

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

June, 2003

"I Will Deliver Thee and Thou Shalt Glorify Me"

--Psalm 50:15

When I am afraid, I will trust in you.
In God . . . I trust; I will not be afraid.
What can mortal man do to me?

--Psalm 56:3-4

I sought the LORD, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears....
This poor man called, and the LORD heard him;
he saved him out of all his troubles.
Taste and see that the LORD is good;
blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.
A righteous man may have many troubles,
but the LORD delivers him from them all.

--Psalm 34:4, 6, 8, 19

**The testimony of a preacher
who sometimes wished he were dead!**

56th Annual Kentucky / Indiana Christian Fellowship

August 4-7, 2003

Day Sessions: Portland Ave. Church of Christ, Louisville

Night Sessions: Sellersburg, Ind. Church of Christ

THEME: The NAME (Acts 4:12)

Monday Evening, August 4

7:30 **IMPORTANCE of the NAME** Sonny Childs

>< PRAYER Time, Tues. - Thur. 9:00 - 9:20

Tuesday, August 5: The MEANING of the NAME

9:20	He is Jesus	Harry Coultas
10:20	He is Christ	Jerry Carmichael
11:20	Exposition of Acts 2:22-36	Robert Garrett
1:15	He is Lord	Randy Coultas
7:30	He is the Word	Bud Ridgeway

Wednesday, August 6: FOLLOWERS of the NAME

9:20	I am the Way	Bennie Hill
10:20	I am the Truth	David Johnson
11:20	Exposition of Acts 2:37-47	Robert Garrett
1:15	I am the Life	Elmer Pacheco
7:30	Call His Name Immanuel	Don McGee

Thursday, August 7: DEFENDERS of the NAME

9:20	Always Ready	Paul Denny
10:20	Free in Christ	Elmer Wheatley
11:20	Exposition of Acts 4:8-22	Robert Garrett
1:15	Prepared to Suffer	Richard Lewis
7:30	I AM	Paul Estes

Daily Lunch: 12:00

Nightly Youth Activities after the regular meeting.

There will be a Missionary Offering Wed. Night.

Dinners at Sellersburg: Tues. (SBS), Thur. (Goin' Fishing) plus
Goin' Fishing Breakfast & Missions Conf. Fri. 8:30 - noon.

For Housing: Bud Ridgeway 502:477-8255;

Clint Dorman 812:246-2600

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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In This Issue

"I will Deliver Thee and Thou Shalt Glorify Me" -- C. V. Wilson .	162
Ready or Not -- Gordon R. Linscott	169
Where Are You Throwing Your Seeds -- Mike Baker.	171
10 Exciting Developments in Missions-- Chris De Welt	175
Report on Trip to Greece -- Bennie Hill	178
Voices From The Fields.	180
Seniors Make a Vital Contribution -- Martha Van Cise	182
Six Nations Where Persecution Rages the Strongest Today	184
Your Hometown -- David Smith	186
Rethinking Harry Potter -- James Girdley	189
Modest Clothing -- Edward Fudge	190
News and Notes -- Bennie Hill	191

“I Will Deliver Thee and Thou Shalt Glorify Me”

Carl Vogt Wilson’s Sermon Testifying to God’s Deliverance in a Time of Great Need

[Introduction by the editor: The following article was a sermon delivered in 1957 by my father. He had become pulpit-minister at Portland Ave. Church of Christ in Louisville just 6 months earlier. It had been a giant surprise to him that the church and the Lord called him to that position. Though he had been an elder there for about 11 years, and Sunday school superintendent, and had preached occasionally, he never dreamed he would become a fulltime preacher. Nor did he feel in the least adequate to follow R. H. Boll, who had ministered there with great distinction for over 50 years!

This sermon recounts his trials -- and the Lord’s upholding -- during that first half-year. We found his notes for this message while going through his files some years ago. Due to its many personal and family references we felt reluctant to print it. But coming across it again recently, it seems right -- especially during this year of anniversaries -- to share its lessons and testimony to our Heavenly Father’s counsel and comfort.

Dad’s preaching ministry there went on till 1980. He fell asleep in Christ in 1994.]

Did you ever wish you were **dead**? Were you ever in an intolerable situation where you felt you just **couldn’t** go on? I’ve had that experience in the six months since I took over the ministry here at Portland Church. The first half-year was a much harder period than may have appeared on the surface. Paradoxically it was also a period of great blessing. As I give you a word of personal testimony I want to share with you how marvelously God has worked in my life since February. My aim is to praise Him for His marvelous blessings and tell you with joy that "there is no God like our God, who alone doeth great and mighty works!" I pray that everything will be to His glory, for my own part was insignificant, indeed inglorious!

I feel emboldened to tell this because it is Scriptural. The Psalmist said, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so," and also "Jehovah hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." It was not uncommon for those the Lord healed to tell it abroad. So I would like to relate WHERE God brought me, WHY God allowed this to befall me, HOW God rescued me, and WHAT God taught me.

WHERE GOD BROUGHT ME

I came directly to Portland's pulpit in February, after my hardest month at Peaslee Gaulbert: a buying trip, annual inventory, compiling the price list for the whole furniture department, and grooming my successor there. (Peaslee Gaulbert was the company where Dad worked for over 20 years; he was manager of its furniture department. -AVW) I see now it would have been wise to take a break in between, but I didn't. I had not realized to what a great extent my new job would differ from my old. As a businessman I interacted with numerous people daily, made many decisions, was constantly on the go, and had a staff of assistants at my beck and call (secretary, dept. assistant, and salesmen). In my new job I spent long hours alone every day, studying and meditating in quietness. Preparing sermons on a regular basis was worlds away from running a furniture department and also from preparing and delivering sermons or talks a few times a year, which I had done.

Because of my "greenness" as a regular preacher, I had to set up a heavy schedule for myself. It involved straight bookwork for 8-10 hours daily - as though I were trying to catch up with Brother Boll! Soon I was on the front edge of a nervous breakdown.

After several weeks, I was in a nervous state indeed! A feeling of depression gradually crept over me. I lost all the feeling of joy I formerly had in the Lord's service. I was constantly laboring under a nameless, awful fear. My hands shook as I wrote or turned pages. I wanted to die! I was running away from something - my new responsibility. I was afraid I was losing my mind! If I failed, I would be letting God down in His work! I feared to go on living this way. There were times when the thought came, "How many sleeping tablets would it take to end it all?" Immediately I would reproach myself with, "Fool! You can't run away from God!"

