

# TIDINGS

Volume 88, Number 6, June, 2025

## TRANSFORMED BY GRACE

*The Letter to Titus  
Humbles and Motivates*



Building faith in the  
Christadelphian community.

# TIDINGS

Volume 88, Number 6 / June, 2025



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E D I T O R I A L

# PRAYING IN THE NAME OF JESUS

*"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the  
Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."  
(Ephesians 5:20)*



**A**s the apostles and disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ began their ministry after the ascension, they were the standard bearers of his name. Their words and behaviors needed to convey his principles accurately. Their faith was reflective of his ongoing leadership in their lives. Jesus had left them physically, but assured them of his powerful presence.

It is an honor to bear the name of Jesus Christ. Peter boldly declared in Jerusalem that there was *“none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12). The lame man was made whole, the blind man given sight—all in the name of Jesus Christ. Men and women were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Men and women *“hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus*

*Christ.”* (Acts 15:26). The name of Jesus Christ established the authenticity of discipleship and their connection to the Lord, who was alive from the tomb. John concludes his gospel with this clear statement:

*But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life **through his name.*** (John 20:31).

As we read the New Testament record, the disciples regularly used the name of Jesus. They used it when addressing opposition. They used it within their circles. Jesus was their identification.

They were his representatives. Everything was done in his name.

There is an essential passage in Acts 4, where the Temple leadership, the rulers of the people, and the elders assess Peter and John. From their observation, it was impossible to reconcile the words coming from the lips of these uneducated Galileans. The Scriptural record says they considered them *“unlearned and ignorant”* men (Acts 4:13.) J.B. Phillips translates this as *“who were in their view uneducated and untrained men.”* At the trial of Jesus just weeks before, Peter had only been known for being a follower of Jesus and a Galilean because his speech gave him away. But now, boldly speaking by the Spirit, and healing by the name of Jesus Christ, *“they took knowledge of them, that they had been*

*with Jesus.”* (Acts 4:13). Their words *“pricked”* the heart of those who heard their words (Acts 2:37). The power of Jesus was on display through those who bore his name. Peter declared, *“And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man [lame man at the gate of the Temple] strong.”* (Acts 3:16 ESV). When we worship and serve in the name of Jesus Christ, it proclaims Jesus, not ourselves.

**Some posit that when we ask our petitions of God, doing so through the name of Jesus Christ is already assumed. Some don't mention the name of Christ in their public prayers. It is a trend that I pray will be reversed very soon...**

### **Prayers Today**

To approach God in prayer, we can only come to Him through the Lord Jesus Christ. Some posit that when we ask our petitions of God, doing so through

the name of Jesus Christ is already assumed. Some don't mention the name of Christ in their public prayers. It is a trend that I pray will be reversed very soon. Naming the Lord Jesus is one of our great privileges as believers today. When we do not include it, it diminishes the reverence of prayer for many brothers and sisters.

God doesn't need to be reminded about how we can approach Him. But it may be highly presumptuous for us to come before our God without naming the Son who brought us into the holiest by his own blood.

Through the name of Jesus Christ, we are promised that if we keep his commandments, the Father and Son will make their abode with us (John 14:23). The intimate relationship offered with the Father is always through the Lord Jesus Christ. In John 15, Jesus continues by speaking of the need for disciples to bear much fruit. Jesus tells his disciples:

*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: **that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*** (John 15:16).

This passage is interesting, especially when coupled with John 16.

*In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.** Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.* (John 16:23-24).

Jesus tells his disciples that up to this point they had "*asked nothing in his name.*" (John 16:24). Certainly, the disciples prayed frequently. We remember them asking Jesus for instruction about prayer. Jesus spoke of the need for prayer and fasting when the disciples could not heal the epileptic (Matthew 17:21). But at this point, they had not yet made their prayers through the name of Jesus Christ. However, Jesus spoke of the day that was soon to come, when he would be seated on the Father's right hand, and granted all power in heaven and earth. (Matthew 28:18). Then they would pray to the Father through his name.

We can be certain the Father and Son are completely aligned about helping us to bear fruit. However, Jesus is now speaking of a time when the disciples will no longer ask their visible and present Master to help them bear fruit. Through him, they will take their petitions to the Almighty God. Whatever they ask, they are to ask in Jesus' name.

The Apostle John reassures us that we can be confident in our petitions. However, he provides an important clarification.

*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, **if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:** And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* (1 John 5:14-15).

Not all petitions we make are according to the will of the Father. We may ask for things that seem appropriate to us, but our perspective is limited. But for things we ask that are the will of God,

we should have confidence that they will happen, not be as waves tossed by the sea (James 1:6). For more on this topic, please see a fine article written by Bro. Darren Tappouras (*We Do Not Know What We Ought to Pray For*, *Tidings*, February 2023).

This subject is not a recent consideration in Christadelphia. In a “Letter to the Editor” of the *Christadelphian Magazine* in 1937, a brother expressed concern over a brother in his worship service prayer neglecting to acknowledge the Mediator. Bro. Carter commented:

This is a matter on which we can take too narrow views. We sympathise with our brother’s lament about the repetitions into which some fall by way of closing prayer; language good on occasion easily becomes a striving for effect. On the other hand, to conclude a prayer with the phrase “in the name of the Lord Jesus” or similar words can with equal ease become a form. What is it to pray “in the name” of Jesus Christ? It is much more than appending a phrase to a petition. It is a recognition of certain doctrinal facts and certain privileged relationships. The “name” expresses and sums up all the truths by which the Father and Jesus are known. The roots of the idea are in the memorial name that God unfolded at the bush. When the promises of God are heartily believed, and the “adoption of sons” in Christ Jesus appreciated, with baptism “into the name of Jesus Christ,” then prayer “in the name,” and

approach to God “by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way” is an exercise that should elevate and ennoble. A richly indwelling word will provide the thoughts and expressions of prayer.

### Meditate on His Name

As Bro. Carter suggested, using Jesus’ name in our prayers should never become a thoughtless, rote repetition. The name of Jesus Christ demands that our minds recognize the mediatorial work of our Master. It is only through him that we can approach the throne of grace. He brings us to the Father to make our petitions and offer praise. We bear the name of Jesus Christ to the world, to one another, and even when we approach our God. Expressing this in our prayers demands devotion and identification.

Jesus was clear about the relationship he was establishing between us and God. “*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*” (1 Timothy 2:5.) We are to be one. But the process of becoming one is **always** through the Lord Jesus Christ.

*That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as*

*thou hast loved me.* (John 17:21-23).

Paul speaks of the name of Jesus Christ in Philippians.

*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.*  
(Philippians 2:9-10).

The picture of every knee bowing to acknowledge our Lord with heart and lip is important. Paul connected Isaiah 45:22-24 to draw on his instruction that we ought not to condemn our brothers and sisters, as if we were the judges. There is one Judge, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only to him that we bow the knee.

*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.* (Isaiah 45:22-23).

### Millennial Name

The beauty of the name of Jesus Christ culminates in his rulership of the earth. Revelation 19:12 tells us that *“He had a name written, that no man knew but himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.”* (Revelation

19:12-13). He has a vesture he wears, and *“on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”* (Revelation 19:16).

We take great comfort in our hope to be part of the new Jerusalem when our Lord will write upon us his new name (Revelation 3:12). At that time, we will be wonderfully joined, by grace, in his saving name, as kings and priests to rule over the earth.

### Public Prayers Today

Our community has long practiced including the name of Jesus Christ in our personal or communal prayers. This is an acknowledgement of what brings us to God today and a reminder of what is promised in the Kingdom Age.

At this time, we may pause, reconsider familiar words, and contemplate what “in his name” means to us. It calls for brothers and sisters to open the pages of Scripture and assess what our prayer practice should be.

Until then, may we each proclaim his name in our lives. Wherever we are, may his name be glorified. We aren’t Americans, Canadians, Britons, Australians, Nigerians, Filipinos, or any other peoples. We are his. He is our king. We do all through his name.

*Dave Jennings*



# I N M E M O R I A M

## BRO. MALCOM CROSS

Bro. Malcolm Cross fell asleep in the Lord at eighty-five on April 23. He is survived by his wife, Sis. Pauline and their three daughters, Rachel, Joanne, and Debbie. We send our deepest sympathies and prayers to his family.

Bro. Malcolm's contributions to the *Christadelphian Tidings* were immensely important to our growth. In the 1980s, it became obvious the magazine was getting enquiries from overseas, as brothers and sisters elsewhere were interested in both news from North America and the American perspective in exhortations and exposition. We thought finding an agent in various places overseas in the community might be a challenge. We were unable even to reimburse them for their expenses!

Fortunately for the *Tidings*, we did not have to try to find a UK agent. Bro. Malcolm found us and volunteered to do the job! Besides distributing all the magazines in the UK after he received the bulk package from us, he also took care of all UK billing. But the most important thing Bro. Malcolm did was to increase awareness of the *Tidings* by designing a placard advertising the magazine and books, and showcasing samples. He carted these off to fraternal gatherings and Bible Studies in the UK and proceeded to recruit additional subscriptions.

I got to know Bro. Malcolm and family during my many working tours in the UK from 1990 until my retirement in 2004. When I was in England, he arranged speaking tours for me several times, which allowed me to meet many

brothers and sisters. This interaction was useful for both me and *Tidings* because it provided an opportunity to discuss what UK readers would like to see in the magazine. It gave us a broader geographic perspective on the community's needs for strengthening faith.

At the time, personal contact was the fastest way to gather trusted information. Bro. Malcolm was the key to making that work for *Tidings* in the UK. Additionally, from time to time, when we were unsure of how an article might be received in North America or elsewhere, we would rely on Bro. Malcolm's wisdom to give us his editorial opinion.

We are saddened to lose such a diligent, devoted brother. Bro. Malcolm will be greatly missed. We are thankful to have known him and grateful for his immeasurable contributions to the work of *The Christadelphian Tidings*.

John C. Bilello,  
Founding Chairman of the  
*Tidings* Publishing Committee





# GRANDPARENT OUTREACH CHALLENGE

*By Linda Beckerson*



**B**EING a grandparent is a unique and rewarding stage of life, offering opportunities for love, connection, and shared experiences with our grandchildren. It often involves a balance of guidance, support, and creating cherished memories. Grandparents are caregivers, teachers, and playmates, offering a distinct role in a child's life. We often feel a deep and unconditional love for them, which can be more relaxed because we don't have the daily parenting responsibilities.

There are also times when we are challenged as grandparents when our children have paused their relationship with God for various reasons. They may not wish us to have conversations with them about their reasons or with their children. This circumstance can be a tough time for our faith. We do our best to cope with the why and how this happened.

Recently, the *Tidings* surveyed a broad group of grandparents struggling with their children and grandchildren currently outside our faith community. A focus group discussion followed the survey. They shared several critical reflections and learnings. Guilt, disappointment, sadness, and thoughts about overcoming these challenges were often mentioned. We are very grateful to them for their willingness to share those experiences and wisdom with us.

### **Children Who Have Left**

One central theme and frustration was that when their children have stepped away from the Truth, this situation has a profound impact on the ability of grandparents to influence their grandchildren. The reasons children left were varied—from feeling left out as they

grew up attending memorial service and CYC, to not perceiving themselves as part of the community with their peers. This issue was perhaps related to having no one else their age at CYC or meeting. Social ostracism can be very debilitating to the individual. Our children may look elsewhere to find places to be included and feel accepted. This occurrence was not rare, and should be dealt with in the ecclesia or CYC by the counsellors to ensure that every child who attends does feel loved and welcomed and a part of the community—teaching them Jesus' command to *"love your neighbor as yourself"* (Matthew 22:39).<sup>1</sup>

Another reason for leaving the community involved families moving to an area without a local ecclesia, then slowly drifting away from our community, and/or having God in their lives at all. Others joined local churches where they felt they had some relationship with God. Both of these scenarios presented some difficult conversations for both parties.

A few noted that their children had endured a significant "trauma" during their teen or early adult years. This experience may have shaken their faith and caused them to seek solace elsewhere.

