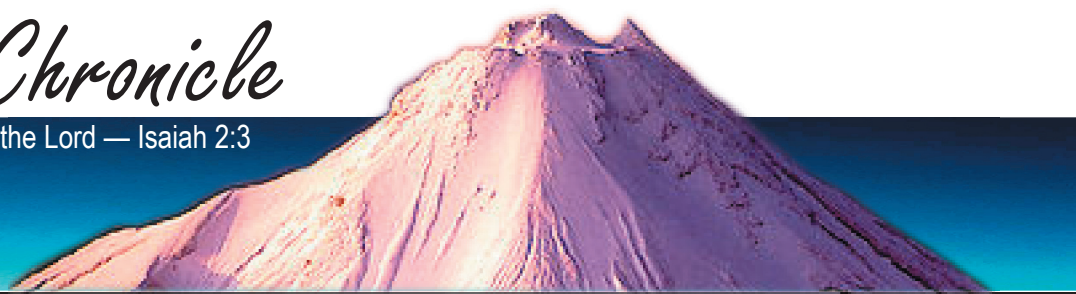


The Summit Chronicle

Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord — Isaiah 2:3



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Scripture of the Month

**"Blessed be the Lord God, the
God of Israel, Who alone works
wonders.**

**And blessed be His glorious
name forever; and may the
whole earth be filled with His
glory. Amen and Amen.**

**The prayers of David, the son of
Jesse, are ended"**

—Psalms 72:18-20

Contact Us!

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would like answered by any of our
writers, please feel free to contact us
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GOD'S AMAZING GRACE

by Kevin G. Cain

The words "amazing" and "grace" are often found side-by-side. John Newton popularized the phrase "amazing grace" when he wrote a song in the late 18th century using this phrase as the title. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me." There are many adjectives that could accurately be coupled with God's grace—amazing, powerful, great, wonderful, perfect, awesome, abundant. These are all true descriptions of God's grace. But what is it that is so amazing about God's grace?

First, what is it? What is God's grace? I have often heard others describe God's grace using the acronym: God's Riches At Christ's Expense. That is a very good description, and also one that is easy to remember. I like to think of grace as the mirror image of mercy. Mercy is being spared of what I deserve, and grace is being given what I do not deserve. Because of my sin, I deserve death; because of Jesus, I receive life.

The Bible is filled with examples of grace—receiving a gift that is neither deserved nor earned. For example, early on in the history of God's creation, we read of a man named Noah who found grace in the eyes of God. (Gen. 6:8). How did God express this grace toward Noah? He spared his life from the flood and gave him life. (Gen. 6:18). While God destroyed the world, he gave Noah the gift of life. Joseph showed grace toward his father by burying Israel with his ancestors. (Gen. 47:29-30).

When Moses asked for God's presence and divine direction, God answered, "I will do this thing also that you have spoken: for you have found grace in my sight." (Ex. 33:17). God showed His grace by allowing a remnant of the Jews to return to Jerusalem from captivity. (Ezra 9:8). First century Christians contributing toward the needs of others was described as an act of grace. (2 Cor. 8:7). Paul was called by God through His grace. (Gal. 1:15). Notice, in each example where there is grace, there is something given.

By God's grace, I receive abundant blessings and gifts—gifts that I do not deserve, and gifts that I have not earned. For example, Abram lied about his wife, Sarai, to preserve his own life. (Gen. 12:10-13). While Abraham deserved punishment, God spared Abram (mercy) and made a great nation of Abram (grace).

The psalmist beautifully described God's grace when he wrote, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly." (Ps. 84:11). Every blessing we receive, every good and perfect gift (James 1:17), every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3) is a result of God's grace. God will bless those who love and faithfully serve Him by blessing them with every good thing they need.

Remember the words of Jesus in the sermon on the mount when he spoke of providing for our daily needs. We need food, clothes, and shelter, and Jesus pointed out that

God provides these things for the birds and grass that surrounds us. (Matt. 6: 25-27). Therefore, don't you think that God will take care of those whom He loves more than the birds and grass? (Matt. 6:28-30). When we sit down to eat a meal, have money to pay for a house, have the health to work and provide for our families, and have more than enough clothes to cover ourselves; we are basking in the grace of God. These are all gifts from the Father.

However, there are spiritual blessings that we have in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3) that far surpass the glory and excellence of our temporal physical blessings. While it is easy to focus on the physical blessings that we can see, touch, and taste; we are the beneficiaries of favor that truly demonstrates the amazing nature of God's grace.

There is no greater gift from God than the salvation we enjoy in Christ. God's grace is given to us by Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1:4; Eph. 2:7). God's gift of grace came by one man, Jesus. (Rom. 5:15). Jesus extended this grace to us by becoming poor that we might be rich. (2 Cor. 8:9). This plan of filling us with God's grace was set into action before the world began. (2 Tim. 1:9). We are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 4:24). Because Jesus died as a perfect sacrifice and was resurrected from death, we have God's grace. The salvation we have because of Christ is the means by which God blesses us with His grace.

How do I come to know this grace? The answer is simple—through God's inspired word. Grace is at the heart of the gospel, the good news of God. Paul spoke of his ministry, "to testify the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20:24). We learn of God's grace

through "the word of his grace." (Acts 20:32). We are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8), and faith comes by hearing God's word. (Rom. 10:17). God has never unilaterally decided to extend his grace to someone without that person first having heard what God wanted them to do. Remember the words of Peter, who while discussing the events that led to the conversion of Cornelius, recounted the instruction given to Cornelius—"call for Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall tell you words whereby you and your house will be saved." (Acts 11:13-14). The gospel of the grace of God is the power of God for salvation. (Acts 20: 24; Rom. 1:16). Simply put, I find God's grace when I hear and obey God's inspired word.

Two passages drive this point home: that God's word is directly tied to His grace. We read in Acts 20:32, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." God describes His holy word as the "word of grace." It is a message that brings salvation, gives light, brings hope, promises an inheritance, and delivers grace. In Titus 2:11-12, Paul writes, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

Paul discusses grace in the context of which we are most familiar—God's salvation. However, Paul goes on to make a point about God's grace that few people consider. Paul states that God grace teaches. That's right, it teaches. God's grace teaches us to refrain from ungodliness and sinful desires and to be clear thinking, obeying God's word (*see* Ps. 119:172),

and to strive to be like God. And where does grace teach us these things? In the word of God's grace. (Acts 20:32).

This concept of God's grace teaching us to avoid sin and live righteously is further highlighted by another passage discussing grace. In Galatians 5:4, Paul warns the Christians of Galatia that in spite of the fact that God's grace is powerful and abundant, it is not able to save those who sin and remain in their sins. Just as we can be saved by grace through our faith, we can also fall from this grace. Paul writes, "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace." (Gal. 5: 4). Notice, they had grace, they were in God's grace, and now they have fallen away from God's grace. That is why it is so important that as Christians, we continue to put to death the old man of sin and continue to live righteous lives. (Rom. 6:6-16).

