

The Bible Standard



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Spring

Only a God with a loving heart could have made us a world like this . . .
a world where like magic the daffodils come with their trumpets all glowing and bright —
as if He repeated the Genesis fiat and said again,
“Let there be light.”*

WHEN THE WORLD WAS NEW, what a miracle that was! All indications are that the earth is several billion years old. The answer as to how it came into being depends on whether one takes the Biblical view, or the prevailing view of evolution, which ascribes all existence to chance.

It is not our purpose here to debate these points. The position of this magazine is that all “creation” has, of necessity, a Creator — that all life has its source in Him, and that we are responsible to Him for *how* we live it. The disagreement between creationists on the one hand, and evolutionists on the other is presented in the media in simple terms, the implication being that either side is quite stupid and wilfully refuses to see the arguments of the other. Of course, the issue is more complicated than that.

On planet Earth, humanity, even in its flawed condition, is the crowning achievement of God’s workmanship. In man’s perfect condition he was morally upright and physically perfect. God created Adam free in the exercise of all his powers — physical, mental, and moral — and though these powers were all perfect in their measure, yet they were each capable of large development. Had evil never been placed before him, he could not have resisted it, and consequently there would be no virtue or merit in his doing right. The act of disobedience caused man’s fall, resulting in the calamities which are evident in even a cursory review of history.

God cannot properly be charged with the creation of evil, and He permitted it only because it was necessary that His creatures should know good from evil; that by being made acquainted with sin and its consequences — sickness, misery, and death — we might learn these bitter effects and thus, over time, be prepared to choose *life*. For God to provide an experience with evil and yet not make available an opportunity to prove that lesson learned — a test paper, so to speak — would seem incomplete. For this reason God has appointed a day in which the world will learn righteousness (Acts 17: 31). The dawning of that day will be truly a season of refreshing — a new Spring, full of the hope and promise of eternal life.

For the Christian, the thread of salvation is woven throughout the Old and New Testaments. To those who grieve over their sinful condition and their sinful ways, a God-less world — a world of random chance — would be hostile beyond bearing. Life has no meaning without the recognition that there is a God who offers salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. It is this message of deliverance from sin and death to a new life, a forgiven life, which delights the hearts of those who have staked their happiness in the Redeemer. To such, as the hymn says, “December’s as pleasant as May.”

* * *

*“Spring,” by Patience Strong, from *The Magic of Memories*; published by Smithmark; copyright 1996.

All Scripture references are to the King James Version, unless otherwise stated.

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“Newness of Life”

— Rom. 6: 4 —

Morning has broken

Like the first morning,

Blackbird has spoken

Like the first bird.

Praise for the singing!

Praise for the morning!

Praise for them, springing

Fresh from the Word!

— Eleanor Farjeon (1931)

WHERE WERE YOU, asked Jehovah of His servant Job, “when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

From this text we get a brief backward glimpse into the scene surrounding the creation of the earth. The “sons of God” we take to mean the angels, the faithful attendants and God’s witnesses from time immemorial.

We can grasp only dimly what a delight it was for those heavenly onlookers to see this new thing that God had made, with all the promise it held for a glorious future for a race yet to be created.

This seems a far cry from our present condition. The world is old with centuries, its history littered with good intentions gone awry, personal tragedies by the million, and a race alienated from its Creator God.

Those new “babes in the wood,” Adam and Eve, fresh from the creative hand of God, blessed with all that human heart could ask for, by their disobedience threw away their immediate prospects for life, not only for themselves, but for all who followed. By that single act of disobedience they disinherited their children for ages upon ages of a world of peace and well-being.

Did God implant in the first man and woman that very thirst for knowledge which led them to an act of rebellion in order to gratify it? Why would He attach a penalty to the sinful act, knowing that a knowledge of evil could be obtained in no other way?

The Permission of Evil

We can see readily that a knowledge of evil could be obtained in no way except by its introduction; Adam and Eve could not have disobeyed had they not been given a commandment, the breach of which carried a penalty.

So then, God not only foresaw man’s potential fall into sin, but *permitted* it. It was a part of His plan. Why? Because, having the remedy provided for his release from its consequences, God in His omniscience saw that the result would be to lead man to a knowledge, through experience, which would enable him to feel the bitterness and blackness of sin and, by contrast, the matchless brilliancy of virtue. In this way man would learn more fully to love and honor his Creator, the fountain and source of all goodness.

The final result would be a greater appreciation of God and *a more highly blessed state for mankind than he could ever have enjoyed had the fall from grace never have happened.*

Dying and Death

“In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2: 17). Adam did not actually go into death that same instant — his sentence was deferred. In modern parlance we would say his capital sentence was commuted to life imprisonment until death. A more literal rendering of the Hebrew text has it, “In the day thou eatest thereof, *dying*, thou shalt die.” In other words, from the moment of Adam and Eve’s disobedience, the dying process began to work and the unavoidable outcome would be death. It was merely a matter of time — in Adam’s case a long time, for he lived 930 years, but inevitable none the less.

Whatever explanation for man’s existence and nature one espouses, it is undeniable that all of us are imperfect and in a dying condition; one way or another, we are already partially dead. This is not so apparent to us when we are in the spring of youth. But once we have a few more years of life tucked under our belts, we are aware of the clock ticking away our remaining years.

Neither medicine, nor genetics, nor exercising can alleviate the fundamental problem and give us eternal life. We are overshadowed by death from the cradle to the grave, the shade increasing each year. As David expresses it in Psalm 23: “I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.” The further we go down into this valley the darker it becomes, until the last spark of life is extinguished.

The Scriptures teach that the “wages of sin is *death*” (Rom. 6: 23; italics ours). Note, the text does not say



A common symbol of Justice is a woman, sometimes blindfolded, holding a set of scales and a sword. The mythical Greek goddess, Themis (forerunner to the Roman goddess, Justitia), represented divine justice to the ancient Greeks, ensuring equality and championing a law without prejudice — ideals characteristic of the one true God.

dying or *torment*, but “death.” This death would be permanent were it not for Christ’s sacrifice, which was to ransom us from death.