We also discussed the challenges of interacting with other Christian groups—perhaps with homeschooling opportunities outside our community. Despite knowing there would be doctrinal differences, over time, some grew to feel connected to that community, feeling loved and included. Perhaps this raises the question of developing more homeschooling opportunities within our ecclesias?

Some related to dating outside the Truth with a partner unwilling to join Christadelphia, or perhaps any church. Over time, the child also left. The Apostle Paul cited this issue nearly two millennia ago, setting the marital standard of being equally yoked (2 Corinthians 6:14).

### **Influence on Grandchildren**

Some of these reasons led to grandchildren not being raised in Christadelphia. As the grandchildren grew up, they were often discouraged from learning about the beliefs and faith of their grandparents. A few focus group members said they had frequent contact with their grandchildren. However, some were now living far away, enabling visits to only happen once or twice a year. FaceTime was a huge help, but still not the same as having close personal contact with the grandchildren. Infrequent connections increased the difficulty of declaring the goodness of God to a new generation (Psalm 78:5-6).

Guilt was a common initial reaction within the grandparenting group. It made them wonder what they might have done differently and what they might say to their children that could potentially reverse the situation. “Did we not teach our children properly?” Insensitive comments from brothers and sisters sometimes exacerbated this sorrow. Comments like “What did you do wrong so that I can avoid it?” Or even suggesting that the parents would have to answer at the Judgment Seat because their children had left the Truth! However, over time, the parents surveyed all recognized that guilt is unhelpful and does not acknowledge that the LORD God is in control. We

can do all the “right things” in raising our children, but still, our children can walk away. The Bible is replete with examples of faithful men and women whose children rejected the ways of God. At some point, it becomes **their** journey, and we need to trust that situations happen for a reason, and God is still working with all of us.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son was cited often as a vision of hope by the grandparents. The father had one son who was unfaithful and left the father’s home. He wandered off and lived a wild and certainly not Christlike life. How difficult it would have been for the father to watch his son leave. But he did watch every day, waiting for his son to realize the error of his ways and come home. We aren’t told, but I am sure he was praying every day, all the time. God answered his prayers, and the son returned. It is the hope and prayer of any of us with children who have walked away. If God can perform that change of heart with this son, He can certainly do it with our family members, too.

### **Spiritual Contact With Grandchildren**

Discussion also revolved around being in touch with the grandchildren, even over long distances. A common idea was that the grandparents needed to be open, welcoming, loving, supportive, and examples of Christlike behavior. Others cited the need to respect the voiced wishes of the parents regarding the grandchildren. When the grandchildren did visit, many said they read books about Bible stories (as the parents permitted this activity). They tried to teach the good examples of behavior that could reflect

God's character. Some could take the grandchildren with them to Sunday School and the Memorial Service. They made sure to pray to God for meals or special occasions.

Some grandparents were pleased to be able to bring their grandchildren to Bible School. It was mentioned that younger children are uninhibited, honest, and inquisitive, and it is so important to be a safe grandparent, making them feel loved and chosen. This practice is so essential for us as grandparents to develop and have that "safe place" role for these children.

All acknowledged that the adult children—despite their upbringing in the Truth—make their own decisions

about continuing with the Truth. Praying without ceasing is called for their children's hearts to be opened. It was important to note that none of those surveyed had chosen an adversarial relationship with their children. They don't push their children or continually badger them about their beliefs. They all had had discussions with their children about why they had decided to leave, and unless the child brought it up, they did not push the issue.

Some were also distraught because the children didn't have God in their lives at all, and therefore, they were not allowed to talk to the grandchildren about Him. This situation left them feeling helpless, so that they would not



be able to make any impact. They felt that constant prayer was a vital part of handling these feelings.

### The Grace of God

One positive comment was that when Christ returns and the Kingdom is set up, perhaps these grandchildren could continue as mortals in the Kingdom, learning and accepting Him there. This thought emphasizes that in whatever way we can plant spiritual seeds with our grandchildren, we must do so lovingly and gently. Grandparents may be the only view our grandchildren have of the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Summary Thoughts

We must approach our children respectfully, not arguing with them or trying to manipulate them. We should focus on understanding their perspective. Ask nonjudgmental questions, such as, “Can you explain your feelings/reasons to me?” Then, acknowledge their feelings, which is far from agreeing with them. This can help them feel you are listening and trying to understand—which hopefully you are doing.

Maintain a healthy relationship with the children and grandchildren, developing your relationship as “safe.” Acknowledge their perspective and make them feel understood, without animosity, which might limit any opportunity to influence the future. Make sure the grandchildren feel secure

chatting with you. Know when it turns into a negative conversation so that you can respond positively to them. We should not try to control them. This will only lead to negative reactions. We must maintain and support our relationship with them, and with time, God willing, their faith may return.

### What Can We Do?

We also need to acknowledge our own feelings. We are hurt, confused and angry. Give ourselves time to process our emotions so we don’t use those initial feelings in early and often emotional communications that can sour the relationship for years.

We also need to stay strong in our faith. All surveyed grandparents noted they

have come closer to God and pray fervently for their children and grandchildren.

One important suggestion for ecclesias is their support of grandparents whose children have left the Truth. Almost all of those surveyed felt this had been a private journey for them. There was some

One important suggestion for ecclesias is their support of grandparents whose children have left the Truth. Almost all of those surveyed felt this had been a private journey for them.

acknowledgement by ecclesial members of the situation, but there was an absence of resources and unique care. There was a stated need for support at an ecclesial level, and even across the community for those dealing with this situation. A professional Bible-based counsellor could be found to guide those on this path. There could be good value in creating more resources across Christadelphia for this need.



Ecclesias can significantly help, but so can our children's friends in the community. They may be uniquely positioned to reach out to young adults who have left, letting them know they are missed. A word from a peer can be very encouraging, letting them know they are valued and loved.

One sister related how she reaches out on every special occasion to young people who are no longer attending, when they experience loss in their family, and other events significant to them, to make them feel loved and respected. A different survey was done about young people not feeling included by the older brothers and sisters, that they were not considered important, and how they wished the older brothers and sisters would interact with them. This is a crucial ecclesial responsibility for us as grandparents, not only to our families and grandchildren, but to all the young people in our ecclesias. It goes both ways, too. As the older generation, we will feel included and loved as we develop those relationships with young people.

Finally, I truly loved this ultimate example of reaching out to our grandchildren who may be struggling with this issue. Shortly before he fell asleep in Christ, a grandfather wrote a beautiful letter to his grandchildren about his love for them, telling them about God. He wrote with sound counsel about finding God and putting Him in their lives. It was gentle and moving. He specified that the letters be held until their eighteenth birthdays, when they are mature and can make more decisions for themselves. In the meantime, grandma is staying the course and setting an example in their daily lives for them to see. This undertaking may be the most important thing we can do, and it came up repeatedly in our discussion. Be a gentle example, a safe place. Ensure grandchildren know our love for God and His Son, and the truth we believe in. For with God, "*all things are possible.*" (Mark 10:27).

*Linda Beckerson,  
Ann Arbor Ecclesia, MI*

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



# CREATING A HEALTHY *LIFESTYLE*

*By Julia Mutter*

**Giving up the “All or Nothing” Approach  
to Your Relationship With Food**



**W**HEN people come to see me as a Dietitian, one of the first topics we discuss is their motivation level. There is a spectrum of motivation levels, which is the first question you might consider when making lifestyle changes of any kind. Are we “comfortable” with our health where it is today? This question is not only for our physical health but also for our spiritual health. I find myself reflecting on these questions when talking to patients. The same questions I ask patients about diet and lifestyle changes are relevant to spiritual changes!

In the outpatient setting, I see a wide variety of people. Among those are adolescents who come to me when their parents are afraid for their health, partners who bring their spouse after a scary diagnosis, all the way to patients who are so motivated they come complete with their questions, data, medication lists and food recall notices. The full spectrum! Positive lifestyle change can happen with any level of motivation.

This is true of us spiritually, too. If we acknowledge we need to make food and/or lifestyle changes, then positive health outcomes can happen. In the health field, there is a term called “pre-contemplation.” This is when someone is contemplating lifestyle changes but needs time before action occurs. This parallels our spiritual motivation: if we recognize we need to be with other believers and in God’s presence, God can work with us—even if the work is just in the beginning stages and moving towards healing.

## Change Our Diet—Renew Our Mind

After determining their level of motivation, we do a full health assessment. What is the state of their health? What is most important for them to focus on first? It can feel overwhelming if they need to manage an illness, get to a healthier weight, and overcome the side effects of medications. We take a physical health inventory and then discuss their daily eating and lifestyle habits.

Often, it is hard to be vulnerable about eating habits. It is personal and sometimes embarrassing to share with someone else when you “know” you should be choosing healthier items. People do not come to a dietitian not knowing they should eat more vegetables. The real question is—why **aren’t** they eating more vegetables, and what are they willing to implement? Isn’t this also

true of us and our spiritual inventory? Paul laments:

*For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.”*  
(Romans 7:15-16 ESV).

It is hard for people to be open to **others** about how they eat. This process takes trust and vulnerability. As a health professional, I like to remind patients that after 23 years as a dietitian, our meeting is a safe opportunity to be truly honest about the way they eat. Furthermore, can we even be honest with **ourselves** about our food choices?

The hardest part of lifestyle change is self-reflection. It is in knowing that no matter where you are, there are small changes you can start to make to improve your health. Our heavenly Father feels the same way when we approach Him to change how we trust and acknowledge Him: *“Who can detect their own failings? Who can expose their hidden faults?”* (Psalm 19:12 ASV).

### Discipline and Self-Control

Once a lifestyle change is made, the best indicator of success is how people react when they fail to achieve their goals. If there is a meal where they ate too much, can they get back on track at the next meal? Or do they say: “I blew it and will restart on Monday” (Even if it is Wednesday?). We need to be patient with lifestyle changes. New habits are hard to implement, and our habits that led to these unhealthy eating patterns did not start overnight. As Paul points out with our spiritual habits, we need to be proactive and work towards change: *“That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.”* (Ephesians 4:22-23 NKJV).

One way to implement change is to self-reflect. Take a moment before reaching for the tempting food to reflect on how it will make you feel afterward. Will it nourish your body, or will it lead to regret and discomfort? This cycle of regret and shame about food choices often leads to more unhealthy food options. Instead, reflect on what led to unhealthy choices and brainstorm ways to break the chain of events. For example, if you overate the cookies on the counter, then some other options for next time would be:

- Do not leave the cookies in a visible place.
- Have healthier food options out on the counter.
- Ask yourself, “Why are the cookies in the house?” Or honestly consider, “Can I resist buying or baking them?”
- Did you have a proper meal before reaching for the cookies?
- Can you pair a cookie with a glass of milk for protein and avoid eating more cookies than you want?

Any of the above choices may lead to a different outcome than overeating the cookies. And the more alternative options you have, the more likely you will be to avoid the temptation next time.

In the face of a slip-up, be patient with yourself. God is patient with us in our faults, and we are encouraged to be patient with each other: *“Be patient with everyone.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:14 ISV). “Everyone” must include ourselves. So, while striving to be fully rounded as patient people, we must learn and demonstrate the same patience toward ourselves.

### Resist Temptation: Think About Your Environment

If certain foods or situations tend to tempt you, remove them from your immediate environment or avoid situations that might lead to temptation. For example, do not keep unhealthy snacks at home or go to places that encourage unhealthy eating. If your family members want to keep tempting foods, keep them in a separate pantry or drawer so they are not visible every time you reach for a snack. When going out to eat, review

the menu ahead of time and make a healthy plan. When invited to a group meal or potluck, bring something you know fits your healthy eating plan.

It is easy to feel deprived when we resist tempting foods. Focusing on the abundance of healthy choices and your other blessings is more helpful. Cultivating a gratitude mindset can help shift your attention from what you do not have (the food you are resisting) to what you do have (your health, strength, and inner peace). Whenever you resist tempting foods, you build a muscle memory of success. Focus on what works and try to set yourself up for success as much as possible.

