edification. But how does God view it when we see our brother falling into sin and we say nothing?

*Rescue those who are unjustly sentenced to die; save them as they stagger to their death. Don’t excuse*

*yourself by saying, "Look, we didn't know." For God understands all hearts, and he sees you. He who guards your soul knows you knew. He will repay all people as their actions deserve. (Proverbs 24:11-12 NLT)*

There is a mutual dependence that believers have. We are accountable to the Lord, but we are also accountable to one another. Our commitment must be to righteousness. Our first responsibility is to correct foolishness and unrighteousness in ourselves. When we see it manifested in the behavior of our brother or sister, we cannot turn our heads and pretend we don't see it.

Paul clearly described this process in Galatians 6.

*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. (Galatians 6:1-3).*

Any rebuke must begin with acknowledging we are no better than the one we are correcting. We could have easily committed this transgression! Solomon, of all men, would learn the value of being corrected when he strayed from God. Perhaps you share my belief that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes after his repentance. In it, he reflects on life's emptiness and wisdom's value. He reflected that the *"words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies."* (Ecclesiastes 12:11). The words of wisdom we speak to one another are edifying. They hold the boards of our spiritual lives together.

Solomon wrote, *"Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."* (Proverbs 4:7). May we all strive to be wise as serpents but harmless as doves. May we, like Solomon, look at all things under the sun with a Divine perspective. It will give us peace and prosper our way.

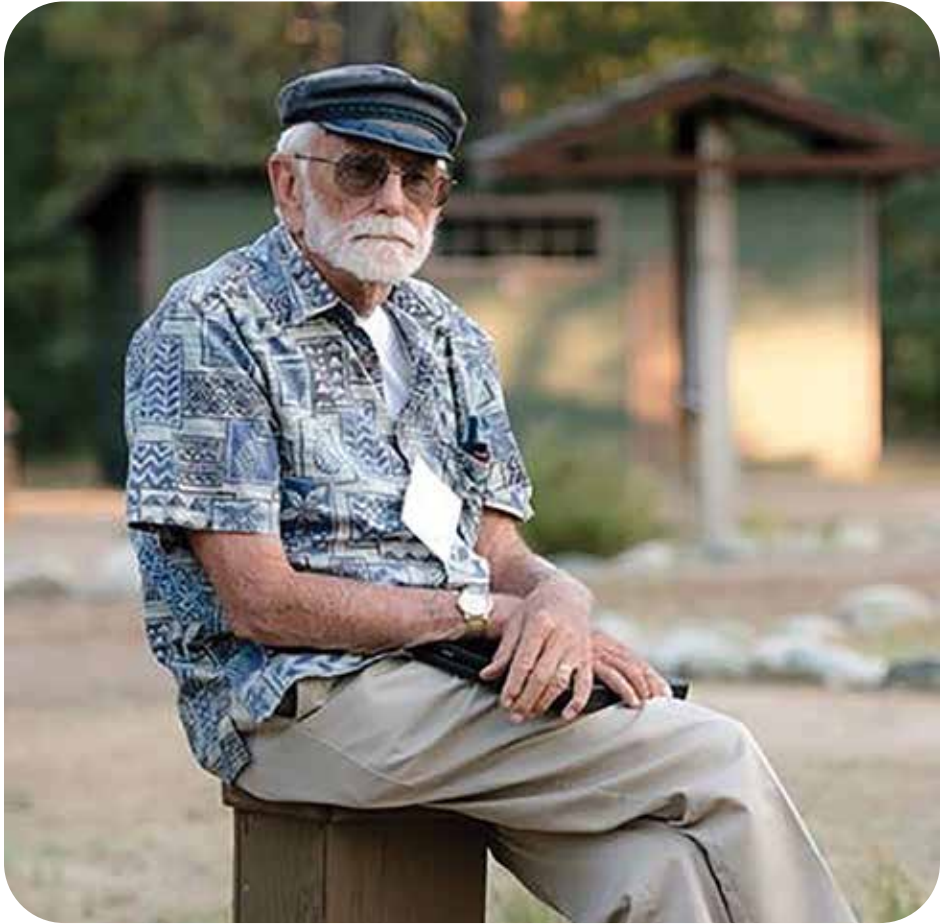
*Dave Jennings*



I N M E M O R I A M

## ***Ken Sommerville***

*June 3, 1937 - July 26, 2024*



An important member of the Tidings family has fallen asleep in the Lord. Bro. Ken Sommerville died on July 26, at the age of 87. Bro. Ken had a significant influence over the past decades on the Tidings, and was a mentor to many of us that are continuing the work.

Not many of the brothers and sisters at Wilbraham Bible School who saw young “Kenny” ride up on a Harley Davidson would have imagined that he would turn into such a productive and loving servant of our Lord Jesus. Born to Bro. John and Sis. Florence (Styles) Sommerville in Fairview, New Jersey in 1937, Ken moved to California in 1960, marrying Sis. Bonnie Young that same year. Together they raised Sis. Kellie Gelineau, Sis. Erin Bottomley, Bro. Joshua Sommerville and Sarah Prince. They have loved and enjoyed eight grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Ken worked tirelessly with other brethren on the Pacific Coast Christadelphian Amended Reunion Committee to bring about reunion on the West Coast, uniting himself in fellowship with many that he considered lifelong friends. When the CBM in England wanted assistance with preaching in Latin America, Ken formed and chaired the CBMA for over 35 years. Ken was one of the original seven brethren in the formation of what is now the Simi Hills Ecclesia, where he fellowshiped for over 45 years. When the *Tidings* Magazine formed a steering committee Ken was one of the first ones chosen and served the magazine for over 25 years. Ken also enjoyed teaching history at the Christadelphian

Heritage Co-op school for 15 years.

Ken partnered with Bro. Bob Lloyd in 1964 to build their insurance agency into a large and successful business that has employed over two dozen brothers and sisters over the years. A big step up from the paper route that he began when he was 12 years old.

Ken was a conscientious objector during the Korean War, and served at the Byberry Mental Hospital, then known as the Philadelphia State Hospital at Byberry. Ken commented for many years about the important life lessons he learned during his time at Byberry.

Before falling asleep, Ken wrote, “God blessed me with 85 years of good health. Then I turned 86. Thankfully, God blessed me with Bonnie. I am very thankful for our lives together and my wife’s loving care for me during these last years. She is truly wonderful.”

Ken's tireless work was not for personal gain or glory. He served the God he loved. He might have been uncomfortable with his legacy being shared broadly. However, we feel that we can all learn from his service, and perhaps some will be encouraged in their own work in the Truth.

We look forward to seeing him again in our Lord’s Kingdom, where we are sure that Ken will be busy working on a project for his Lord.

*Jeff Gelineau,  
Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA*

# TIME RUNNING OUT

*The fact is that whatever we would like to do,  
time is running out to get it done.*



*By Paul Zilmer*

**I**'VE reached a point in life where it's clear that time is running out. Oh, nothing imminent, but there are inescapable indications in body and mind.

Of course, time is running out for all of us, and we've all known it since we came to understand what death is and absorbed the truth that we are not exempt. It's mostly theoretical to us when we're young and relatively

healthy—until death strikes close to us or we become seriously unwell. For a time, the concept of death becomes much more real to us, and that we only have so much time. And the kicker is, we don't know how much time. Not everyone survives to the point of feeling in body and mind how time is running out.

In the only psalm we know of written by Moses (Psalm 90), he reflects on

death. His thoughts jump around some, challenging us to follow his thinking, but it's quickly plain that his thoughts go very deep. He talks about how brief life is, as we've just been remarking. Then he prays, "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."<sup>1</sup> (verse 12) What he means, I think: "Time is running out. Don't forget it; be wise about how you use it."

Moses is far from alone. David, Solomon, Paul, James, and more make the same point.

- Psalm 39:4-5—*O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am! Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath!*
- Ecclesiastes 9:10—*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.*
- Ephesians 5:15-16—*Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.*
- James 4:14—*You do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.*

The point here is not to be depressing! (I'm sorry if it has felt that way.) The fact is that whatever we would like to do, time is running out to get it done.

Secular motivational speakers and writers make this point all the time. How much more should we heed this truth when thinking about what we want to do in the LORD's service but keep putting it off?

There are things to say and do for people we love. There are relationships to be built or repaired. There are a thousand good things to work on in our churches, communities, and beyond. There is good news to share about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. Some personal patterns and habits need pruning, and others need cultivating.

Time is running out. At some point, we will realize that time is up—we are no longer capable or have lost the opportunity.

I'm sorry, I'm not as good at this as those secular motivational writers. We need to be upbeat and energized to turn the uncertainty of our life into motivation to be doing while there's still time. Where do we find the energy, the motivation? A loving God, a shining hope, a living Lord.

*Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:57-58).*

*Paul Zilmer,  
Bloomington Ecclesia, IL*

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural citations are taken from the English Standard Version, unless specifically noted.

# PREACHING: READY! SET! PRAY!

*“Pray like it all depends on God,  
but act like it all depends on you.”*

*By Darren Tappouras*



I remember an incident quite clearly from about twenty years ago. I received a flyer from a friend living in Canada for the Learn To Read The Bible Effectively seminars.

I was blown away. It made so much sense. It was a well-designed brochure with casual and attractive artwork, advertising an obligation-free seminar for anyone interested in the Bible. To me, it felt like a gift from God, something to kick-start our preaching efforts, which had struggled in the preceding years.

The preaching committee members at my ecclesia, who were of similar age to me (Gen X), jumped on the seminar idea instantly. We approached our Arranging Body (Baby Boomers), who considered our proposal, approved our budget, and gave their blessing to the idea. We booked a hotel conference room and got the artwork to a printer. We were all excited, or so we thought. Not all, however, were so keen.

The older members (some call them the Silent Generation) were troubled by this development. I still remember their very fervent and genuinely felt resistance. They objected that as an ecclesial lightstand, we already held a public lecture every Sunday evening and had done so for many years. They argued that if God wanted to “call” someone in our city to the Truth, He would bring them to the lecture. Our role was to faithfully witness by holding the lectures and being ready to talk to anyone God guided into our hall. They genuinely struggled to see why we needed externally held seminars.

Several things struck me from that experience. Firstly, how drastically

different my generation and older members (who I loved and respected) felt about the exact same idea. I couldn't comprehend how anyone could not be excited about such a project. However, the theology of the older group also intrigued me. Did they really believe this was what preaching was all about? How did their view of God's sovereignty work? Did God pick people out like that and directly bring them to Christ?

I would go on in life to find out how God “calls” people, which has been debated and discussed by theologians for hundreds of years. On the one hand, there is a concept, sometimes referred to as “Calvinism,” named after the 16th-century Protestant Reformer, John Calvin, that God chooses specific people and works directly in their lives to bring them to Him. The other side of the argument is referred to as Arminianism, named after Dutch Reformer Jacobus Arminius, who emphasized free will and the responsibility of humans to choose God for themselves.

Our community would probably officially be considered “Arminian.” Our view of adult baptism emphasizes free will and a personal commitment to God based on reason and choice. Also, our early members specifically rejected a doctrine called “predestination,” which includes many Calvinistic concepts.

The attitude experienced in my ecclesia may stem from the area of Australia where I live (Newcastle), which was once heavily populated by Scottish mining families who had brought with them the Presbyterian Church, which is very much committed to Calvinism

and individual Divine selection. This religious upbringing and environment likely influenced the older members of my ecclesia. Or it may be that this issue has not generally been well articulated in our community. It may be confusing for some and remains a bit of a grey area for many.

In *“The Genius of Discipleship”* (Gillett, 1984), Bro. Dennis Gillett considers this subject in a chapter called *“On Being Called.”* He considers the two opinions held in our community regarding how God calls someone. One opinion he labels *“Individual Selection,”* which he defines as *“God putting His finger on selected individuals... and then arranging the circumstances in such a way to confront them with the Gospel.”* The other view he labeled the *“General Preaching Mode,”* in which the Gospel is taught and those who hear it are

being called—they either reject or accept it. Bro. Gillett concludes, *“It seems to the writer that there is Biblical support for both views.”*

Over the years, I have read and studied extensively about these two approaches. I could argue both sides of the debate with anyone holding either view, yet I find it impossible to come down hard on one side.

At the end of the day, I have adopted an old Puritan saying (although attributed to various people): *“Pray like it all depends on God, but act like it all depends on you.”*

One can hold both these ideas in tension, committing all plans to God, asking for His help and guidance, and acknowledging His hand while acting in a way that allows for initiative, innovation, resourcefulness, and personal effort.

**Pray Like It All Depends on God**

The preaching examples in the book of Acts describe the preaching activity as God’s work.

VERSE	GOD’S WORK	HUMAN ACTIVITY
Acts 14:27	<i>“all that God had done”<sup>1</sup></i>	Preaching
Acts 15:4	<i>“all things that God had done”</i>	Preaching
Acts 15:12	<i>“God had worked through them”</i>	Preaching
Acts 21:19	<i>“The things God had done”</i>	Preaching

The well-known words of the Apostle Paul express this reality:

I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. (*1 Corinthians 3:6-7 NKJV*).

Although Paul made a great personal effort and endured much suffering in carrying out this preaching activity, he always credits God as the ultimate source of his preaching success. We also note that on several occasions, the Apostle Paul directly requests others to pray for his preaching efforts

(Ephesians 6:19-20, 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2).

So, we can be sure of these things:

- Preaching is God's work,
- Preaching success relies on God,
- We should pray for God to be with us in our preaching efforts and others' preaching activities.

Therefore, it is essential to pray for God to be with us in preaching, to provide us with opportunities to preach, and to give us success in our preaching efforts. Yet it appears more is required from the preacher.