In disobedience man fell into the hands of Justice, and though God is merciful and loving, there can be no warfare between His attributes. Mercy and love must be exercised in harmony with justice. Strict justice cannot excuse the guilty (Num. 14: 18). Man was guilty, and must therefore be dealt with by justice. Justice says, Your life is forfeited, “dying thou shalt die.” Man was thrown into the prison-house of death, and Justice, while locking him in, says: “Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing” (Matt. 5: 26).

Christ Our Substitute

A false idea of substitution has prevailed among Christians from a supposition that God as a vindictive, vengeful tyrant, was angry because man had sinned, refusing to show mercy until blood had been shed and caring not whether it was the blood of the innocent or the guilty. Perhaps many have been led to look upon Substitution as a God-dishonoring doctrine, as being too legalistic a notion, even though there are many Scriptures which are otherwise found difficult to make use of, as that Christ “by the grace of God should taste death for every man”; “my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world”; and Christ “gave himself a ransom for all” (Heb. 2: 9; John 6: 51; 1 Tim. 2: 6).

It was not by His leaving the glory that He had, nor by His having kept the Law, nor by His being rejected of the Jews; it was not by His resurrection, but by His *death* that we are reconciled to God. However, the death and resurrection of Christ are inseparably linked and each necessary. As His death would have done us little good, because we would be without a living Savior, so also, had Jesus been ever so perfect a leader and guide and a fine example of holy living, we prisoners in the grip of death could never follow His leading until He first purchased our release.

Divine Justice Must Be Satisfied

God in justice, recognizing and enforcing His own law, could not permit man to live again, *unless the claim of justice was met*. Man is the debtor, and unless he can pay the debt he cannot come out of the

prison-house of death — cannot have life. How could he atone for himself? How can the one subject to the penalty, and poverty-stricken, purchase his own freedom? He cannot pay this debt, and consequently cannot release himself.

But man’s helplessness gives occasion for the display of God’s mercy and love in Christ Jesus, for God devised a way in which He could be both just and merciful — “for when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5: 6).

However, Christ’s death does not now prevent us — not even as Christians — from dying. It does prevent our remaining in death forever, for Christ came to open the prison doors and set at liberty the captives (Isa. 61: 1, 2; Luke 4: 18, 19). This He does, not by opposing or skirting God’s justice, but by recognizing it and paying that which is demanded by it. He has a right to set those prisoners free. By His own death He purchases the sinner.

Jesus came into the world by a special creative act of God, and consequently was untainted by the curse of sin and death. Not having forfeited His right to life, either through Adam’s sin or any of His own (for He was sinless), death had no claim upon him. Therefore He had something to offer Justice for the life of mankind: Himself. He must have had the right to continuance of life, else He could not give it in ransom.

But how could the life of *one*, purchase the life of *many*? Only by the principle of substitution. Adam represented the entire unborn human race when put on test. Consequently, through his failure “death passed upon all men” and all were counted sinners even before birth. Christ in His death purchased Adam from the death sentence, and by so doing purchased all of Adam’s descendants — the entire human family (Rom. 5: 18, 19).

Resurrection Guaranteed

Is the resurrection of the dead optional or compulsory on Divine justice? Christ having died for all, according to God’s

arrangements, it is certainly compulsory on Divine justice to release the prisoners held for sin. This is not to say that God Himself can be forced to anything against His will. But He had previously bound Himself by an oath that He would provide for the blessing of the human family (Gen. 22: 15-18; Heb. 6: 13, 14). In this way, God furthers His own Plan according to His own will; He is always in control.

It would be incorrect, however, to classify the resurrection for all (Christ died for *all*) as universalism — universal salvation to eternal life. No, it is the saving of all men from the condition of death, but as some will be liable to the “second death” on account of their own sin, it cannot be *eternal* salvation.

Having restored the race, brought them back to where they were before the fall, with the advantage of knowing from actual experience the character and results of evil, Christ will offer eternal life to the willing and obedient. When thus restored to perfect natural life, possessing the knowledge of good and evil, perfect obedience will be expected of them as was required of Adam, they will be tested accordingly.

Elect and Non-Elect

There are conditions laid down for the attainment of eternal life, but none for the recovery of the race from the fall, *except* the righteousness and acceptableness of our Substitute. To have a clear understanding of God’s Plan, we must recognize the distinction which He makes between the Church (the elect) and the world in general (the non-elect).

God “so loved the world” (John 3: 16) that He made great and rich provisions for their eternal happiness and peace. But in the meantime, while they are getting their experience with evil, God calls out from among them a “little flock” — the Bride of Christ, to whom He makes “exceeding great and precious promises,” conditional upon their suffering with Him, separate from the rest of the world, that they may become His joint-heirs, a privilege not offered to humanity in general (Luke 12: 32; 2 Pet. 1: 3, 4). Again, the Apostle John writes, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God . . . and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3: 1, 2). And the Apostle Paul declares of this special company, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8: 16, 17).

Thy Kingdom come, O God, Thy rule on earth begin; Break with thine iron rod The tyrannies of sin

The Church’s Resurrection

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” This verse (Col. 3: 1), is in the past tense and takes the view that the resurrection of the Church of Christ was an accomplished fact. In much the same way, without any hint of contradiction, the same persons are said to have become “dead with Christ” (Col. 2: 20).

Before there can be a resurrection, there must be a death. But how can both statements be true at the same time? In the act of their submission to God, through Christ, the Church renounced their earthly hopes and ambitions — all that they had and hoped to have. Having counted themselves as dead to the world they were reckoned by God as being alive in Christ, of *having entered into* His resurrection. Of course, their resurrection in the objective, final sense, the First Resurrection, was yet future.