Recognize that desires, including cravings for tempting foods, may indicate something else. Has it been too long since your last meal? If so, then the yearning for carbohydrates is natural. The body is longing for instant energy or fuel. However, if you combine the carbohydrate with protein and plant fat, the body will have a better long-term energy source. If you consume carbohydrates alone, then it will break down quickly and leave you wanting more. It is better to avoid getting overly hungry so you do not make impulsive food decisions. Spiritually, if we do not feed our minds with the word of God, then we will start to crave immediate pleasures in life and not ones that will truly meet our long-term needs.

### **Lifestyle Change Takes Time: Perseverance and Endurance**

When you feel discouraged or tempted to give up, remind yourself that the effort you make today will pay off in the future. Stay focused on your long-

term goals and persist through the challenges. *"And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."* (Galatians 6:9 ESV). This verse encourages perseverance and assures us you will see results in time if you continue to make the right choices. Do not let momentary setbacks discourage you, stay persistent, and the rewards will come.

Remember, you are not on this journey alone. Lean on God's strength, trust in His guidance, and know He will help you along the way, especially when you feel weak or discouraged. Also, make sure you have health advocates. I challenge my patients to find two people—one who can help with diet changes and another who can help with movement goals. Have conversations with these health advocates. Can they watch the kids so you can go for a walk? Can they decrease the number of tempting foods they keep in the house? Can they praise your efforts to eat healthily and not shame you when you slip from your healthy eating patterns? *"He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength."* (Isaiah 40:29 ESV).

### **Make a Plan: Connect to a Higher Purpose**

Connect your eating habits to a higher purpose, such as honoring your body, respecting nature, or living in alignment with your spiritual values. When you act from a place of purpose, it is easier to resist temptations that do not align with your goals. *"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."* (1



Corinthians 10:31 ESV). This verse reminds us that our actions, including our choices around food, can be acts of worship or devotion. If we remember that eating mindfully and healthily is a way to honor God, we can shift our perspective on food and use it as a tool for spiritual growth rather than momentary pleasure.

### **Palm Dates: Abundance and Energy**

In some future articles, I will focus on the amazing foods in the Bible. Each food mentioned in the Bible has spiritual and physical health significance. As a preview, here is a date recipe that is a healthier alternative to a brownie. These bars taste like the real thing with 70% less sugar than brownies.

#### **Ingredients:**

- 1 1/2 cups raw cashews
- 1 1/2 cups raw walnuts (reserve 1/4 cup walnuts)
- 1/2 cup raw cocoa powder
- 8 Medjool dates, pitted
- Pinch of sea salt

**Nutritional information:** *Per serving: 213 calories, 15g fat (2g saturated fat), 51mg sodium, 20g carbohydrates, 4g fiber, 5.5g protein*

#### **Directions:**

1. LINE an 8" square baking pan with parchment paper.
2. CHOP 1/4 cup of the walnuts and set aside.
3. COMBINE cashews, remaining walnuts, cocoa powder, and dates in a food processor. Process until ingredients form a sticky ball.
4. TRANSFER mixture to pan and evenly press mixture until flat and smooth. Top with chopped walnuts and sea salt.
5. CHILL in freezer for 20 minutes or until firm enough to slice. Cut into 12 even sized bars.
6. LAYER bars between waxed paper and store in an airtight container.

Dates are a fruit from the date palm tree (*Phoenix dactylifera*). They are



mentioned in the Bible multiple times and often symbolize prosperity, abundance, and beauty. This fruit can be eaten raw, dried, cooked, or baked. Dates are a carbohydrate, which provides a natural source of quick energy. The date is packed with fiber, which leaves the body feeling fuller longer. Dates also have:

- Potassium—This mineral helps regulate blood pressure and support heart health.
- Magnesium—This mineral can reduce inflammation and support muscle and nerve function.
- Iron—This mineral can help prevent/treat anemia and boost oxygen circulation.
- Vitamin B6—This vitamin can support brain function and mood regulation.

Before God led Israel into the promised land, He encouraged the people with a list of healthy foods that could be found

in their new home: *"For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey."* (Deuteronomy 8:7-8 ESV). The honey in this verse is commonly believed to be the sweetness from the date palm when stewed and squeezed.

Later, in a verse from Nehemiah, we see the palms are mentioned during the Feast of Tabernacles. It was at this time that the people were to reflect on their abundance and feast on healthy foods: *"Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written."* (Nehemiah 8:15 ESV).

Enjoy the date squares! And as you do, you can recall the same abundance and healthy eating God reminded Israel of many years ago.

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# WHERE WE CAMPED, NOT WHERE WE *FELL*

*By Jason Grant*

Movement matters.  
Even in the wandering of Israel,  
they were not lost.  
God was still leading.



I know what the priests say: God is merciful. I know Moses says we've been forgiven. But I wonder if those promises are for people better than me. I was there when we cried out for meat. I was there when we said the manna wasn't enough. I was one of the ones who doubted, who complained, who made God angry enough to turn us back into this wilderness. I look at my son, running through the camp, and I wonder how I'll explain to him that it's because of men like me that he grew up here instead of in the land God promised. I wonder if he'll understand—or carry my failure like his own burden. Everyone says the cloud still moves, that the fire still burns. But some nights, it feels like it's moved on without me. Maybe some sins are too heavy even for forgiveness...

*Private Fictional Journal,  
Year Thirty-Eight, Somewhere beyond Mount Hor*

**W**E can imagine that feeling, can't we? Carrying the weight of past mistakes. Dragging them from place to place. The remembrance of missteps, things we wish we could undo. They can start to feel like they are part of who we are, like the real story of our lives. We can eventually convince ourselves that's the story God sees too, the one He'll hold against us when the journey ends.

But is that truly how God sees us? If forgiveness has been given, why do we insist on carrying burdens He's told us we can leave behind? Maybe because it feels right. Like a kind of self-imposed punishment. Like we ought to pay for the places we failed.

But what if God sees a different story of our lives? A life not focused on our mistakes but on our movement. A quiet chapter tucked away in the Bible hints that He does. It's found in an unlikely place: Numbers 33.

In the chapters leading up to this one, we learn that Israel fought a major battle against Midian, counted a new generation, appointed Joshua to succeed Moses and made plans for settling the land. Now, standing on the edge of the Promised Land—one

of the most significant moments in Israel's history—God paused the story. As plans unfolded, God paused the narrative for reflection.

At His command, Moses recorded every step of the Israelites' journey, "*their starting places by their stages*." (Numbers 33:2). It's a curious instruction. Why document every dusty stop instead of the highlights, such as the Red Sea, Sinai, victories, and miracles? Instead, it's just a simple travel itinerary. Tents pitched and taken down; places briefly inhabited, then left behind. Forty-two encampments across the Israelites' forty-year journey from Egypt to the Promised Land.

But the real significance isn't in what's recorded, it's in what's omitted.

There are no detailed accounts of the events at some of these locations, many of which were violent and shameful. There's no mention of the day 3,000 were killed after worshipping the golden calf, or when Israel abandoned God for an idol. No reference to Korah's rebellion, when the earth itself opened to swallow those who challenged Moses' leadership. Nothing about the venomous serpents sent as judgment after their constant complaining

against God. No mention of deeply painful episodes like Rephidim, where thirsty Israelites doubted if God was truly among them. Or Taberah, where constant complaints caused fire to break out in judgment. Nothing about Kadesh Barnea, where fear of giants caused Israel to refuse entry into the Promised Land. These are all passed over without comment. The places are named. The failures are not.

In this light, if we step back and look at the chapter as a whole, Numbers 33 is a quiet, unadorned record of **movement**. If we were writing the list, we'd probably insert asterisks at the worst stops, annotate the sins, and highlight the failures. But God doesn't. He simply tells us His people kept moving forward, departing one place, and arriving at the next. The point isn't that mistakes didn't happen. Each step forward mattered because it meant He was still walking with them.

Yes, God calls us to learn from the past, but not to live there. He invites us forward to trust His guidance

our thoughts? We remain mentally camped at spiritual Kadesh's far longer than we should. But God doesn't keep us there. He doesn't want us there. If we're following Him, He is always moving us forward. The record of our lives, like Israel's, is a map marked not by perfection, but by perseverance.

### **When the Destination Is the Point**

Numbers 33 isn't the only place Scripture focuses less on details and more on direction. Abraham's call in Genesis 12:1 is brief and almost abrupt: *"Go from your country... to the land that I will show you."* We don't know much about the steps in between, what he packed, where he slept, the detours or delays. What mattered was that he obeyed—he went.

The same is true of the wise men in Matthew 2. Their route is never detailed, and we aren't told how long the journey took or what challenges they faced. We're only told they arrived, they worshipped and left changed.

Even Paul's journeys in Acts, though more thoroughly recorded, are marked

**If we're following Him, He is always moving us forward.  
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and follow where He leads us next. Every departure is a step toward Him. Every encampment is a gift of rest and renewal. There is grace in this steady rhythm. We learn, move, pause, and try again.

Yet, how often do we replay our missteps in painful detail, reliving moments of sin, regret, and failure in

by intentional gaps. There are dozens of unnamed places, quick mentions of stops, sailing, and setbacks. But what stands out is the forward motion. Paul moved, and the gospel moved with him. The details of every village or hardship weren't the point. It was the destination, and the faithfulness along the way. *"Forgetting those things which*

*are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal.*" (Philippians 3:13-14). Paul's literal and spiritual journey wasn't about retelling every past mistake or step. It was about keeping eyes forward. Paul deliberately downplays what's behind his achievements and failures to focus on what lies ahead.

We sometimes think our spiritual story needs to be tidy—to be meaningful, or full of stops and grand adventures along the way. But the Bible shows us otherwise. Some of the most faithful people in Scripture are remembered with just these words: "*By faith, they went.*" That was enough. If God doesn't feel the need to document every detail, we can also learn to stop replaying every wrong turn. Our story is not about the moments we stumbled—but the fact that, by His grace, we didn't stop walking.

### Grace in Motion

Movement matters. Even in the wandering of Israel, they were not lost. God was still leading.

Here's something that can often be overlooked. While each person in Israel had their individual path of faith and failure, God was shaping them into a people. The wilderness wasn't just a place of personal testing but a classroom for the whole community. Even those who wouldn't enter the land still had a role to prepare the next generation to walk more faithfully than they had.

There's a quiet pattern across Scripture. Journeys are rarely solitary. God forms individuals **within** the community, and

the **community** through its individuals.

It's tempting to think of the wilderness years as wasted time, just a long punishment between Egypt and the Promised Land. But that's not how God tells it. Their refusal at Kadesh (stop thirty-three of forty-two) came well into the journey, and even afterward, God guided them with a clear purpose. Each location listed in Numbers 33 matters because none of their wandering was meaningless. Though many would not enter the Promised Land, their journey still had profound value.

That entire forty-year period, an entire generation's lifetime, is covered in just the final nine encampments (Numbers 33:36-49). That's forty years in thirteen verses. Two locations, Zalmonah and Punon, appear nowhere else in Scripture. These were not years of aimless punishment, but of deliberate preparation. The judgment came at Kadesh (Numbers 14:29-34), yet even then, God did not abandon them. He continued to lead and shape them.

That's the perspective Moses offers in Deuteronomy 8. He reminds the people that their time in the wilderness wasn't wasted. It was a season of humbling, teaching, and formation. Yes, there had been failure. But the point wasn't to carry it forever; it was to learn from it. To use it. The past was meant to shape their next steps, not hold them back from taking them.

These were the parents and grandparents who wouldn't enter themselves. But they still had critical work to do in training, teaching, and



showing their children how to follow God, even in the wake of their own mistakes. With the help of leaders like Moses, Joshua, Caleb, and others, they reshaped the community around a future they would not personally inherit.

That is grace in motion, where even our detours become classrooms, where our lost opportunities become someone else's foundation.

For us today, the lesson is deeply practical. When we feel stalled or sidelined—when our mistakes seem to have rerouted our story, it's easy to believe we've lost our usefulness. But what if the season you're in right now still has purpose? What if it's not about trying to regain what you lost but helping others move forward, laying a foundation they can build on?