### Act Like It Depends on You

Although we acknowledge God's involvement in preaching, the New Testament clarifies that our attitude to preaching is directly related to our preaching success.

*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be **ready** to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. (1 Peter 3:15 NKJV).*

The mindset of being "ready" is attributed to our sanctifying God in our hearts. The ESV renders this word as "honor," and the NIV to "revere" God in our hearts.

Here, we have an interesting balance. Honoring and revering God in our hearts prepares a believer to preach. It appears to me that taking the initiative and putting human effort into preaching does not reduce one's acknowledgment of God's involvement but, in fact, reflects the reverence and gratitude we hold for God.

An interesting passage in Romans 10 suggests that many will not hear the gospel without the preacher taking the initiative. But they may well have heard and responded if the preacher had taken their role seriously. And yet the passage declares it is God who sends the preacher. God has inspired the preacher with their own salvation and the specific command to preach to others and is thus the prime mover in the process even though the preacher takes the initiative.

- "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (v. 13).
- "How, then, shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" (v. 14).
- "And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" (v. 14).
- "And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (v. 14).
- "And how shall they preach unless they are sent?" (v. 15).

Without a preacher, one cannot hear, believe, and be saved. Yet we acknowledge that God is the one inspiring the preacher.

### Be Ready

This phrase "*be ready*" (or "*prepared*" in the NIV) captures the attitude and state of mind of the faithful preacher in 1 Peter 3:15. See also "*Preach the word! Be ready ("prepared" NIV) in season and out of season.*" (2 Timothy 4:2).

We have seen that readiness to preach honors God in our hearts (1 Peter 3:15). We also see an interesting example of the preaching readiness mindset in the famous Spiritual Warrior metaphor in



Ephesians 6. Paul here equates certain spiritual characteristics with weapons that help protect us in times of hardship and trial.

*Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.* (v. 11).

*Therefore, take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.* (v. 13).

So, all these items of armor represent spiritual attributes that help us and greatly benefit us: truth, faith, salvation, and the Word. These bring us great spiritual well-being.

Yet inserted among these spiritual armor types is a very interesting preaching-related attribute. “*Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.*” (Ephesians 6:15 NKJV). The word *preparation* is almost identical to the word *ready* in (1 Peter 3:15 NKJV). The connection of feet and Gospel preaching is no doubt taken from the context of gospel preaching in Isaiah 52: “*How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good things.*” (v. 7).

So, among the spiritual attributes that benefit us greatly and allow us to endure trials, there is one referred to as “*readiness to preach.*” The mindset of being ready to preach can now be associated with “*honoring God in our heart*” (1 Peter 3:15) and giving us the ability to “*stand in the evil day.*” (Ephesians 6:13).

## Bringing Them Together

In this Spiritual Warrior context of Ephesians 6, we have a beautiful way of harmonizing these approaches: “praying like it depends on God, and acting like it depends on you.”

Notice the section starts with an imperative—our responsibility! “*Take unto you the whole armour of God.*” (v. 11).

Then, the different armor attributes are itemized, beginning with truth, including our feet shod with the “*preparation*” of the gospel of peace and ending with the Word. (v. 17).

It may initially appear that these are all the spiritual weapons we need, and it may seem that it is only up to us to obtain and use these weapons to benefit our spiritual lives. However, notice that verse 17 immediately follows the words “*praying always.*”

*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.* (Ephesians 6:18-20 NKJV).

Sticking with the military metaphor for a minute, we note how essential it is for military units to communicate with their headquarters. Re-supply and strategy are disseminated from a central location, and being cut off from such communication typically results in failure.



So, too, in our spiritual life. While we may be responsible for taking the armor to ourselves, prayer directs and supports the use and implementation of the attributes from our headquarters. Also, note the preaching emphasis in this Spiritual Warrior context and the accompanying prayer.

- *That utterance may be given.* (v. 19 KJV).
- *That I may open my mouth boldly.* (v. 19 KJV).
- *To make known the mystery of the gospel.* (v. 19 KJV).
- *I am an ambassador.* (v. 20 KJV)
- *To speak boldly as I ought to speak.* (v. 20 NET).

So, let's conclude with a few observations. There appears to be a joint effort taking place. It is quite right for us to take the initiative and use creativity, innovation, and strategy to think of ways to preach to the world around us.

Also, there are specific commandments for us as faithful believers to be “ready” to preach. This instruction must involve developing a mindset that focuses on a desire to preach and putting in personal effort on what to say and how to express the faith we hold to different groups within our society.

So far, it looks like it's all up to us.

However, Scripture makes it clear that it is “God that gives the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6 KJV), and that if God is not involved in the building of the house, “they labour in vain that build.” (Psalm 127:1 KJV).

Preaching is truly a Divine/Human partnership!

*How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent by God?*  
(Romans 10:14).

*Darren Tappouras,  
Gosford Ecclesia, NSW*

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1 All Scriptural citations are taken from the English Standard Version, unless specifically noted.

I N M E M O R I A M  
**Bro. Nassib Shankour**

**Y**OU might ask why a memorial for a brother who fell asleep recently belongs in a special section about “Personal Preaching.” Bro. Nassib fell asleep on June 25 after a battle with cancer. For those of us who knew him, Bro. Nassib was a cheerful and loving brother, one we were always pleased to see during our day. Our prayers for comfort and strength are with his family, his wife, Sis. Norma Shankour and his teenage daughter, Sis. Abigail.

Bro. Nassib was a wonderful example of a single servant deciding to make a difference in the lives of others. A native of Syria and fluent in Arabic, Bro. Nassib discerned that there was an important and unique service that he could fulfill for other Arabic speakers seeking the truth. Waking up early in the day, well before normal hours, Bro. Nassib hosted Zoom Bible classes with students located in Europe and the Middle East. When you spoke with Bro. Nassib about this work, he was literally brimming with enthusiasm. His teaching led many to baptism. He demonstrated in his classes that he was interested in teaching his students and genuinely cared for them.

Here is a loving tribute from several of those who were baptized after being led in classes by Bro. Nassib.

*We express our gratitude to your wife and daughter for the time you*

*generously gave to us, your students. Our prayer is to see you, our teacher, returned to life and full health again when your Master returns, whom you served faithfully. Dear teacher, you are an example for all of us to use our time wisely and in serving God. Thank you so much for your teaching, for your patience, for your kindness.*

*Your brothers in Christ Jesus.*

*Bro. Abdul Abbas, Bro. Adel Ghaneem, Bro. Hamed Al-Hamoudi, Bro. Muhammad Al-Ayashi, Bro. Mustafa Aziz Hussain, Bro. Nowruz El-Yashi*

When we are graced with examples of faith from those around us, it makes us take note that our time also needs to be redeemed. It puts life’s priorities in clear view. As Paul wrote:

*For this reason, it says, “Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you.” So then, be careful how you walk, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:14-16 NASB).*

Let us glorify our God, as our Bro. Nassib did. May Bro. Nassib’s sleep be short. *“Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20).*

*Dave Jennings*



# SEEKING SUPPORT IN TIMES OF LONELINESS

*Experiencing the loss of my mother as a late teen  
has affected me in many ways.*

*By Naomi Gallagher*

**F**OR a long time, I have worked with kids in various ways: teaching Sunday school, babysitting, being an au pair, leading youth events, and professionally as an Occupational Therapist. I was so excited to have my own child and start a family. I remember being thrilled to share the news with my ecclesial family that I was pregnant, and when my son was born, I couldn't wait for everyone to meet him. I was eager to return to the Breaking of Bread, and just a few weeks after the birth of my son, I went to the meeting for the first time.

I am naturally an extrovert, so not doing much for the first few days, weeks, and months was hard for me. I was very aware of my new role as a mother, and while I was so in love with my new son, I also felt overwhelmed and a bit clueless. I was happy to return to my ecclesial family but didn't realize how much attending the meeting would change for me. When will he next need to be fed? Where will I feed him? How will I get the emblems if I'm feeding? All these thoughts ran through my head while simultaneously trying to get spiritual food from the Breaking of Bread service.

It was (and still is) challenging, and I remember feeling quite uncertain about where I fit in. My new child was a gift from God, but I didn't feel like I was quickly adjusting to this being my new role in the ecclesial family. Even outside the ecclesial setting, my husband had returned to work, and I felt a bit lost about my new identity as a mother. My son struggled to put on weight in the beginning, and I felt like I was just trying to get through the day learning my new baby and what he needed. As weeks and months went on, I realized the new normal would be finding it hard to be spiritually fed when attending the meeting. Even now, as my son has just turned two, I am trying to teach him to sit through a Breaking of Bread, which can be exhausting and hilarious. He calls out for family members or other kids, makes animal sounds, and sings. It is a joy, but my mind is focused on

mother. I don't have her support and guidance to lead me in this phase of life. This makes my spiritual family so much more important to me. I look at the mothers and women in mother roles around me, watching how they are raising children and being spiritual leaders to their children.

There are no other kids around the same age as my son and no other moms in the same stage of life as me currently at our ecclesia. I realized for my own spiritual life, I just wasn't able to get everything I wanted or needed out of a Sunday morning. I started proactively looking for other things to fill my cup in this new phase of my life. I found a Christian mom's group at another church and decided to attend. I was immediately welcomed. We shared food and coffee, watched a video on a spiritual topic, and discussed the video, relating it to our roles as mothers. I

## I look at the mothers and women in mother roles around me, watching how they are raising children and being spiritual leaders to their children...

teaching him how to sit through the service quietly, so getting nourishment from the exhortation continues to be challenging. My husband often performs a duty with our small ecclesia and cannot always help during this time.

Experiencing the loss of my mother as a late teen has affected me in many ways. Perhaps one of the most profound has been not having her to talk to as I am learning and growing in my role as a

have been attending this group for over a year now, and it gives me a little bit of spiritual sustenance and a shared understanding among Christian mothers raising children. Is it ideal? Of course not. I'd love to have a Mom's group with kids running around at my ecclesia, but that isn't practical right now, so that is okay.

I would be amiss if I did not mention how my ecclesia and the individuals around me have supported me because



these acts of service and love are invaluable to me. One of the best things has been our ecclesia assigning funds to revamp our nursery space. Since we run a Zoom meeting, we bought a TV for the nursery, and I can watch the service when I have to be in the nursery with my son. The rest of the room is also a much more practical space for me to be in, for which I am immensely grateful. Other things that have been so helpful to me are when people helped pack boxes or took my son to the park when we moved houses, people who brought meals when my son was born, those who took a shift to look after my son during the meeting, ones who met up for coffee, those who watched my son so I could eat lunch during potlucks, those who cooked a meal and gave it to us when we were sick, and those who watched our son so my husband and I can go on a date.

These outpourings of love mean the world to me in this season of life. The love shown to my family is one of the greatest gifts. This love is a taste of the love God has for us and the love I want my son to feel. This phase of my life is about teaching my son about God and nurturing his spiritual life. Our ecclesia is great at showing love to children, and I know at age two that my son already feels that unconditional love that God shows us. Just last week, we went to the meeting on a Saturday for an event, and as soon as we entered the parking lot, my son realized where he was and let out an excited “Yesss!” Seeing his joy is the greatest gift as a mother. To see my son excited to be at our ecclesia and know the love he has from others and God is a great joy.

*Naomi Gallagher,  
San Francisco Peninsula Ecclesia, CA*

EXHORTATION AND CONSOLATION

# THE APOSTLE PAUL'S ECCLESIAL GUIDELINES

*By Alan Smith*



### Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5

**A**N exhortation based on one of Apostle Paul's letters to the Mediterranean region readily invites an introduction. His moment of epiphany while on his way to Damascus wrenched his heart from hate and vengeance to be changed into a selfless, sacrificing, humble, and dedicated servant in Christ. His healed heart and unwavering zeal for preaching the Gospel accredited his ministry while establishing and nurturing the Mediterranean churches. The "nurturing" aspect of keeping an early ecclesia engaged and focused in its faith had to be practiced explicitly. It was a credit to the church elders for their efforts to stay in touch with Paul about issues, threatening to misguide the ecclesia from its devoted faith and service. When personal visits were impossible, Paul remained dedicated to the churches even when he wrote from the dreadful prison. For Paul, it was a labor of love to do whatever he could to encourage the churches to follow the Light represented in the Son of God.

In our reading this morning, we are divinely gifted to receive a list of ecclesial guidelines Paul typically expressed in his letters. God's gift of the Holy Scriptures, specifically the record of Paul's letters, also serves as a guiding light for us. Let us consider some of Paul's wisdom in his first letter to the Church at Thessalonica.

Paul begins chapter five with these words:

*Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need*

*to have anything written to you. (1 Thessalonians 5:1).<sup>1</sup>*

The Apostle Paul refers to speculations attempting to extrapolate the hour of Christ's second return from various celestial and terrestrial events. Prominent figures in theology share places in history for their failed attempts at predicting the hour of Christ's arrival. John Wesley speculated Christ would return by 1836. The Protestant Reformers Luther, Wycliffe, Knox, and Calvin were all responsible for failed predictions. Luther's prediction in 1540 placed Christ's return no later than 1840. Augustine of Hippo generally believed Christ would return by AD 650.

A Christian radio broadcaster and evangelist, Harold Camping, who passed away in 2013, attempted to predict the Messiah's return on five dates. His last prediction, widely reported through a successful evangelical broadcast center in California, was May 21, 2011. The consequence of these failed predictions ruined the lives of countless people who had fanatically followed the voices of those fanatically confident in their predictions of the time of Christ's return. Paul had addressed this concern earlier in his second letter to the church at Thessalonica:

*For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon [a woman with child],*



and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. (1 Thessalonians 5:2-4).