It is necessary, then, to distinguish between those of the spirit-begotten, prospective heavenly company, and those who by reason of historical time have now been passed over for that calling. In this way we can understand the nature of resurrection — that it applies differently according to God’s purposes and the season of His Plan. Not all Christians go to heaven. The larger number of those who take on the worthy name of Christian — and there are many today who still do — can anticipate a glorious eternity, not in heaven, but on earth.

Resurrection and Restitution for the Non-Elect

The very purity of God’s justice, as well as the love of God in providing the ransom-sacrifice of Christ, assures us that, the penalty having now been paid, everyone must at some point be released from death. This will occur in Christ’s Kingdom to come (Matt. 6: 10; John 18: 36). However, not all in that Kingdom will accept Christ and be eternally saved. There is a second death, but those who become subject to it will not compare in numbers with the saved (Acts 3: 19-23).

The world, although purchased by His death, get back in Him as their Substitute only what they lost. Consequently, they will stand where Adam would have stood had he possessed experience or knowledge of evil.

Individually, each one must make great strides forward to attain Christlikeness.

Our Present Justification By Faith

This is a remarkable thing: that those who are under the curse of sin and its effect — death, may be dealt with by God *as if they were not*. Here is the great truth of justification, the bedrock of the Christian Reformation and the consolation to all who “mourn in Zion” — the contrite, those whose hearts are broken because of the consciousness of their sins (Isa. 57: 15; 66: 1, 2; Matt. 5: 4). Nor are the Christian’s joys merely deferred to a distant future: there is, here and now, a real and attainable state of happiness, referred to by Jesus as the “hundredfold” (Mark 10: 29, 30).

Our justifying faith must rest in the sureness of God’s Word. He does not speak to His people through dreams or spurious revelations. His Word is sufficient to furnish us with the necessary knowledge, exhortation, and affirmation. Not all can be teachers of the Word, but each one of us must be a student of it, comparing Scripture with Scripture. Feelings come and go, but the Word of the Lord lasts forever.

A book of its time and yet a Book for all time, the Bible is as satisfying to the hungry heart as ever it was. Customs of dress and social decorum may have changed many times over since the Word of God was rendered complete — in fact, those things continually changed while the Word — issued over the centuries by the Prophets and written down and transcribed — was being assembled incrementally — and yet its message is direct and understandable to the soul that asks to understand it. *But faith must precede the asking.*

This is the faith that accepts Christ as Savior and King. This, at root, is enough to start us on the way. But the heart so exercised has the privilege of going further, of building on this privilege of forgiveness to submitting one’s will to God’s will, an act of surrender, which comparatively few in this world, at this time, will have the faith to be able to do.

“Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God,” said Christ to His disciples (Luke 8: 10). They went on from strength to strength, themselves elaborating on and clarifying those mysteries (truths) in their preaching and writings, capturing us in these late centuries in the blessed dispersal of Truth.

Living a Life of Faith

We do well to remember, when we complain about our difficult circumstances, how hard and dangerous it was for the early Christians. No wonder that

Christ’s Church were exhorted to have courage. How powerful a hold the promises had upon their minds and hearts — for without them they could not have braved the torments and persecutions which many of them were called to suffer.

The dangers to the Christian character today are often more internal than external. Certainly in much of the western world an avowal of the Christian life is met not with slings and arrows, but with indifference or, at the worst, insulting disdain and the rolling of eyes. However, severe and dangerous and deadly persecution still hunts many Christians in a number of countries.

We must ask ourselves: How does my new life compare with my old one? Am I less selfish or bad-tempered than I used to be? We must look for a transformation of both mind and heart, an alteration of our own will to God’s will, a better approximation to the spirit and character of Christ. We must learn to will God’s will, love what He loves, want what He wants. This is a transformation of the highest order. This is the “newness” which we must aim for.

The Waters of Life

“And the Spirit and bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22: 17).

In the last book of the Bible we find the message of recovery and restitution, the counterpoint to the Genesis account of the fall of man into sin. The text quoted above takes the vantage point of the Kingdom of Christ and, in few words, shows the generous offer which will be presented to the resurrected world. The perfect, eternal remedy for the sin-sickness under which the race has struggled for thousands of years, the righteous and life-giving truths of that time will undo the damage caused by Adam’s fall into sin. Faithful compliance with the arrangements of that new world will bring eternal perfect life on a perfected earth — a full restoration of everything that was lost in Eden. This will be a new and better Paradise, one in which the revived race will bask in the sunshine of God’s love and be able to fully appreciate it, having come through the tumult of the permission of evil.

And he that sat upon the throne said,

Behold, I make all things new.

And he said unto me,

Write: for these words are true and faithful.

— Rev. 21: 5

* * *

This Happy Fear

*Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord,
that delighteth greatly in his commandments.*

— Psa. 112: 1 —

BEING AFRAID IS HARDLY a sensation of choice. What we instinctively long for is peace, security, and a happy and pleasant life for ourselves and our families.

But there are many things for us to be afraid of, social and personal, including crime against our person or property, illness and old age, failure of our marriage, losing our job, financial loss, terrorism, and on and on. The last thing we need is to *cultivate* the quality of fear. But this is what the Scriptures encourage us not to do.

The Apostle John in his epistle tells us that fear has no place in the heart of the Christian, for “perfect love casteth out fear” (1 John 4: 18). Why then are we often afraid? Is it a deficit in our faith, perhaps? Or a guilty conscience?

Not Peas in a Pod

We may have a personality which is prone to fearful thoughts, of the obsessive or compulsive type. We may be overly sensitive, too eager to please others and afraid of being rejected. Perhaps our mental disposition is obsessed with pending calamities and we live our lives in daily expectation of serious consequences arising out of some wrong we may have committed. Often, our feelings of dread are vague and non-specific, but we find ourselves prone to panic attacks.

Sometimes it is not possible to completely eliminate this obsessive type of fear if it is induced by the bio-chemical reaction in our brain, or an emotional difficulty; but a constant filling of our minds with helpful promises and encouragements from the Scriptures can help us to displace our besetting fears.