### **Forgiving Ourselves**

There's a strange irony in our faith. We readily believe in God's ability

to forgive, but wrestle to extend that same grace to ourselves. We know, intellectually, God removes our sins *"as far as the east is from the west"* (Psalm 103:12), but we still choose to keep them close, as though holding on to them might somehow pay the debt. We carry them as punishment in our minds, our memories, and our hesitations to serve. We replay them in quiet moments. We wonder: "Who am I to teach? Who am I to lead? Who am I to be an example when I've made such a mess of things?" But if the wilderness generation teaches us anything, it's that usefulness is not limited by a flawless past. God doesn't demand perfection before He allows us to influence others.

We face a similar challenge today. We typically speak of Christ's return as imminent, but we don't know the day or the hour. We don't know where we are on the map of those encampments. So, what do we do? We

can stand still spiritually, holding our breath in passive expectation, waiting motionless for that day to come upon us, believing Jesus will return, but using that belief as a reason to disengage. We might bury our talents in a napkin in the ground. Growth is stunted. We wait for someone else to act, or for God to make the next move.

Or we can **move**—not frantically or fearfully but faithfully. That begins within. Movement means letting God heal us, stopping our endless circling regrets, and trusting Him to reshape us, to fully accept that we're truly forgiven. Then it also means looking outward, investing in others. Teaching, mentoring, encouraging, and preaching. Preparing the next generation as if they'll inherit the responsibility we've carried. Because if Jesus remains away, they will.

That preparation takes humility. It means setting aside the emotional weight of regrets and focusing on what lies ahead. Our children, our young people, and those newly baptized don't need examples of perfection. They need examples of persistence. Of repentance. People who've made mistakes, acknowledged them, learned from them, and kept moving toward the kingdom. When we forgive ourselves, we free ourselves to lead. To mentor. To encourage. To say, "I've been there—but by God's grace, I'm still walking. So, let's do this together."

### Keep Walking

That brings us back to our own journey. What would it look like if we were to write our version of Numbers

33? Would it be a list of milestones, or a mess of regrets, reroutes, and restarts? Would it highlight the failures? Or would it, like God's record, simply show that we kept going?

We all have a version of this journey. Some of the stops we're proud of. Others we'd rather forget. But the good news is, God isn't standing at the finish line with a scorecard. He's gently leading us forward. What matters most is not where we've been, but where we're going.

So, the invitation for all of us today is simple. Let's stop pitching our tents in memories God has already moved us past. Let's break camp and leave behind whatever guilt we have that He has already forgiven. Let's take the next step forward. Let's keep looking ahead. Because grace isn't just something God gives once. It's something we live with every day. It's the air we breathe on this journey, always present, always sustaining. If we are still walking, still trying, still turning toward Him, that's the evidence that grace is doing exactly what it was meant to do.

God's story about us isn't written in the places we stumbled. It's written in the places we got up. It's written where we kept moving. Where we camped, not where we fell. Let's keep learning. Let's keep growing. Let's help one another do the same. The journey continues. We are not walking alone. Let's go. The Promised Land is just ahead.

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# HEURISTICS

*By Paul Zilmer*



**T**HERE'S a fancy word for something we use daily, which you might not know about. It is: "heuristics." We mainly use unfancy terms like: rules of thumb, educated guesses, hacks and common sense. One writer I came across says, "Heuristics reduce cognitive load, simplify choices, and allow us to act quickly instead of consciously thinking about

all the options."<sup>1</sup> We use these all day, in the countless small decisions we must make. We would hardly be able to function without them.

However, the same writer cautions, "Heuristics can also generate inaccurate conclusions and irrational actions. In this way, they frequently lead to biases—irrational, often unconscious, influences on behavior."

I'm sure you can see the spiritual application. Are heuristics good or bad? Well, yes. For example, Jesus urged the application of one heuristic—if he could do miracles, then he must be from God, and people should believe him (John 5:36; 10:37-38). Some embraced this principle and came to the proper conclusion (John 3:2; 9:31-33).

On the other hand, the resistance Jesus encountered came from other heuristics, such as the belief that healing was “work” and, therefore, forbidden on the Sabbath. (Matthew 12:10-14). That the source of “uncleanness” is external. (Mark 7:14-23).

So, it's not at all clear. There are good and helpful heuristics, and bad and misleading (or worse) heuristics. How do we know whether we are on the good or bad side, as we exercise the rules of thumb that we use daily? It would be nice to have a heuristic to give us a simple answer!

We don't.

Heuristics are sometimes referred to as “simplifying assumptions.” We often unconsciously set aside some possibilities when making plans or decisions. We simplify. That's fine, essential even. But it's critically important that we are aware of what we're assuming. **Unexamined assumptions** can lead us to terrible decisions with terrible outcomes.

Our nature works against us. Our pride can lead us to think we're much more self-aware than we actually are, that we

are, in fact, wise and have considered everything. Our desires may attract us powerfully in one direction and cause us to discount any factor contrary to what we want.

Employing appropriate and well-thought-out heuristics is what we call wisdom. Experience, especially painful experience, can help. But it doesn't come with a guarantee. What we think is wisdom may actually be that we're set in our ways.

What does God's word tell us? “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.*” (Proverbs 9:10 ESV). As you probably know, the “*fear*” here is reverence. Solomon is telling us what the starting place is. Honoring and revering the One God is where we begin.


What does this do for us, practically speaking? I think it tells us to ask, “Do my assumptions acknowledge the role of the LORD in this decision, this plan?” Asking and answering the question need not take a long time. You will know immediately. True wisdom is refusing to put on blinders to avoid seeing the answer.

Reverence for the LORD “lightens the cognitive load,” simplifies choices, and allows us to act quickly. It counteracts biases and inaccurate conclusions. It's the starting point for wisdom in the thousand decisions you'll make today.

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1 Hitchcock, Joe, “*Heuristics—Everything you Need to Know*,” [www.insidebe.com/articles/heuristics](http://www.insidebe.com/articles/heuristics)



SPECIAL SECTION: PROPHECY

# AD 70

*By Jason Hensley*

**T**HROUGHOUT his ministry, the Lord Jesus emphasized that change was coming for the Jewish world. He stated that all the blood of the prophets would fall upon that current generation (Luke 11:47–51). He told a parable about a fig tree, representing Israel, about to be cut down (Luke 13:6–9). He called Jerusalem’s house “*forsaken*” (Luke 13:34–35). As he approached the last week of his life, this emphasis found its way into many of his different interactions, because his death would be what brought about this shift. Soon, God would bring the fury of the Roman armies upon the Jewish world, and all would change. They would burn the Temple, the focal point of worship in Judaism, and would only preserve the Temple Mount platform, and thus, leave Judaism in a state of ruins. How could they continue without a Temple? What about the festivals? What about the daily offerings? What about the Day of Atonement and forgiveness? How would Judaism continue?

In the Olivet Prophecy, the Lord Jesus brought together much of his previous teaching about the fall of Judaism as they knew it. Not only did he bring previous teachings together, but he elaborated on many of those points and gave his disciples specific signs so they too would be ready for what was about to happen. In this article, we’ll consider that prophecy and its specific fulfillment in AD 70. We’ll first examine the disciples’ questions that introduced the prophecy, some of the signs Jesus referenced, and then his second coming. Ultimately, we’ll see the Lord’s care for his followers, and thus remember the goodness of the one we follow.

## The Disciples’ Questions

For years, the disciples expected Christ to somehow partner with the religious establishment to bring about the Kingdom of God. Thus, when he upset the Pharisees, they let him know that he had perhaps unwittingly made a mistake (Matthew 15:12). Later, when he took them to Jerusalem for the last time, they believed he was on the cusp of setting up the Kingdom (Luke 19:11). Finally, after they continued to wait a few more days and no Kingdom came, they appeared to have tried prompting him: “*Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple.*” (Matthew 24:1).<sup>1</sup> Why else would they have done this? Clearly, Jesus knew what the Temple looked like. Instead, Scripture perhaps shows a picture of an anxious group of people, prompting the Lord to finally work together with the religious establishment and thus bring that Kingdom immediately.

Yet, that was not to be. That very week, the religious establishment would work together with the Romans to bring about Christ’s crucifixion. Thus, instead of the Kingdom of God, Judea would see a very different change. On looking at those Temple buildings and seeing the disciples’ expectations, the Lord gave a shocking revelation: “*But he answered them, ‘You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.’*” (Matthew 24:2). Not only were these words the exact opposite of what the disciples wanted to hear, they were stunning in their frankness and horror. Being familiar with Judaism without a Temple, we often forget the magnitude

of this prediction. Everything in Judaism revolved around the Temple. Essentially, Christ told his disciples that Judaism, as they knew it, was about to disappear. Either Judaism would adapt, which it did when it arose from the ashes of AD 70 as Rabbinic Judaism, or it would vanish.

Following the Lord from the Temple to the Mount of Olives, the disciples appear to walk in a stunned silence. Only once Christ sat down on the mount did they approach him and ask for clarity. They asked three questions (Matthew 24:3):

1. When would this happen?
2. What would be the sign of his coming?
3. What would be the sign of the end of the age?

We can occasionally get distracted by the second two questions, thinking the disciples were asking about Christ's second coming. That seems unlikely, however, considering they didn't believe in a second coming. They didn't know he was going to die or ascend to heaven, so they didn't expect him to come again.

Then, what did they mean by the second and third questions? Perhaps they meant Christ would be the one to effect this change, and in so doing, bring the Kingdom of God. When

would he come to destroy the Temple, and then, with its destruction, when would he bring the Kingdom of God? Unfortunately, the disciples' timeline was confused. Thus, when the Lord Jesus answered their questions, he gave a prophecy that not only discussed the signs related to the Temple's destruction, but also those connected to his second coming and the Kingdom of God.

### The Signs

The link between this prophecy and the Temple's destruction typically causes scholars to try to date the writing of the gospels post-AD 70. Mark Allan Powell writes,

A number of matters in Matthew's Gospel reflect the sort of concerns the Jewish people were dealing with in the decades after the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 CE (cf. Matthew 24:1–2).<sup>2</sup>

In other words, they recognize Jesus's accurate prediction and thus believe it couldn't truly have been a prophecy. Instead, it must be a reflection of the wrestlings of the Christian community while writing the gospel. Nevertheless, that approach completely removes the value of the text. Jesus' words were intended to warn that generation about what was to come. He specifically gave them signs so those in Judea could "flee

Everything in Judaism revolved around the Temple. Essentially, Christ told his disciples that Judaism, as they knew it, was about to disappear. Either Judaism would adapt, which it did when it arose from the ashes of AD 70 as Rabbinic Judaism, or it would vanish.





*to the mountains.”* (Matthew 24:16). What’s the point of writing that after the event already happened?

Rather, Christ intended these signs to prepare his followers for what was to come. Earthquakes, famines, and pestilences would remind them God was still working, and eventually things would shift significantly. Ultimately, when they saw the abomination of desolation described by Daniel (referenced four times in Daniel’s prophecy and consistently connected with the removal of the daily sacrifice), they were to flee. Josephus,

an eyewitness to the Roman siege of Jerusalem, wrote:

And now Titus gave orders to his soldiers that were with him to dig up the foundations of the tower of Antonia, and make him a ready passage for his army to come up; while he himself had Josephus brought to him (for he had been informed that on that very day, which was the seventeenth day of Panemus [Talmuz], the sacrifice called ‘the Daily Sacrifice’ had failed, and had not been offered to God for want of men to offer it, and



that the people were grievously troubled at it.<sup>3</sup>

At that point, the Romans broke through Jerusalem's defenses and entered the Temple. Titus, the Roman general, sent Josephus (who had been captured in a previous battle) to the city walls to offer clemency to any Jews willing to surrender. This was a major policy change, as Titus had previously crucified those who sought to escape. Many surrendered, and not only did they surrender, but they then used their freedom, just as Christ said, to flee to the mountains.<sup>4</sup> They saw the abomination of desolation, and chose to listen to Jesus. This saved their lives.