That is what grace teaches us to do. God's grace not only saves us, but it teaches us how to live so that we do not fall from God's grace. God's grace is not some one-time inoculation from sin that allows us do whatever we want with eternal immunity from its consequences. Rather, grace teaches us how to live our daily lives in such a way that we continue in God's grace.

Understanding all this about God's grace, what is it exactly that makes this grace so amazing? Is it that the sinless Christ died for sinful men? In part, yes, but there is so much more. God's grace is amazing. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13). But God went far beyond this in revealing His grace in two very significant respects.

First, Jesus did not merely die for his friends and for those who love

Him. Jesus did sacrifice His life for His friends. But He also hung on that cruel cross for sinners, liars, unfaithful spouses, complainers, murderers, disrespectful, drug addicts, and rapists. Jesus died for everyone, for those good-hearted teenagers who have been “raised in the church,” but also for those who have lived sinful lives filled with unspeakable atrocities. Jesus died for us all. Jesus even died for those who drove the nails through His hands and feet, for those who beat the crown of thorns into His head, for those who spit on Him and slapped

His face, for those who mocked Him while He suffered on the cross, for the worst of us and the best of us. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” (1 Tim. 1:15). We all need Jesus, and God’s grace and love caused Jesus to suffer on that cross for all of us. God’s grace is amazing.

Second and finally, the sacrifice of Jesus is made even greater because the Father allowed the Son to die for sinful humanity. I recall hearing a preacher proclaim to a large assembly, “I love you all very much. I love you so much that if I thought it would save your soul, I would gladly sacrifice my own life for yours.” But then he made a point that I did not expect, and that I will never forget. He went on to say, “But I don’t love you so much that I would let one of my precious grandchildren die for you.” This seasoned Christian made an amazing point about God’s amazing grace—a point plainly made in Scripture, but a point we may too often overlook. “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16).

For purposes of this next illustration, you need to know two things about me. One, I am an attorney; and two, I have two sweet and wonderful children—an eight year-old boy, and a four year-old girl. I recently tried a case against an attorney who has a reputation of being completely unscrupulous and unethical. I was told I could not trust him, and I soon found that to be true. During the course of the trial he frequently lied, misled the judge, repeatedly and publically called me names, and feigned theatrics to gain the sympathy of the judge and jury. He was rude, discourteous, and unprofessional. In other words, he did just about everything possible to make me hate him. It was a daily struggle, requiring consistent prayer, to act like a Christian toward him and not let my emotions get the best of me.

If someone were to tell me that this immoral attorney had been convicted of crimes that mandate a death sentence, my first thought would be, “It’s good to know that some people actually get what they deserve.” Now imagine the judge sentencing this sinful man to death, and the judge pauses to look directly at me and states, “Mr. Cain, I will spare this man’s life if you will allow your only son to go to prison for 30 years. He will be mistreated and abused. Your son will be ridiculed and hated. It is highly likely that he will die from mistreatment before the 30 years are completed.” I would not think or ponder for a second or moment before saying, “Absolutely no!”

How can a father willingly subject his son to such horror. And yet, that is exactly what God did for us. He loved us so much that he allowed Himself to be separated from the Son, allowed Jesus to live among sinful men, to be mistreated by sinful men, lied about

by sinful men, and tortured and killed by sinful men. God’s grace is simply amazing. And, what does God ask in return for this grace of eternal life? The religious world would answer, “Nothing, God zaps you with His grace and there is nothing you can do about it.” The Bible answers differently. In response to God’s love, Christ’s sacrifice, and divine grace, God demands everything we have. “Love the Lord God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” (Mark 12:30). “Present your bodies as living sacrifices.” (Rom. 12:1). God wants everything we have and everything we are, and we are still undeserving of God’s grace. “So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’” (Luke 17:10).

Because of God’s amazing grace, should we continue in sin? May it not be so. How can we, who have died to sin, continue to live in sin any longer? Having been baptized into Christ, I have died to sin and am alive in Christ. I no longer serve sin that leads to death, but righteousness that leads to life. (Rom. 5:20-6:14). All this is possible because of God’s grace—God’s amazing grace. “I once was lost, but now am found. Was blind, but now I see.”



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SALVATION IN ONE BODY

by Rex Banks

Introduction

The good news of scripture is that the God, who could not simply ignore sin, broke its power over man by meeting the demands of perfect justice Himself and then with nail-pierced hands extended the gift of eternal life to frail, weak, sons of Adam like you and me. Now, a gift cannot be earned but it must be accepted, and according to the New Testament good-hearted men and women of the first century accepted the offer of salvation by responding in faith to the good news; faith which manifested itself in repentance for sin, confession of Jesus as Lord and baptism for the remission of the sin. (See "Accepting God's Gift")

Clearly since baptism is the point at which the repentant believer's sins are washed away by the blood of Christ (not by the water [1 Pet. 3:21]) baptism also marks the beginning of a new relationship between God and man, and scripture has a great deal to say on this topic. One aspect of this new relationship is touched upon in 1 Cor 12:13 where Paul reminds his brethren at Corinth that "by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body". (1 Cor 12:13) What we learn from this verse (among others) is that scriptural baptism places the believer in something which the New Testament calls one body. Thus the same action (scriptural baptism) which washes away sin is also said to place the believer in one body, and if we let scripture explain its own terms we discover that this one body (cf Eph. 4:4) is also called "His (i.e. Christ's) body"

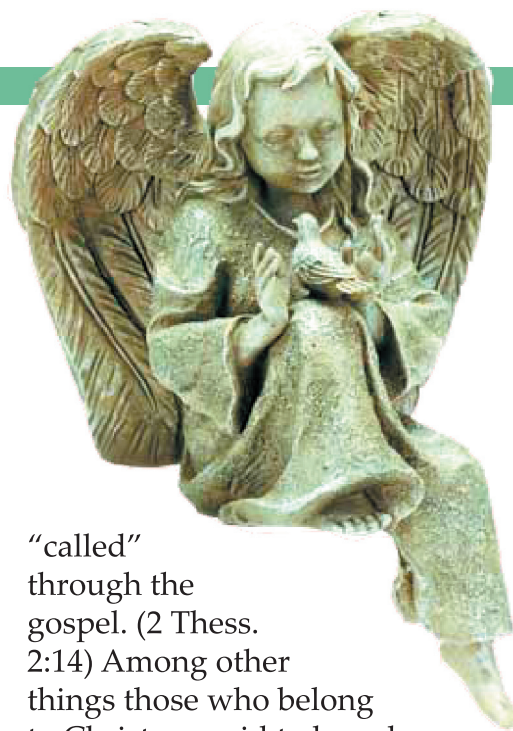
and also "the church". (Eph 1:22, 23; Col 1:18) To be "baptised into Christ" (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27) is then to be baptised into His body, which scripture also calls (among other things) the church.