Sermon preparation normally required 12-15 hours per sermon. It became wearisome! I looked ahead to two sermons a week ... 8 or 10 per month ... 104 per year! That seemed like a great mountain looming overhead, about to fall on me and crush me. The Lord let me be stricken afresh with three old war pains (in my back, shoulder, and knee) because of my nervous tension. As a result I became well acquainted with the "terror by night." Many nights I got only two or three hours of sleep. Three nights I went without any sleep. At least one of those was a Saturday night; before preaching the next morning I slipped out to the water fountain and doused my face with cold water to arouse and stimulate me in my exhaustion.

All this time special prayer was going up on my behalf - by Brethren Chambers, Phil Bornwasser, the elders, Sister Tillie Frazee and other ladies in their prayer meeting. (Yet I was afraid my condi-

tion would bring reproach to the name of the Lord, so we tried to keep it from people in general.) And of course Alexina and I were constantly in desperate prayer.

WHY GOD ALLOWED THIS TO BEFALL ME

You may inquire, as I often did, “*Why*, God?” Man has the tendency to question the motives of his Creator rather than accept conditions quietly as from a loving heavenly Father. Job certainly did this at first, but later could say, “Shall I receive good from the Lord and not also evil?” The timing of all this had me worried, especially when I started with such high hopes.

As I look back now, I am convinced that God had a very definite purpose. “The God of all comfort ... comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (2 Cor.1:4). He was preparing me, by mental and physical suffering, to be able to sympathize with others similarly afflicted, and understand and help them in the future. At the same time, several mature Christians whom I consulted said, “Satan is the root of the trouble!” Certainly it is his way to try to fill God’s children with doubts and fears and to oppress those who start working harder for the Lord.

All this time God knew what He was doing. He had a plan for my life (as for yours) and in His time He was working out the details. Little by little He was leading me from the pit of despond to a greater trust in Him and usefulness to Him.

The Turning Point was a rainy, gloomy Monday long to be remembered. Being “blue Monday” was bad enough. In addition, we both had colds and had to stay in. It was raining, too. My faithful wife was distressed over her husband who was worried about himself. It had all the makings of a really dark day! I thought it would lead to another sleepless night. But I had reckoned without God, who is able to save to the uttermost.

As usual we started with prayer for certain definite needs. Then we decided to read the Bible, meditating on what the Lord said to us through His Word. We began with Philipians – reading aloud, discussing each chapter and the key verses, and applying the message of this book to our own needs that very day! We squeezed out every drop of comfort and consolation we could find. Then we had another session of prayer, interceding for others too. This was followed by reading through another short epistle.

After awhile the “clouds” lightened and blessing broke through! We cried to the Lord, literally. At that time I was finally able to pray meaningfully, “Lord, take me, break me, make me after Thy will.” The hardest part was to say, “**Break** me,” to ask God to help me get

to the point where "no longer did I live, but Christ lived in me." I wanted to die to self, to be willing to give up ALL for Him - my wife, my loved ones, my savings, my college record, business record, home - everything I took pride in! I was willing to give it all up if He would take and use me in His service as a blessing to others. It took me 53 years to let God get me to this point.

HOW GOD RESCUED ME

It wasn't long afterward that Brother Chambers said, "You've cried long enough to the Lord! It's time to be up and doing for Him, counting on Him to supply your needs." But he suggested that first we take a little vacation, reminding us of Jesus' words, "Come ye apart and rest for awhile."

This same need -- to get away from it all, temporarily -- was also suggested by another friend. It happened this way; One Saturday night I was sleepless and tossing. I finally awoke Alexina, saying, "Let's pray." We asked God to direct us to some able spiritual counselor. William Rinne came to my mind, so I told Mom, "William is a Christian psychologist. Let's drive to Bloomington Monday and talk with him." She agreed. But the Lord saved us a trip, for at church the next morning, I walked William! We took a long walk that afternoon, and discussed everything "from A to Z." He advised me to ease up on my study schedule, and preach only one sermon weekly, and to do visitation - so I'd get my mind off myself and on others instead; also to take a vacation soon. All that was sound advice, and when I told the elders about it, they agreed to the suggestions.

About that time Alex arrived home for spring break from Wheaton. I secured much help from our prayer sessions together. How thankful I was that he was at Wheaton, not Princeton, and that he'd finished high school at Portland Christian, not Atherton! In prayer he gained deep spiritual insight. For instance, he asked me, "Since it is the Lord's will that you preach, are you willing to get in the pulpit and shake for Him, if necessary?" I had to think about that, but was able to answer, "Yes." Alex also remembered that Charles Spurgeon the great preacher suffered spells of deep depression at times. We got out our copy of Spurgeon's biography and read together the chapter about his bouts of despair. It consoled me to realize such an outstanding Christian had suffered from weaknesses very similar to mine.

Brother Frank Mullins was holding meetings at Buechel about this time. We had a long discussion and prayer. He, having left business for the ministry himself, was able to understand the situation I found myself in. This consecrated man was a wonderful encouragement to me. He told me stories of the Lord's marvelous working in his life. He showed me the Lord would use me if I trusted HIM completely: "Realize C.V. can't do anything of his own ability. Just preach the sermons the Lord gives you, whether they're simple or not. Give the

congregation God's Word and you yourself will grow as the Lord enables you." This admonition helped me, for I saw that self and pride were the basis of my fear. After Brother Boll's masterful sermons the church would find me dreadfully disappointing.

Soon afterward we went to Wheaton for a "breather." Alex was back in classes there by this time, and Frances Lee and Dick were there too – Dick being a faculty member in the Bible department. It was wonderful "medicine" to have this time of spiritual fellowship with our daughter and son-in-love. Alexina, Frances Lee and I had several protracted periods of prayer and discussion. They read article after article in Christian magazines, and when they found something helpful they would share it with me for encouragement. God has been so good to give me such a family without whose prayerful support I would never have pulled through.