### The Second Coming

Despite the disciples' misunderstanding (that Christ would destroy the Temple and bring the Kingdom simultaneously), the Lord Jesus explained that the Kingdom would come at some unspecified time **after** the Temple's fall. No one knew the day or the hour (Mark 13:32). Nevertheless, at some point, he would indeed come with power and great

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glory to set up that Kingdom: "*Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*" (Matthew 24:30). In the Greek text of this verse, the word "*then*" is the second word in

the sentence, possibly giving it a greater emphasis. In the context we've considered, that of the disciples' misunderstanding regarding Christ's second coming, one can imagine the Lord emphasizing that particular word, "*Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man.*" It's similar to the situation in which Paul was confronted by the ecclesia at Thessalonica. People

were quitting their jobs and preparing for the Kingdom of God shortly. Paul had to remind them there were still other prophecies yet to be fulfilled (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

### Conclusion

Thus, when we consider this prophecy given at the end of the Lord's life, we see a man who knew Judaism would

Judean jills, Israel

change. He knew the Romans would burn the Temple. He knew they would lay Jerusalem in ruins. And thus, he sought to prepare his followers, all of whom were Jews at the time of the prophecy, for this shocking change. Even more, he sought to show them that not only would Jerusalem be destroyed, but the Kingdom of God would not come at any point in their near future. All that destruction would come upon **that** generation (Matthew 24:34). Only then, after those changes, would the Kingdom of God come.

Though considerations of prophecy often focus solely on when events will take place and how they will unfold, this prophecy, given on the Mount of Olives, illustrates a major characteristic of the Lord Jesus. We see his compassion and care for his followers. He told them these things so they could prepare for what was going to happen, so they could ask themselves “*Since all these things* [the Temple and the traditions

of Judaism] *are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?*” (2 Peter 3:11). He told them these things so they could recognize the abomination of desolation and could thus flee at the right time, a choice which would save their lives. That’s who our Lord is. He doesn’t enjoy our suffering. He doesn’t take pleasure in our confusion. Instead, he gives us prophecy so we can better know him and so we can more fully appreciate both his compassion and his goodness.

*Jason Hensley,  
Associate Editor*

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

<sup>2</sup> Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Flavius Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, trans. William Whiston, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2004, 6.2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., “Now Caesar not only received these men very kindly in other respects, but knowing they would not willingly live after the customs of other nations he sent them to Gophna, and desired them to remain there for the present.”

# MOTHERHOOD AND FAITH SHARING

Editor's Note: Four years ago, a few sisters from Australia began *The Seasons Magazine*, which focuses on the various seasons of our lives. *Tidings* is pleased to collaborate with them on our shared interest in parenting, and we plan to publish a few of their articles related to this topic.



**W**HEN it comes to sharing my faith, my approach has been to look out for those who may need some friendship or support while in the same stage. The beauty of being a mom is that I now have the time to chat with other parents at the playground or park. They are so often looking for connection and understanding, which really makes me appreciate how blessed we are to have our extended family in Christ, our community, and the sense of

belonging that comes with that. I think every young parent should be that lucky and befriending them and offering them a meal or a play date is a subtle way of demonstrating our faith. I will tell them upfront that I am Christadelphian and that I believe in God and let them ask questions if they want to know more. We are told to look out for each other. "*Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfil the law of Christ.*" (Galatians 6:2 NIV).<sup>1</sup>

My experience of early motherhood so far has been both magical, love-filled, and somewhat exhausting. I am a mom in my mid-30s and have two small energetic toddlers. I found the transition from a career and personal freedom to my new job as a stay-at-home mom sometimes challenging, so I have empathy for other situations, whatever they may be. On the flip side, I am in constant awe of the insane cuteness of small humans and am so grateful to God that I have been blessed with a family.

One of the key lessons in being a mom for me was to learn to surrender. From pregnancy to birth, and then learning how to be a mother, I have had to really embrace that I am not in control and have faith in the power of God to make this miracle unfold. Surrender has continued to be a theme with me finding my feet in my new caregiving role. I truly believe that having children has strengthened my faith and made me want to be more like Christ. I find his incredible example so encouraging, he always put others first and nurtured his family both physically and spiritually.

Early motherhood is a perfect time to slow down and reassess what is important in this life: our faith, our health, our family, and our extended family in Christ. I believe the vulnerability of pregnancy and childbirth encourages us to have a new perspective about our lives and to better look after each other.

The old saying “it takes a village” is so true when it comes to motherhood. We need the wisdom of all ages to help teach our kids and support us in our new role. On a practical note, attending the meeting and Bible classes has become

more about wrangling children, and it's often hard to listen to a talk properly (or at all). To counter this, I have found that listening to talks at home and talking to my beautiful friends about the Bible to be so spiritually uplifting. As a sister pointed out to me recently, she has never learned more about the Bible since being at home with her kids. Don't get me wrong, she is very busy. But modern technology means she has the ability to listen to Bible studies throughout her entire day.

*This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. (John 15:12-15 ESV).*

If you are struggling in early motherhood, remember that we are in a season of caregiving that will quickly pass, and then we will miss it! Praying to God, thinking about Christ's example, and creating a loving tribe around you really helps. While our seasons may be different, we can all be there for each other on our walk to God's glorious Kingdom.

*Seasons Magazine,  
Australia*

P A R T 3

# HIDDEN TREASURES IN THE TITLES OF THE PSALMS

*By Leen Ritmeyer*

***MORE THAN CONQUERORS***





Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are **more than conquerors** through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans 8:35-39).<sup>1</sup>

**T**HE Apostle Paul lists the difficult circumstances Jesus found himself in many times (v. 35). The Apostle himself had his fair share of tribulations, as he mentions in 2 Corinthians:

*Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. (2 Corinthians 11:22-23).*

How did he conquer the fear that he undoubtedly must have experienced? We too may find ourselves in difficult circumstances when we show our love for God and stand up for the Truth. Paul exhorts us to “Be ye **followers** [imitators] of me, even as I also am of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 11:1). What did Christ do when he was persecuted?

*Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. (1 Peter 2:21-23).*

We should learn from this that we also must commit ourselves to God. We can do this through prayer. Committing

ourselves to God using the psalms puts our minds right, for we develop the mind of Christ.

### Start of a New Day and Analysis of Psalm 5

How do we, for example, start a new day? We should start with prayer, and there is no better prayer than Psalm 5.

*“To the chief Musician upon Nehiloth, A Psalm of David.” The literal meaning of this verse is: “To him that overcomes concerning an inheritance [nehiloth]. The best fruits of the beloved [Title].”*

Thinking about an inheritance, we are told:

*The LORD is the portion of mine **inheritance** and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly **heritage**. I will **bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel**: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. (Psalm 16:5-8).*

So, to get an inheritance, we too must set Yahweh always before us. This would change our minds and our behavior. It makes us receive God’s counsel and instructions and teaches us to commit our ways unto Yahweh,



every minute of the day. By saying this Psalm with all our heart, we are ready to receive the counsel of God and then we are led by the Spirit, which comes with a great promise:

*Ointment and perfume [incense] rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.* (Proverbs 27:9).

*Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.* (Psalm 73:24).

David valued the Counsel of God and appreciated it:

*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean(sing), enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.* (Psalm 19:7-11).

David loved God's law and meditated on it. "O **how love I thy law!** it is my meditation all the day." (Psalm 119:97).

The inheritance we hope to receive can only be obtained in Christ, as Paul explains:

*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the*

*counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest (pledge) of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.* (Ephesians 1:11-14).

So, to receive the inheritance, we must be able to produce the pledge of the Spirit. Remember that Tamar's life was saved by the pledge she acquired from Judah. The Psalms will help develop in us the Spirit of Christ, remembering that:

*Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* (Romans 8:9-11).

Whatever the day may bring, we face it with our inheritance in view, knowing that we can only receive it when we have developed the mind of Christ. Then we would want to pray to God: "Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation." (Psalm 5:1).

We should have meditated on something, otherwise we cannot say this Psalm and we cannot pray it to God!



*Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up. (Psalm 5:2-3).*

*“I direct my prayer unto thee”* is in Hebrew: *“I will arrange myself with thee.”* In Psalm 50:21, this word is translated as *“set them in order.”* That is how we should begin the day, by thinking about God, as the following verses tell us. (Note six points in Psalm 5:4-6):

1. Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness
2. Neither shall evil dwell with thee
3. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight
4. Thou hatest all workers of iniquity
5. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing [lies]
6. Yahweh will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

By thinking about these six points, we are more ready to arrange ourselves, or to set ourselves in order with God in the day before us. We soon find out that we lead a more godly life when we keep remembering our morning prayer throughout the day. Once we get used to praying the psalms, our minds become purer, more like the mind of Christ, and less like our own minds. Our longing for God becomes stronger:

*A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. God [Elohim,] thou art my God [El]; **early** will I seek thee: my soul*

*thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. (Psalm 63: Title-3).*

David wrote this Psalm in the wilderness. The nation of Israel was formed in the wilderness, far away from the world's distractions. But if we love the world more than God, we won't pray this Psalm. The present world has many attractions, especially for young people. The question is, do we consider this world a wilderness or an attractive place to be in? Are we tempted by the so-called attractions that the world has to offer, or are they distractions to the people of God? Only when we look upon the world in which we live as a wilderness with nothing to offer will we turn to the psalms for meditation and consolation and use them in our prayers.

It becomes clear then that by using the psalms, our minds become purer and sounder, like that of Christ. When we suffer for righteousness, because we do not participate in the things of the world, it becomes easier to bear, for God's lovingkindness is better than this life (v. 3). That is how it is for the true believer.

When we pray in the morning, we are in good company. Daniel prayed three times a day (Daniel 6:10).

Other psalms help us in the morning:

*But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the **morning**: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. (Psalm 59:16).*

*But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the **morning** shall my prayer prevent thee. (Psalm 88:13).*

*I prevented the dawning of the **morning** and cried: I hoped in thy word. (Psalm 119:147).*

### Giving Thanks For Food

Before we go to work, we have breakfast and we give thanks for our food to God. Why not use the words of the psalms? We can make up a prayer by using verses from different Psalms:

*The earth is Yahweh's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. (Psalm 24:1).*

*The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. (Psalm 145:15).*

*Bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved. (Psalm 66:8-9).*

*Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever. (Psalm 136:25).*

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural references are taken from the Authorized King James Version.

# TITUS: TRANSFORMED BY GRACE

*By Andrew Weller*

*The Servant and the Sent: Paul's Purpose in Titus*



**PAUL** begins his letter to Titus in a way that, if we let it, can set the tone for our entire approach to ecclesial life and leadership. His first words aren't a self-congratulatory resume or a claim to personal brilliance. No. They are words of identity: "*Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ.*" (Titus 1:1).<sup>1</sup>

That is not a throwaway line. That's a deep, defining description of who

Paul is and what he is about. He is not boasting. He is not even primarily claiming authority. He is putting himself in a long line of people who were simply servants of God. Think of Moses, Joshua, and the prophets. Now, Paul, who once called himself a Pharisee of Pharisees, calls himself a servant.

Let that sink in: Paul, who was a Christ-appointed leader, and who had every

reason to list his spiritual credentials, instead identifies first and foremost as a **servant**. And not just any servant. A servant of God and one who has been sent by Jesus Christ.

This isn't some casual self-description. It's

the foundation for everything he's about to say. He is speaking from a place of submission and service. He is a man under orders. The one who has sent him is none other than the risen Christ. The idea that apostleship is not self-appointed but God-commissioned

has enormous implications for how we think about leadership in ecclesias. Authority in the ecclesia flows not from power or personality, but from faithfulness to Christ and his message.

And then Paul tells us why. He tells us his purpose. His whole life's work, his mission, the driving force behind his labor.

*For the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness.*  
(Titus 1:1).

Paul sees his whole apostleship, his calling, work, preaching and writing as being for the sake of others. He doesn't promote himself. He doesn't build a platform. He doesn't stir controversy or showcase his intellect or polish. He does this for the sake of the faith of God's people, for their growth in knowledge, and the transformation of their lives. If what Paul was doing didn't change lives, it wasn't fulfilling its purpose.

That's the kind of leadership we need. That's the kind of leadership Titus was asked to carry forward in Crete. It was servant-hearted, Scripture-shaped, and utterly oriented to the building up of others. In a place like Crete, known for

deception, lawlessness, and self-indulgence, this kind of gospel-centered leadership was revolutionary. It remains so.