In the following paragraphs we are going to touch up on a few matters relating to the concept of the church as that concept is developed by the inspired writers of scripture.

The New Testament and the Term "Church"

The word translated "church" in the English Bible (ekklesia) is from ek (out) and klesia (kaleo, to call), and it was often used by the Greeks to speak of a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly of people convened for the purpose of deliberating. The word occurs frequently in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint), where it is primarily used of Israel, God's chosen people.

In the New Testament the word is used to speak of the tumultuous assembly in the theatre at Ephesus (Acts 19:32, 41) and also of a properly convened "lawful assembly". (Acts 19:39) It is also used by Stephen, who describes the company of Israelites who followed Moses into the desert as the "church in the wilderness". (Acts 7:38 [K.J.V.]) However the New Testament writers use the word ekklesia almost exclusively in a Christian context and although we do not normally define a word primarily in terms of its etymology, it is surely significant that Christians are said to have been



"called" through the gospel. (2 Thess. 2:14) Among other things those who belong to Christ are said to have been "called...out of darkness (Satan's realm) into His marvellous light" (1 Pet 2:9), to have been "called to freedom" (Gal 5:13) and to have been "called" to "eternal life" (1 Tim 6:12). Clearly then when used of God's people, ekklesia is a strongly suggestive term, and in this context it is used in at least three different ways. For the sake of convenience we will look later at the scriptural use of this word to speak of Christians assembled for worship, and focus now upon its use by inspired writers in connection with (1) the universal church and (2) the local church.

The Universal Church

We noticed above that by submitting to scriptural baptism the repentant, confessing believer washes away his sins (Acts 22:16) and is baptised into what scripture calls one body (1 Cor 12:13) which is Christ's body, the church. (Eph 1:22, 23; Col 1:18) According to scripture there is but one body or church (Eph 4:4) and but one baptism which places a repentant, confessing

believer into that body or church. (Eph 4:5) When scripture uses the term “church” to speak of all those throughout the world who have obeyed the gospel, it is using the term in the universal sense. In this universal sense then ekklesia is used to designate all those who have obeyed the gospel and only those who have obeyed the gospel.

Clearly since obedience to the gospel places one in the church of the Bible, it makes no sense to speak of the church of the Bible as an organization which a saved person decides to join or not to join. According to scripture when a person obeys the gospel it is “the Lord” who adds him to the number of the saved (Acts 2:47) in the universal body/church of Christ. Jesus is Saviour of “the body” (Eph 5:23) and with His blood He purchased “the church” (Acts 20:28) which simply means that Jesus is not the Savior of those outside “the body” and that His blood does not purchase anyone outside the “the church.” When we use language which suggests that salvation exists apart from the church we are using language in a manner which is foreign to scripture.

Our understanding of the church of the Bible is greatly enhanced if we consider some of the figures used in scripture to describe her, and in this context the following metaphors are instructive:

a) The church is the spiritual “body of Christ,” and Christ is the “head” of the church. (Eph 1:22, 23; 5:23, 30; Col 1:18, 24) Since there is but one head there is but one body (Eph 4:4) and, just as in the natural realm the head directs the body, so too Christ is director of His body, the church.

Of course headship designates authority, and the church is subject to Christ as the wife is subject to her husband. (Eph 5:22-33) It is only by “holding fast to the head” that the body “grows with a growth which is from God”. (Col 2:9) Likely by describing Christ’s spiritual body as “the fulness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph 1:23) Paul is reminding us that the fulness of the divine blessings repose in this body. Quite simply there are no spiritual blessings outside the body of which Christ is the Head.

b) The church is the spiritual “kingdom” anticipated by the inspired writers of the Old Testament and described as a reality by the writers of the New Testament. Although not all kingdom references speak of the church (e.g. Matt 25:34; 2 Pet 1:11) it is clear that the church is the present earthly phase of God’s kingdom, which is why in Matt 16:18 Jesus uses “church” and “kingdom” synonymously (“I will build my church....I will give you the keys of the kingdom...”). It is also why Jesus speaks of the Lord’s Supper as a memorial which is to be observed in the kingdom. (Matt 26:26-29) Scripture tells us that Christ the King is seated today upon the throne of His father David (2 Sam 7:12-16; Psa 89:3, 4, 35-37; Lk 1:31, 32) and scripture also reveals that David’s throne was in fact God’s throne. (1 Chron 29:23; Rev 3:21) It is this same kingdom which Daniel says would be established in the days of the Roman empire. (Dan 2:44) Thus in the days of Rome when John the Baptist and Christ were upon the earth they could both speak of this kingdom as being “at hand”. (Matt 3:2; 4:17)

c) Jesus adds that the kingdom would “come with power” during the lifetime of those living in the first century. (Mk 9:1) When this promised “power” came upon Christ’s apostles on the first Pentecost following His resurrection from the dead (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4) the long-awaited spiritual kingdom was established. Following that momentous day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, first century Christians are spoken of as having entered the kingdom. For example Paul reminds the Colossian Christians that they had been “transferred...to the kingdom”. (Col 1:13) Christians are said to “receive” an unshakable kingdom (Heb 12:28) and to constitute a “royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:9) and “a kingdom”. (Rev 1:6)

d) Christ will reign over this kingdom until death is abolished (1 Cor 15:25, 26) on the last day (Jn 6:39) at which time He “delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father”. (1 Cor 15:24) Thus the church is a monarchy ruled over by One who has all authority (Matt 28:18; Col 3:17) and as citizens of Christ’s kingdom Christians are to acknowledge His sovereignty in all matters.

e) The church is the “temple of the living God”. (2 Cor 6:16) In the Old Testament the tabernacle and temple are described as the dwelling place of God (Ex 25:8; 1 Kings 8:13) where His glory manifested itself (Ex 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10, 11) and in the New Testament it is the church which is pictured as the Lord’s temple and dwelling place. (1 Cor 3:16; Eph 2:21, 22) It is because the Spirit of God dwells in this temple (the church), that Paul

issues a stern warning to those who threatened to destroy the church by factionalism (1 Cor 3:16) or to compromise her holiness (2 Cor 6: 16) by pagan associations.