While there I asked Dr. Raymond Edman, president of Wheaton College, for an interview. I had known him for some years – he was an outstanding Cn. scholar and practical, consecrated Cn. Educator. He invited me to his office after chapel. After I told him my story he immediately stated his belief that Satan was behind the whole "illness" and only the Great Physician could give a lasting cure. Then he gave an illustration which didn't impress me too much at that moment – it was so simple! – but became more and more precious as time passed:

He said, "You see this airmail letter in my hand. It is very important, related to urgent financial matters. It is imperative that it reach the hands of a friend by the day after tomorrow. In a while, as I go home for lunch, I must **commit** this letter to a mailbox ... and the U.S. postal system. I will not just stand there and hold on to the envelope due to its importance – refusing to drop it in the box, **trusting** the government to deliver it on time. Uncle Sam promised to deliver if I commit. That's what YOU must do: **Commit** your life and way to the Lord and then sit back and **trust** Him, being confident that He is able to take care of you. He has promised: Psalm 37:5." With passing days I came more and more to appreciate what he said.

I found that whenever a "black spell" would overcloud me, the Lord would give relief if I'd address Him thus: "Lord, there's fear in my heart because I'm doubting Thy love. This unbelief is sin. I confess this sin and claim Thy promise and forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ. I not only **want** to commit this to Thee, I **am** committing it to Thee **right now!** It's no longer mine, I'm casting it on Thee as directed, 'Cast thy burden on the Lord and He will sustain thee' (Psa.55:22). If this promise is not good, then none of Thy promises are good! I've committed the burden to Thee -- it's no longer mine, but Thine." Every time I thus commit/trust, I rise from my knees light-

hearted, possessing God's peace! He never fails His own; He delights to make good His promises.

Another source of blessing was a book, "Mountain Singing," given me by Sister Allen. It tells the story of Joy Ridderhof, pioneer missionary and founder of Gospel Recordings, and her co-workers. They learned, whenever they got depressed due to problems, to **thank and praise God anyhow!** Satan and his fears cannot find lodging in a heart that is thanking and praising the Lord. Try it yourself! When the blues arrive, start praising Him and giving thanks for what He has already done and what He has promised to do too.

My chief helper was my loyal and devoted Alexina. She was available for prayer, Bible reading or consultation any time of the day or night! She was exactly what God had in mind for a wife: a helpmeet, or "helper suited to me." One way that she aided me was most unusual: She searched the Bible for God's great and precious promises and encouragements, then wrote them down on 3x5 cards. These I carried with me, in my pocket, at all times. Whenever depression started to come on at night, I would feast my soul on verses like Psa.56:3-4; Psa.50:15; 2 Cor.12:9-10; Psa.34:4, 6-8, 19, 22; and others. One reason I had not received blessing from these verses before, according to Heb.4:2, was that I didn't have the word of hearing united with **faith**. Before God's Word can really bless you, you must both hear it and by faith totally hold on to the promises.

Speaking of faith, I learned to step out on God's promises, to expect Him to fulfill them even if it seemed impossible by human standards. One day Sue Ann Herdt [*now Browning*] gave me an envelope. It was an invitation for me to give the Baccalaureate address 3-4 weeks from then. (Remember how very difficult I was finding sermon preparation to be.) I groaned, thinking "I'll never be well enough prepared by then for a special occasion like that." I mentally decided to decline due to my ill health (my nervousness). But when I went to bed I discussed it with the Lord. He made me understand that if I had faith enough to accept the invitation, He could and would make me well enough to deliver the address for His name's glory and honor. We prayed much about it while at Wheaton. At length I stepped out, like Peter on the water, and accepted the invitation - though with fear and trepidation. Many of you remember how God honored His promise and blessed the message that night. I confess that afterward I cried like a baby to think that through unbelief I might have missed that wonderful opportunity! [*All or nearly all the seniors, and others too, made public responses of dedication that night.*]

WHAT GOD TAUGHT ME

"Jehovah hath done great things for me, whereof I am glad." I am here to testify to you today that I now have joy in the Lord's work which I didn't have at first - though I expected to. My Heavenly Fa-

ther has given me peace. He made sermon preparation easier, which gives me more time for visitation as well as study. I have put away all medications, and am getting blessed sleep without it. I am truly thankful for His deliverance, **but also for lessons He taught me by means of my time of affliction.**

What are some of these lessons?

1. **“It is good to be afflicted by the Lord.”** God has chastening for all He loves, and we must learn to accept it thankfully from Him. We should thank Him during our sorrows, even through tears, for “tribulation produces steadfastness.” If you are in a period of despair, start praising Him for the blessing He can give you through this trial.

2. **Live one day at a time.** God gave enough manna for each day but no more than that. He promises, “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” Are you worrying about what tomorrow may bring? God will order the future as He knows best. Live for Christ today; He’ll take care of your tomorrow.

3. **Because we belong to the Lord, the forces of Satan will fight against us.** Don’t be surprised by this; be prepared for such opposition. But what a wonderful promise God has given us in Jer.1:19, “They fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you, declares the Lord.” Are you fearful and anxious? Realize that Christ in you is greater than he that is in the world.

4. **Prayer and Bible reading are essentials for having the peace of God.** Man’s words are good – I’ve read millions of them by good Christian writers. But there is nothing like sessions of prayer and reading God’s word to ease inner conflicts. Read it first, then listen, and pray. In this way He gives peace.

5. **Learn to “Commit your way to Jehovah; Trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass.”** He is ready, willing and able to work for you in ways that are better than your way.

6. A Christian lady asked Alex one day, “How is your Dad doing?” Alex said, “The Lord is helping him.” Her reply to that was, “He doesn’t need much help.” When I heard that it depressed me exceedingly! **Don’t ever think that I or other church leaders “don’t need much help” from the Lord.** I need continuing prayers.

I conclude with the songwriter’s words, “It’s no secret what God can do; what He’s done for others He’ll do for you.”

Reprint from a former editor

Ready Or Not

Gordon R. Linscott

Some years ago I canvassed approximately 100 church members in good standing with a church of Christ asking them two questions. My first Question was "Do you have hope of eternal life?"

Except for one, all answered in the affirmative--although some seemed a little uncertain. The one who said, "No," also added, "I don't hope for eternal life, because I have eternal life right now." And he was able to cite the appropriate scriptures.