Meditation on the Word of God induces peace and *changes* our characters. It is a powerful antidote against the dis-ease of Self and the World. It opens up vistas that we cannot see if we are preoccupied with what is going on in our own heads or our immediate surroundings.

How to Cultivate Fear

We have, in our modern world, too much of the wrong kind of fear and not enough of the right sort. To put our fears into context we need to view things from the standpoint of eternity. The only way we can do this is by adopting the viewpoint of the Eternal One as our own. The best way to lose our own fears is *to learn to fear* (reverence) *God*.

Fear De-Fanged

The Hebrew translated “feareth” in the King James translation at the head of this article (*yare*, pronounced, *yawray*) is used in many other texts, frequently in the sense of our common understanding of the word.

In exhorting his brethren to simple trust and confidence in God’s promises, the Apostle Paul writes that God “hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13: 5, 6). The main part of this text is a quotation from Psa. 118: 6. In both texts the dread of man is said to be countered by a trust in God. In Proverbs 24: 21 we are told to fear both God and the king, a point that the Apostle Peter repeats in his epistle (1 Pet. 2: 17; Greek, *phobos*).

According to the Apostle, in the book of Romans, Chapter 13, it is the duty of the Christian to submit to secular government in those matters over which it has jurisdiction. Violating the civil or criminal law will rightly induce the dread of retribution (Rom. 13: 4). In a similar vein, the wicked are warned to be in dread of God’s wrath against them with a “fearful” expectation of judgment (Heb. 10: 27; comp. v. 31). Here the word fearful is the translation of the Greek word, *phoberos*, similar to our Anglicized word, *phobia*.

But God is less interested in unleashing His almighty power than He is in rescuing the lost, restoring the fallen, drawing the penitent to faith. It is said of Christ, and thus of Christ’s Father, that “a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench” (Isa. 42: 3). If we were perpetually afraid of God with a common fear, life would be intolerable. Obviously, we are to understand the injunction to fear Him in a wider context.

Holy Fear

Fright of God was often used as a basis to drive people into the churches during less enlightened periods. The specter of eternal torture was enough to force even unbelievers to “hedge their bets” and to put on a show of virtue as insurance against the horror of an agonizing eternity in the afterlife.

If we substitute the word “reverence” or “veneration” for “fear,” we arrive at a better understanding of our subject. The reason that “fear” is used is because

both reverence and fear have in common a grave manner and a certain timidity or tentativeness of disposition. “Piety” also expresses the kind of Godly fear we seek.

The false distinction that holds God to be vengeful and Christ to be compassionate does a great disservice to Jehovah. The generous plan of salvation for all originates with Him; and it was the loving, Fatherly spirit that Jesus reflected in His own ministry and in His tender words to His disciples when He told them that, “the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God” (John 16: 27).

Here Jesus gives the elements of a justifying faith: (1) You have loved me — accepted Christ as God’s Agent of salvation, and (2) I came out from God — recognized that Jesus is the Son of God. With the love of God on our side, why do we need to be afraid of anything or anyone?

Yes — easier said than done sometimes, but in our quieter moments we do well to take the opportunity to meditate on this and reinforce our confidence in God. No need for the children of God to cower in the dark or be put to flight by the forces of this world or the Adversary.

There is a large lack of deference in modern western society, with a great deal of disrespect for fellow-citizens and those in office. This overall lack of courtesy is seen in the way people drive, in their manner of speaking to one another, and in countless other ways. Newspapers, television, films, stand-up comedians, all

make a living, in part, from being critical and hostile to various groups.

Sometimes the criticism is necessary, and it can be a healthy sign in a free society, but it often goes beyond the bounds of good taste. This lack of respect for authority extends to lack of reverence on matters religious and frequently degenerates into blasphemy.

To fear — to reverence — God is to put the world and its affairs into the proper context. An adjustment of our attitude with respect to God will beneficially alter our relationship with all those around us — our families, friends, society at large and, yes, even those who do not like us.

Reverence Brings Joy

A steady reverence for our God, an appreciation of His incomparable status — far above everything — will gradually bring rest and strength to our hearts and will help to quell our anxieties. The solid understanding that our affairs are in His capable hands, that nothing can take us from His care, and that He stands with us will moderate our daily, petty fears and remove the sting from the trials we may have to endure as believers. Our consciousness of His holiness will cause us to rejoice.

*In quietness and in confidence shall
be your strength.*

— Isa. 30: 15

* * *

of interest . . .

A **joint expedition** of 10 explorers from the United States and Turkey intend to trek up Mount Ararat in July with hopes of discovering Noah’s Ark. They will spend a month searching for a large structure exposed in part by melting snow last summer.

The trip is being organized by Daniel McGivern, a company president based in Hawaii, described in the local press as a Christian activist. Mr. McGivern told a press conference in Washington DC that satellite images had helped locate an object 13.5m (45ft) high, 22.5m (75ft) wide and up to 135m (450ft) long on the mountain. “We are not excavating it. We are not taking any artifacts,” he told reporters. “We’re going to photograph it and, God willing, you’re all going to see it.”

Recounted in the Bible, Noah and his ark are said to have alighted on Mount Ararat after the Great Flood. In 1957, Turkish air force pilots spotted a boat-shaped formation in Agri province, but as yet, no team visiting the area has been able to find any trace of a vessel.

— *bbc.com*

* * *

Couples getting married in Italy’s churches will soon say “I receive you” instead of “I take you” as part of their wedding vows. Italian Roman Catholic bishops have approved the change to underscore that marriage should not be seen as one person possessing the other but each receiving the other as a gift from God.

— *Reuters*



PAUL'S EXPECTATION

Q In Phil. 1: 23 we read of the Apostle Paul's "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ." Does this prove that Paul expected to be with Christ immediately after his death?