f) The “cornerstone” of this spiritual temple, keeping it steady and in line is Christ. (Eph 2:20 cf Isa 28:16; Psa 118:22; Acts 4:11) Then there is “the “foundation” which is said to consist of the “apostles and prophets” (Eph 2:20) because it is the teaching of these inspired men which sets forth the gospel of Christ. Within this spiritual temple, the church, no separate priesthood exists, but instead all Christians are priests offering up “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”. (1 Pet 2:5)

g) The church is “the pillar and support of the truth”. (1 Tim 3: 15) The word translated “pillar” means a column such as supports a building, while the word translated “support” suggests the idea of a foundation designed to support an entire superstructure. In God’s plan the church is not the originator of truth but the pillar and support of the truth, which is of course set forth in God’s word. (Jn 17:17) Luke speaks of this “word of God” as the “teaching of the Lord” and as “the faith” (Acts 13:7, 8, 12) and thus when Jude tells us that “the faith” was “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) he means that the word of God, the teaching of the Lord was delivered once and delivered for all time. The divine assurance is that the truth set forth in the first century by specially chosen men guided by the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:26; Gal 1:11; 2 Pet 1: 21) will never pass away (1 Pet. 1: 22-25) and it is God’s plan for the church to function as the pillar and support of that truth.

h) The church is the “bride”

of Christ. (Rev 19:6-9) She is “betrothed” to Christ, and must safeguard her purity by taking care that she is not deceived by those who preach “another Jesus,” bring “a different spirit” or offer a “different gospel”. (2 Cor 11:3, 4) Her destiny is heaven. (Eph. 5:27)

These and other figures found in scripture illustrate the centrality of the church in the divine plan of salvation. Before time began the Lord determined that “every spiritual blessing” which He bestowed upon man would be made available “in Christ” (Eph 1: 3) which means in the church of which He is head. To God is the “glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever”. (Eph 3:20, 21)

Much more could be said about the church pictured in scripture but enough has been said to demonstrate her centrality to the divine plan of redemption. Planned in eternity and prepared for by the Old Testament prophets, we have seen that the church was at hand during the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus, and was established with power in the city of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost following Christ’s resurrection. Among other things the church is the body of which Christ is the head, the kingdom of which Christ is the king, the temple of which Christ is the cornerstone, and the pillar and support of that truth of which Christ is the mediator. Christ is builder, purchaser, saviour and foundation of the church, and He will come again for her as a bridegroom comes to claim his bride. Clearly the failure to appreciate the importance of this sacred institution reflects a failure to understand one of the great themes of scripture.

The Local Church

According to the New Testament, the one universal church consists of the aggregate of all repentant, confessing believers who have been scripturally baptised. Christ is sole head of this body. Seated at the right hand of God in heaven (Rev 3:21) Christ exercises all authority over the universal church. It is important to notice here that Christ reigns from heaven. Significantly no scriptural authority exists for an earthly head over the universal church. In fact when we examine the New Testament we find no provision for the universal church to function through any organizational structure, and this brings us to a study of the local church.

The Church During the Apostolic Period

Following the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 when the church was established, and prior to the completion of the New Testament scriptures towards the end of the first century, the “doctrine of Christ” (2 Jn 9) was communicated to the world through the teaching of inspired men (Jn 14:26; 16:13; 1 Cor 2:12-13; 14:37; Gal 1:11-12), but none of these men claimed to be the earthly head of the church.

Nor was any provision made in scripture for apostolic succession. Matthias who was “chosen” by the Lord to replace Judas (Acts 1:15-26 [esp. 24]) prior to the establishment of the church in Acts 2, had to possess two qualifications in order to take this office: first he had to have been with Jesus from the time of His baptism by John, and second he had to have personally seen the risen Christ. (Acts 1:22) Clearly no one can meet these qualifications

A BOOK FROM GOD

by Gary C. Hampton

Before we start to study the Bible, we need to recognize that it is God's word. Such recognition will help us to study with a more serious attitude.

The Bible Claims to be Inspired

The Bible lays claim to inspiration. Paul told Timothy, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Paul used the Greek word *theopneustos* in the place where we find "inspiration." *Theo* means "God" and *pneustos* means "breathed," thus, God breathed, or God breathed out. The idea is that God spoke, since we exhale, or breathe out, through the vocal cords to speak.

Peter explained inspiration when he wrote, "For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). The Hebrew writer must have recognized this as he often said God said a certain thing, when we know man did the actual writing (see Hebrews 1:5, 8; 5:5-6).

Many Old Testament writers claimed inspiration, as did some New Testament writers (see Isaiah 1:1-2, 10, 24; Jeremiah 1:1-2; 2:1; Ezekiel 1:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 3:2). Jesus considered Old Testament scriptures inspired and used them as authoritative (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). His whole

purpose in coming to earth was to do God's will by fulfilling Old Testament prophecy (Matthew 5:7-18; John 15:25). The New Testament writers considered Old Testament writers inspired (Acts 1:15-16; 4:25; 28:25-27; Galatians 3:16-19).

The writers of the New Testament also claimed inspiration for other New Testament writers. Jesus said the apostles would be guided by the Holy Spirit (John 14:25-26; 16:12-13; Hebrews 2:1-4). The clearest and perhaps most intriguing of all these statements is that made by Peter about the writings of Paul. "And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation--as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:15-16).

Scientific Foreknowledge Proves the Bible Is from God

However, such internal claims would be meaningless if they were not supported by evidence. In fact, such claims force us to test their validity. We can know the Bible is from God because of the scientific facts which were written in it long before man recognized them or knew about them. In Genesis 1:11-12, 21, 24-25, we find the expression "after his kind" in reference to the grasses, trees, fish, birds, cattle, and other beasts. These statements are made despite

today and thus there are no apostles today in the sense that this term is applied to "the twelve" (1 Cor 15:5) whose names are inscribed upon the twelve foundation stones of "the holy city". (Rev 21:14) Paul who was later called personally and directly to be an apostle of Christ speaks of himself as "one untimely born". (1 Cor 15:8) The apostolic office then was part of the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20) and that foundation was laid once for all. When James was put to death (Acts 12:2) no one succeeded him and no one succeeded any of the other apostles. The bottom line then is that as far as the church universal is concerned there is no provision in scripture for a permanent earthly headship, earthly hierarchy or earthly organization.

On the other hand it is equally clear that first century Christians did indeed engage in corporate activities in some kind of organizational structure, and that certain individuals did indeed exercise authority in certain matters with divine approval. For example Paul specifies the qualifications for a particular "office" within the church (1 Tim 1:1ff) and urges brethren to appreciate those who "have charge over...(them) in the Lord ". (1 Thess 5:12) We read too of regular assemblies, (Heb 10:25; 1 Cor 5:4) a widow's list, (1 Tim 5:9) co-ordinated charitable activities, (1 Cor 16:1, 2) special roles of service, (1 Tim 3:8ff) and the like, all of which tell us that some kind of organizational structure was in place. In order to learn more about this structure we need to look at what scripture has to say about the church at the local level.