It reminds us that faithful leadership never begins with a platform. It begins with a posture of humility, service, and obedience to Christ. It isn't about

recognition, but responsibility. Paul's words challenge all of us who have any role in ecclesial life, formal or informal, to ask whether we see ourselves first as servants of God.

### **God's Elect: A Purpose That Humbles and Motivates**

There is a phrase in verse 1 we might skip over too quickly: "*God's elect.*" Paul is writing, laboring, and teaching for the sake of God's elect. That is, for those whom God has called and chosen. This can be a confusing idea, especially when the subject has been wrapped in centuries of theological argument. But Paul doesn't treat it as a point of division. He treats it as a point of **confidence**—a foundation. If God is the one who saves us, if God is the one who calls us, transforms us, and redeems us, then we can be certain that the work we do in His name is not in vain.

The doctrine of election is not

**Faithful leadership never begins with a platform. It begins with a posture of humility, service, and obedience to Christ. It isn't about recognition, but responsibility.**

something to argue about. It is something to marvel at. It is not something to make us proud. It is something to make us grateful.

Because God didn't wait until we were good enough. He didn't wait until we cleaned ourselves up, memorized the Statement of Faith, or sorted out our ecclesial politics. He chose us in Christ **before** the foundation of the world, to be *"holy and blameless in his sight."* (Ephesians 1:4 NIV). Not that we were impressive or deserving, but that His mercy was extended to us. That's why Paul says in Titus 3:5, *"He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy."*

It's hard to overstate how transformative this concept is. So often, we fall into the trap of thinking we are accepted by God because of our performance. We subtly start to believe that our attendance, our family name, our conservative values, our speaking schedule, or Bible knowledge, gives us credit with God. But the gospel of grace dismantles that. Paul's whole mission is rooted in helping the elect grow in faith and deepen their knowledge of the truth. This leads away from pride and to godliness.

This means our preaching and teaching must aim for more than agreement or knowledge. It must be first for growth. A true shepherd doesn't just want people to tick doctrinal boxes. He wants them to flourish in Christ. The gospel is not just a set of ideas to believe, but a power to be changed by.

So why is Paul preaching? Why is he writing this letter to Titus? Because the elect need to grow. Because the grace

that saves also teaches. It teaches us to *"say no to ungodliness, to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives, and to wait for the blessed hope."* (Titus 2:12-13). Paul preaches because election does not negate effort. It inspires it. It motivates it. It fuels godliness.

### Truth That Leads to Godliness

There's another little phrase in verse 1 we must not miss. Paul says he labors for *"the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness."* Read that again: *"truth that leads to godliness."* On the "flip side," there is such a thing as truth that leads to pride. There is truth that leads to quarrels. There is truth that becomes an end in itself, and that does not lead to life. That's not the kind of truth Paul is talking about.

Paul is not interested in clever teaching that doesn't change anyone. He's not excited by new theories, novel insights, or speculative timelines. He wants people to know the truth *"that leads to godliness."*

We have to be honest about this. There is a kind of Bible teaching that can be spiritually dangerous. Not because it's completely false, but because it's disconnected from living. It fills the mind but leaves the heart cold. It wows with technical knowledge and intriguing insights, but fails to move anyone to love, repent, or serve. Paul would have no time for that. He says if your teaching isn't producing transformation, you've missed the point.

That's what the ecclesias in Crete needed. That's what our ecclesias need too. We don't need more opinions.



We don't need louder voices. We need a more profound truth. Truth that changes how we think and feel, and live. Truth that turns sinners into saints, critics into encouragers, and spectators into servants.

We need teaching that does more than fill our notebooks or complete our workbooks. We need teaching that fills our hearts, shapes our lives, and transforms how we treat our families, co-workers, and ecclesial members.

In Paul's thinking, godliness is never merely about the outward appearance. It is the lived reality of a life gripped by grace and shaped by the gospel. This is why the method matters just as much as the message. If truth is delivered in a way that is harsh, domineering, or self-promoting, it undermines the very transformation it claims to promote.

That's why Paul will be so strong on rebuking false teachers later in this letter. Not because he enjoys controversy, but because he knows what's at stake. If people teach things that are not true, or teach in a way that doesn't lead to godliness, they are doing damage. They are disqualifying themselves from doing good (Titus 1:16). They must be silenced, Paul says, because they are upsetting whole households.

But when the truth is taught faithfully and received humbly, it leads to lovely lives. That's what this series of articles is about. That's what Paul wanted for Titus. That's what God wants for us.

### Hope That Is Certain

Paul says he works *"in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began."* (Titus 1:2).

He is not hoping in the sense of crossing

his fingers. He is living in a sure hope anchored in a promise—not just any promise, but a promise made by *"God, who never lies."* That is a breathtaking contrast to the Cretan culture, which Paul will later describe as full of liars, beasts, and lazy gluttons.

So here is the foundation: God has promised eternal life. God has spoken. God does not lie. That is the hope Paul lives in. That is the hope he holds out to Titus and the believers in Crete. That is the hope we hold out to each other. In a world filled with broken promises, this is radical. Leaders break promises. Friends betray trust. Families become fractured. But God does not lie. He is faithful. He is true. His promises are not like ours; they are anchored in eternity.

This hope isn't abstract; it isn't "pie in the sky." It is tangible. It is seen in changed lives. It is shown in lives full of good works (Titus 3:8), which is evidence of people living for another world. Hope is not passive. It's active, energized and sustained. It strengthens us to live well now because we believe something better is coming.

### Titus: A True Son in the Faith

Then Paul named Titus: "To Titus, my true child in a common faith." This line is full of warmth, spiritual parenthood, shared conviction, and unity. Paul and Titus were not just missionary colleagues; they were family in Christ, bound together by a common faith.

Isn't that what we want? Not just committees, teams, or rosters, but true spiritual partnerships. Genuine affection. Deep love. Real investment in one another's lives. Paul had mentored Titus, modeled ministry to

him, and trusted him. Now, he sends him to Crete to do hard things, not because he is disposable, but because he is dependable.

Titus was tasked with a demanding job, but he didn't do it alone. Paul was with him, and God was with him. That's true of us, too. When we step into the responsibilities God has placed in front of us, whether teaching a Bible class, supporting a brother or sister, raising children, or leading in the ecclesia, we do not do it alone. We are not left to our own strength. We serve in the strength that God supplies.

### **Conclusion: Beginning with the Right Foundation**

So here is where we begin this journey through Titus:

- A servant, sent by Christ.
- A purpose: to build up the faith of God's people.
- A truth that leads to godliness.

- A hope that is promised by a God who cannot lie.
- A partnership, born of a common faith.

Let's begin here, too. Let's recommit ourselves to being servants of God. Let's seek to build up faith. Let's treasure the truth that transforms. Let's cling to hope that is certain. Let's walk together in this common faith.

May this word dwell in us richly, and may our lives be a lovely witness to the grace of God that has appeared, bringing salvation for all. May we, like Paul and Titus, be found faithful to the task entrusted to us, until the day our hope is fully realized and we are welcomed into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> All Scriptural references are taken from the English Standard Version.

# DIFFICULT PASSAGES: HEBREWS 1:8

*By Richard Morgan*



**F**OR those who believe in the deity of Christ, such as Trinitarians, Hebrews 1:8 proves that Jesus is God. The verse says:

*But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom."<sup>1</sup>*

It is very easy to understand this verse from a Trinitarian viewpoint since it clearly addresses *"the Son"* with the words *"O God."* How should we approach this passage when talking with our Trinitarian friends?

The key to studying any passage is its context. Let's first think about the purpose of the book of Hebrews. It was written to combat the main controversy in the first-century ecclesia: the cessation of the Old Covenant and the rituals of the Law of Moses. A key word in Hebrews is *"better,"* as the author illustrates that everything about Jesus is better than things connected with the idea that salvation comes from following the rituals of the Law of Moses. The first two chapters show Jesus is better than the angels. The reason for outlining this point is that it was through angelic ministration that Moses received the Law (Galatians 3:19—*"it was put in place through angels by an intermediary"*) as he spoke with the angels of God on Mount Sinai (Acts 7:30, 35, 38). Then, in the following chapters, the writer shows how Jesus is better than Moses (Hebrews 3:3), and Joshua (Hebrews 4:8), has a better priesthood (Hebrews 5:5-7), and is the mediator of a better covenant through his blood (Hebrews 8:6-10).

We focus on the first two chapters, where we learn Jesus is better than the angels. The term *"angel"* simply means a messenger, and the writer's reference to messengers links back to the very first verse where we read *"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets."* (Hebrews 1:1). Whether through prophets or angels, God made sure his message was delivered. However, as the next verse says, *"But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son."* (Hebrews 1:2). The Greek for *"by"* in this verse is *en*, which is often translated as *"in."* So we could translate the phrase as God speaking *"in his Son"* instead, which seems to be the emphasis of contrast the writer wants to make. Notice what the writer then goes on to say about the Son:

- God appointed him heir of all things (v. 2).
- God created the world through him (v. 2).
- He is the radiance of God's glory (v. 3).
- He is the exact imprint of God's nature (v. 3).
- He upholds the universe by the word of his power (v. 3).
- He made purification for sins (v. 3).
- He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (v. 3).

These are all points of contrast with other messengers God uses, be they prophets or angels. A Trinitarian might latch onto each of these and conclude they all teach us Jesus is God. However, look carefully at what the writer says.

First, the Son has been “*appointed*” as heir of all things. That means it is not his inherent right as the supposed “God the Son.” Second, it is God who creates “*through the Son.*” Furthermore, the word for “*world*” is *aion*, which does not mean the physical heavens and earth but “the ages.” The writer is not referring to the Genesis creation, and it is much more likely he has in mind the New Creation. Third, he is the “*radiance*” of God’s glory. The word for “*radiance*” is unique here in the New Testament, but it is found in the Apocrypha in Wisdom 7:26, where the writer, speaking of wisdom, says, “For she is a reflection of eternal light.” Other writers, like Philo, use the term in the sense of reflection or image. Therefore, if Jesus reflects God’s glory, it follows he is not God Himself. Fourth, the phrase “*exact imprint*” is the word character, in the sense of a character imprinted through some process, e.g., if you were typing a character on a keyboard. If Jesus is the imprint of God, it follows he is not God himself.

However, it is in Hebrews 1:3-4 that we see the kernel of the author’s intent. He emphasizes “*the word of his power*” that “*upholds the universe,*” which takes us back to verse 2 and how God speaks “*by*” his Son. What makes the word of Christ so powerful? Why was it different from the words of angels or messengers? Because the word is now something that is “in” God’s Son, reflected not just in the physical words he said, but in the kind of person he was. Jesus reflected God’s glory and character, and we see in Jesus not just words being uttered, but those words being fulfilled in how he lived his life, treated others, and gave his life as a purification for sins.

However glorious the words of God’s other messengers, they were all flawed somehow. The prophets were sinful and could not fully reflect God’s glory. The angels, as the writer goes on to explain in Chapter 2, were not of the same nature as us, and so there is no connection between us. However glorious an angel might be in word and power; they cannot act as a mediator for us when it comes to the question of salvation.

After telling us Jesus was able to bring about purification from sin and sit down at God’s right hand, he writes, “*Having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.*” (v. 4). If Jesus was God himself, would this make any sense? He wouldn’t become superior to angels if he were God; he would already be superior. He wouldn’t inherit a better name than theirs; he would already have a better name inherent in him by his being God. Furthermore, if Jesus is God, why does the writer to the Hebrews need to go through such a process to prove Jesus is better than the angels (and the other things mentioned in subsequent chapters, for that matter)? If he is God, of course, he is better than the angels!

However, verse 8 still addresses the Son with the words “*O God.*” So, let’s think about the author’s intention in using this language.

Verses 8-9 together form a quotation from Psalm 45:8-9, one of a series of Old Testament quotations, which begins in verse 5. In using these Old Testament passages, the author intends to illustrate that God already spoke about the superiority of the Son; hence, each passage is introduced

with something like “*he says.*” (vs. 5-8). Remember, he is concerned from the first verse of the epistle with the importance of God speaking, whether through messengers, angels, or in His Son. Instead of saying something like, “as the Psalmist wrote,” he is reminding us, “God himself already told us this,” which would add authority to the argument.