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4)

Our Christadelphian community has made similar mistakes in predicting the Lord's return. Scripture advises us repeatedly about the vanity of attempting to calculate that day. In Acts chapter 1:7-8, the apostles had asked their master about when he would restore Israel,

*He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed **by his own authority**. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has*

*come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

And in Matthew's gospel,

*But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore, you, also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. (Matthew 24:36, 43-44).*

Divining the course of history to determine the return of the Messiah is a vanity and, certainly, a risky vanity.

Why did Jesus declare "the Father only?"

Because God, alone, knows the ways of the human heart. For it is the ways of humankind that shape the outcome of history. When Jesus' disciples asked him when the end times would occur, their Master answered by describing the destruction of Judea.

*[The inhabitants of Judea] will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:24).*

I consider Jesus' stipulation that the end-times of the Gentiles speaks to a specific moment known only to our

heavenly Creator. Human history has proved to be a halting, stuttering course of events marking terrible times and jubilant celebrations. Therefore, divining the course of history to determine the return of the Messiah is a vanity and, certainly, a risky vanity. If we are not to know the hour of our beloved Master's return, what are we exhorted to do while we wait? Jesus teaches us in Matthew 24:44, "Therefore you also must be ready." That is, to be prepared for that great day.

Apostle Paul explained to the Church at Thessalonica that preparation for the day of Christ's return starts with turning away from the "darkness of the world" by becoming "children of the light."

*But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So, then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. **But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.*** (1 Thessalonians 5:4-8).

Paul uses a handful of metaphors distilled into meanings used by Jesus and the apostles to represent a believer's readiness in their hope of salvation. Paul reminds the believer that it is not enough to be personally familiar with interpretations of Christ



as "the light," a representation of salvation. We must adopt the principles and commandments of Christ to shield us from the worldly influences that threaten to burrow under the faithful "armor." We pledge to wear that armor to protect our dedication and love for our Savior.

The tenor of his letters sums up the Apostle Paul's efforts in encouraging the churches surrounding the Mediterranean Sea with the principles of the hope of salvation through Christ. Jewish exiles were encouraged to hear Paul's words of that hope, which promised to supersede the condemnation left by the Law of Moses. In our reading, verses nine through eleven, Paul stated,

*For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we might live with him. Therefore encourage*

*one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.* (1 Thessalonians 5:9-11).

To what was the Apostle Paul referring when he penned, “*For God has not destined us for wrath.*”? When I first read this passage, I thought Paul’s use of the word “*wrath*” alluded to the curses of the Law, which are superseded by the death, burial, and resurrection of

*in the Lord, and instruct you. Hold them in the highest regard, loving them because of their work. Live in peace with each other. We urge you, brothers, to admonish those who are idle, cheer up those who are discouraged, and help those who are weak. Be patient with everyone. Make sure that no one pays back evil for evil. Instead, always pursue*

**Avoid raising any judgmental stumbling blocks that would discourage a frail heart. Instead, we are encouraged to build up our strengths and use them.**

Jesus Christ. However, the relevant cross-references associated with verses nine through eleven point to a more imminent threat: the increasing affliction of believers in God and His Son. Considering the deterioration of contemporary societal values, Paul’s appeal to “*encourage one another and build each other up*” suggests “*faithful strength in numbers!*” which lovingly encourages “*Faithful strength in ourselves!*”

Therefore, we are to avoid raising any judgmental stumbling blocks that would discourage a frail heart. Instead, we are encouraged to build up our strengths and use them. It is a solemn service to promote the light that shines in others who have elected to put on the body of Christ.

The Apostle Paul continues in his appeal to the Thessalonian Church’s responsibility in preserving unity:

*Brothers, we ask you to show your appreciation for those who work among you, set an example for you*

*what is good for each other and for everyone else.* (1 Thessalonians 5:12-15 ISV).

As was the case in the early churches, elders were appointed to assume offices of management. It was, and still is, the human approach to elect leaders to manage tasks in an institution of faith. History records such appointments gave rise to ministers, bishops, presbyters, priests, and deacons. Regardless of the human need for strong leadership roles, Paul’s concern was for a church to remain peacefully and respectfully assembled in a unified pursuit that continued steadfastly in the spirit of oneness in Christ. We pray together for the day when our own households will be unified in the one body, Jesus Christ, as Paul had exhorted repeatedly to the Mediterranean churches.

He wrote these words to the church at Ephesus:

*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk*

*worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Ephesians 4:1-6 KJV).*

We now come to the remaining verses in our reading this morning. I envision Paul's concluding remarks as gathering the church members close into a loving embrace to touch their hearts with the desires Jesus Christ had voiced for all that love him. *"Rejoice Always!"* Be encouraging in everything we do. Thank God for all His blessings. *"Pray without ceasing!"* Devote time to give thanks through prayer during our daily labors. *"Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good!"* Paul repeats this especially important appeal in all his letters. *"Holding fast to what is good"* not only reminds the church that their faith must continually

seek the Truth as clearly defined in the principles of the gospels and the commandments of Christ but to abstain *"from every form of evil"* that threatens to jeopardize the church's labors in Christ.

Paul sums up his exhortation in 1 Thessalonians 5:23:

*Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Paul's words, *"to ready ourselves for our beloved Master's return,"* require us to remain steadfast in our pledge to our Savior by remembering his victory over sin and death. It is what the Apostle Paul meant when he implored the churches to *"pray without ceasing."* May our minds rise above the tangled web of dust that defines our daily lives during our temporal existence and thank our heavenly Father for sending His Son in whom we place our Hope.

*Alan Smith,  
Ann Arbor Ecclesia, MI*

# A HOME FOR GOD'S NAME

By Jackie Grieve

## Reading: Deuteronomy 12

**YOU** could have a local butcher in your town or village in Israel, but the butcher was subject to a law that forbade butchering animals that were dedicated to God for ceremonial purposes. Five times in Deuteronomy 12 and four more times in Deuteronomy, Israel was told to take those animals to “*the place God would choose to put his Name*” and to be the subject of feasting and rejoicing there.

So, where did God put his Name? I always thought of that as Jerusalem, but that was later in Israel’s history. The Ark first rested at Shiloh, about 30 km north of Jerusalem. Was God’s Name there too? Did the Ark rest there because Shiloh was in the inheritance of Joshua’s tribe, and it was his choice as leader of Israel then? Or was there a “blank” while Israel waited for God to reveal His choice of where he would

choose to put His Name? All Israel gathered at Shiloh to set up the tent of meeting (Joshua 18.1). Was that the people’s choice, or was it God’s choice?

I found nothing in Joshua suggesting that Shiloh was God’s choice. However, I found this in Jeremiah 7:12

*Go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for my Name.<sup>1</sup>*

And this in Psalm 78:60:

*He abandoned the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent he had set up among humans.*

From those words it seems Shiloh was where God first chose to put his Name, represented by the Worship Tent and the Ark.

Fast-forward 400 years to Samuel. In his time, the priesthood was in disarray, formal worship corrupt, and probably abandoned by most people. Samuel,

a Kohathite (so, not a “full” priest), traveled a limited circuit in Israel, encouraging the people to worship. Where was God’s Name located then?

After going as a mascot into battle against the Philistines, the Ark was stolen, returned by them under duress, and then hidden away in private houses for years. Four hundred years had passed since it was placed at God’s instruction to represent him at Shiloh.

At the end of that time, King David was very disturbed that there was no proper place for the Ark, no formal working center of worship, and no place for God’s Name. He swore an oath that he wouldn’t rest until he had found a resting place for the Ark (Psalm 132.2-5). 2 Samuel 7:2 summarizes that resolve in the interview with Nathan: “I am living in a house of cedar while the Ark of God remains in a tent.” But God said, not yet.

Solomon later said God told his father that when Zion in Jerusalem had been fully conquered, it was to be the place. Psalm 78:67-69 puts it this way:

*Then he rejected the tents of Joseph, he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim; but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loved. He built his sanctuary like the heights, like the earth that he established for ever.*

See more commentary in Psalm 132 and Psalm 87.

More than 400 years after God placed his Name at Shiloh, Jerusalem became the final place where God’s Name was located, the center of formal worship. When the temple Solomon built was complete, God showed his approval when His glory entered and filled it. (1 Kings 8.10-11).

God’s instruction for Israel to worship in the place God would choose means there could be no competition among the tribes or competing locations for priority as the place of worship. Jerusalem was and remains until at the least the end of The Millennium. Ezekiel 48:35 puts it this way: *“And the name of the city from that time on will be: THE LORD IS THERE.”*

When we travel, we must carry tangible nationality passports to get us through human barriers to enter a country. But we also carry our real, intangible passport, the “not on paper” one that doesn’t need security features. That’s God’s “passport” to us. Ours is a Zion passport, for which there are no barriers to entry.

Korah wrote a song about it:

*On the holy mountain stands the city founded by the LORD. He loves the city of Jerusalem more than any other city in Israel. O city of God, what glorious things are said of you! (Psalm 87:1-3 NLT).*

*Jackie Grieve,  
Pakuranga Ecclesia, NZ*

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural citations are taken from the New International Version, unless specifically noted.

EXHORTATION AND CONSOLATION

# THE CHRIST CANDLE

*By Helen Smallwood*



**L**ATELY I have been very tempted to light a Christ candle.

I heard a talk about the Lost Sheep parable. The sheep managed to wander away, and the son willfully left. But in the companion parable, the coin was lost inside the house. It was lost by the woman (the ecclesia), and a candle had to be lit to find it. The ecclesia was so dark that the light of Christ had to be rekindled to spread its warm glow.

John wrote

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. (John 1:1, 4, 9).<sup>1</sup>*

Scripture is full of light images, from Eden to Revelation. Finally, in Revelation, we learn there will be no more need for the sun, as “*the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*” (Revelation 21:23 KJV). God’s glory will fill the earth.

Jesus described those in the land of Zebulon and Naphtali as “*a people living in darkness who have seen a great light.*” (Matthew 4:16).

I don’t know about you, but sometimes I feel shrouded in darkness. The world is slowly closing in, the thorns are choking, and there seems little hope of change. I need the Christ candle. I need the light of Christ to gradually filter into all the dark recesses of my life and heart—to bring to light anything I am keeping hidden from shame or guilt, or I have put in the “too hard” basket.

What am I afraid of? Why do I need to keep some things hidden?

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9).*

Can we really take God at His word here? Do we really believe that we have been chosen?

*Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine. When you pass through waters, I will be with you; through rivers, you shall not be swept away. (Isaiah 43:1-4 NAB).*

Chosen for what?

*Nothing between us and God, our faces shining with the brightness of his face. And so we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like him. (2 Corinthians 3:18 MSG).*

Can we really imagine that?

Paul writes that he desires that Christ’s life become visible in our lives (Galatians 4:19, Romans 13:14, Philippians 2:5). We can make the invisible visible in our lives! Jesus was the exact representation of God, and we are the Body of Christ. So, that makes us the representation of God on earth. But to be that we have to allow Christ’s light to shine in us and reveal all the areas that need to be swept out and renovated.



C.S. Lewis wrote,

Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself.<sup>2</sup>

Imagine that! God is living in us.

Jesus answered him, *“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”* (John 14:23 ESV).

We had better get the vacuum and duster out and tidy up a bit to prepare for renovation in our lives. Giving up parts of our life for Christ is not easy. We will resist or justify, or just plain hold on as tightly as we can to what we know. What we know is safer than the unknown. But is it?

*The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?* (Psalm 27:1).

Jesus said he would send the Holy Spirit as the “*guarantee*” of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14). The word “*guarantee*” originally comes from a Phoenician word and is sometimes used in literature for “engagement ring.” What a beautiful metaphor! We become part of the bride of Christ, and that promise is sealed with a ring.

There are many verses about being filled with the Spirit, allowing it to do the cleaning and renovating needed in our hearts and lives. We need to give ourselves up to its work and love.

*You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.* (Romans 8:9-10 ESV).

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own.* (1 Corinthians 6:19 ESV).

We now belong to God because we have been adopted into His family.

*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears[a] we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.* (1 John 3:1-2 ESV).

So, what does this mean in our day-to-day lives?



We have changed forever, and we cannot return to where we were. Our lives are now different. They have to be different because we have been redeemed by the glory of the cross. We are now Kingdom people, showing the world what it will be like when Jesus is King. Paul calls Jesus Lord, as Jesus now has all authority on earth and in heaven. (Matthew 28:18).

*However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived”—the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God*

*except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. (1 Corinthians 2:9-12).*

*For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. (1 Corinthians 13:12 ESV).*

We try to live now as we will live in the Kingdom. If we want peace in the Kingdom, then we live peaceful lives now. Each individual believer is a microcosm of the Kingdom, chosen to be God’s image bearer, to reflect God’s glory on earth, and to reflect the praises of the world to God.

*Helen Smallwood,  
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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural citations are taken from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis, C.S., *Mere Christianity*, Geoffrey Bles, Publisher, July 7, 1952.

# MAKING MUSIC TOGETHER

A VISIT WITH SIS. JOANNE GOULD



*By Jessica Gelineau*

**O**N A Friday this past February, I spent a lovely morning at the home of my friend, Sis. Kristin Atwood. Sis. JoAnne Gould, Sis. Kristin's grandmother spends many Fridays with Sis. Kristin and her three sons and they have lunch together. It was a treat to share in this hospitality. I had the opportunity to sit in the living room with Sis. JoAnne and swap stories about our love of music. I was keen to hear about Sis. JoAnne's years of experience organizing and directing Bible School cantatas and Sunday School programs, among other projects that I knew she had had a huge hand in.