Part 2 will be in the August issue of The Summit Chronicle

the fact that man, even hundreds of years later, believed in spontaneous generation. Only recently some doctors think they have found certain special elements in the blood of a boy baby eight days old which help to heal. Yet, Moses, thousands of years ago, wrote by inspiration that boy babies were to be circumcised the eighth day (Leviticus 12:3).

Long before modern medicine thought of putting people with highly contagious diseases in isolation, God's word, in Leviticus 13:45, instructed the children of Israel to do just that with lepers. "Now the leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!'" In George Washington's time, doctors believed "bleeding" a patient would rid the body of impurities. Now, doctors realize that the blood is the life of the body, just as Moses wrote in the long ago (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:11, 14).

Thompson and Jackson note that the Mississippi River dumps over 6 million gallons of water per second into the Gulf of Mexico (A Study Course In Christian Evidences, Montgomery: Apologetics Press, Inc., 1992). One might ask, "Where does it all go and why is the land not flooded?" The answer was revealed by God through Solomon. "All the rivers run into the sea, Yet the sea is not full; To the place from which the rivers come, There they return again" (Ecclesiastes 1:7). In 11:3a, he fleshes out the explanation by saying, "If the clouds are full of rain, They empty themselves upon the earth." Amos concurs with Solomon when he describes God by writing, "Who calls for the waters of the sea, And pours them out on the face of the earth--The Lord is

His name" (Amos 9:6b).

Specific Prophecies Fulfilled Prove the Bible Is from God

Specific prophecies about an event hundreds of years in the future could only come true if they were inspired of God. The Bible has many examples of such specific prophecy that was fulfilled. Just in the case of Christ, we find prophecies made from 400 to 700 years before the event which are true in details that could not have been guessed at. The place of His birth and fact that His mother would be a virgin are found in Micah 5:2 and Isaiah 7:14. Matthew tells us He was born of a virgin in Bethlehem (Matthew 1:20-2:1). His triumphant entry into Jerusalem is foretold in Zechariah 9:9 and fulfilled in Matthew 21:1-5.

Miracles Prove the Bible Is from God

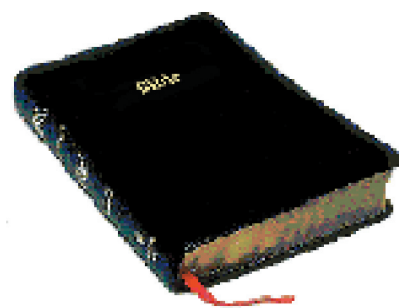
The miracles worked in the Bible prove the spokesmen who worked them were from God. God gave Moses certain miraculous signs to use in proving to the Israelites that he was from God (Exodus 4:1-5). The miracles worked in bringing the ten plagues upon the land of Egypt were done to prove there was one God in the world and He was with Moses and the people (Exodus 7:5, 17; 8:10, 22; 9:14, 29; 10:2; 11:7; 13:3; 14:14). Christ was raised from the dead to prove He was God's spokesman (Romans 1:4). That the apostles were speaking by God's direction is clear because of the signs they were able to work (Mark 16:14-20; Hebrews 2:3-4).

The Bible is also geographically correct. When it says someone, or group, went up, the reader can be sure they went from a lower

elevation to a higher elevation. For instance, in the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus said, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead" (Luke 10:30). A simple glance at a topographical map is very revealing. Jerusalem is in a mountainous area, with the Mt. of Olives being 2680 feet high. In contrast, Jericho is near the mouth to the Dead Sea. It is actually below sea level, at approximately -500 feet. So, one truly would go "down" from Jerusalem to Jericho!

Conclusion

Other areas of proof could be explored, such as: the historical accuracy of the Bible; the unity of 66 books written by about 40 writers, in different languages, over 1600 years; geographic accuracy; and the greatness of the message. However, I believe we can already see that the Bible claims to be "God-breathed" and there are undeniable proofs that it is.



*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet
and a light unto my path.
—Psalms 119:105*

*The grass withers, the flower
fades but the Word of our God
stands forever.
—Isaiah 40:8*

SINGING SILENCE IMPLICATION & THE INSTRUMENT

by Dave Bell



The challenge to singing has been brought up again and like all challenges must be looked at in the word for the truth on the matter. This time the challenge is couched in the form of a dilemma. Should we argue from specificity or silence? If from specificity then for one to use a guitar while singing is not breaking the command to sing at all. The (so-called) “law of silence” does not forbid or condone the guitar in question. This is *true*. The “law of silence” is I think a misnomer and an unfortunate one.

However, the dilemma is a false one for it involves a situation in which only two alternatives are offered in this case specificity or silence. It is clear that some things can be understood *without being spoken*.

Specificity simply means that which is *explicitly stated* and that what is being specified is distinctive and has specific unique qualities and attributes. Logically it is categorical, precise, unequivocal, and unambiguous.

Silence means speechless, quiet still, wordless. However, there is a synonym that is used in regard to silence and that term is *tacit*. This means that which is *implied or inferred from statements or actions that are not voiced*. Such statements are tacitly conceded though not specifically or explicitly written or stated rather they are determined from known facts.

This highlights the created *false dilemma* of specificity or silence

by giving us a third option that of *implication*. This means that from specificity (the explicit statement) we can infer the unspoken (the implicit statement).

Implicit teaching is such that if the explicit (specific) statement is true then the implicit (unspoken) statement *cannot be false*. Implication is concerned with argument, which in turn is concerned with validity/invalidity and soundness. All these are concerned with *truth*.

To say that something is authorised explicitly by the Bible is saying that it is taught by the words it uses, that is, the exact matter being considered.

If we state specifically that Bob is taller than Jim it teaches in those words that Bob is taller than Jim. However, if we then say that Bob is taller than Kevin and Kevin is taller than Nathan and Nathan is taller than Jack these three things are being taught:

- (1) Bob is taller than Kevin.
 - (2) Kevin is taller than Nathan.
 - (3) Nathan is taller than Jack.
- These are the specific or explicit statements. Notice, however, that *none* of these three propositions explicitly affirms or specifies that Bob is taller than Jack. However, the conjunction of the three propositions does *implicitly* (or silently unspoken) affirm that Bob is indeed taller than Jack. This is obviously and necessarily

true, though tacitly approved. So proposition

(4) Bob is taller than Jack is nowhere explicitly or specifically affirmed in the three preceding propositions it is in the fourth by implication.

We can know that proposition (4) is true just as surely as we know propositions (1) (2) and (3) are true *if we are willing to reason correctly*.

This same principle must be applied when studying the Bible. If this is not done it will be impossible to interpret the Bible accurately. If we say that silence can neither permit nor prohibit (and suppose we do) we cannot do the same with implication since by its very nature does permit or prohibit as long as we reason correctly and apply it to specificity.