The second questions was, "Upon what do you base your hope?" Less than ten people related their "hope" to "Jesus Christ our hope" (1 Tim. 1:1). Even of those who reported that they were trusting in the Lord Jesus, there were some who weren't too sure that they had the right answer. Very few knew the Way and knew that they knew Him. Most were hoping ("wishing" would be more accurate) on the basis of church membership, good works, "doing the best they could," etc. And yet that congregation had not lacked in good sound Bible teaching. How could there be such abysmal ignorance of the most fundamental fact of the gospel?

"BE READY ALWAYS"

The command of the Lord, through Peter, is "Be ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15). Why are we so unready? This is a question that has deeply disturbed me. Inquiring of brethren in various congregations around, I find the condition to be general. When, in a Sunday school class or other small informal meeting, there is call for Christians to give a testimony of the Lord, the response is almost nil. When Christians will not speak of their faith to each other, certainly they are not likely "to give answer to every man that asketh" in the course of their daily lives.

THE MISSING KEY

In the book of Acts (8:4) we read that "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." We know the results. And we know that these "preachers" were not specially trained, nor professionally schooled. They were ordinary people who were willing to tell what Jesus Christ meant to them. Personal witness was the key to the spread of the gospel in the first century. Even the apostles were primarily witnesses--not preachers or teachers or theologians (Acts 1:8). More than once we have record of Paul's giving testimony to his own experience of conversion.

There can be no doubt about the effectiveness of the personal testimony. Thousands of dollars are paid to put on your television screen a picture of some unidentified housewife--an expert in nothing--who says, "Fab really did give me a whiter wash." Result? The cost is soon repaid by housewives who rush out to try it for themselves. The personal testimonial cannot be refuted. When you argue about doctrine with a person, even if you win the argument, you lose the man. When you say, "Jesus Christ changed my life," he has no answer.

Today there are in use a multitude of schemes for reaching the community with the gospel. They are effective to a small degree, but usually it is a tiny fraction of any congregation that gets involved. I believe that the key to community outreach is the personal witness of every believer, in his usual, everyday situation. This key is missing. Christians are not ready to speak for their Lord when the opportunity presents itself.

HOW TO GET READY

In less than two minutes you can read aloud Paul's personal testimony before Agrippa (Acts 26). With just a little effort, you can compose your own testimony following Paul's pattern. The essentials may be summed up in three words: Before, During, and After. What were you before you met the Lord? This is the starting point. Whether you were pious or a profligate, you were lost, dead in trespasses and sins. "For there is no difference, for all have sinned. .." It is not necessary to relate the gory details of your behavior, but you certainly should be clear on the hopelessness of your condition without Christ.

Secondly, answer the question, "What happened to you?" We have all been saved by the same wonderful Savior, but He didn't deal with any two of us in exactly the same way. What circumstances did He use to bring you to Himself? This in itself is thrilling--how He knew to apply just the right kind of pressure at the right time. A word of caution here: Be on your guard against taking part of the credit for yourself. "Salvation belongeth to Jehovah." "Let Him that glorieth glory in the Lord."

Now to the "after" part. What difference is there between what you are now and what you were? Do you see tangible evidence of being a new creature? Have the old things really passed away from your life and all things become new? Then tell it! (If your life hasn't changed, then you haven't really met the Lord. When He takes over, He changes you.)

If you are to go all the way with Paul, one thing more should be added: The offer. Ask the Lord for boldness to add, "I wish you could experience for yourself the wonderful things that the Lord Jesus has done for me. And He will, if you just ask Him to." Of course, you don't need to use these words--Paul didn't (Acts 26:29).

It might be helpful to you to write out your testimony so you can go over it and make it more presentable to your friends. In any case, do take time to think it through in your own mind. Pretend that you are telling it to a friend, and consider what should be left out or included. Try to think of appropriate verses of scripture that you might use to "back up" your own experience. Be careful that what you say does conform to the truth of God's word. A good way to begin is to practice on a Christian friend. You'll be surprised what a blessing it will be to him (or her) to hear of the Lord's dealings with you--even though you may feel that it was poorly told. And you'll be even more surprised at what a blessing it is to you when you struggle through the first few attempts to tell it to an unbeliever. "It is more blessed to give than to receive," said the Lord Jesus. If you receive a blessing in receiving the Word from the pulpit, you'll be blessed a thousand times more by sharing it with someone else. Try it and see.

Where Are You Throwing Your Seeds?

by Mike Baker

So much has been written about evangelism over the years. If we've heard the Great Commission once, we've heard it a thousand times. Preachers often remind us that Jesus wants us to "go into all the world and make disciples." Many of us, driven by guilt, move clumsily into this endeavor with absolutely no idea how to share our faith.

We sign up "for share your faith" classes, read books on evangelism, and are involved in our church "calling" program; but mostly we are frustrated, scared, embarrassed, and have nothing to show for our efforts. Maybe it's because we've gotten this whole evangelism thing wrong. Maybe an examination of the conversion experiences of the early church could shed some light on this idea of sharing our faith.

In the book of Acts, there are thousands of people who come to the Lord. But there, preserved for us in detail, are three conversion stories that may be helpful in teaching us how to tell others the good news. Jesus taught clearly in Luke 8 that there are definitely better places to throw the seed of the gospel than others. I believe that one of the most important details of evangelism is to locate fertile soil for the truth.

By and large, well-meaning Christians are often frustrated evangelists because their efforts land mostly on rocks, thorns and paths. Let's look briefly at these stories to identify times and places where we should sow the most. These stories show us three distinct times when people are ready to hear about Jesus.

Some Come Rationally

The first story is found in Acts 16. Paul and Silas embarked on their second missionary journey and wandered around their old stomp-

ing grounds looking for a place to preach. They tried to go south, but the Holy Spirit kept them from going there (Acts 16:6). Then they tried to go north of Babylonia, but the Spirit wouldn't let them (Acts 16:7). Before they knew it, they were in Troas staring at the Aegean Sea and wondering what to do.

In the middle of the night, Paul got a vision of a man from Macedonia saying, "Come over and help us." Paul and his company sailed for the continent of Europe and made their way to Philippi. Not finding a Jewish synagogue, he and his companions made their way to the river outside of town to pray. That's where they met Lydia.