It is when we consider these Old Testament quotations up to verse 8 that we can have a better sense as to why he quotes Psalm 45 and refers to the Son as “*God.*”

The quotation is in Psalm 2:7:

*I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.”*

We know from how this verse is quoted elsewhere in the New Testament that it does not refer to the birth of Jesus. In Acts 13:33, Paul says the verse was fulfilled in God “*raising Jesus*” from the dead. In other words, Psalm 2 refers to the exaltation of Jesus, which makes sense because the context of Hebrews 1 does refer to Jesus’ exaltation (v. 3-4). Hebrews 5:5 also quotes the same verse from Psalm 2, where the writer uses it to prove “*Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest.*”

It is this exaltation theme that continues in the other quotations. However, first notice in Psalm 2 it refers to both Yahweh and the Messiah, “*against the Lord and against his Anointed.*” (v. 2). In Acts 2:36, Peter says, by virtue of his resurrection, “*God has made him both LORD and Christ.*” In Romans 1:4, Paul writes that Jesus “*was declared to*

*be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.*” Again, the principle to keep in mind here is Jesus’ exaltation.

That brings us to the second quotation in Hebrews 1:5, taken from 2 Samuel 7:14.

*I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son.*

Hebrews’ reference to this verse is key for a couple of reasons. First, it refers to the promises given to the anointed king in the line of David—the Messiah or Christ. God promised David that his seed would be the Son of God, and of course, it all points forward to the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, Solomon’s initial fulfillment is important. Look at what David says of his son in 1 Chronicles 28:5-7.

*And of all my sons (for the LORD has given me many sons,) he has chosen Solomon my son to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel. He said to me, “It is Solomon your son who shall build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. I will establish his kingdom forever if he continues strong in keeping my commandments and my rules, as he is today.”*

Each element of the promise refers to Solomon, **including** the words quoted in Hebrews, “*I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father.*” If being the Son of God implies the Son is also God, then how do we account for Solomon also being the Son of God?



In the next chapter, “*They made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and they anointed him as prince for the Lord.*” (1 Chronicles 29:22). As the anointed one, he becomes the Messiah, or Christ [the meaning of “anointed”]. Look at what happens next:

*Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king in place of David his father. And he prospered, and all Israel obeyed him. All the leaders and the mighty men, and also all the sons of King David, pledged their allegiance to King Solomon. And the LORD made Solomon very great in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel.* (1 Chronicles 29:23-25).

Here we see the exaltation of Solomon. He sits on “*the throne of the LORD.*” If we didn’t know this was Solomon, we might think the one sitting on Yahweh’s throne is Yahweh himself. However, this is a mere man who now points forward to Jesus in his exaltation. Remember, Jesus doesn’t even sit on Yahweh’s throne. He sits at God’s right hand.

The passage above also says Yahweh “*made Solomon very great*”—he was exalted. Yahweh also “*bestowed on him such royal majesty*” using the word *hod*, translated as “*majesty.*” This is a Hebrew word used consistently to describe the honor and majesty of Yahweh himself. For instance, earlier in the same book, David in praising Yahweh says, “*Splendor and majesty are before him.*” (1 Chronicles 16:27). In the same chapter Solomon is given this *hod*: David said, “*Yours, O LORD,*

*is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty.*” (1 Chronicles 29:11). Again, if we didn’t know it was Solomon, we might think that the one who sits on Yahweh’s throne with Yahweh’s majesty is God himself.

The following two quotations in Hebrews 1:6-7 are used to prove the inferiority of the angels. It is worth noting that the one from Psalm 104 says in the context, again using the word *hod* and speaking of Yahweh, “*You are clothed with splendor and majesty.*” (Psalm 104:1).

All this leads to our main quotation from Psalm 45. Hebrews quotes the following verses from the psalm:

*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.* (Psalm 45:6-7).

Verse 7, also part of the Hebrews quotation, answers verse 6. There, we read “*your God*” about the one referred to as “*God*” in the previous verse. So, the one called God **has a God**, which is very confusing if we conclude that the one reference in the Psalm is God Himself.

So, why is he called God if he is not God himself?

First, note that verse 7 says, “*God has anointed you.*” Again, we are talking here about the Messiah or Christ. He is said to be “*the most handsome of the sons of men*” (v. 2), which confirms the Psalm speaks of a human being called

“God.” The next verse says this:

*Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your splendor and majesty!*

Here again we have the word *hod* [splendor] which belongs to the gibbor [mighty one]. The fact he is anointed by God and has a throne (v. 6) tells us this is a psalm about a king. The Psalm goes on to speak of the king's marriage to a princess, and could refer to Solomon himself, although the precise identification of the king is not material.

What is important is the role of the king mentioned in verse 4:

*In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness; let your right hand teach you awesome deeds!*

These words follow the reference in verse 3 of the king having *hod* and tell us that it is manifest in things like faithfulness (“truth,” Hebrew *emet*), a fundamental characteristic of Yahweh himself (Exodus 34:6). In other words, the king is God's agent, administering God's will. This is what *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary* says on verse 6, where the king is called “God.”

In fact, the poet so identifies the king with God's purposes that the psalmist even addresses the king in v. 6a as “Elohim.” This name is most frequently used for God, as the NIV and the NRSV suggest; however, it occasionally designates human beings who exercise God-

given authority over others (see Exodus 4:16, where Moses is “God” for Aaron, and Exodus 7:1 where Moses is “God” to Pharaoh; the same kind of usage may be intended in Exodus 21:6; 22:8-9, as the NIV and NRSV notes suggest; see also Zechariah 12:8). This seems to be the case here.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, we can see why Hebrews uses the Psalm 45 quotation where the anointed king, the Christ, is called “God.” Previously, in Hebrews 1, we considered that the Son of God is better than the angels and prophets because God speaks in him, as he radiates God's glory. Psalm 45, along with the example of King Solomon, teaches the same principles that the anointed of Yahweh is His agent, to show faithfulness and righteousness, shining forth with the *hod* of God's glory. Therefore, it is right that he should be given the title “God,” just as much as any other agent of God, like Moses, or the Judges of Israel, who acted on behalf of Yahweh. It would be redundant to go through the process of the Old Testament quotations which establish his theme if Jesus was literally God himself.

*Richard Morgan,  
Simi Hills Ecclesia, CA*

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

<sup>2</sup> *New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, Joseph Blenkinsopp, Terence E. Fretheim, Abington Press 2015.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I was concerned to read the “*Letter to the Editor*,” written by an unnamed author, on the topic of “Political Involvement” (Volume 88, Number 5, May 2025).

I do believe that we are on dangerous ground when Christadelphians spend large amounts of time on social media, and especially when they are engaged in public debate on political issues. This holds true, especially for those who are in high esteem. I am deeply disturbed that the American democracy is under threat right now, and I can draw parallels to the late 1920s and early 1930s in Germany as to what is going on now in the US. My wife and family talk about this, but we limit our discussions. We are more interested in how these fit into God’s plan.

I think that this issue may be used to focus our minds on the positive. That is how presently we do have citizenship, which is the Kingdom of Heaven. We are awaiting that Kingdom becoming reality here on earth, which is the vision of the Kingdom of God that aligns us all. Nonetheless, we are citizens prospectively of that Kingdom today.

1 Peter 2:9-10 (NKJV) says:

*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.*

One question we must ask ourselves is, are we “*children of this world [cosmos]*,” or are we the “*children of light*?” I believe that we all (that is, those who have put on Christ) would identify with the “*children of light*.” So, we need to behave accordingly. That is easier to do when things are going along smoothly. But in the political climate of the United States, which is now highly polarized, things are not going smoothly around us. Our human reaction is to put our defenses up and be prepared for battle against these external influences. But the real question is what should the children of light do when these things happen? It is hard when we see God’s principles violated. One administration openly supported lifestyles contrary to God’s commandments. A new administration appears to be destroying Constitutional rights that residents of the United

States are supposed to have. But what should the household of faith do? If these are truly the end times, we should follow the admonition of Isaiah 26:20-21 and enter into our chambers until the indignation be over past. If that is the direction to take, we should be inwardly focused on the household of faith.

We cannot escape this time of trouble for the United States. We see it everywhere, in newscasts, political commentaries, and protests that are located in many places. Often, people experience fear, anger, and other intense emotions.

In the BASE, Doctrines to Be Rejected, it says:

We reject the doctrine—that we are at liberty to take part in politics, or recover debts by legal coercion.

Most in our community believe that to “take part in politics” at least means we should refrain from voting. Personally, in the spirit of Christ, it means much more. We need to explore more fully what it means.

We are all literally at the mercy of our government to enjoy our Constitutional freedoms. When those are taken away, I can relate better to what it was like to those who were oppressed in this country.

But it is a suitable time to take stock of what we should do.

*James E. Land,  
Los Angeles Ecclesia, CA*

# OUTREACH FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

*By The Garden Outreach Project Committee*



**I**n every community, opportunities abound for Christadelphian ecclesias to extend hands of compassion, reflecting the love of Christ through deliberate acts of kindness. Outreach transcends obligation. It stands as a vibrant testament to faith, where simple gestures resonate profoundly. Scripture consistently reminds us of our calling to care for the vulnerable among us—from the Mosaic law, which instructs for the care of widows, orphans, and strangers (Deuteronomy 10:18-19), to Christ's ministry of healing, feeding, and comforting those in need (Matthew 25:35-40). The Bible clearly outlines the importance of compassion and practical support as core expressions of faithful discipleship.

**The Garden Outreach Project** embodies this calling, hoping to inspire the North American Christadelphian community to share Christ's love through initiatives that address immediate needs and foster meaningful relationships. By participating in these programs, individuals and entire ecclesias become beacons of hope and

compassion in their local communities. Here are the six main initiatives that The Garden Outreach Project funds for participants:

**Food4Friends**—This initiative provides a \$100 USD (\$135 CAD) grant to **purchase and donate food to local charities**. Engaging children in this effort teaches them the impact they can have in alleviating hunger and showing kindness to others. Free activity books are available to involve young ones in meaningful ways.

**Kits4Kids**—Participants receive twenty-four free backpacks to **support children affected by poverty**. These backpacks can be filled with school supplies and donated to local family support groups or schools, directly benefiting children in need and demonstrating Christ's love in action.

**Bags of Love**—This program offers twenty free sleeping bags to be donated to **local homeless shelters**. Providing warmth and comfort to those experiencing homelessness is a tangible way to extend compassion and care within the community.

**GotYourBack**—Aimed at **supporting at-risk teens and young adults**, this initiative provides twenty-four free backpacks for participants to fill with practical essentials. It educates and empowers ecclesias and youth groups to serve vulnerable populations, fostering connections and supporting those navigating challenging circumstances.

**Knit2Gether**—This program, for those who enjoy knitting, brings individuals together via Zoom to **create gloves, hats, and scarves for the homeless** across North America. Combining fellowship with service, participants craft items that offer warmth and a personal touch to those in need.

**Care Packs**—This initiative encourages assembling and **donating care packages to local charities**. The Garden provides grants of up to \$250 USD (\$335 CAD) to help cover the costs of purchasing items. These care packs, filled with personal care essentials, serve as practical demonstrations of love and support to recipients.

These initiatives are designed to remove common barriers to outreach, making it easy and fulfilling for anyone to participate, regardless of age, financial means, or location. Many can be undertaken individually and often require nothing more than the generous gift of your time.

Engaging in these initiatives, or others like them, allows for an active demonstration of faith through service, building bridges within their

communities, while embodying the teachings of Christ. Each program is designed to be accessible and impactful, providing resources and support to facilitate meaningful outreach efforts.

As you consider these opportunities, consider the unique needs of your local community. How can you, your CYC, or your ecclesia become a source of hope, compassion, and love? By participating in outreach initiatives, whether through The Garden or otherwise, you can cultivate a culture of service and generosity, planting seeds that will grow into lasting relationships and transformed lives. This year, we're especially encouraging ecclesias to explore creative ways to use their meeting halls as inviting spaces, drawing the local community in through acts of hospitality and outreach. If your ecclesia has hosted events or found innovative ways to connect with your neighbors using your hall, we'd love to hear your ideas and experiences so we can share them to inspire others.