This unmasks the false dichotomy of specificity or silence. These two things are used to try and close down any legitimate argument from implication. And that is the fallacy of the specificity/silence argument. It is restrictive and silence is ambiguous in this form.

The Bible teaches many things which it does not teach explicitly. For example it teaches the proposition that Joseph Smith was NOT a prophet of God but was a false prophet. We see here that Joseph Smith is NOT specified or made explicit the Bible is *silent* about him, but from other passages we can infer by implication that Joseph Smith was indeed a false prophet.

The Bible also teaches implicitly but not specifically that the church was established on the *first* Pentecost after Christ was risen from the dead. When you read (Acts 2:1) it simply says, "When the day of Pentecost had fully come." It is silent as to its number. It is also implicitly taught that the church can use individual cups to drink the wine of the Lord's supper.

It must be realised too that anything that is implicitly taught *can be bound on all people* not because we have inferred it but because God has implied it. Further we cannot say that the principles of logic are merely human doctrine which cannot therefore be bound, this is a false assumption.

Logic is a discipline and it deals with whether a given proposition allows us to infer or imply another proposition. Furthermore if we are to be rational we must draw only the conclusions that are warranted by the evidence and nothing more.

Implication means to say that the conjunction of propositions A and B imply proposition C. This is the same as saying that if propositions A and B are true then proposition C cannot be false. There must be a *relevant connection* between the evidence and the conclusion.

Many claim that only that which is *explicitly taught (i.e. specificity) can be bound on Christians*. This claim means that therefore *nothing* that is taught implicitly (i.e. unspoken or silent) can be bound on Christians. But implication by its nature is tacit since it opens up statements or actions that are *not voiced (i.e. silent in the explicit statement)*. Many statements of the Bible are implicit and they are binding.

A lot of disputes around this area are merely verbal they are also ones where neither disputant is denying what the other is saying. Why is this? Simply it is because they are using the *same terms in different senses* this renders the term ambiguous as with "silence" in this debate. This highlights for us the absolute necessity of defining crucial terms so that they are not open to ambiguity.

When dealing with propositions we define them as a statement which says that something is or is not the case. They may be categorical which asserts that something is or is not the case without stating any sort of conditions. They may be hypothetical, which says that if one thing is the case then another thing will be the case. They may be disjunctive, which says either one thing is the case or another thing is the case. Lastly they may be conjunctive, which says that both of two propositions or more are true.

When dealing with validity we are saying that to be valid the conclusion is implied in the premises. An argument, however, is sound when it is valid and *all the premises are true*. At this point we can introduce the law of excluded middle which when

applied to propositions says that *every precisely stated proposition is either true or false*. There is no halfway house or middle ground between being true or false. None of our conclusions in order to be true can go beyond the evidence.

So to reject implication is to reject rationality and as it applies to the Bible to reject it can cost you your soul. In (Luke 24:25-27) Jesus when he interpreted scripture for some men found that it was necessary for Him to do more than simply read it aloud to them. He showed them what the specific/explicit statements *implied*. He showed them how passages, which did not specify His name, did in fact refer to him. How could He do that? By showing what those scriptural passages implied. Thus He showed what we ought to infer in regard to the implications of the specific/explicit statements of the Old Testament.

We see then that the things taught implicitly (unspoken) are just as binding as that which is taught by specificity or explicitly (spoken).

The challenge given to me to list all the things "to sing" prohibits can be turned around to say, "You list all the things which God has bound directly and specifically on me by name or make a list of all the items that have been bound directly (without the use of any human reasoning or implication whatsoever). Every specific statement God gives or says contains *all that he says implicitly as well*.

Inference has two aspects it is both in the mind and in the facts. The inference in the facts is called implication. Implication is a metaphor from folding. The logical

inference is viewed as *enfolded* in the facts and *unfolded* by the mind.

Now we look at terms. Discourse begins when something is proposed, that is, set forth in terms *about something or someone*. A term in its *verbal aspect* is defined as a word or combination of words which can stand by itself as the subject or predicate of a proposition. A term in its *real aspect* is defined as whatever we can think of and speak of as the subject or predicate of a proposition. The context usually makes it clear which meaning is intended.

For example, when we speak of *concrete terms* as persons or things, we are thinking and speaking of *real terms*. **Terms then are the subject and predicate of a proposition.**

Intension and extension of terms
the intension of a term is its *connotation*. This is simply the *necessary qualities* that the term implies. The word necessary is very important since it limits the characteristics of the term to its *Practical and simple meaning*.

The extension of a term is its *denotation*. The extension of a term is vast. For example the extension of the term "rose" is smaller for not all flowers are roses. But the connotation of "rose" is greater than that of "flower" why? If there were not more necessary qualities in "rose" than in "flower" how could we separate one from the other?

A *singular term* is one that denotes a single object so long as it is used in exactly the same meaning. "St. Paul's cathedral" for example is a

singular term since it refers to a singular building. "Singular" in logic is not the same as "singular" in grammar. Thus "the seven dwarfs" though plural in grammar is a singular term in logic as it refers to a single group of definite persons.

A *general term* is one, which can be applied equally to any one of an indefinite number of objects, all of which resemble each other in certain qualities. "St. Paul's" becomes a general term since it can be applied to an indefinite number of churches dedicated to St. Paul.

A *collective term* is the name of a number of objects when all joined together in one whole. For example "the crew of a boat," "priesthood," "singers," "a jury." Note here, however, that these terms can be *both general and collective* according to the sense in which they are used. In the phrase "members of the jury, I ask you to consider this etc," a particular jury is being addressed therefore the term "jury" is singular.

A *positive term* expresses the possession of a certain quality or qualities such a term can be seen in the phrase "Bill (hard) man that he is." Here the quality of "hardness" is being applied to Bill.

A *privative term* denotes that the term has been deprived of certain qualities.

An *abstract term* is the name of a quality, attribute, or circumstance.

A *concrete term* is the name of a thing that is to say that we can touch or see a concrete term.

Finally there is an *absolute term*

and that is a term that can be thought of without reference to some other object for example "gas," "sky," "table," "dog," etc. Another aspect is the *relative term* one in which we cannot think of without reference to some other object. These last two terms can present a problem for the logic student because he or she almost always tries to *force their meaning*.

Therefore he or she will often argue, "But I can't think of gas without thinking of "smell," "gas meter," or "explosion," or some similar idea.

HOW DOES ALL THIS APPLY TO THE QUESTION OF SINGING?

In *Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16* we are told to speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs *singing* and making melody in your hearts to the lord. The Greek word used here is *αδοντες* (adontes) it is from *αδω* (ado) to sing with a grateful heart; it is always used in praise of God. In *Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16*, it is a verb that is used *Intransitively*.