You know the story. Eventually Paul gave a message and Lydia and her household (not necessarily family, but those living under her roof) professed faith in Jesus and were baptized. But why was she so open to the gospel? There are two reasons. One is a constant in all conversion experiences – "the Lord opened her heart" (Acts 16:14). God is always at work in the conversion of people. Remember it was He who made the ultimate sacrifice and is intensely involved in the salvation process of mankind!

But Lydia also responded to the message that day because of relationship. Paul and his companions had established some sort of relationship with her. We know this by all the details that Luke records about her. From this story we learn her occupation, her hometown, her status as a "God-fearer," and her name. What this means, of course, is that the message followed some time of getting to know who she was.

Imagine with me for just a moment: Have you ever thought that Paul and Lydia had some common ground? They were both into textiles and Thyatira (her hometown) was known around the world for the textile trade. Paul's profession was tent-maker and hers was clothing (a veritable first century Armani). I wonder if they talked about fabrics, colors and sewing techniques as they shared their trades with one another.

The point is that the apostle didn't come with some pre-rehearsed speech to a bunch of women at Riverside church. He got to know them first and found common ground. At that point, the Lord opened hearts and Paul was able to share why and how he had come to Philippi. It turns out that the "man" from Macedonia was a lady named Lydia, but she came to Jesus because of a relationship Paul had established. Your preacher won't like this much, but skip the evangelism training program and go do something with non-Christians. Find common ground. Establish some relationships and wait. God will open hearts and an opportunity will arise.

Some Come Emotionally

The next evangelism story follows in Acts 16, and is in the same city, but the situation is different. As the missionary endeavor in Philippi continued, Paul and his team began to attract attention, especially from a demon-possessed girl who was a fortune-teller. After several exasperating days, Paul cast out the demon. This caused a chain reaction that led to a mob scene, a public beating, and jail time. Poor Silas! He didn't know what he was getting into when Paul asked him to be his missions partner!

At any rate, this next conversion account takes place in the jail. Again there are two very important components. The first is how Paul and Silas handle their harsh situations. Dr. Luke records in verse 23 that they had been severely flogged, indicating there was probably significant bodily damage. They were put into the high-security inner cell, one usually devoid of light, sanitation, and airflow. This is where the gospel story begins.

Around midnight, Paul said to Silas, "Hey, Silas. You OK, Brother?" "Yes, Paul, I'll be all right. You know, you could've just left her alone. But no, you had to say, 'In the name of Jesus' ..." "Hey, Silas," "Yes, Paul." "Do you want to sing?" Right there in the middle of pain and discomfort, these two men of God started a praise service! This would lay the groundwork for their message later.

Just about the time they were really getting into worship, an earthquake shook the place. All the prison doors flew open and all the chains fell off the prisoners. The jailer woke up and seeing that the prison door was open, he decided to deal with the emergency by taking his life. Noticing what was about to happen, Paul yelled for him not to do it. He told him that all prisoners were still there. Imagine seeing this big, burly, Roman officer on his knees asking a prisoner how to be saved. I don't think he was talking about salvation. He was wanting to save his hide. Since Paul seemed to handle emotionally hard times well, he was asking Paul what to do.

Paul gave a spiritual answer to a physical question. The jailer didn't need to know how to keep all the prisoners in; he needed to release his soul from an eternal prison.

Many people are emotional wrecks. If you look closely at the lives of the people around you, you will see the emergencies in their lives. It may be divorce, cancer, raising kids, job loss, or any number of things, but they are emotionally on their knees crying out, "What must I do to be saved?" Of course, this is a perfect place for the gospel message. They will be inclined to ask you if they have seen you handle hard circumstances well. Just be ready to give the spiritual answer of Jesus to the physical question they have.

Some Come Intellectually

Finally, we consider the story in Acts 8 of a man from Ethiopia, a true seeker for meaning in his life. Remember this is a man who has risen to the position of treasurer for a queen, yet as a eunuch, he has no hope of having children to carry on his name. He obviously has some questions about his lot in life. Was there a God who had some answers for his circumstances?

Perhaps he was first intrigued by Isaiah the prophet because his writings include a passage that promises eunuchs who follow God a place in eternity with a "name better than sons and daughters" (Isaiah 56:5). No wonder he had gone to Jerusalem to learn more about this God of the Hebrews, and no wonder he was trying to understand how he could have relationship with Him.

Again, God moved in the life of the evangelist Philip to help him cross paths with this seeker. That teaches some valuable lessons about how people receive the good news. First, notice that Philip lets the Word of God speak. An old theologian has said, "If you want to understand the Old Testament, nail it to the cross and read it there." That's exactly what Philip did. He didn't say, "That's Old Testament stuff, really boring reading. Let me tell you about Jesus." Instead he used that passage to point to Jesus' crucifixion and preached the gospel from there. Next, Philip answered the eunuch's question. So many times we approach people with good answers, but the answers do not address the questions they are asking. The eunuch wanted to know who the prophet was talking about. Until that question was answered, the conversion was going nowhere. Finally, Philip began from that place. He started where the Ethiopian treasurer was.

No doubt this is the hardest and most intimidating form of evangelism. We need to have a handle on theology here, but isn't this what we are challenged to do in Scripture? "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15). Obviously, we have some responsibility to get to know some Scripture and understand how Christ fits into the entire biblical plan. However, having all the answers is not nearly as important to the intellectual as answering the questions he has, starting where he is, with the Word doing the talking.

Fulfilling the Great Commission is not so much a mission, but a lifestyle. Christians who start relationships with unbelievers are there in times of emotional trauma, and can answer the questions of the intellectual. They are exactly what God had in mind when He decided He would let us be involved in kingdom work.

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Ten Exciting Developments In The World Of International Missions

Chris De Welt

Acts 14:27 "...and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles."

1. God is answering our Matthew 9:38 prayers! Young people are stepping forward in huge numbers saying - "we want to do whatever needs to be done to see the nations come to the Throne of God!" Where is this happening? Through campus ministries, at Bible Colleges, in local churches. In addition, not so young people are volunteering and going to the field for service both short term and long! Today, special conferences are held especially for those who have chosen to redirect their careers.

2. The Nations are coming to the West! The Gospel is by nature both centrifugal and centripetal in that it both attracts and it sends us out! The nations are coming to our college campuses by the thousands, hundreds of thousands! We are seeing the cross-pollination of the Mars Hill of today! They are coming to America to live and work, exactly like our great grandparents did. They are coming in the midst of huge sociological changes, ours and theirs.