I first met Sis. JoAnne in 2007. I'd flown out to California from my home state of New Jersey to attend the Idyllwild Bible School. As a young adult at Bible Schools and youth conferences, I always participated in choir programs if they were an option! I soon learned that Idyllwild was known for having a themed music program, a cantata, which was rehearsed by many Bible school attendees throughout the week and then sung in entirety on the last night of Bible school. My first time at Idyllwild was during the era (1991-2008) when JoAnne was directing the cantata. Before and after she served as the director, she acted as pianist and collaborator—formerly with her good friend Sis. Cynthia Magill, from 1967-1990, and more recently again with her granddaughter, Sis. Kristin. In 2009, Kristin stepped into her grandma's shoes as the Idyllwild cantata director, and JoAnne became the piano accompanist for the yearly program. Just recently, several others have also started playing some of the piano pieces.

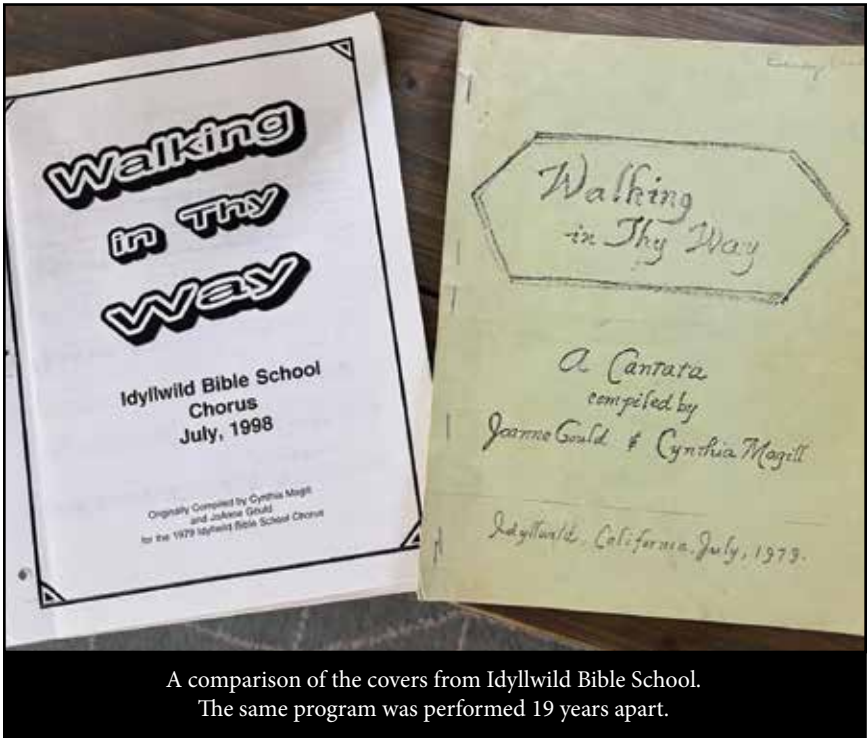
Sis. JoAnne remarked that when she initially took on the role of cantata director, "I cried! I said, I can't do that. I've never done that before." And yet, she did.

The role of the cantata director includes much preparation work: selecting, sourcing, and organizing all of the songs involved. As someone (okay, a mom of little kids) who finds it challenging to carve out time to type on my super-functional, lightweight MacBook Air that I can throw in my purse and take on the go, I gawked over the handwritten and photocopied cantata booklets from the 1970s that JoAnne had brought for me to peruse. "It was all done by hand, isn't that crazy? Cynthia would come down and stay with me, and we would spend several days deciding what to do."

"That's like a full-time job for a chunk of time!" I exclaimed.

"I didn't even try to get involved until my children were older," JoAnne noted. By then, her three daughters were essentially adults.

It was fascinating to compare a 1979 compilation of the "Walking in Thy Way" with a 1998 printed copy of the same program, recycled for use by a newer generation. JoAnne and I discussed how much has changed over time regarding what music is available to us—the breadth of resources, both within our Christadelphian community and in the larger Christian music scene. Changes in technology from 1979 to 1998 (as evidenced below) and much more so from 1998 to 2024 have greatly impacted how easy it is to notate, share, and collaborate on written scores and recorded music.



A comparison of the covers from Idyllwild Bible School.  
The same program was performed 19 years apart.

Sis. JoAnne’s journey as a musician and follower of our Lord began when she started piano lessons at age eight and continued to study the instrument formally until age sixteen. Around that same time, she was baptized and started playing piano at Sunday Meeting. Sitting down at her piano these days, she gravitates towards old classical pieces learned when she was younger, saying, “I like to go back and see if I can still play them!”

In addition to playing the piano, JoAnne also plays the organ and spends time at her home practicing organ for Sunday Memorial Services at her ecclesia, Verdugo Hills. Sis. JoAnne often plays the organ while another brother or sister plays the piano. It’s an experience that has (at least, for me, as a visitor) become a

bit of a trademark of the music at the Verdugo Hills memorial service. Regarding getting an organ and starting to use it regularly at the ecclesia, she shared that, in addition to many of the members really enjoying the sound, “So many of our pianists were hesitant and afraid, and when we did it together that helped them to feel more confident.”

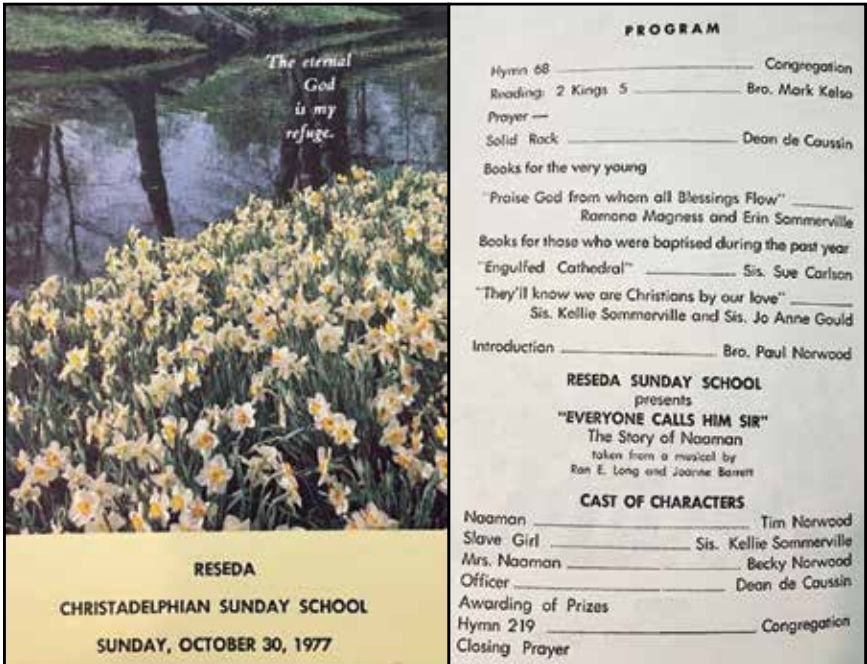
I love this idea, which came up more than once in my visit with Sis. JoAnne of (and this is my paraphrase), “Just do it with me, and it will be okay! We’re in this together.” This concept resonates with me so deeply when I consider all the joyful experiences I have had making music with a friend or group. We all need people who can come alongside us and say, “Just do it with me!”

“I’ve always enjoyed making music with people,” Sis. JoAnne went on. “Including playing for people that are singing. Years ago, we had a trio, Bro. Jack Collister, Sis. Teri Carlson and I, all playing the violin, cello, and piano. We played for many things, and it was just a lot of fun.”

These days, Sis. JoAnne remains an active member of the Verdugo Hills Ecclesia. For many years, from shortly after she and Bro. Dick Gould were married in 1954 until the early 1980s, and the Goulds were members of the Reseda Christadelphian Ecclesia. Among the artifacts from JoAnne’s incredible collection of Californian Christadelphian history are several

copies of the Reseda Sunday School programs JoAnne headed up. At the time, Bro. Dick was the Sunday School superintendent. In a similar vein to “Just do it with me,” Dick implemented the strategy of co-teaching, always assigning two teachers to a class. Sharing the work this way made it more likely for teachers to volunteer, as they had someone else to lean on and collaborate with. Co-teaching also made for easy plan-sharing and substituting when one teacher was traveling or needed to stay home for the week.

Sis. JoAnne shared, “When I was growing up, and until this time, Sunday School programs were always a mixture



Snapshots of a program from the 1977 Reseda Ecclesia Sunday School Program, which included a musical on Naaman titled “Everyone Calls Him Sir”.

of kids getting up and reciting poetry, playing an instrument, or classes doing a little skit or something. So, one year, I said, “Wouldn’t it be fun if we did something altogether? We picked out a musical and did it together, and it was fun, and that’s basically what we did from there on out.” Sis. JoAnne did not necessarily write the musicals. I’m sure all the children and families involved at that time appreciated these efforts as much as I appreciate brothers and sisters who undertook similar feats for my kids.

Another way Sis. JoAnne has brought about musical praise within the Southern California ecclesias and the larger Christadelphian community is through her work on the Spanish Christadelphian Hymn Book. The original version, published in 1980, was a collaborative project by Sis. JoAnne and her friend Sis. Cynthia Magill. After the songs were compiled by brothers and sisters who were more fluent in Spanish, the project was turned over to the duo. Sis. JoAnne explained: “Cynthia wrote the music by hand, and I typed up the words. I worked in an office then, and we had a Remington Selectric typewriter. It had a ball on it that you could change, and I bought a Spanish ball, and I stayed after work to type the words on it. So that’s how that hymn book came about, and it took a while!”

I asked Sis. JoAnne, during our time together, “What advice or encouragement do you have for someone interested in music and

wants to use their gifts within our community?”

The key points she shared were:

- Be willing to participate!
- The more you learn, whatever it is that you’re involved in, the more you can contribute. In other words, hone your craft.
- You don’t have to be afraid like you’re the show’s star giving a big performance. When you share your musical gifts, ideally, it just feels cooperative. You’re praising God and worshiping and supporting other worshipers in being able to express their praise.

I was greatly encouraged by spending this time with Sis. JoAnne. Though she would probably think her accomplishments are unremarkable, I am learning that a gift we can give each other is to say out loud, “What you are doing inspires me.” By doing so, we combat the forces of discouragement that are always at play (including our own harsh inner criticism) and build each other up, ensuring that we all have enough heart to keep going.

*Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.* (1 Thessalonians 5:11 ESV).

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# SCRIPTURE'S THREE IMPONDERABLES *AND ONE ESSENTIAL PONDERABLE*

*By David Levin*



**T**HE Bible proposes, though only by implication, three great questions. None of them is directly stated, discussed, or answered and only one is given even a nod toward explanation. All three questions are beyond human comprehension, yet awareness of them is vital to faith.

These three imponderables are:

1. How do we account for a self-existent, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent Deity?
2. How can God know and control all human events yet allow humans to behave of their own volition?



3. How can New Testament ethics require us to be complete followers of Christ, perfect in every thought and behavior, when this is clearly impossible?

### An Uncreate God

A purely material (atheistic) universe raises the question, “If there is no Creator, where did ‘stuff’ come from? Time, matter, and energy are not self-existent. They require a Creator. But that just shoves the question back one big step to “Where does this creator come from?”

This question has no answer because it is an invalid question. The Creator doesn’t “come from” anyplace or anywhere. The Creator always was and is eternal and self-existent. We call this Creator “God.”

Self-existence and eternity are given attributes of God, not of the physical universe. The eternal existence of God is logical, even if we can’t comprehend the “how” or the reality of an eternal God. Yet here we are. I’ll take the imponderable, self-existent, eternal God over the impossible physical-only universe.

The Bible does not attempt to explain the existence of God. The first sentence of the Bible, Genesis 1:1, elegantly assumes a God who is apart from the physical universe and called it into existence. This verse implies an eternal, omnipotent God, but Scripture never goes further than that by way of explanation. It’s a fact of theological life, and humans can’t grasp anything more.

Even more striking and incomprehensible is that the Creator God is also a *personal* God to every human being who has ever lived, even if the overwhelming majority of them declined to recognize this relationship.



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### Free-will and Foreknowledge

Like the existence of an eternal God, foreknowledge and free will are assumed but never explained. The tension between them is explicit but overlooked when Jesus declares, *“The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed.”* (Matthew 26:24). This statement includes more than the specific act of Judas’s betrayal; it would include all those responsible for his crucifixion.

Peter’s similar statement in his Pentecost speech (Acts 2:22-23) invokes both of these realities: God’s determinate plan (*“set purpose,”* NIV) and foreknowledge and the criminal minds and hands of Jesus’ murderers. Later in the speech, Peter lays that guilt on the whole assembly (*“whom you crucified”*) and bids them to repent, indicating that they were personally culpable of Jesus’ death. Personally culpable, as in **it was their free choice to do so.**

The Old Testament has several asides indicating that a particular event occurred as ordained by God, even though the participants acted according to their own judgment and intentions and ignorance of providence (e.g., Judges 14:6, Joshua 11:20).

God’s will and foreknowledge operate

simultaneously with the actions of those who carry out God’s plan but act in accord with their own purposes and desires. They are doing volitionally (willingly) what God would have them do if they were marionettes on his strings.

How does this work? Scripture offers no explanation. It only teaches that this is indeed the case.

Paul’s extensive discussion in Romans 9-11 seems to take free choice off the board as an option. God makes people choose what they choose, so it appears. However, the context in this section of Romans is about God’s national purpose with Israel. This idea softens the conflict somewhat. Paul is not talking about faithful individuals because God has foreordained the matter, and they had no choice. Paul makes it clear elsewhere in Romans (e.g., 2:7) that individual choice, not Divine manipulation, steers one to belief. Yet it is also clear that God equips us with the power to believe and a brain to discern.