In *Revelation 5:9, 14:3, and 15:3*, it is used *transitively*. An intransitive verb denotes an action, which *does not* affect or pass over to any person or thing **besides the subject of the verb**. Whereas a transitive verb denotes an action which *necessarily affects or passes over to some person or thing other than the subject of the verb*. An example of this is "I throw" or "I take." These statements are not complete since we immediately ask, "What do you throw or take?" Then the name of the person or thing must be supplied to complete the sentence e.g. "I throw a ball." So then we glean from all of

this that in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, that the command of the verb is *"to sing."* The subject of the verb is *"the church."* Therefore the church is commanded to sing and only to sing, that is A Cappella.

Does this or can this include instruments of music which if used would not break that command? *In no way does it do this!* Why? Is it the so-called "law of silence" that forbids it? *No it is not, what forbids an instrument is the IMPLICATION OF THE PROPOSITION.*

We are to sing and only sing. How do we know this? The command is specific or explicit and from that command we can infer or imply **only one action from it and that is to sing.** Further as we have seen the verb is intransitive and as we have said that action of singing *does not* affect or pass over to anyone except the subject of the verb. Who is the subject of the verb? It is the church and only the church.

This makes it unique since God wants the church to sing to him A Capella only. This is true not because we infer it but because God has implied it in his specific statement. He has specifically said to "sing" and He added nothing more. Thus to sing with instruments goes beyond the warrant of scripture we will have added to what God has implied and that quite simply is presumptuous sin.

As for singing with the aid of hymnbooks this *does not violate the command to sing A Capella whereas the instrument does.* We also need to be careful about

throwing a lot of questions about things like hymnbooks, PowerPoint, and suchlike since they do not violate the act of singing A Capella and it involves the fallacy of "many questions."

TO SUMMARISE

(1) The argument specificity or "law of silence" is a false dilemma since it offers only two solutions when there are in fact more viz. implication.

(2) We can only imply what the specific proposition addresses (singing)

(3) From this the Holy Spirit implies that singing is all that He wants. This we call A Capella singing.

(4) We have no scriptural warrant to go beyond the explicit statement and what that statement implies (that is its unspoken implication).

(5) It is obvious that the apostles and the early church completely understood the implication of the command since they sung A Cappella in obedience to it.

(6) The adding of a hymnbook does not violate the implication since it does not stop us singing A Capella while adding an instrument clearly violates the A Cappella implication. It is also adding to God's word implied in that command.

(7) We understand the implications of other teachings so why in this instance do we throw out reason? The answer I suggest is that we want our own way in

the matter. God indeed has spoken; therefore He was not silent on this matter at all. God said, "sing A Cappella" having said this He added no more.

Therefore the only implication we can rationally draw from that explicit command is that we simply sing A Cappella only in the church which is the subject of that command. To do anything else is to disobey God's implied command and that will cost you your soul.

Isn't it interesting how the church is so full of colorful personalities?

IMAGINE HOW BORING IT WOULD BE IF WE WERE ALL THE SAME!

but thanks to the wisdom of God, we are all different in so many ways

we all have to give to each other's weaknesses and draw from each other's strengths

there is no right or wrong personality because God made them all

so we could help each other get to heaven!

YOU DON'T REALLY BELIEVE IN HEAVEN OR HELL DO YOU?

by Demar Elam



If you ask the average Christian, "Do you believe in heaven and in hell?" they would most likely answer, "Why of course I believe in heaven and in hell!" However, to say you believe in heaven and hell is one thing and to live in a manner that proves you believe in them is another. I heard an illustration used in a sermon concerning a preacher and his infidel friend who met on the street and began talking. This illustration had a profound effect on my thinking and opened my mind to the possibility that many are saying they believe in heaven and hell but in reality they do not.

The illustration was about a preacher and his infidel friend who met on the street and recognized each other from college days. They had been good friends during those years in school but had not seen each other since leaving school. Going into a café they ordered coffee and began to renew their friendship and reminisce. They talked about almost everything they had experienced together in the past. As they were about to go their separate ways the infidel said to the preacher, "You don't really believe in heaven or hell do you?" The preacher was taken back at the suggestion of such a thought. "Of course I believe in heaven and hell," replied the preacher. His friend said, "Then I must call you a liar because if you really believed in those two places you would have talked to me about my soul. According to the Bible I am lost and headed to hell and yet you talked about everything in the world with me but what should have really

mattered."

It is shocking to think that we might be confessing one thing with our tongue and in reality living out something entirely different in our daily lives. Christians need to search their hearts regarding the answer to this question. If we really believe that there is a lake that burns with fire and brimstone, a place, "where their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched" (Mk. 9:44) then, of necessity, we will speak to everyone we can in order to warn them of pending destruction. Do we really believe that, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psalms 9: 17)?

Do we really believe the words found in Revelation 21:8, "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, and sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death"? Do you personally believe there is going to be a second death? Do you really believe this?

Do you believe it so strongly that you must act upon your belief and warn people of this second death that awaits them because of their sinful lives and their failure to accept the gift of God's love, Jesus Christ, into their lives? Saying we believe in hell is one thing and living in a practical manner that demonstrates we believe there is a hell is another matter. Hell is a place of insatiable tormenting appetite and desire. In Luke 16:

22-25 we read, "So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. Here was a man crying for a drink of water, but there was no water to quench his starving thirst.

Think about this and realize that if Christians really believe this is true why do they do so little about warning lost souls about it? Hell is a place of unutterable and everlasting shame and contempt. The great prophet Daniel penned these words, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2). How strongly do professing Christians believe in the resurrection of the dead and in the everlasting life and the everlasting contempt that is to follow that resurrection? The extent of that belief is what compels us to go or not to go and evangelize.

In hell there is utter darkness and banishment from heaven, from God, from Christ, from the Holy Spirit, where all is light to an extreme

and eternal darkness. Matthew 25:30 teaches that the wicked and unprofitable servant will be cast into hell. Matthew writes, "And cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." So, in hell there is weeping, an expression of wailing, anguish and great sorrow. In hell there is gnashing of teeth, an expression of great rage and indignation (Matthew 25:30).

The question is how strongly do Christians believe this? The extent of our actions will give us the answer. The Bible speaks of this place called heaven, the home of the soul, in beautiful and sublime language. How strongly do we believe in this place? Evidently some don't think highly enough of heaven to recommend it to others with urgency. Yes, there are those who will occasionally mention heaven in a passing fashion but where are the Christians today who believe in heaven so strongly they are driven to tell as many people as possible about this place? Why aren't more Christians covering land and sea to share the wonderful news of heaven, the habitation of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and all the redeemed of the ages?