3. The openness of the International College Campus. Opportunities exist today to do a totally new kind of campus ministry. This is on the college campus that is found in every nation on earth. Today, openings are there for those creative enough to seize them, even in Kabul!

4. The international desire to know the English language. English has become the "Koine Greek" of modern times. It is the language of international trade, of education, of the Internet, and much more. It is highly desired by people in virtually every land and every social level. What a gift from God! They want to learn English! We can go and teach them. It is a key to the unopened door! It is a means of support in many places! It is access to people of education and influence. It is useful in spite of the fact that nearly all western Christians are monolingual. It is the "tent-making" skill of the modern era! Paul's skills allowed him to meet people, to talk, to share, to move around, in short, to relate to people in their own context.

5. A century of technology has led us to unprecedented opportunity. The use of PC's and Macs for translation work has reduced the

job of 2S years to under 18. There is now an ability to proof read and print out in minutes what formerly took months.

The power of the Internet where 10 million users in China will climb to 100 million in 36 months time.

The possibilities of "distance learning" that will create a virtual classroom and even what David Cho and Rick Warren call "a virtual church!" David Cho simulcasts his services on the web and thousands watch him in the Middle East!

Then there is the ability to pick up a telephone and speak to anyone on the planet in seconds at ever decreasing costs.

In the area of transportation, we have the ability to travel to the other side of the world in under 24 hours and walk into virtually any location. Further, the costs of international transportation are actually much less than they were a century ago (in relative terms).

Are we paying attention? Do we stop and consider *why* we have such things? Is it to get rich off of the NASDAQ? Is it to complain about how inept it makes us all feel? **Could it not be that the Father of all art and science is handing us the tools to finish the task?**

6. Scripture translation is racing forward with breathtaking speed! At the beginning of last year, 8 out of 10 people on planet earth had the Scriptures available in their own language. Nine out of 10 had the NT. During the 20th century languages with any Scriptures at all climbed from 537 to over 2800. Sounds great, but the difficult part is that there are over 6000 languages. However, Bible translators (Wycliffe, PBT, and others) have set a goal of having projects started in every language by the year 2025. Could it be that the "end" is in sight? (By that I mean every language group having at least the New Testament.)

7. Christian Radio. Radio ministries around the world have united to see that there is a 30-minute short wave radio broadcast every day in each of the world's 372 mega languages (spoken by 1 million plus people). This would mean understanding by over 99 % of the world's population. They are about halfway to that goal after 15 years of work. According to best estimates, as many as 15 % of some very closed countries listen regularly to Christian radio. We think of radio in terms of inspiration or entertainment - much of the world looks at radio as a source of basic information and a window on the world.

8. The Jesus Films. According to www.jesusfilm.org there are currently 745 translations available of this remarkable film which is the life of Christ from the Gospel of Luke. Not only that but Internet webcast in 55 languages is also available, as is a single DVD with 8 language choices! Thirty-two million video cassettes are also in circulation.

9. Huge changes in the political systems of modern history. Could I have ever imagined the day (even when I was 30 years old) that I would, within a few years, be walking on the streets of Moscow? Or that we could listen to Gospel preaching and see the total annihilation of a world political system in places like Russia or Ukraine or even in Albania UNBELIEVEABLE! What does it mean? For one thing much prayer is needed and with those prayers, workers are needed!

10. Huge changes in the unreached peoples of the world. In the Hindu world of India where some are radical, we have seen the death of a Christian worker, Graham Staines, and have heard his widow Gladys Staines give testimony on national television in the land of 1 billion people. Every network covered it. She and her daughter sang "Because He Lives" in English and in Hindi to hundreds of millions of Hindus who were watching, wondering how a Christian would respond to such a difficult situation. Even more amazing is the fact that last year the Dalits (untouchables) - 300 million strong - were challenged by their own "leader" to leave Hinduism! Some have turned to Buddhism, but many can and will turn to the cross of Jesus! PRAY! Pray for India!

Parallel this with the changes that are rocking the Muslim world. The extremism of a few has acted like a rock in the stream. Which side will each of the world's 1.2 billion Muslims take? Many are more open today than they have ever been in history! There are more Muslim background believers today than ever before and, according to those that know, more Muslims have come to Christ in the last 15 years than in all of Muslim history (1300 years!).

Can God not open doors? Will the walls fall? Is the church paying attention? Could it be that God is "shaking the nations?" (Heb 12) making way for the church to do her task - for it is our task to do. The angels won't preach the Good News! He has given that job to us.

--From *One Body*

Report on Trip to Greece

April 4-15, 2003

Bennie Hill

Our trip to Athens Greece and the Island of Crete seemed to be planned properly with travel information, purchase of tickets, and an itinerary once in Athens and Crete. But with the outbreak of war with Iraq our plans changed dramatically. It was as if God was saying, "You have your plan and I have mine." Looking back over the past twelve days, I'm glad we decided to follow His plan.

Our traveling party consisted of David & Betsy Harding, Mike Harding, Pie & JR Satterfield, and Bennie & Adele Hill. Our main objective was to be used of the Lord in encouraging Bro. & Sis. George Galanis - long time missionaries with the Coridallas congregation in Athens and Bro. Nick Tsagarakis who desires to be used of the Lord as a full time evangelist in Crete.

Following a very enjoyable flight - we reached the first stop on our journey - Athens Greece. To our surprise, Bro. George wasn't there to meet us. He later told us that because of the outbreak of war - he thought the trip had been canceled. To his surprise we were in Athens. For an 81 year old man - he moved quickly to secure hotel accommodations for two nights close to the harbor where we would be catching the all night ferry to Crete (which too, had been canceled).

The next morning (Sunday) came early but George was there ready to take us to the Coridallas congregation. It was there we met his wife, Sophia and other members of the congregation that had been built in 1964. The work seems to be a thriving "Evangelical" congregation with four men sharing in the preaching responsibilities. Our group received a very warm Christian greeting applying 1 Thess. 5:26 literally: "greet all the brethren with a holy kiss." George had informed me several months ago that I would be preaching with him interpreting. I had chosen as my text: Rev. 1:5 entitled "God's Message to the Church is Jesus Christ."