**Free choice, free will, and preordination have existed side-by-side since Adam’s creation, and how they happen is always utterly beyond human comprehension.**

There is no point in trying to unscrew the inscrutable. Free choice, free will, and preordination have existed side-by-side since Adam’s creation, and how they happen is always utterly beyond human comprehension.

Imponderable number two: every thought and action you do is entirely yours, but it is in full accord with God’s purpose.

### **Be Perfect, Miserable Sinner**

Imponderable number three—the impossible task of living a life in perfect accord with Jesus’ teaching. This puzzle taxes the mind differently than the first two imponderables. Maybe this is not so hard for you to figure out, and indeed, the Bible does give some leads on understanding this one. Perhaps I am sensitive to this matter because of my career in psychotherapy.

In addition to the selfish, short-sighted, and biased-to-pleasure natural mind, each one of us, some tragically so, grows up with psychological adversity. Taking a long view, we see all of us have been born into generations of accumulated psychological trauma engendered by wars, displacement, genocide, greed, alcoholism, adultery, and families broken by death, divorce, depression, and drugs. Directly or indirectly, immediate or remote, we’re all born and raised in this moral and emotional quagmire.

My clients were a daily reminder of how vicious life can be. People who were raped and sodomized, who had family members die by homicide and suicide, who were victims of physical and emotional abuse from alcoholic and borderline parents, and so on.

Many of their psychological traumas were less extreme but nonetheless left them with significant emotional problems. Perhaps theirs was “just” a father who never praised the 99% grade but criticized the one mistake or the distant mother who remained stuck in postpartum depression. Life hands us psychological affronts abundantly and variedly.

Yet Scripture makes no accommodation for what happens to us along the way. We are all expected to function as if we have no impediments to our emotional, spiritual, and psychological well-being. Scripture neither mentions tragic upbringings (though we can see familial dysfunction in the patriarchal and David narratives) nor gives any slack to such victims of abuse. The goal for everyone is the same: perfection in thought and behavior. Think right, do right, no matter your past.

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**perfection in thought and behavior.**  
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So where's the imponderable in all this? That each of us is the product of thousands of years of rampant human sin, yet God sorts all of this out and accepts us based on our faith in his grace. He judges us perfectly in our impossible quest to live a perfectly spiritual life.

### **What is Ponderable?**

You can exasperate your brain trying to grasp these imponderables. The answers are not for human consumption. These imponderables, though, do have a practical role to play in our spiritual lives. They give a context for Christian character, broadly encapsulated in the fruit of the Spirit.

In contrast to unfathomable theological chestnuts, these character traits benefit our lives and society in general in manifestly obvious ways. Love, forgiveness, patience, kindness, and gratitude are easily understood as

the guides to life and even more readily appreciated when experienced in our interpersonal affairs.

You'll have no problem figuring out how gratitude, for instance, is spiritually and emotionally beneficial. Forgiveness heals relationships, a simple concept if not always easy to practice. Love makes everyone feel better and accepted. These concepts are readily grasped and, unlike the imponderables, practical in real life.

So, three cheers for the ponderable! Christian virtue is readily understood, good for you now, and prepares you for your place in God's kingdom.

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# THE DEVIL IN HEBREWS

*By Richard Morgan*



**W**HEN speaking to those who believe in a supernatural devil, we often take them to Hebrews 2:14, where we read that Jesus was of the same nature as us, “*that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.*”<sup>1</sup> Strong arguments can be made from this verse to prove that the term “*the devil*” does not refer to the supernatural being of apostate Christianity. Usually, the conclusion is that the “*devil*” here refers to sin in the flesh or human nature.

However, we miss a lot by looking at the verse out of its immediate context and that of the book of Hebrews. This instance is the only time we encounter the word “*devil*” in the Book of Hebrews. For that reason alone, it should pique our interest in why the Spirit chose this word in this context. We need to fit the use of the word devil into the following scenario:

- Hebrews was written to warn Jewish Christians against returning to the Law of Moses.
- The book's main subject is the superior priesthood of Christ over that under the Law.
- Hebrews 2 is about Christ's future dominion and superiority over the angels.

In verses 5 to 8, a quotation from Psalm 8 proves Christ's superiority over the angels. The writer makes an excellent case for Christ's superior priesthood since angels and priests perform the same function as ministers and similar arguments are used for Christ's superiority over the angels, the same as his superiority over the priesthood under the Law.<sup>2</sup> The argument goes that whereas the Psalm speaks of Jesus

as “*a little while lower than the angels*” (Psalm 8:5 KJV), he has now been “*crowned... with glory and honour*”<sup>3</sup> and hence raised to a greater status.

The reason for Jesus being made lower than the angels is given as “*so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*” (Hebrews 2:9). By using the phrase “*taste death*” here, the writer echoes John 8, where the Jews question Jesus' teaching by saying, “*You say, If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.*” (John 8:52). This is a misquote of what Jesus really said but is what Hebrews picks up on. It is one of a series of allusions that the early chapters in Hebrews make to this context,<sup>4</sup> because the question in Hebrews 7 and 8 is what authority Jesus had regarding what he said about the Law.<sup>5</sup>

The allusion helps us identify the devil since the word is in the context Hebrews directed our attention to. Jesus is discussing with the Jews and rebukes them forcibly by saying, “*You are of your father the devil.*” (John 8:44). This proclamation was a counterpunch to their implied false accusation that Jesus was “*born of sexual immorality*” (verse 41) because he would have appeared to be an illegitimate son of Mary.<sup>6</sup>

Jesus says the devil “*was a murderer from the beginning,*” alluding to Cain's killing of his brother Abel and forecasting his own death at the hands of his brethren. Spiritually speaking, Cain was born of sexual immorality (1 John 3:8-15), and this is what Jesus is saying to the Jews. We can also think of the law of the cities of refuge that if a man killed someone “*in enmity*” (Numbers 35:21), they were counted

as a murderer, just like Cain. This law is taken up in Ephesians 2, which speaks of Christ's sacrifice in these terms:

*By abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. (Ephesians 2:15-16)*

This is a key verse in our understanding of the devil in Hebrews since the word “abolishing” (Gk. *katargeo*) is the same as the word “destroy” in Hebrews 2:14. The passage states that the “hostility” (the conflict between the serpent and the seed of the woman) is two things: the Law, and in alluding to the law concerning the cities of refuge, the antagonism between those who oppose each other, like Cain and Abel. The phrase “killing the hostility” alludes to the end of Numbers 35:21, which says, “Put the murderer to death,” but in fact, it is the enmity between the murderer and his foe that is slain in Ephesians. Thus, it is the root cause of the animosity that is solved by Christ's death,<sup>7</sup> and this enmity, says Ephesians, is actually the law of commandments.<sup>8</sup>

A second clue as to the identification of the devil is in Hebrews 2:10, where Jesus is called “the founder of their salvation.” The word “founder” (Gk. *Archegos*<sup>9</sup>) is only used four times in the New Testament and always of the Lord Jesus Christ. Each time the word occurs, the context is the same:

*The God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered*

*over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses... And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers.<sup>10</sup> (Acts 3:13-15, 17).*

*The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior. (Acts 5:30-31).*

*Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.<sup>11</sup> Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself. (Hebrews 12:2-3).*

In each of these passages, the Lord Jesus, as the “Author,” “Leader,” or “founder,” is suffering under the hand of the Jewish authorities who were murderers. Ironically, the people “asked for a murderer” in place of Jesus and chose the serpent over the seed of the woman, thus becoming the seed of the serpent and murderers themselves.

The third item of evidence for identifying the devil in Hebrews is seen in three Old Testament quotations in Hebrews 2:12-13. While each of the contexts quoted helps prove the writer's point that Jesus is “not ashamed to call them brothers” (Hebrews 2:11), they also continue to give us insight into the devil of verse 14. The key element

in each context is those who are the enemies of Christ.

Hebrews 2:12 quotes Psalm 22:22 in a context, which is obviously about Jesus on the cross. In the psalm, Jesus is “*despised by the people*” (verse 6) and beset around with enemies (verses 7-8, 12-13, 16-18.) Hebrews 2:13 contains two quotations, the first from Psalm 18:2. We will look at this psalm later, but note the context speaks a lot about enemies (verses 4, 17, 37-38, 40, 42, 48). The final quotation is from Isaiah 8:18. A few verses before, the prophet speaks of Jesus as “*a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel... And many shall stumble on it.*” (Isaiah 8:14-15). This passage refers to the Jews who stumbled at the death of Christ and the teaching of the New Covenant. (1 Corinthians 1:23; Romans 9:32-33).

We can now read Hebrews 2:14 with the following evidence provided by the allusions and quotations that the previous verses have made:

- Jesus was made lower than the angels to suffer a death at the hands

of his brethren, the Jews, who are murderers.

- Jesus was raised to a status higher than the angels and, as the chief leader, has had all rulers put under his feet.
- The rulers of the Jews put Jesus to death for his preaching about the Law of Moses.

There is an interesting allusion to the life of Samson in Hebrews 2:14: “*that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death.*” We are told of Samson that “*the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those whom he had killed during his life.*” (Judges 16:30). This happened after Delilah betrayed him in a typical event that points forward to the betrayal by Judas. The “*lords of the Philistines*” (verse 5) who approached Delilah stood for the chief priests (Matthew 26:14-16) who wanted to “*bind him to humble him.*” As with the betrayal of Jesus, a reward of silver was offered.

Significantly, Samson is referred to as the “*enemy*” of the Philistines (Judges 16:23-24), and they say, “*Our god has*





given our enemy into our hand, the ravager of our country.” By being in their hands, Samson was under their power but was soon to fulfill his title as destroyer just as Jesus “destroyed him that hath the power of death.”

The words “power of death” allude to an Old Testament prophecy:

*I shall ransom them from the power of Sheol; I shall redeem them from Death. O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion is hidden from my eyes. (Hosea 13:14).*

The word “grave” in Hebrew is *sheol* and is identical in Hebrew to the name “Saul.”<sup>12</sup> In fact, two Sauls are alluded to in Hosea. Firstly, there is King Saul: “I gave you a king in my anger.” (verse 11). He was the one the people desired: “You said, ‘Give me a king and princes’” (verse 10), pointing forward to the rejection of the Prince of Life in favor of a murderer (Acts 3:14-15).

The second Saul is Saul of Tarsus, who, when he was the Apostle Paul, alludes to his old life when quoting Hosea 13:

*“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.” (1 Corinthians 15:55-56).*

The word “sting” here is the same as the word “pricks” used by Jesus when Saul met him on the road to Damascus (Acts 26:14 KJV). His strength was the law (Philippians 3:4-6), and we can see the connection with King Saul in that both men pursued true believers<sup>13</sup> in an attempt to kill them (1 Samuel 18:29; 19:1; Acts 9:1-2). Psalm 18, already

quoted in Hebrews 2, was written by David to commemorate his deliverance from Saul. The title of the Psalm says, “A Psalm of David... on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.”

Both David and the early Christians were afraid (Hebrews 2:15) of the hand or power of their enemies. However, both 1 Corinthians 15 and Psalm 18 speak of the victory over the power of death because of the resurrection of a man who destroyed the grave and death.

Psalm 18 has three parts: Christ’s death, resurrection, and exaltation. Christ prays for deliverance from his enemies (verse 3) who have the power of death (verses 4-5). God delivers him from his enemy (verse 17) by raising him from the dead because of his sinlessness<sup>14</sup> (verses 20-24). The pursuer now becomes the pursued as Christ is exalted and rules over his enemies, putting them under his feet (verses 37-45, 48). The same pattern appears in 1 Corinthians 15:21-26, which culminates with the words, “The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” Significantly, the word “destroyed” here is the same as that used in Hebrews 2:14.

One more detail from Hebrews 2:14 helps complete the picture: the use of the word “devil” itself, which literally means “false accuser.” We can see this is the one overriding and defining attribute of the enemies of Christ and his followers.

When Saul of Tarsus became Paul the Apostle, Jesus spoke the enigmatic words: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.” (Acts 26:14). The word “goads” is the same as the word “sting,” referring to the sting

of death which belonged to Paul as he persecuted the ecclesia under the strength of the Law. The word “kick” more exactly means “to kick with the heel” and is a stamp rather than a toe-poke. In other words, Jesus said to Saul, “It is hard for you to tread underfoot the sting of death which is sin,” an allusion to Genesis 3:15 and the conflict between the serpent and the seed of the woman.

The “problem” with this is that it is the wrong way around. Jesus says that Saul is the one doing the treading and that he is the serpent!<sup>15</sup> The same thing occurs in Psalm 41:9, a prophecy of the betrayal by Judas: “*Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.*” (see John 13:18). Shouldn’t this be the other way around? Isn’t Jesus the seed of the woman lifting his heel against men like Saul and Judas, the true seed of the serpent?