A In Phil. 1: 20-25 the Apostle tells us that he does not know whether to prefer his human life with its sufferings and its blessings of service for the brethren, or death with its release from labor and suffering. He confesses himself hard pressed as to which he should choose of these two things:

1. His human life, or
2. His death.

It was a matter of indifference to him which he should choose, since both had such accompaniments that he could not decide which was the more desirable.

Two Even More Desirable Things

But in v. 23 he mentions two other things — a third and a fourth — that are far better than either his human life or his death. In the King James Version these are mentioned as:

3. Departing, and
4. Being with Christ.

The Greek word *anulusai*, which in v. 23 is translated "depart," is also translated "return" in Luke 12: 36.

Which of these renderings fits Phil. 1: 23?

In Luke 12: 36 *anulusai* is used in a parable illustrative of our Lord's Second Advent. Jesus clearly taught us that the Christian would be rewarded at the resurrection, and not before (Luke 14: 14). Paul and the other Apostles, therefore, believed that they would for the first time in glory see and be with the Lord Jesus at His Second Advent (2 Tim. 4: 1).

These considerations lead to the thought that the translation of Phil. 1: 23 should read, "having a desire for the *returning* of, and the being with, Christ."

Therefore, these two things, departing and being with Christ, Paul considered to be far better than the other two things — his human life or his death. This was the hope that the Apostle expressed in Phil. 1: 23, which is to be realized at Christ's return, through the resurrection.

UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION?

Q Does the Bible teach universal redemption?

A The Bible teaches universal redemption for all, in the sense that all who have ever lived will *at some point* benefit from the ransom-sacrifice of Christ (1 Tim. 2: 6).

For believers of the Gospel Age — this "day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6: 2) — the saving process begins to work for them, by faith, in this life. The *opportunity* for unbelievers to gain eternal life will not begin until they have been raised from the dead in Christ's Kingdom on earth (John 5: 28, 29). Given every help and encouragement in that day to accept Him as Savior and to come into harmony with the laws of the New Covenant, those who fail to respond favorably to His righteous judgments will be destroyed in the Second Death (Acts 3: 19-23).

The first death passed upon all because of one man's sin (Rom. 5: 12). The Second Death will pass upon none except for the wilful, intelligent, persistent sin of the individual (Heb. 10: 26-29; Jer. 31: 29, 30). Such a sin could not be committed until first, one had been delivered from the sentence previously upon him through Father Adam — the *first* death sentence. The world, therefore, cannot now die

We should consider as Christian brothers and sisters all who claim to have repented for sin and to have accepted Jesus as Savior, and whose course of conduct is consistent with the Bible's teachings (Acts 4: 12; 16: 31).

the Second Death, because they are not yet released from the first death — hence the folly of teaching that this life presents the “last chance” for anyone to accept Christ.

The human family has been condemned once — Adam and all his race in him (1 Cor. 15: 22). Not until they through Christ's merit shall be released from that condemnation can they come into a fresh trial for eternal life, and the possibility of a final condemnation if found incorrigible.

WHY VARIED BELIEFS?

Q How should we regard the many variations in Christian belief?

A The various Reformers and their Reform movements were evidently used of God to gradually bring His Truth-hungry people more and more out of the errors of the Dark Ages.

God used **Martin Luther** to bring forth from the Scriptures the true doctrine of justification by faith, as against the error of justification by works. His movement through his and other leaders' efforts became the Lutheran denomination.

Ulrich Zwingli was used of God to bring forth the Truth teaching that the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper *represent* Jesus' body and blood, as against the error of the *real presence* of Jesus' body and blood in the Lord's Supper. Through the efforts of Calvin and others his movement became the Presbyterian denomination.

Thomas Cranmer was used of God to bring forth the Truth teaching that the Church in the flesh is subject to the civil powers, as against the error that the civil power is subject to the Church. Eventually, his movement became the Episcopal Church.

Reformers such as Wesley, Campbell, and Miller brought forth other Truth teachings. Their

movements became respectively the Methodist, Christian (Disciple), and Adventist Churches. There were others as well.

Failure To Follow Advancing Truth

However, as time went on and the denominations grew, many of their adherents stood still and refused to consider the possibility of further advancing Truth. This fostered a sectarian spirit and consequent persecution of other Christians.

It is not our prerogative to criticize or belittle those who see matters differently than ourselves. We should consider as Christian brothers and sisters all who claim to have repented for sin and to have accepted Jesus as Savior, and whose course of conduct is consistent with the Bible's teachings (Acts 4: 12; 16: 31). And all who have dedicated or consecrated themselves to God, and whose lives are in harmony as far as possible with the principles of truth and righteousness, should be gladly accepted as true fellow disciples of Christ (John 8: 31, 32, 36).

ELIJAH IN HEAVEN?

Q Did Elijah go to God in heaven in a chariot of fire?

A In 2 Kings 2: 11 we read: “There appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both [Elijah and Elisha] asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.”

A close reading of this Scripture shows that Elijah did not go “into heaven” *in the chariot*, but “by a *whirlwind*.” It does not say that Elijah was in the chariot at all. The chariot and horses of fire drove between the two prophets and “parted them both asunder,” and then went on.

The Heaven Elijah Went To

Apparently, the heaven into which Elijah was taken by a whirlwind was not God's dwelling place but rather the atmosphere or sky surrounding the earth, the aerial heaven.

The Hebrew word *shamayim*, translated “heaven” in 2 Kings 2: 11, occurs many times and is used variously in the Bible. It is used sometimes to denote earth's atmosphere (Gen. 1: 8). As to anyone going to the heaven where God dwells, Jesus tells us plainly in John 3: 13 that “no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven.”

* * *

Servants of God and Man

The sixth in a series of articles on godly men and women from around the world, whose lives have shaped the cultures in which we live

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

1906–1945

The Cost of His Discipleship

A PRIVATE MAN, BUT AN ATTENTIVE FRIEND — one description of this courageous Christian who dared to oppose the gross injustices of the Nazi regime in Hitler's Germany during the 1930s and 1940s. Remembered as theologian and author, pastor and teacher, his eminent place in history was secured by his martyrdom to the cause he had fought from early manhood.