After some sightseeing that afternoon of the Acropolis and the Parthenon as well as where Paul preached addressing the "Men of Athens" at the Areopagus - we returned for another night of rest. The following morning George again met us for a trip to Corinth. George has always been impressed with the apostle Paul and here he gave us a great history lesson when Paul visited there on his second missionary journey. It was from Paul's life and example that George received much inspiration and motivation for his work in evangelism. After three years of study at Southeastern Christian College to study in the Bible Institute, George returned to Greece to begin a new work. The

Coridallas congregation was established within six months of his return.

Bro. Galanis had a great longing to reach the whole nation of Greece with the Gospel. The government made life difficult for Christians particularly those not of Greek Othodox religion. Still Bro. George began a Bible Correspondence course of 22 lessons. Over 650,000 cards were printed and distributed in many parts of the country, advertising the course. One of Bro. Galanis' many contacts who became a believer and today desires to become a full time evangelist on Crete was Bro. Nick Tsagarakis. Following our visit to Corinth - we made our way to the Ferry for the all night boat trip to Crete and were greeted by Bro. Nick. He was excited that our group had finally arrived since he too didn't think we were coming. But after a brief stop at his home to also be greeted by his mother-in-law and wife, Chrisolua and one son, it was off to Porto Geogrioupolis Hotel close to Rethimno. Incidentally, they were not expecting us either. However, the owners who were from South Africa were trying to manage a "Christian Environment." We were beginning to see why God's plan was working better than ours. This family rolled out the "red carpet" for us serving breakfast and dinner daily. Our first night with them, following the evening meal, consisted in joining their family circle and discussing Bible prophecy. What a joy it was to meet this family who shared our love for God's prophetic Word.

The rest of the week provided opportunity for some visits with some of the contacts that Bro. Nick had previously made related to his business of selling agricultural equipment. George had told us of Nick's recent purchase of a car to be used in his work of evangelism. This need of about \$6000.00 has been presented to churches and individuals who have had an interest in the work in Greece. Any desiring to give to this great work can do so by writing to: Church of Christ Worldwide, P.O. Box 54842, Lexington, KY 40555. For: Greece Car

Our second Sunday was spent worshiping at Bro. Nick's church in Iraklion. He speaks occasionally on Sunday nights and receives no salary. We were impressed again with the love and friendship. This time, both myself and JR were invited to share from God's Word.

The next day we began our long journey home after embracing our brothers in Greece and saying our good-byes. While taking us to the airport on Crete, Bro. Nick said he had prayed that the Lord would send our group to Greece and now he is praying He would send us back. Please remember this "man of God" in your prayers who has a heart for evangelism. We felt the hand of the Lord the entire way - working His plan and giving each of us opportunities and memories that will last a life time. And we thank each whose prayers helped give us success.

VOICES from the FIELDS

Dan Wilson

St. Petersburg, Russia

June, 2003

Tomorrow (June 2) I leave for my summer home, where the days have 22 hours of sunlight! . . . For five years now God has been using Project Friendship teams from the U.S. to take His kingdom into secular summer camps near St. Petersburg. During the course of this time over 15,000 Russian children and adults have been exposed to the message of the Gospel as they have come into personal contact with team members. We are expecting a record number of team members from the U.S. this summer - around 88. They will be coming on 9 different teams, but for the first time none of the teams are totally new to the camp work.

In many of these camps our team members have met orphans and as relationships have been built, doors have opened for us to minister in orphanages. For the past three years we have sent teams to far northern Russia where they have held short-term Bible clubs in two such homes. Because of the success of these programs, the government of that region has asked us to run a summer program for orphans at one of their camp facilities. So in addition to our teams working in camps where we've worked before, now for the first time we are running a camp too - being in charge of the staff and the program for two weeks.

Thus from August 10-24 at the children's camp named Gandvik we will direct the program for 100 children from orphanages and dysfunctional homes. These children, many of whom have been victims of neglect or abuse, have known very little love and even less about the Father of love. With "Real Love" as our theme and 1 Corinthians 13 as our text, our goal is that each child will know both true love and the One who is its source.

In years past we dreamed of running our own camp, but the difficulties of logistics and the huge price tag always kept this dream from becoming a reality. Along with the invitation to run this camp, however, the local authorities told us that they would pay to house, feed and transport the children! God used the local Russian government to answer our prayers! With this assurance, we have been planning the program and building a team of 12 Russian and 10 American volunteers who will run it, offering God's love to these precious children.

Please pray for team unity, as we work together to direct a camp for 100 children who speak no English. And even with the cost to us being greatly reduced, we must still cover expenses for our Russian

team members, transporting our team from St. Petersburg to Gandvik, pre-camp set-up, and purchasing crafts, sports and ministry supplies. Pray for us all, for safety and health - physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

James and Karen Ashley July 1, 2003 Solomon Islands

It's finished!!

Yes! The Sa'a New Testament is finished! (Well, almost.)

The files lost when the hard drive crashed June 4th have been reconstructed, the last books have been checked for accuracy by the consultants, and checked again for naturalness by a committee of Sa'a speakers.

The whole New Testament is now (as of June 24) through the major checks. It's not completely done, but the biggest part is over. My co-translators David and Jonathan are as delighted as I am - probably more! - that we have at last realized this goal.

Now we have a lot of proofreading to do, checking especially for spelling errors and inconsistencies in names and terms, and then we'll be able to begin the final typesetting process. Since these changes are mostly cosmetic, we do not need to be in the Solomons to do them, and it is time for us to spend a year in the U.S. on furlough.

I have joined up with Karen and Susan in Brisbane, Australia, and tomorrow we'll be headed back across the Pacific. We'll spend most of the year near the typesetting department in Dallas, and later we hope to bring Jonathan to the States to help prepare the final photo-ready copy. We trust that we will also have the chance to see many of you, as we want to thank you for the part you have played in bringing the Sa'a translation to this milestone stage. We couldn't have done it without you. Thank you!

Please note our new address: c/o Seymour Ashley, 2770 Lakeview Rd. Midlothian, TX 76065.

(972) 723-0222 Email: j-k_ashley@sil.org

Seniors Make a Vital Contribution

Martha Van Cise

"Eighty years old!" my husband gasped. "They're sending a man who is almost eighty years old." We were trying to finish a ten-month, 500-square-foot house reconstruction project following a Guatemalan earthquake, and had asked for outside help to erect a large community center. According to the message, John, an elderly retiree would arrive the next Monday to supervise construction of the metal building.