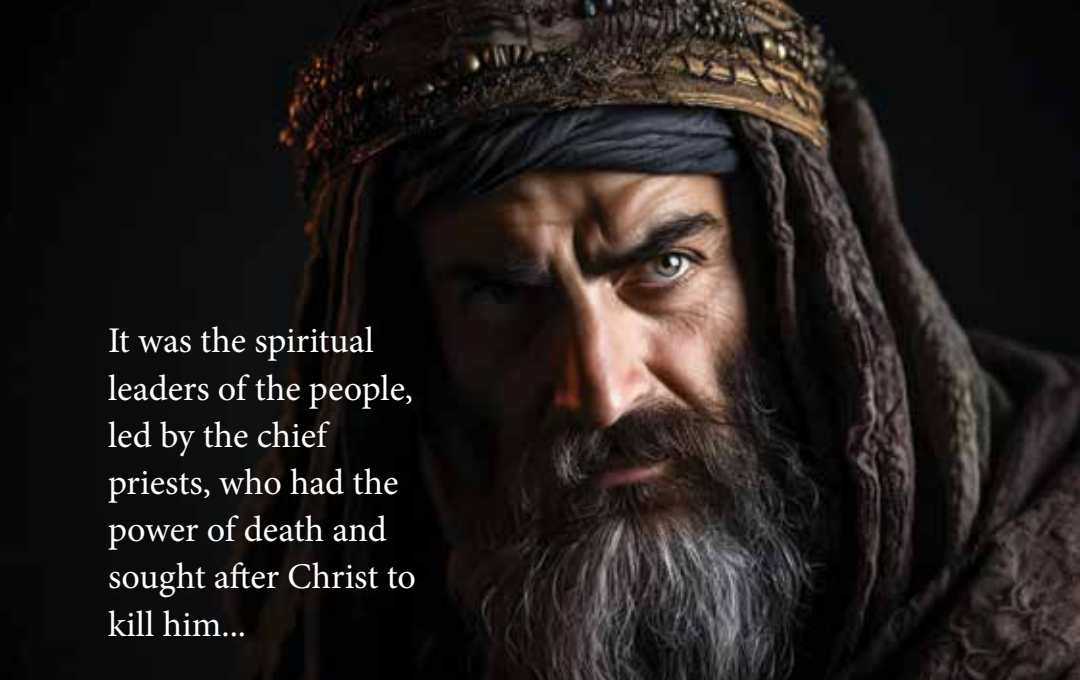
The answer is that those who are the enemies of the cross of Christ count those in the truth as their enemies and that they themselves are the ones who represent the truth. Saul of Tarsus thought he was doing the right thing, standing up for the Law of God and seeking to destroy this new religion that threatened to supplant all the traditions and rites of Judaism. Jesus was saying to him, “Saul, you picture yourself as the seed of the woman treading on the serpent,” but then Jesus proceeded to convert him so that he actually was doing that!<sup>16</sup>

Saul and others like him were false accusers, accusing the truth of being

in error. Jeremiah was someone who suffered such a false accusation when the officials accused him of the same thing Jesus was falsely accused with: “*This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city.*” (Jeremiah 26:11; see Matthew 26:59-62). The Jews were the ones who were to be the subjects of a curse (Jeremiah 26:6; cf. Genesis 3:14-15) but saw themselves instead as the ones on the sides of truth, putting themselves in place of God by saying, “*You shall die!*” (v. 8; cf. Genesis 2:17). Jeremiah says, “*I am in your hands*” (v. 14) recognizing he was in the hands of those who had the power to put him to death.<sup>17</sup>

The ones who falsely accused Jeremiah, thus identifying themselves as the devil, included “*the officials of Judah*” (v. 10), who “*took their seat in the entry of the New Gate.*” The gate was the place of power and authority. But the promise to Abraham was that Jesus would “*possess the gate of his enemies*”<sup>18</sup> (Genesis 22:17), signifying his dominion by putting all things under his feet.

From the evidence presented, we can conclude that the “*devil*” that has the “*power of death*” refers to the enemies of Christ, the ones who put him to death after they falsely accused him. This thought fits in with the context of the Book of Hebrews as a whole, which centers on Christ’s superior priesthood.<sup>19</sup> It was the spiritual leaders of the people, led by the chief priests (Gk. *archierius*), who had the



It was the spiritual leaders of the people, led by the chief priests, who had the power of death and sought after Christ to kill him...

power of death and sought after Christ to kill him. But in wounding his heel, their head was wounded as Christ became the captain of our salvation. He is now a greater High Priest, head over all principality and power.

However, there is a little more to the devil than just a reference to chief priests and rulers. We find that they are simply the representatives<sup>20</sup> of a whole system of thought.

The devil is “*destroyed*” by the death of Christ, but this word does not mean annihilation. The Greek word *katargeo* means “to abolish” or “render powerless” and is used in contexts that help further identify the devil of Hebrews 2.

The first occurrence of the word is in Luke 13:7 in a parable about a fig tree that did “*use up*” the ground and was fit only to be destroyed. The fig tree represents the nation of Israel that rendered the ground powerless to bring forth fruit<sup>21</sup> because they

sought righteousness by the works of the Law (Galatians 5:4). Paul picks up on this in Romans 4:14, saying, “*If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null, and the promise is void (katargeo).*” The reason for this is that “*the law brings wrath*” (v. 15) both in the righteous judgments of God upon those unable to keep the Law (Hebrews 2:2) and in the false accusations of those who use the Law unwisely, like the chief priests. In other words, the Law has the power of death. On the other hand, despite the best efforts of those like the Hebrews who tried to return to the Law, their unbelief cannot “*nullify (katargeo) the faithfulness of God.*” (Romans 3:3; also Galatians 3:17).

Another set of passages that use *katargeo* speak of abolishing the Law. The word is used four times in 2 Corinthians 3<sup>22</sup> (vv. 7, 11, 13, 14) to refer to the abolishment of the Law in a chapter that says that “*the letter*

kills” (vv. 6, 9). We also learn that sin (Romans 6:6) brings about death (1 Corinthians 15:26; 2 Timothy 1:10).

In 1 Corinthians 2, we are told of “*the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away (katargeo)*” (v. 6) because they “*crucified the Lord of glory*” (v. 8). These princes have a leader, the “*man of lawlessness*”<sup>23</sup> (2 Thessalonians 2:3) whom “*the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing (katargeo) by the appearance of his coming.*” (v. 8). Why is the Roman Catholic Church prophesied of in this way? Because it is spiritual apostate Israel having failed to heed the advice of the Book of Hebrews and gone back to the rituals of the Law.<sup>24</sup> The false church’s Pope, cardinals, and bishops are the latter-day chief priests who persecute faithful brethren in Christ.<sup>25</sup> The Book of Revelation predicts that this system, which had the power of death and to persecute, will be destroyed at the coming of Christ.

We can see the connection between the devil of Hebrews 2:14 and the Law that caused bondage (v. 15) and the “*fear of death*” by those condemned under it. However, there is also a link here with Romans:

*We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. (Romans 6:6-7).*

Hebrews 2:14-15 connects with the phrase “*brought to nothing*” (*katargeo*)

and the freedom from bondage. Here, the devil of Hebrews 2 is “*the body of sin*” and brings the whole subject down to a more personal level. The actions of the chief priests, for example, were simply a manifestation of the thinking of the flesh urged on by the Law.

“*Sin*” in Romans 6 is personified as a king, particularly King Saul. Verse 13 says, “*Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness,*” which alludes to Samuel’s description of the type of King that would reign over them if they rejected God (1 Samuel 8:6-18). The people would be under his power and do things like “*make his implements of war.*” (v. 12). They would become slaves to the King just as those under the Law were servants of sin (Romans 6:16-20). We have already seen that Saul is called the “*enemy*” (Psalm 18 title) and stands for the devil in Hebrews 2:14. But it is the root cause of the “*body of sin*” that drives those who oppose the will of God.

Romans 8 is a fitting summary, a chapter in which there is victory over “*the law of sin and death.*” (v. 2). The enemy is a “*mind that is set on the flesh*” (v. 7) and is overcome by having the hope of the resurrection in us (v. 11) in which we have been converted like Saul or Samson and “*led by the Spirit of God*”<sup>26</sup> out of the bondage of death<sup>27</sup> (vv. 15, 21-23). With this hope, no enemy can vanquish us (vv. 31-39).

There is both a doctrinal and practical note to be made by way of summary. Firstly, we can see that the “*devil*” in Hebrews 2:14 represents those who are the enemies of Christ and his ecclesia,

who persecute them and have the power of death over them. The thinking of the flesh, which in turn is motivated by the Law, encourages them. The practical point from this is that the Law in the hands of sinners is a dangerous thing. We need to heed the warning of the Book of Hebrews and not revert to legalism, counting rituals, rules, and regulations as true religion. The man of sin arose from within the ecclesia,<sup>28</sup> and that is a warning to us lest we become the devil ourselves, opposing the will of God and persecuting our brothers and sisters. We can condemn one another by

reverting to Law and using it to judge our brothers or sisters, sitting in the gate like the princes in the days of Jeremiah and acting as if we are God.

Instead, let us rejoice that our Lord died to free us from the law of sin and death, and even this body of sin cannot have dominion over us, for we shall receive “*the redemption of our bodies.*” (Romans 8:23).

*Richard Morgan,  
Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA*

1 All Scriptural citations are taken from the English Standard Version, unless specifically noted.

2 For example, in Hebrews 1:13-14 there is a quotation from Psalm 110— “*Sit at my right hand*”—in which the writer contrasts Jesus having finished his work and sitting at the right hand of God with angels who are always standing in Scripture (e.g. Luke 1:19; Zechariah 6:5-7; 2 Kings 22:19). They are called “*ministering spirits*” in verse 14. In Hebrews 10:11-13 the same argument is made for priests. They “*stand daily at his service,*” whereas Christ “*sat down on the right hand of God*” with the same quotation from Psalm 110.

3 Hebrews continues this theme in chapter 3, where we are told Jesus has more “*glory*” than Moses. Again, the arguments concerning angels are used regarding the things under the Law. Moses was the Lawgiver, as are the angels (Galatians 3:19).

4 e.g., the contrast between a servant and a son in John 8:35 is picked up in Hebrews 3:5-6.

5 See Hebrews 2:1-4.

6 This is probably the same reason that Ishmael mocked Isaac (Genesis 21:9), as it would have appeared that Isaac was the illegitimate son of Abimelech. Genesis 21:10 is quoted in Galatians 4:30 in a context that matches that of John 8 (see John 8:32-36; Galatians 4:22-31). Note here, Paul says that those in bondage “*persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit*” (Galatians 4:29), a comment on Ishmael’s mocking.

7 Which is of course better than just slaying the murderer. The Law of Moses could condemn someone (the murderer) to death to solve the problem of sin, but it could never solve the problem of human nature (the enmity) that causes sin.

8 Law and human nature work in tandem. The law says, “*Don’t do that.*” and immediately the flesh looks at whatever “*that*” is and is drawn towards it. See Romans 7:5-13.

9 From *arche*, (“beginning” or “chief”) and *ago* (“bring” or “lead”) hence a chief leader. The word *arche* is used for “*principalities*” in several places (Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16; 2:10,15) that speak of Jesus having dominion over them since he is the chief prince. In this regard, he is typified by Michael the archangel (*archaggelos*) (Jude 9; Daniel 12:1), the one who is like God and has all angels under his control (Matthew 28:18). Thus, he is better than the angels (Hebrews 1:3-4).

10 Gk. *archon*.

11 See 1 Peter 3:22.

12 *Sheol* comes from the word *shaal*, which means “*to ask,*” i.e. a place of inquiry. King Saul (whose name means “*asked*” or “*desired*”) obviously believed in necromancy in visiting the witch of Endor and thus lived up to his name (1 Samuel 28).

13 David is seen as a type of Christ when fleeing Saul and gathering together his followers, who made him “*commander over them.*” (1 Samuel 22:1-2).

14 Acts 2:23-24. Because of his sinlessness, Christ defeated the power of death, which was the result of Adam’s sin.

- 15 Possibly from the words of Jesus in John 8:51 and Luke 20:36, which are very similar to the half-truths of the serpent in Genesis 3:4-5.
- 16 The lesson that Saul/Paul learns in Acts 9 is that of Samson. After he saw the light “*brighter than the sun*” (Acts 26:13, Samson means “like the sun”), he was blinded and had to be led by the hand (Acts 9:8), just like Samson. (Judges 16:21,26). But like Samson, “*he was strengthened*” (v. 19) and “*increased all the more in strength,*” (v. 22.) Both men had their enemies who laid wait for them outside of a city before they escaped (vv. 23-25; Judges 16:2-3), representing delivery from the power of death through resurrection.
- 17 Note, too, that the words of Jeremiah in verse 15, “*You will bring innocent blood upon yourselves,*” are echoed by Judas after his betrayal (Matt 27:4).
- 18 The patriarchs were all buried in Hebron (Gen 25:9-10; 23:19), which was where Samson took the gates of Gaza (Judg 16:3), thus signifying the possession of the gates of his enemies and pointing forward to the resurrection of the patriarchs and their victory over the power of death.
- 19 Christ is only referred to as a High Priest in Hebrews.
- 20 See 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.
- 21 In Micah 7:1, Israel is found to be unfruitful with nobody “*godly*” (v. 2) in the earth. Instead, there is brotherly strife and the production only of briars and thorns (v. 4; Genesis 3:18). Verses 5 and 6 remind us of the betrayal of Judas, “*a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.*” But the enemy shall be destroyed (v. 10) by being “*trampled down*” (Genesis 3:15).
- 22 See also Romans 7:1-6; Ephesians 2:15.
- 23 Jeremiah 26:8-11 prefigures the man of sin as the princes of Judah set themselves up as God in the temple of God and speaking as if they are God.
- 24 The Roman Church has priests, altars, incense, tradition and many rules and regulations, just like Judaism.
- 25 See Galatians 5:11 where *katargeo* is used in the context of persecution for those who preach the truth. Here Paul, in preaching against ritual (circumcision) suffers persecution by those who stumble at the crucifixion of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:23; Romans 9:32-33) like the Jews of his day and those who preach false doctrine concerning the atonement and ritual today.
- 26 Acts 9:8; Judges 16:26.
- 27 Acts 9:23-25; Judges 16:2-3.
- 28 The Roman Catholic Church is an apostasy (2 Thessalonians 2:3).
- 28 I would like to fully agree with the teaching that Jesus put to death sin, in the flesh. Romans 8:3 and other passages teach this plainly and my article was not intended in any way to contradict the fact that Jesus came in the flesh to defeat the same sinful tendencies that we all possess. The context of Hebrews 2, as I attempted to outline in my article, leads us to a supplementary conclusion. Specifically, that the “*devil*” that Jesus dealt with was those who had the power of death, and did put him to death, those same people who brought him temptations. Now, this does not take away from the fact that the “*devil*” is very much tied to human nature and the thinking of the flesh. The scribes and Pharisees, Sadducees, and chief priests, manifested the thinking of the flesh in their treatment of Jesus. They were sin **manifest**. When Jesus “*destroyed*” (Hebrews 2:14) the devil he dealt with this way of thinking that, in the first century context, was evident in the sinful attitudes and actions of those who killed Jesus. The word “*destroyed*” does not mean “*put to death.*” It means “to abolish” or “render powerless.” It is used almost exclusively in Paul’s writings in contexts where the New Covenant is put in contrast to the Old. The BASF does use Hebrews 2:14 in its footnote against Clause 8, where it says the death and resurrection of Christ was effective to “abrogate the law of condemnation.” The term **abrogate** is one way we can translate *katargeo*, the word used for “destroy” in Hebrews 2:14. It is a legal term, as it’s used throughout Paul’s writings. Jesus’ abrogation of the law of condemnation is a huge aspect of New Testament teaching, covered in the gospels, Romans, Galatians, Hebrews, Ephesians, Colossians, and scattered throughout other books. Law, sin, and death (1 Corinthians 15:56) work in harmony with each other, and I believe the term “*the devil*” is used in Hebrews 2:14 to express how that principle had its outworking in who had “*the power of death*” – the people who tempted, tried, and killed the Lord Jesus Christ. But in going through that experience, Jesus highlighted their iniquity, the sinfulness of sin, and his own victory over the thinking of flesh that was extant in his own sinful human nature.