Jesus said in John 14:1-3, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." Can Christians today envision that place and those mansions? Do they believe this text so strongly that they are compelled to tell others about it? Has belief in their lives become so complete and full that they are driven to share the concept with the lost all around them? Heaven

is a place just as earth is a place. Isaiah the prophet of old wrote, "Thus says the Lord: 'Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool... (Isaiah 66:1). Heaven is spoken of as being so much better than anything we have ever known on this earth (Hebrews 10:34). Do we believe this with such intensity of heart that we cannot hold the news of it back but must share it with as many others as we can? The Hebrew writer spoke of heaven as a place of rest in Hebrews 4:9. He urges us to give diligence to enter into that rest (Hebrews 4:11) and not to fall short of it (Hebrews 4:1).

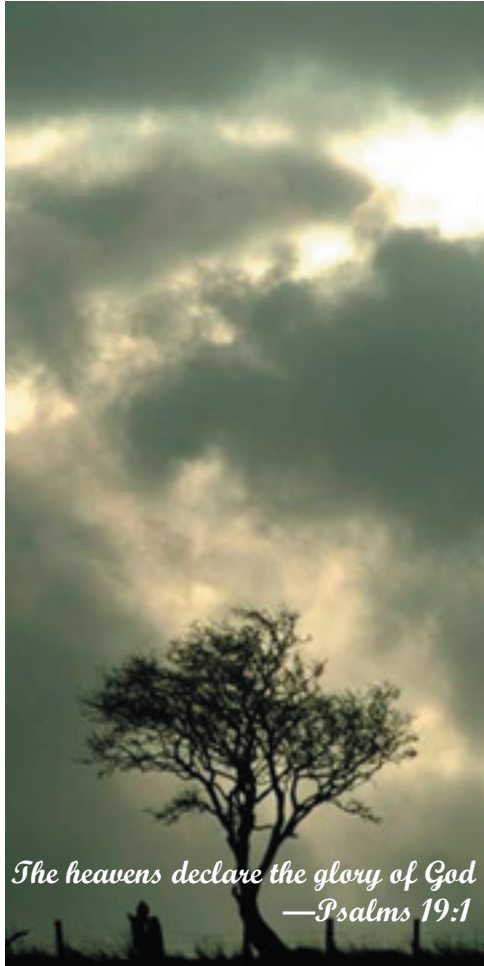
Heaven is spoken of as being a place where the faithful children of God will finally be delivered from the sorrows, tribulations, and the heartaches, pains and death faced in this life. According to the John, the beloved disciple, heaven is a place where, "... God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Does that not excite your heart? Do you believe it? How strongly do you believe?

Remember what the infidel said to the preacher, "If you really believed in heaven and in hell you would have talked to me about my soul." Often we hear people say, "Well, why are we here? What is life all about? What is my purpose for being here?" A casual reader of the Bible knows that God's Word teaches that this life is preparatory for life beyond this present existence. Heaven and Hell are real. Judgment is sure and certain.

God's gift of love is extended to all people through Christ. God's love for His creation has been shed abroad through Jesus who saves people from the impending doom

that awaits all who refuse to accept Him through obedience and service. If we believe in the resurrection, in hell, and in heaven then we will talk to people about their relationship with Christ. Remember that mental belief of the existence of heaven and hell causes us to share our faith with others but it is the extent and depth of our belief in heaven and hell that compels us to speak to others about their existence.

Dr. Demar Elam
*Director Open Door Ministry
Southern Christian University
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Theological College*



*The heavens declare the glory of God
—Psalms 19:1*



Visit New Plymouth, NZ

STOP STRANGLING YOURSELF

by John W. Moore

Living in this world will often bring hardships and difficulties. The pressures of life can sometimes seem insurmountable and cause one to be in a troubled state of mind. Problems in the workplace, problems in the home, problems in the church, and problems at school can weigh heavily on the mind. Questions of “How will I be able to do this or that?” or “What will happen if I do or don’t do this or that?” can distress and vex the soul. Choices to make, people to deal with, bills to pay, health to sustain, children and grandchildren to raise, relationships to maintain, and things to settle, repair, or do can cause distress and anxiety.

Generally speaking, these emotions can be summarized by one word — worry. The word “worry” is derived from an old English term, which has reference to being choked or strangled. For many this accurately describes the emotionality which accompanies stress. When problems are severe, some experience a literal feeling of strangulation and will have difficulty breathing. It is the feeling of being trapped and cornered without a visible means of escape. Worry plagues the world and can rob you of valuable energy and time. It can prevent you from forging ahead or being effective.

It can cloud your thinking and harm your physical and mental health. In the church, there are far too many who are strangling themselves with the cares of the world. Worry has dominated their lives and kept them from maintaining a proper emotional balance. But it does not have to be

this way, because God has provided a relief mechanism and strategy for dealing with worry. A part of the strategy is found in Philippians 4: 6-10, where Paul commands the brethren to be anxious in nothing. Following this dictate, he gives at least three practical approaches to overcoming worry.

First, Paul emphasizes that we pray right (v. 6). There is peace in praying, for it causes us to reflect upon the spiritual and rely upon God. In prayer, we can cast our cares upon God, knowing that He cares for us (I Pet. 5:7). By making our requests known unto God, we can obtain a peace that passeth all understanding (Phil. 4:7); we can have confidence, knowing that He rules the world and will provide what we need. The prayer of the righteous “availeth much” (Jas. 5: 16) and the Lord heareth their cries (Psa. 34:15).

Second, in eliminating worry, we must think right. Thinking on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy will rid us of the negatives that are a detriment to our soul. There is power in positive thinking, for as a man thinketh in his heart, so he will become (Prov. 23:7). Far too many of our worries are the result of faulty thinking. Some worry about the past, which cannot be changed. Some worry about things over which we have no control; some about things that will never happen. But mostly, we worry because we have failed to keep things in perspective. We forget about what is really important and find ourselves dwelling on the

small things that are here today but gone tomorrow. Generally, we are about as happy as we make up our minds to be. Did Paul worry about being in prison when he wrote the Philippian letter? NO! He used his imprisonment for the good of the kingdom by converting others to Christ (1:12-13). He made up his mind to be content in whatever state he found himself (4:11). He would rejoice (4:10) because he controlled his thoughts instead of allowing circumstances to control him.

Third, worry can be conquered when we live right. Paul said, the “things which ye have both learned and received and heard...do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” (Phil. 4:9) Peace comes when one lives according to God’s will. Not only will God be on our side, but we will eliminate the ramifications and consequences of sinful behavior. The sluggard worries about his next meal. The thief worries about prison. The fornicator worries about sexually transmitted diseases, etc. All sinners worry about death and hell. When the child of God lives right, all things will work together for good (Rom. 8:28). God’s Word will direct our steps, and we will learn to focus our hearts and minds on what is really important.

Praying, thinking, and living right will enable us to eliminate worry and possess peace. God’s methods for dealing with the mental battles of life are effective and fool-proof. His Word will produce mental stability and spiritual soundness. It will keep us from strangling ourselves with the cares of this world.