The sixth of eight children born to Karl and Paula Bonhoeffer in Breslau, East Germany (present-day Wrocław, Poland), Dietrich was educated at home in his early years by his mother, one of the few women then to have a university degree. Father Karl was an eminent professor of psychiatry and neurology, and the young family grew up among the academic circles of Berlin University. Paula taught her children the importance of a strong moral and intellectual character, which they all grew to share, as evidenced by their later stand against a corrupt regime.

The Christian Ministry

Dietrich at 18 years of age began theological studies at Tübingen and Berlin Universities, and three years later was awarded a Doctorate with Honors for his dissertation *Sanctorum Communio* (The Communion of Saints). After serving a while as assistant pastor to a German congregation in Barcelona, in 1930 he went to New York and studied at the Union Theological Seminary, working also at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. In 1931, at the age of only 25, Dietrich returned to Berlin to take up the post of lecturer in systematic theology at the University, and later that year he was ordained a minister of the Protestant German Evangelical Church.

Hitler's Germany

From its early beginnings, nationalism and state authority had influenced the Church, and this tradition, along with Hitler's emergence as a strong new leader, inclined many German Protestants to favor the rise of Nazism. Victimization of "non-Aryans" — specifically the Jewish population, who were by state legislation forbidden to work in the civil service, was

approved by the Church in 1933, and those of Jewish descent were thereafter forbidden to become ministers or religious teachers.

Bonhoeffer protested bitterly against this policy. He argued that if non-Aryans were banned from the ministry, their colleagues should resign as a display of committed support, even if this resulted in the setting up of another Church, which would stay free from Nazi influence. He demonstrated his own sincerity by refusing an appointment as pastor to a Berlin congregation.

Into the desert

Finding himself opposed to most of his friends on the matter of Germany's increasing anti-Semitism, and ashamed of what he viewed as cowardice on the part of the established Christian church, in late 1933 Bonhoeffer became pastor to German-speaking congregations in London. Writing to a friend, he explained his decision that "it was time to go for a while into the desert." He served the German Evangelical Church in Sydenham and the Reformed Church of St. Paul in London. His parish soon became a sanctuary for Christian and Jewish refugees.

The Confessing Church

A minority of German Christians were as distraught as Bonhoeffer at the growing injustices and the complacency of the Evangelical Church as a whole. Unable to cooperate with the Nazis in church affairs, a group of protesters formally set up in May 1934, The Confessing Church, dedicated to remaining free from the influences of Nazism. Bonhoeffer was a founding member. His London parish and other German parishes in England withdrew from the official German Evangelical Church in support of the new Confessing Church.

Returning to Germany in 1935, Bonhoeffer took up the leadership of the Confessing Church's seminary. His students had an uncertain future, as the official church prevented them from getting appointments. The new Church, however, was under increasing pressure from the Gestapo, and while some members had begun to help Jews, others refused to discuss "the Jewish question" and even proposed a resolution explicitly supporting the state's right to regulate the affairs of Jewish citizens.



Bonhoeffer was greatly disturbed at this lack of solidarity, but continued his teaching at the seminary until August 1937, when Himmler issued a decree declaring the education and examination of Confessing ministry candidates illegal. The seminary was closed by the Gestapo, and 27 of Bonhoeffer's former students had been arrested by November.

The undercover ministry

For the next two years Bonhoeffer secretly toured East German villages, supervising his students, many of whom worked illegally in small parishes. At conferences throughout Europe he vigorously represented the cause of the Confessing Church and challenged the ecumenical movement about its theological foundations and its responsibility for peace. However, aware that the Gestapo were watching him closely, Bonhoeffer limited his public preaching.

Kristallnacht

That "night of broken glass" — November 10, 1938, is the only date marked in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Bible. The day after the Nazi "*Kristallnacht*" destruction — a concentrated attack on Jews and their homes, synagogues, and shops — he marked the date next to Psalm 74, verse 8:

"They said in their hearts, let us plunder their goods! They burn all the houses of God in the land . . . O God, how long is the foe to scoff? How long will the enemy revile your name?"

Having opposed Hitler and the Nazi party so far only in ideological terms, Bonhoeffer grew increasingly opposed to the Fuhrer and his party. He seriously contemplated leaving Germany, knowing war was inevitable and that he would never fight in Hitler's army.

Offered a post at the Union Seminary in New York, he set out in June 1939, but by the time he arrived he had changed his mind. He wrote to a friend: "I have come to the conclusion that I made a mistake in coming to America . . . I shall have no right to take part in the restoration of Christian life in Germany after the war unless I share the trials of this time with my people" (Bethge, Eberhard. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Eine Biographie*. Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag).

The German resistance movement

Dietrich Bonhoeffer first met with the organized German Resistance early in 1939. His brother-in-law, Hans von Dohnanyi, was a member, and as a lawyer worked at the Armed Forces High Command office of

Military Intelligence with Admiral Wilhelm Canaris and Major-General Hans Oster. Both shared his political views and the office became a center of conspiracy and resistance.

In October 1940 Bonhoeffer began work as a Military Intelligence agent, purportedly to win support for Nazism among his ecumenical contacts, but in reality using his influence to spread information about the resistance movement. Visiting various European countries he tried to persuade them that some Allied gesture of support for a German conspiracy to overthrow Hitler was critical. However, the Allied governments were skeptical and not prepared to accept such demands.

Operation Seven

This was a plan to smuggle Jews out of Germany, using forged visas. The first 14 reached Switzerland safely by September 1942, but the Gestapo discovered the substantial funds sent for their support, traced the money back to Dohnanyi and Bonhoeffer, and arrested them in April 1943. Dietrich was charged with:

- Conspiring to rescue Jews;
- Using his travels abroad for non-intelligence matters;
- Abuse of his intelligence position to keep Confessing Church pastors out of military service, and for his own ecumenical work.