**HERITAGE**  
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

## A Vision for Global Christadelphian Education

Loving Greetings in the Hope that knits us together around the world!

### **A Pioneering Educational Institution**

We are pleased to announce the launch of the Heritage International School (HIS) initiative, a transformative project designed to provide children worldwide with an internationally recognized educational qualification at a reasonable cost.

This initiative not only addresses educational needs but also serves as a strategic tool to expand our mission efforts and strengthen our community bonds. Our mission is to work closely with families, Heritage Colleges, and Christadelphian mission organizations to create a supportive environment that inspires minds and transforms lives.

### **Key Features and Benefits**

#### **1. Comprehensive Curriculum:**

HIS intends to offer a widely recognized and accredited international curriculum, suitable for tertiary institutions locally and globally. This ensures that our students receive a valuable education that can be continued at higher education institutions worldwide and courses that will lead them to rewarding vocations.

#### **2. Cost-Effective and Efficient:**

By making productive use of online educational delivery tools, HIS hopes to minimize costs while maximizing

educational returns. Without the need for physical facilities, we will be able to offer worldwide recognized education at a cost competitive with traditional private schooling.

#### **3. Flexible and Accessible Learning:**

Our lessons will primarily be conducted live via platforms like Zoom, facilitating real-time interaction and engagement. Resources, including recordings of lessons, will be available online to support student learning in addition to school policies, including student welfare and child protection. We aim to accommodate different time zones through flexible scheduling and teacher allocations, ensuring all students can participate fully. This approach minimizes weekly screen time while maintaining robust educational standards.

At HIS Online School, we will balance educational effectiveness with student well-being by structuring our school week to prioritize teaching and learning. Lessons will be conducted live, recorded for further reference by students and parents, and supplemented with one-to-one conferencing sessions. We will aim to minimize screen time without diminishing the quality of student learning.

#### **4. Qualified Teachers:**

All sessions will be conducted by

qualified teachers experienced in delivering high-quality education. This ensures that our students receive the best possible instruction and support.

### **5. Community Hubs and In-Person Interaction:**

We plan to organize occasional in-person meetings for students by using existing ecclesial facilities. These "hubs" will serve as centers for student interaction and practical coursework, strengthening our community bonds.

### **6. Positive Financial Oversight and School Policies**

We are committed to transparency and accountability in fund management, ensuring every contribution effectively supports our mission and education goals. This promotes trust and integrity within our community. Audited financial statements will be available to the school community.

School policies covering areas such as student welfare, including behavior, child protection, teacher employment and accountability and dispute resolution will be made available online.

#### **In Summary:**

HIS aims to provide an educational experience that appeals to families who are homeschooling, considering homeschooling, or seeking an alternative to traditional in-person schooling. This approach makes quality education accessible to students regardless of their geographical location, including those in mission areas, and supports existing Heritage Colleges by widening their course selection.

### **Call to Action—Engaging the Community**

Currently, we are collecting data through a survey to gauge interest and secure funding. The global response has been overwhelmingly positive, but we would appreciate more input. See the links below. Survey Completion Date: October 1, 2024.

- **HIS Survey Cover Letter:**  
[tinyurl.com/25jb7hx9](https://tinyurl.com/25jb7hx9)
- **Proposal:**  
[tinyurl.com/24dq3dre](https://tinyurl.com/24dq3dre)
- **Expression of Interest Survey:**  
[bit.ly/3zTTWnh](https://bit.ly/3zTTWnh)

#### **Join Us in This Endeavor**

We invite you to share this information and consider supporting the Heritage International School initiative. We thank you for your prayers and encouragement. Together we can make a significant impact on the education of children worldwide.

We deeply appreciate the enthusiasm and encouragement we have already received for this project. We ask for your continued patience and understanding as all these plans and details are still being worked out. God willing, with the survey responses coming in and help from the brotherhood, the scope of the project will become clearer.

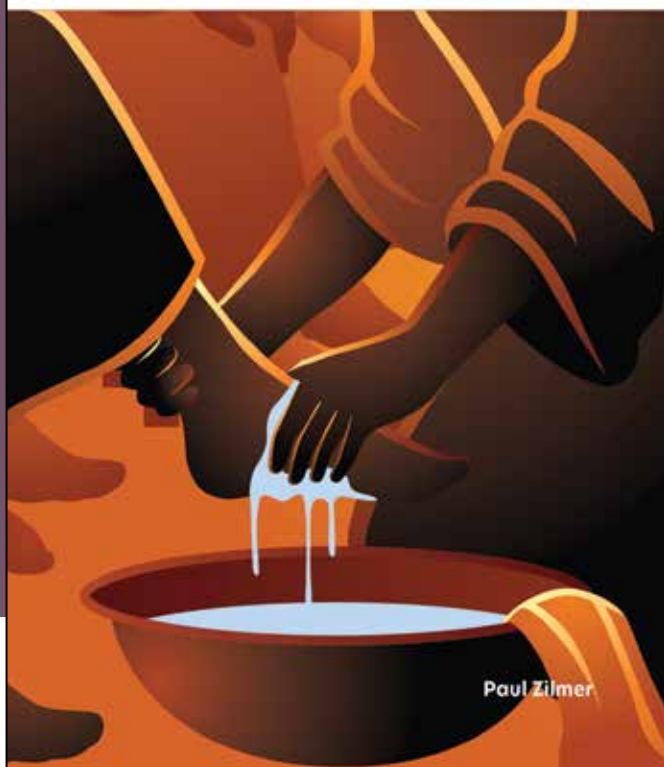
For further information or questions, please contact us at:  
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*TJ Reding,  
(On behalf of the  
HIS Steering Committee)*



## BOOK EXCERPT

### **YOU ARE THOSE WHO STOOD BY ME**



*We are pleased to share an excerpt from a new Tidings book written by Paul Zilmer. “You Are Those Who Stood By Me,” is available now at [tidings.org](https://tidings.org)*

## CHAPTER 42: IF ONLY

### John 11:17-53

Oh, if the Lord had only been here!

Martha can't stop thinking it. It goes around and around in her mind. She says it to Mary, for the umpteenth time. Mary says it to Martha just as often. The bitter grief of losing Lazarus is compounded by knowing that Jesus could have healed him. If only he'd been here! The tears begin again.

There has been an outpouring of support from all sides, some of it unexpected. Followers of the Rabbi came out in significant numbers for the funeral, and many have been coming every day. Given the recent confrontations, they might have chosen to stay home—but they come. It's a source of great comfort that so many of their friends and followers of the Lord are there. Most of them say it: "If only he'd been here!"

Even more surprising, some of the lesser religious leadership have also come, and it doesn't seem they're there only to snoop. The family did have some standing socially, enough that there seems to be genuine respect shown. Martha thinks she might even detect a bit of respect for the Teacher—mostly concealed, given the way the political wind is blowing.

Oh, if only he had been here!

Four days now. Their mourning goes on; there doesn't seem to be any end to the tears. On top of the pain of the loss, Martha yearns for the comfort only the Lord could provide. How she wants to pour out her heart to him, to hear his voice, feel his touch on her shoulder.

This day they sit in the house, as they've done each day, receiving those who

have come to offer comfort. Their expressions of love are a comfort. And then, someone they don't know arrives. Not so strange; there have been several who have come to show respect that they don't know or barely know. This one comes in quietly, and approaches the sisters, leaning down to whisper. They take him for one of those who come to offer condolences, which is his intent. But in fact he is a messenger, and what he says makes their eyes go wide in surprise: "The Lord is just outside town, asking for you to meet him there."

Martha and Mary look at one another with wide eyes. They realize they'd better keep this quiet—who knows what the authorities would do? They've just threatened to kill him. Amazement gives way in both their minds to the same refrain of the last four days: "If only he'd been here!" Their eyes locked together, Martha sees her sister's jaw tighten and her eyes narrow. She can tell Mary is really angry; her sister slumps back and folds her arms. Martha can see her sister is not going to go out. But for herself, her yearning for the Lord pushes everything else aside. She quickly gets up and goes out, accompanied by the messenger. The whole thing lasted less than a minute, and no one seems to have noticed anything out of the ordinary.

Once away from the house, Martha moves quickly and it takes only twenty minutes to get to where the Lord is standing, surrounded by his disciples, who are looking very nervous.

Once she sees him, she runs the final distance. It hadn't been her plan, but she throws herself at his feet and blurts out, "Oh Lord! If you'd only been here! He wouldn't have died!" Choking back her

sobs, she realizes it has come out like an accusation, but she really just wants to pour out her grief.

Jesus says nothing, but he reaches down to pull her up. Collecting herself, Martha dares to express her greatest hope, her eyes still on his feet. “But even now . . .” She chokes, swallows, and finally looking up into his eyes, goes on. “Even now I know that anything you ask God for, He will give you.” There is no need to spell out what she is asking for.

The look in the Teacher’s eye is full of compassion, and also, Is that gratitude? For her expression of faith, it must be. Jesus then voices the truth that has kept her going. “Your brother is going to rise again, Martha.”

She knows it, has an unshakeable conviction that it’s true, but it is so wonderful to hear the reassurance from the Lord himself. Pulling her shoulders up straight, still watching her Lord’s face, she declares, “I know that he will rise in the great resurrection at the end.” It’s clear in the Lord’s expression as he nods—this declaration of faith is what he was looking for, and it pleases him very much. In response, in a few sentences he summarizes his own role and the hope of resurrection which the Lord God has given to all who believe. Then he asks her point blank if she believes it. She replies, “Yes, Lord! I believe you are the Messiah! The Son of God! The one we’ve all been waiting for!”

The grief isn’t gone, for either of them, but they stand for a moment with their sorrow eased by their shared hope.

Then Jesus says, “Call Mary. I must see her too.” Martha nods and hurries back to the house. Nothing much has changed.

Martha leans down and whispers in Mary’s ear, “He’s here. He’s asking for you.”

Martha watches as conflicting emotions pass across her sister’s face. Mary hesitates, comes to a decision, then gets up and almost runs out, with Martha right behind her. Those there to comfort the sisters quickly follow, thinking they are going to the tomb. Martha hears surprise and speculation behind her as it becomes clear they’re headed down the road, not to the cemetery.

The surprise escalates into shock as they see and recognize Jesus, standing and patiently waiting. Just as Martha had done, Mary runs to him and falls at his feet. She says almost the identical words, the words the two of them had been saying to each other for four days. But in Mary’s voice there is more than a trace of bitterness. And then, she breaks into uncontrollable sobbing.

Those who had followed, seeing her grief and hearing her words, broke into fresh tears themselves. Even those not totally convinced about who Jesus is, recognize he did many miraculous healings—and they agree: Jesus could have healed Lazarus.

The emotion of the moment is evident even in the Teacher’s face. He is plainly very moved, and his own voice cracks as he asks, “Where have you laid him?”

The whole group heads to the cemetery, with Jesus and his disciples following the sisters. It isn’t far, and soon they’re standing at the tomb. Tears are streaming down the Teacher’s face as he gazes at the tomb, and takes in the sorrow of all those around him. The disciples are all in tears too. Lazarus had been a dear friend to them all.

Moving closer to the tomb, Jesus composes himself and shocks them all, saying, “Move back the stone.”

There’s a collective gasp, then stunned silence. Martha, fresh grief on her face, finally says, “No, Lord. Four days... the smell will be awful!”

The Lord turns to her and asks, “Didn’t I tell you that if you believe, you’ll see God’s glory?” He hadn’t said it today, but she does remember—he’d certainly said it. And today he has said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” And she herself has said to him, “Even now...”

Trembling with sudden hopefulness, she turns to the group behind her, unable to speak, wringing her hands, she nods her head, keeps nodding, and gestures toward the tomb. A few of the men come forward, clearly skeptical and expecting the worst. To the astonishment of them all, there is no smell!

As this sinks in, all eyes turn toward Jesus, who turns his own eyes upward. Loudly, actually shouting, the Teacher prays, “Father! Thank you! I know you always hear me—please let these standing here know it, and believe that you sent me!”