We hope our initiatives serve as catalysts, igniting journeys of compassion, meaningful connections, and vibrant faith. Together, we can cultivate gardens of outreach, where each act, big or small, blossoms into enduring transformation, community renewal, and abundant spiritual growth.

Visit [www.thegardenoutreach.org](http://www.thegardenoutreach.org) for more information or to register for an initiative today!

*The Garden Outreach Project Committee*



# BIBLE SEMINAR IN HAITI

*By Bill Hlina*

**O**VER the last few years, the Christadelphians have been requested by some interested Bible students in Haiti to offer their perspective on Bible Prophecy. Hindered by gang violence in the country, a seminar was finally able to be planned through a Zoom presentation. This idea originated with brother Esmath Sainval in Haiti and was orchestrated by Bro. Stephen Johnson to present a “Bible Conference Day,” organized in Les Cayes, Haiti, on January 25.

Locally, a team was selected to organize the event. They were given

good instructions by Bro. Esmath for the registration, documentation, and printed materials, how people were welcomed, and the arrangement for food, of which there was plenty, with everyone being satisfied.

Despite the many challenges for those in Haiti, and with support from CBMC and others, a Starlink Internet connection was set up with a Zoom video presentation. This was new technology for those involved, and having only been tested the day before, there were some challenges. The language in Haiti is Creole. Therefore, interpreters were needed.

Bro. David Jennings had presented a few years ago, and again was invited to speak on the Theme: "The Great Plan of God for Mankind Based on the Prophecy of the End Time." The conference was scheduled to begin at 8 am, with three classes, questions, and lunch, until it ended at 2 PM. When I joined the live feed forty-five minutes early, I was treated to singing and clapping, praising the Lord, and Scripture reading until the classes began. I was inspired by their evident joy and praise to the Lord.

There were three classes:

- Class 1—The Vision of The Metallic Image of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon: Chapter 2 of The Book of Daniel.
- Class 2—Jesus Is The Seed That Will Conquer Sin And Crush The Serpent, The Promises Made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob Implies God's Plan To Bless All Nations.
- Class 3—The Stage Is Being Set For The Final Overthrow of Israel; When That Happens, The Return of Christ Is Near.

All Bro. David's slides were in Creole, so the message was well presented. The comments were positive about the speaker and the event. They were impressed with the speaker's Biblical knowledge. "He knew what he was saying, and he was methodical in his explanations." Everyone present was "happy, blessed, and satisfied with the first Bible conference in the area." There are already requests to establish a regular series of presentations to the same group, possibly once a month if we can find speakers willing to join the project.

Looking ahead, another seminar is being prepared, focusing on first principle talks, which have generated significant interest. The plan is to use the purchased technology for monthly Bible Classes and to equip additional venues with generators and Starlink for ongoing participation. This initiative aims to expand the reach and impact of Christadelphian teachings in Haiti, fostering continued growth and engagement in the region.

Recently, we found that in addition to problems with gangs and violence, there is also increasing food insecurity. Many come to the school in search of food and help. In recent days, we have had requests for funds to help with this severe and ongoing food crisis, particularly in the Carrefour region, where most of our members reside. There are challenges with getting funds into the country, as gang leaders will wait outside banks and financial institutions where money transfers are sent to steal the funds.

A local brother has been coordinating support for families with food when it is available for distribution. The CBMC has committed to help provide some relief for this emergency and is taking every precaution to ensure the funds get to the brothers and sisters first and to those in dire need as they are able. We ask for prayers to our Heavenly Father, who has blessed us with all we need, and we trust He will also provide for those struggling in this area.

*Bill Hlina,  
Chairman, CBMC*

# JAMAICA EASTER YOUTH CAMP

*By Antonia Giordano*

**J**AMAICA Easter Youth Camp took place this year at Camp Hope, a pretty spot on the south coast of the island, right on the water. With the bright turquoise of the Caribbean Sea as a backdrop, about forty-five Jamaicans and overseas visitors gathered for a weekend around God's word.

Bro. Gideon Hewitson led the young people through the main classes on the topic "Preaching and Living the

Gospel." Outside, sometimes on the porch or under the mango tree, a group of kids learned about the book of Acts. Several Jamaican young people also took lively roles in teaching afternoon sessions and kids' classes, which is so fun for Bro. Nathan and me to see after watching them grow from teens into young adults over the decade that we've been visiting Jamaica.





The days began with “Morningspiration,” a thought for the day, followed by enthusiastic singing. The afternoons were jam-packed with sports days, a cook-off competition, and pick-up soccer games. Deportment lessons preceded a fancy banquet and talent night.

Three-year-old Caleb was scooped up by forty-two aunties, uncles, and cousins when his mama had to take his big sister to the hospital. He was a proper little champ. Without any fussing or crying, he did his coloring quietly during class and spent the rest of the day running around after a ball fully half the size he was.

We rounded out the weekend with a fraternal, when the campers were joined by a number of brothers and sisters from the nearby ecclesia in Broughton. Easter Camp is always a fun, hectic and uplifting time, and we’re keen to share the experience with anyone interested in spending time with the lovely group of believers in Jamaica. If that’s you, please get in touch at [antoniagiordano@gmail.com](mailto:antoniagiordano@gmail.com)

*Antonia Giordano,  
CBMC Jamaica Co-Link*





# ITALY

## BIBLE WEEKEND

### 2024

*By Michael Davey*

**T**HE 3rd annual Italian Bible weekend was held October 4-6, 2024 in the small but lively city of Bologna, Italy. Perhaps the city is best known for being the birthplace of Bolognese sauce—a treat not to be missed!

There are three sisters who live in Italy, and currently, there are no brothers. Our sisters are spread throughout the northern Italian cities of Cremona, Torino, and Bergamo. Since there are so few Christadelphians in Italy, the annual Bible Weekend is a critical opportunity for our sisters to connect with others and to be encouraged. In addition to the annual Bible Weekend, there is a monthly Zoom event. Every quarter, it is held as an online memorial service, and in the remaining months, we hold a Bible readings and discussion session.

Bro. Volker Imhoff of the Esslingen, Germany Ecclesia, presented the classes for this year's Bible Weekend. They focused on the Biblical theme of the Promises. He led us from the first promises made to Adam and Eve to the promises made to Abraham and David. On Sunday, the classes culminated with the hope of our promise in Christ.

This was our biggest weekend yet! Twenty-six participants, including three children, attended, and members came from five different countries.

On Friday, we incorporated an evening class instead of the readings, which worked well. It allowed initial conversations on the theme to be kicked off over dinner on Friday evening, some of which continued late into the night.

On Saturday, there were two morning sessions, lunch, followed by a session on the readings. During the class sessions, the children joined some of the sisters for Sunday School activities corresponding with the weekend's theme of God's Promises. A little bit of free time in the afternoon allowed attendees to explore the city as they pleased, taking in the various sights, sounds, and tastes of Bologna. We enjoyed a simple but delicious meal in the evening at a trattoria close to our hotel.

Sunday morning, we concluded our weekend together with a final session, shared the memorial emblems, and enjoyed one final meal together before everyone headed their separate ways. Participants, especially our Italian sisters, expressed joy at being a part of a larger group this year and feeling surrounded by a sense of community. This is something desperately lacking for believers in Italy. It was sad to depart, but wonderful to conclude the weekend with positive feedback from all who joined.

Visits to our sisters in Italy are greatly appreciated! If you are planning to be in Italy, we are happy to help coordinate visit our sisters with you.

We are also planning a 2025 Bible Weekend. At present, our plans are as follows:

Date: October 3-5, 2025

Location: Santa Barbara Hotel,  
Milan, Italy

Speaker: Bro Jeremy Morgan, UK

Topic: Philippians

If you would like more information, please don't hesitate to contact us at: [italy@cbm.org.uk](mailto:italy@cbm.org.uk). We would love to hear from you and appreciate your support with the weekend.

In summary, 2024 was a very refreshing weekend together around God's word. Should our Lord remain away, we look forward to doing it again next year.

*Michael Davey,  
CBM Link Person for Italy*





# Thoughts on the Way

## Why Agora?

*But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance.*

*You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.*

(Romans 6:17-18).<sup>1</sup>

**I**N the Greek of the New Testament, *Agora* was the marketplace. It was also the place of public assembly, where people met one another, and where children played. It was the place where news was circulated and ideas were exchanged. It was especially the place where the gospel of Christ was first preached.

Here, the Apostle Paul began to develop what we may call the "marketplace" or *agora* metaphor.

In the verses above, "*sin*" is personified. "Sin" becomes the great ruler to whom all the world gives allegiance—a slave-owner who owns all men and women. "*I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.*" (Romans 7:14). In this metaphor, Paul recalls the words of Jesus: "*Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.*" (John 8:34).

This figure of speech may come into focus as we imagine an Eastern *agora*, forum, or bazaar. This marketplace was the meeting place of the ancient world. It was the center of commerce, entertainment, and social interaction. It was also the source of news and opinions.

In the center of the agora was the slave market, with its auction block. Approach that site in your mind, and

the brutality, callousness, and fear wash over you like a flood. We imagine the smells and the sounds with revulsion. Our memories are stirred in modern times when we recall our own country's particularly ugly forms of slavery. Here we see women destined to be slaves to the worst desires of men. Other men were doomed to lifelong drudgery to satisfy the greed of their fellow men. Here are wasted, broken lives, dashed hopes, and families torn apart forever.

The slave market may be an ugly parable of our world, where people are fleshly, carnal, unspiritual, and bought and sold as slaves to sin. Everyone who sins is a slave to sin. I sin; therefore, I am a slave. Now we can begin to imagine being such a slave.

Into this scene comes a man who is obviously different from all others. Striding up to me, he speaks forcefully: "I have bought you. Come, follow me." There are no chains, no threats, no whips, just a simple command. I follow him.

Right behind him, breathing fresh air, I walk through the milling and clamorous crowds, and then through the winding streets of the city, until we come to a beautiful house.

"Here is where I live," my new master tells me. "Here is your room." It is lovely and wonderfully furnished. Never have I seen such a luxurious dwelling, and this will be my home! The master excuses himself, but soon he is back. He has brought water, and he kneels to wash **my** feet! I should be washing **his** feet! He has brought me a new expensive garment. I can throw away my slave's rags. I won't need them anymore. With healing oil, he soothes the cruel wounds inflicted by my previous owner, and I know they will never hurt again. "Now you are as I am," he says. "You are no longer a slave. This is my Father's house, and you are one of His children!"

A lifetime of fear and hate is washed away, miraculously, and in its place is the cry of a heart set free:

*Because you are children, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. (Galatians 4:6-7).*

Redemption from the slave market was a concept that would particularly appeal to Paul's converts, many of whom had been slaves themselves (Titus 2:9-10). They might be unable to hope for redemption from their mortal bondage, but they could rejoice in being redeemed from sin. *"For the one who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freed person."* (1 Corinthians 7:22). They could live accordingly. In their hearts and minds,

they were already free from the worst slave master. Soon their bodies would follow, and they would be truly and absolutely free!

Redemption is release for a ransom. All who become God's servants are therefore released from a former owner by purchase. The purchaser is the LORD God. The price, or ransom, which had been paid, was the precious blood of His only Son, Jesus Christ. He is the man who bought me and paid an unbelievable price. He deliberately laid down his life, suffering and shedding his blood along the way, to purchase my release. Somehow, I knew that "King Sin" had been destroyed and would never torment me again.

In my mind, I heard: *"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life."* (Romans 6:23 KJV). Somewhere nearby, as I followed my Master beside green pastures, I heard another soft voice: *"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."* (Luke 12:32.) I knew, without being told, that my days of fear, starvation, illness, and darkness were gone forever. A new world was dawning on the horizon.

*George Booker, Austin Leander  
Ecclesia, TX*

*EDITOR'S Note: Please visit Bro. George's Agora website to review a large number of great Bible resources. It can be accessed at:*

**[christadelphianbooks.org/agora](http://christadelphianbooks.org/agora)**

# THE CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS

OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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