The Cost of Discipleship

Though he had participated in a failed assassination attempt on the Fuhrer, it took the Nazis a long time to realize the full extent of Bonhoeffer's participation in the resistance movement. Imprisoned first in Berlin, then moved to Buchenwald and finally to Flossenburg concentration camp, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hanged on April 9, 1945, along with other conspirators. His brother Klaus, and brother-in-law Dohnanyi, were executed a few days later.

Bonhoeffer's writings reveal a deeply spiritual man, concerned at the secularization of the world and the 20th century departure from religious values. *The Cost of Discipleship*, published in 1939, is an interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount, and calls for radical living if the Christian is to be a genuine disciple of Christ. The letters of Dietrich Bonhoeffer from prison betray no tortured struggle or spirit of rebellion. Rather, as the SS doctor who witnessed his death later observed: "I have hardly ever seen a man so submissive to the will of God."

Sources: www.probe.org/docs/bonhoeffer.html; www.usmmm.org/bonhoeffer; www.dbonhoeffer.org/who-was-db2.htm; 1994–2000 Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.; www.augsburgfortress.org/bonhoeffer/portrait.asp

STRENGTH FROM ABOVE

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

— 2 Cor. 12: 7-10 —

ST. PAUL’S EXPERIENCE is briefly stated in our opening text. This was the language of an overcoming saint, meekly bowing to the Divine will. Noble, loyal, true, and strong in character as the Apostle was, he nevertheless realized that he was a member of the fallen human race, and, in common with all humanity, was subject to frailties. God had called him to a most important and glorious work — that of bearing the Gospel to the Gentiles. For the benefit of the whole Church, to him were granted special and wonderful revelations, even above those granted to other honored and beloved Apostles.

The Apostle was caught away in mental vision to the third heaven — the new dispensation, the Millennial reign of Christ (2 Pet. 3: 6, 7, 13; Isa. 65: 17). He was shown things (doubtless the Plan and purpose of God, as now made manifest to us, largely through his writings) not lawful to be uttered then, because not then due to be expounded to the Church (2 Cor. 12: 4). Upon him devolved the care of all the churches of the Gentiles, and great were the responsibilities of his office. Though his position was a most laborious and trying one, requiring of him great fortitude, zeal, energy, and self-denial to fill it, it was also one of great honor.

Paul’s Thorn in the Flesh

Paul appreciated the honor of such intimate fellowship of service with the Lord, and manifested his appreciation by untiring zeal and enthusiasm. But even in this the Lord recognized a personal danger to His beloved and faithful Apostle — a danger of pride and self-exaltation, which, if it should develop, would soon make him unfit for further service and rob him of his future reward. So the thorn in the flesh was permitted. It came, not from the hand of the Lord, though by His permission, but, as the Apostle affirms, it was “the messenger of Satan to buffet” him.

A thorn in the flesh is always a painful thing and whatever this may have been (we believe it was his weak eyesight), it was something severely trying to

Paul. At first he thought only of the pain and annoyance it caused him, and of its hindrance to him in the Lord’s work. It was a messenger of Satan that he was eager to get rid of, and three times he besought the Lord for its removal. But no, it had come to stay, and the Lord mercifully made him realize that though it was very undesirable to the flesh, it was nevertheless profitable to him spiritually, for otherwise he might become exalted overmuch.

Paul Appreciated His Lord’s Care

The implication of weakness the Apostle humbly accepted. He did not resent it and begin to boast of his strength and to reproach the Lord for not exerting His power for its removal. On the contrary, with grace and gladness, he accepted the Lord’s judgment of his heart, and His estimate of his strength, and appreciated the love that thus cared *for him personally*, while through him the Lord was ministering to the whole Church.

Yes, praise the Lord! He chooses His own instruments and whets, grinds, and polishes them for more effectual service, and wields them with force and power in the service of His people. In all the painful and laborious service, He has special care also for His willing and faithful instruments. He will not suffer them to be tried beyond that which they are able to endure (1 Cor. 10: 13). Nor will He suffer them to be exalted without some counterbalancing thorn in the flesh to preserve their equilibrium.

The answer to the Apostle’s prayer, although not an affirmative answer to his request, was a blessed consolation — “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” The Lord’s favor made up for the Apostle’s weakness, so he was enabled to carry out his ministry.

OUR SIMILAR CONSOLATION

This is the blessed consolation also of every other truly submissive Christian heart. How many of the Lord’s people are tempest-tossed and sorely tried in these days! Doubtless many of them have earnestly besought the

Lord to remove this or that trial or affliction, but the piercing thorn still remains for their discipline and perfecting. Let all such, like the Apostle Paul, give ear to the Master's voice — "My grace is sufficient for thee." What if friends forsake you — if you have My favor, My love, is that not sufficient? And what though the flesh be weak and the heart sometimes faint — My strength shall supply your lack; and while you walk in the way of My appointment, your weakness shall only the more manifest the power of God.

God's Power on our Behalf

What sincere child of God has not realized, in times of greatest need and extreme weakness, the power of God on his behalf, supplementing his weakness with strength from above? And when the task was accomplished to which the Lord had called him and for which he felt so incompetent of himself, who has not realized in the outcome the wonderful power of God?

In view of such a gracious provision to supplement his weakness with the Divine strength, the faithful Apostle meekly responded, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Having put forth all his own energies and having faithfully used his own ability to its fullest extent as a wise steward, it was his joy to recognize the hand of the Lord working with him — by miracles and signs and with demonstrations of the spirit and of power (Heb. 2: 4; Acts 19: 11, 12; 1 Cor. 2: 4). These demonstrations of Divine power, supplementing Paul's faithful use of his natural abilities, were the Lord's endorsement of all he did — the manifestations of Divine approval both to himself and to others, and consequently a cause for great rejoicing.