In the same loud voice, Jesus then looks back to the tomb and shouts, “Lazarus! Come out!” Martha’s heart is pounding, her breath coming in gasps. She hears noise coming from the tomb! She looks at her sister, and they share their astonishment, their hope, their fear. Gripping one another’s hands, looking back at the tomb, they see the body of their brother, still in the wrappings they had put on him themselves. Arms and legs bound together, blindfolded by the head wrapping, he is worming his way out of the tomb!

The whole crowd is immobilized, jaws hanging open in their amazement. Quickly Jesus commands, “Help him out! Get the wrappings off!” Excited shouts of amazement erupt as many jump to do so, including Martha and Mary. The grave clothes are soon removed, and there is Lazarus. He is grinning, embracing his sisters. His eyes search out and locate the Lord’s. With his sisters unwilling to let go of him, they all take the few steps to where Jesus is standing, with a wide smile on his own face. Lazarus starts to kneel, but Jesus catches him and pulls him up into an embrace.

It is so amazing! Even though they knew the Lord had such power, to see it . . .

The crowd is delirious with joy, embracing one another, some literally jumping up and down, everyone talking at once.

Even some of the “official” mourners from the Council are caught up in it. One of them approaches Martha and over the din she hears him shout, “I wasn’t sure what to make of him, but now I’ve seen it! He’s the Anointed one!” The man moves off to say the same thing to someone else.

Clinging to their brother’s arms, the sisters and the raised man head to their home. As they go, Martha sees that not all of the officials are excited. Out on the fringes, there are a couple small groups whispering together. The joy she feels is undiminished, but added to it is a stab of pain, as she realizes these men will be carrying the news to a very hostile Council. Jesus has put himself at great risk coming here.

# MEXICO

## STUDY WEEKEND

*By David Collister*

I arrived in Guadalajara, Mexico, Friday, May 17, after a fairly short flight of just over three hours. As I got off the plane, I could feel the heat in the jetway. I was told this was the hottest time of the year in the Guadalajara area and that when the rains started in June, the temperature would drop a little. Sis. Cynthia and Bro. Gabriel Lopez were waiting for me at the airport, and we hurried back to their house to drop off Gabriel before heading right back to the airport to pick up four others from Oaxaca. Of the four, two are baptized, Sis. Yolanda Morales and Sis. Rocio Mendez and two others who were to be baptized during the weekend activities, Emilio and Antonio Hernandez, father and son respectively. From the airport, we headed to Ocotlan, some of us with Sister Cynthia in her car and the others in a taxi. Ocotlan is the town

where the Jalisco Sur Ecclesial Hall is located. Jalisco Sur is one of two ecclesias in Mexico, the other being the Guadalajara Ecclesia.

While there are only two ecclesias in Mexico, there are several brothers and sisters who live in other areas of the country, some of whom are quite busy preaching and holding Bible Classes. One of these is Sis. Yolanda mentioned above, who came with Sis. Rocio (who was just baptized this last December), and also with Emilio and Antonio. Also, Bro. Juan Sanchez was down for the study weekend from his home in Monterrey. He is a quiet and thoughtful brother, good company in an unassuming way.

In the two weeks leading up to the study weekend, Bro. Juan, along with Bro. Guillermo (Memo) Lopez, from Guadalajara, had been going out during the day to handbill in Ocotlán.

This was a worthwhile effort, as some visitors were fruits of their labors.

When we arrived in Ocotlán, we checked into our hotel and then went out as a group in search of something to eat. We found a little place a couple of blocks away that served hearty “homemade” style food (comida casera) and had a great meal for a surprisingly low price. After eating, we made our way to the village square, where we sat and talked and watched groups practicing the regional dance of this area in preparation for an upcoming festival. It was nice to have fellowship in this relaxed environment.

After a wonderful night of rest, we had a delicious breakfast at a local

restaurant and then went to a local water park, where we had plenty of time for fellowship. The children played in the pools, and we adults sat in the shade and chatted. Bro. Gabriel Lopez and Bro. Juan Sanchez conducted baptismal interviews with Emilio and Antonio Hernandez nearby. Around midday, we gathered as a group and had a reading and a prayer before witnessing Emilio and Antonio pass through the waters of baptism in one of the bigger pools. It was a very moving experience. After the baptism, we welcomed our new brothers into the family of faith and then had a delicious picnic lunch before packing up and returning to the ecclesial hall.



Bro. Gabriel Lopez and Bro. Juan Sanchez (right) interview Emilio and Antonio Hernandez for baptism.



*The ecclesia enjoyed a picnic lunch after the baptism*

The Jalisco Sur Ecclesia has recently moved to a new location, and the facilities are very adequate. I was to give the classes for the study weekend, and I had chosen the topic, “Seek First the Kingdom of God,” in which I examined the lives of several men of faith from the Old Testament, considering how they were able to seek first God’s Kingdom in their lives. I gave two classes on Saturday. The event was well attended, with over 30 participating, including some from the Guadalajara Ecclesia, some visitors and a few online.

On Sunday morning, those of us staying at the hotel went out for breakfast before going to the hall. For the Memorial Service, I gave my exhortation on “Treasure in Heaven,” after which the presiding brother, Gabriel Lopez, welcomed our new brothers with the traditional Right Hand of Fellowship. It was a very moving Memorial Service.

After the Memorial Service, I gave my third and final class, this one on Moses, focusing on how he could seek the Kingdom of God in his life. After

the class, we had a delicious lunch of fried chicken, beans, salad and tortillas as we enjoyed fellowship.

The activities of the day ended with many helping to clean up, after which we closed up the hall, and those of us from out of the area went to see Lake Chapala. As we wandered through the souvenir stalls next to the lake, I heard English spoken several times, probably tourists or residents from the US who live in the area, according to Sis. Cynthia. We enjoyed a great meal prepared by Sis. Rocio and Sis. Yolanda, and had some wonderful fellowship.

And so, in this way, the study weekend concluded. Thanks to Bro. and Sis. Gabriel and Cynthia’s organization and hard work, as well as the support, efforts, and participation of all the attendees, it was an uplifting event that helped us all as we continue to seek first the Kingdom of God and to lay up treasure in heaven.

*David Collister,  
CBMA Co-Link for Mexico*

# ST. LUCIA

## BAPTISM

*By Mike LeDuke*

ON Sunday, April 7, Nasha Louis was baptized into Christ at Vigie Beach, Castries, St. Lucia. During a thorough interview on the previous Thursday, she gave a good confession of her understanding of the gospel with two local witnesses present, Sis. Dawn Hutchinson and Bro. Julian Jackson.

Sis. Nasha had completed the Exploring the Bible course on “thisisyourbible.com” and consequently requested baptism. Bro. Martin Webster and I met Nasha briefly in early February 2021 at a local radio station where she worked. This was just before the lockdowns due to the severity of the COVID-19 outbreak. It was a brief encounter, and as we had no opportunity to follow up with the station, we didn’t expect to hear from her again.

During a subsequent visit in November of 2022, I providentially met her again while walking down the road near the Mission House. I struck up a conversation with her and gave her a “thisisyourbible.com” business card. Much to my surprise (“Oh, me of little

faith!”), she registered for Exploring the Bible and submitted her lesson responses regularly with insightful answers, comments, and excellent questions. Upon my return to Canada, we kept in touch with regular ZOOM Bible Classes, which, before long, morphed into pre-baptismal classes. Bro. Martin and Sis. Lois Webster had sessions with her during their visit in January of this year.

Nasha is a good student with a caring nature. With God’s blessing, she will prove to be a valuable addition to the Lord’s family in St. Lucia.

*Mike LeDuke,  
CBMC Link for St. Lucia*



Sis. Nasha in green.



# A BAPTISM IN PANAMA

*By Ian Neblett*

**O**N May 4, Andres Ramos, the son of Bro. Abdiel and Sis. Xenia Ramos made a heartfelt confession of his faith before entering the waters of baptism. Some members of both ecclesias, Panama City and Colon, were in attendance to witness the beginning of his walk in our Lord Jesus Christ. The joyous occasion took place at Sherman Beach in the province of Colon, Panama. Regular beachgoers couldn't help but interrupt their activities, listen to our hymns of praise, and watch the baptism.



Before his baptism, Bro. Andres was a committed attendee of Memorial Service and Sunday School for many years. His mature demeanor, loving disposition, and proactive attitude, and most importantly, his love for God and his Son, are what caused him to ask for baptismal classes, which were led by Bro. Luis Sobers. We are grateful for everyone's contributions, both visiting brethren and resident members, to this young brother's development. We look forward to the contributions he has dedicated himself to supplying to the body of Christ in love.

*Ian Neblett,  
CBMA Link for Panama*



Brothers and sisters in Panama attend the baptism.

# Thoughts on the Way

## The Bundle of the Living

**D**AVID and his men were in real trouble. King Saul and several thousand armed men were hunting him down with an eye to killing the man who might replace him as King of Israel (1 Samuel 24).<sup>1</sup>

Along with his companions and their families, David sought refuge in Ein-Gedi, a sunken garden in the wilderness, where there were caves in which to hide, fresh water, and some food. But they had to keep on the move, being careful about where they went and what they did. And to make it worse, when David sent messengers to the rich man Nabal to ask for some food for himself and his followers, Nabal had scoffed at the request:

Who is this David? ... Many servants are breaking away from their masters these days... Why should I take my bread and my water, and the meat... and give it to men coming from who knows where? (1 Samuel 25:10,11).

When Nabal's wife, Abigail, understood the situation, she acted without her husband's consent, gathering abundant food and then delivering it to David and his men. She knew David was a righteous man who worshiped the LORD God, and she wanted to thank him for protecting Nabal's flocks and to

give him and his men what they rightly deserved. She also wanted to dissuade David from seeking vengeance. When she met David and his men, Abigail told the exiled king:

*Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life, the life of my master [David] will be bound securely in the bundle [tzeror] of the living by the LORD your God. (1 Samuel 25:29).*

The rare Hebrew word that Abigail used, *tzeror*, was intended to encourage David. There was no need, really, for him to take out his anger on the selfish man who scorned him and his followers and refused to help them in any way. Abigail knew, seemingly more than David at that moment, that the God of Israel would preserve and protect this righteous man who worshiped him.

Abigail knew and believed that David was precious to the LORD, so she used a figure of speech that was well-known to her people. When a household moved from place to place, as the Bedouin shepherds often did, every possession was transported with them. But the most precious possessions, money, jewelry, keepsakes, spices, and perfumes, would be bound in a small bundle to be kept close at hand

and guarded most carefully. Abigail perceived and appreciated that David's life was bound up in a bundle of the precious things that belonged to the LORD and that He would protect David through all his trials and wanderings.

The ultimate and most beautiful picture illustrating this concept (i.e., the bundle of precious things) is found in the prophecy of Malachi. Although the same Hebrew word, *tzeror*, is not used here, the idea is very relevant:

*Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. "They will be mine," says the LORD Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession [segullah]. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him." (Malachi 3:16, 17).*

The NIV translates the Hebrew word, *segullah*, here as "treasured possession." The KJV uses "jewels," and the NET uses "my own property."

We are told that this Hebrew word referred to the private treasure of kings.

In societies

where kings were more or less absolute dictators, everything in their realm was considered legally their property. However, even a king could not control, spend, and enjoy all the properties in his kingdom. So he would possess certain properties that were set apart as his own "special treasure," his "peculiar" or unique property, and no one else's.

Practically from the beginning, God spoke of the nation of Israel as His very own "treasured possession." (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Psalm 135:4). Such divine love and devotion called for a response, and King David recognized this. He also recognized, as Abigail had reminded him, that he himself was precious to the LORD. Consequently, he was willing as king to devote all of his own "personal treasures of gold and silver for the temple of [his] God." (1 Chronicles 29:1-3).

God Almighty is the great King, and all the universe belongs to Him. All men, and all they have, are all His. He says:

*I have no need of a bull from your stall, or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills [are mine]; I know every bird in the mountains, and the insects in the fields are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. (Psalm 50:9-12).*

However, the Heavenly Father has condescended to choose a special few of all His subjects to be His own family, His own special possession, His own cherished riches. They stay close to His person; they recline





I know every bird in the  
mountains, and the insects  
in the fields are mine.

in His bosom (cp. KJV in John 1:18). They hear His whispers of endearment. They feel the tender touch of His special love. They are dearer to Him than the stars in the heavens or the glorious snow-topped mountains. They are dearer to Him than the treasures of the richest mines or the harvests of the richest fields. They are the ones He has redeemed with the precious blood of His Son. "These special ones," the LORD God says, "These—they are

truly and altogether Mine. They belong to Me and to no one else!"

What a picture of redemption this is. To be taken by the loving hand of an Omnipotent Father and bound up in the bundle of His special and treasured possessions. To be kept safe and secure close by Him until the final destination is reached.

*George Booker,  
Austin Leander Ecclesia, TX*

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1 All Scriptural citations are taken from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN  
**TIDINGS**  
OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

is published monthly, except bimonthly in July-August, by The **Christadelphian Tidings**,

567 Astorian Drive, Simi Valley, CA 93065-5941.

**FIRST CLASS POSTAGE PAID** at Simi Valley, CA and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Christadelphian Tidings, 567 Astorian Dr., Simi Valley, CA 93065.

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**The Christadelphian Tidings** is published on the 15th of the month for the month following. Items for publication must be received by the 1st of the month. Correspondence to the editor, Dave Jennings at [editor@tidings.org](mailto:editor@tidings.org). Publication of articles does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine as set forth in the BASF. Letters should be sent via email to [letters@tidings.org](mailto:letters@tidings.org). Please include your name, address and phone number. The magazine reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity.

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