Our Cause for Rejoicing

With the Apostle it is also the privilege of all God's children to have their weakness supplemented by Divine grace, while they meekly and faithfully use their talents in the Lord's service. And so all the faithful may rejoice in tribulations, infirmities, and perplexing situations, realizing that God overrules in all things and supplies the needed strength, causing "all things" to "work together for good to them that love God" (Phil. 4: 13, 19; Rom. 8: 28). Only as we use the key of His promised all-sufficient grace will we be able

to ascend from our valley of weakness to heights of greater strength and attainment above otherwise insurmountable obstacles.

But to rejoice in tribulations, to endure meekly and patiently a sore thorn in the flesh, and even to glory in such personal infirmities as make the power of Christ the more manifest, is not possible except to those whose hearts are in fullest accord with the loving purposes of God (Rom. 5: 2-5). If the heart be influenced by pride, self-exaltation, ostentation, love of fame or wealth, or any worldly ambition, joy in tribulation is impossible. But if the old ambitions and desires of the flesh are kept under, and faith, hope, love, meekness, obedience, zeal, and various other Christian graces are all alive and active, we will have the consciousness of God's favor, extended through Christ, and then we can rejoice in every experience.

This is true of all who follow the example of Jesus and of the Apostle Paul (1 Pet. 2: 21; 1 Cor. 11: 1). The Master truly said of His followers, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15: 5). God's power operates through our Lord Jesus and the Word of Truth, in all of His consecrated people, in proportion as they call on Him and rely in His strength. This power can operate in the weakest as well as in the strongest of His people.

Prayer for Grace Sufficient

God's grace through Christ is sufficient for all and for every time of need. We are not to forget, however, that this great sufficiency is not poured out upon God's people unconditionally, but in answer to their recognition of their need and their prayerful request for grace sufficient in every time of need. He who marks the sparrow's fall and numbers the very hairs of our heads will not let our supplications for needed strength go unheeded (Luke 12: 6, 7; 2 Cor. 9: 8; Phil. 4: 19).

Let us remember the Lord's promise: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." May these words bring rich blessings to God's dear people who trust in Him, whom He loves, cares for, and will ever keep "as the apple of his eye" (Deut. 32: 10; Psa. 17: 8; Zech. 2: 8). How wonderful it is to belong to God, to feel the warmth of His great love, and ever to find in Him "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psa. 46: 1)!



Paul blinded en-route to Damascus

* * *

THE MAIL BOX



Dear Mr. Herzig:

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Thanks,

R. K., New York

Dear friends,

Good day! Firstly, thank you for the tracts and booklets. We got the package alright and started to distribute and mail out the leaflets here, there, on Yap {*Ed. — an island of Guam*}, and worldwide, even to family members.

Please pray with me for my success in helping lost souls to know Jehovah God, Jesus, and the most holy Bible.

Love, yours in Christ,

P. K., Guam

Greetings,

I was given a tract with some of your information, and would like to get your price/publication list. I enjoy Bible study and have done so for many years. I do not know anything about your organization, so could you tell me a little of your background?

I would enjoy receiving a copy of several other tracts.

Thank you,

H.K., Washington

* * *

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* * *

announcements

GENERAL CONVENTIONS FOR 2004

At-a-glance

France: *(All at Barlin)* July 30-August 1; October 30, 31

Germany: *Altleiningen*, October 1-3

Nigeria: *Umunkiri*, June 25-27; *Osusu Amukwa*, September 26; *Aba, Abia State*, November 26-28

Poland: *Susiec*, July 9-11; *Rzeszow*, July 12-14; *Wroklow*, July 16-18; *Bydgoszcz*, July 19-21; *Katowice*, August 27-29

United Kingdom: *Hyde*, August 6-8; *Sheffield*, October 30, 31

United States: *Philadelphia Area*, July 3-5; *Ohio*, August 13-15; *Illinois*, October 1-3; *Oklahoma*, November 12-14.

Details

United States

Philadelphia Area (Lionville), July 3-5 (Saturday-Monday)

Site: The Inn at Chester Springs (formerly known as *Best Western*), Route 100 (south of route 113), Lionville, PA 19353; telephone: (610) 363-1100 *Rates and Reservations:* For 1-4 people, \$74.00 plus \$5.92 tax. ***Please make reservations for all four nights through our office; and make checks payable to LHMM.*** Our address is 1156 Saint Matthew's Road, Chester Springs, PA 19425-2700; telephone: (610) 827-7665

Athens, Ohio, August 13-15 (Friday-Sunday)

Site: Ohio University Inn, 331 Richland Ave., Athens, Ohio 45701; telephone (740-593-6661). *Rate and Reservations:* \$77.00 per room plus 13.25% tax. Reservations must be received by July 14, 2004.

SERVICES BY VISITING MINISTERS

The General Editor, Ralph Herzig

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5

Richard Blaine

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5

Robert Herzig

Boston, Massachusetts, June 27; Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5; New Haven, Connecticut, August 15

John Wojnar

Pittsfield, Massachusetts, June 13; Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5; Boston, Massachusetts, August 22

John Detzler

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5

Leon Snyder

Chicago, Illinois, June 12, 13; Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5

Baron Duncan

Springfield, Massachusetts, June 6; Springfield, Massachusetts, August 1

Tom Cimbura

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5

Don Lewis

Muskegon, Michigan, June 26; Grand Rapids, Michigan, June 27; Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5; Chicago, Illinois, August 28, 29

Jack Zilch

Philadelphia Area Convention, July 3-5

Evangelists' Services

Robert Branconnier, Norfolk, Virginia, June 13

Jon Hanning, North Canton, Ohio, June 13; Beechgrove, Tennessee, July 24, 25

David Lounsbury, Jr., New York City, June 20

Richard Piquene, Independence, Kansas, June 27

Harold Solomon, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, August 8

Robert Steenrod, Cambridge Springs, Pennsylvania, June 13; Derry, Pennsylvania, August 29

William Sturges, Seattle, Washington, June 5, 6; Cincinnati, Ohio, June 27

Edward Tomkiewicz, Minneapolis, Minnesota, July 18, 19