To our surprise, John not only directed the construction of the building to a timely finish, but he enriched camp life. The son of missionaries, John had spent the first sixteen years of his life in Guatemala, but this was his first return trip. Each evening he came to dinner glowing with enthusiasm as he shared remembered Spanish phrases and cajoled other team members into tasting long-forgotten foods he had loved as a child. John's age never seemed to influence his work or social pace.

Today's Seniors are Different

As medical advances lengthen life spans and people make healthier lifestyle choices, the term "senior citizen" no longer describes an inactive, infirm, close-to-the-end-of-life person. Today's seniors often have thirty active, productive years ahead. Furthermore, many of today's seniors possess the two elements that never seem to coexist during one's youth--expendable time and money.

Some, who have been blessed with successful careers, use their last years to give back to their family, community, or church. Among evangelical Christians, a growing number use expendable resources to participate in home and foreign mission projects.

Senior involvement in missions usually occurs on one of four levels: *single* short mission tour (4-14 days); *one or more* short tours annually; *2-4 month assignment* to a specific field; or *second career* as a missionary. Many seniors volunteer first for one project, then go on to volunteer annually for one or more projects. When mission leaders need longer-term help for a specific project, they often contact volunteers who have participated in short projects and demonstrated emotional stability, servanthood, and spiritual strength in adverse situations. Accomplishments on one level prepare the candidate for service on the next level. The majority of seniors who choose mission involvement will participate on one or more of the first three levels. Only a few have the income, stamina, and ability to make the drastic lifestyle changes required of the fourth level--career missionary.

Avoid the Dis-Organized!

When volunteering for service, avoid any organization that says, "You'll find something to do when you get here." Well-run organizations have short-range and long-range goals and they have definite assignments for their personnel. If you go for longer-term service, make a specific time commitment. Agree to work for a specific number of days or until completion of a specified project. A specific time frame will provide a graceful means for either party to step out of an unsatisfactory relationship.

Be Clear on Financial Arrangements

Besides being informed about the organization, your specific duties, and the time frame, be sure to obtain clear details of financial arrangements. You will probably be expected to pay all of your expenses. This includes housing, food, transportation, laundry, and medical care. If you get approval from a national pastor to come and work, do not expect free food, board, and transportation. Providing food and lodging for a volunteer would place serious financial strains on the local pastor, his family, and the congregation.

Use Wisdom Throughout

Be wise. Make sure that you have been specifically invited, to do a specific project for a specified length of time. In some cases, selling all to devote the last 15-20 years of life to missions has been a worthy decision. God has blessed the lives and work of some that have made this decision late in life. For the most part, however, disposing of one's home and furniture is not a wise decision for a senior. A stroke, heart attack, or bone-shattering fall can end a missionary's service abruptly. You may sacrifice the standard of living to which you have been accustomed, but in fairness to your family and home church, don't abandon provisions for your declining years.

Have a Willing Heart. Be Flexible.

Be willing. No matter the length of stay on the mission field, you must be willing to do the job at hand. Well-organized and goal oriented organizations constantly deal with change and have to adjust plans accordingly which means you may be asked to do work that you didn't ask to do or want to do.

Invest Wisely

Seniors may use expendable time and money carelessly or invest it for eternal profit. Investment in eternal stock such as global missions, however, should not be done haphazardly. High-yield investment in missions will require being well-informed about mission

option, making wise long-term choices, doing the job at hand without complaint, and watching for small ways to serve others.

Martha VanCise has twenty-five years of experience in short-term mission work. Her book is *Successful Mission Teams: A Guide for Volunteers* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope, 1996)

Six Nations Where Persecution Rages the Strongest Today

Pakistan

Christians have always been treated as second-class citizens in the Islamic nation of Pakistan. But since the U.S.-led war on terrorism and the invasion of neighboring Afghanistan, Pakistan has become one of the most volatile nations on earth for Christians today.

Since September 11, 2001, several waves of random terrorist violence have claimed the lives of 39 Christians and injured over 75 believers worshipping in churches or serving in ministry. To safeguard their families, Pakistani Christians are placing sandbags around some of their churches.

North Korea

Hard labor camps. Forced abortions. Execution for refusing to worship North Korea's dictator. These are just some of the terrifying realities facing Christians in North Korea today--in addition to food shortages and extreme poverty. Yet in spite of the deadly opposition, at least 200,000 people follow Christ in North Korea, and some estimate the number is actually closer to half a million.

And the most exciting news is that the Holy Spirit is at work! Some North Korean Christians are so bold that they dare to share the Gospel with unknown people on the streets--always a life-or-death risk. One woman tried to share a Gospel tract with a military officer near a train station. He got angry and dragged her to the police station, where she was terribly beaten and then dragged away. Yet she did not deny the Lord! Please pray for God to give our brothers and sisters the courage and perseverance they need in the midst of their fiery trials.

Sudan

Since 1983, the radical Islamic government in northern Sudan has waged a fierce struggle to convert or eradicate Christians and other non-Muslims in southern Sudan. At the same time, factions among the rebel forces fighting against the Islamic government also target Christians.

Recently one of these rag-tag armies stormed a Christian village and destroyed the church, Sunday School, and orphanage that was led by Tony, an Open Doors co-worker in Sudan. In one brutal day, years of Tony's hard work were destroyed instantly. The 3,000 villagers who survived were left homeless and without any food. Unfortunately, flights into Sudan are currently banned, making relief efforts harder than ever. But our brothers and sisters are persisting in fervent prayer--trusting in God to deliver them.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's constitution mandates that all citizens be Muslim. There is no legal protection for freedom of religion. And the public practice of non-Muslim religions is strictly prohibited for all foreigners living in Saudi Arabia. Expatriates in the country who are suspected of breaking these laws can be imprisoned, treated harshly, and deported--a fate befalling 14 foreign Christians in the past 12 months.

In spite of this extraordinarily dangerous climate, a tiny handful of Saudi citizens do follow Christ. They live in great secrecy and fear betrayal at any time. But they have discovered the immense spiritual riches of Christ--and they consider the danger a small price to pay.

Colombia

For 38 years, the government of Colombia has warred against rebel forces for control of the nation. Christians are trapped in the middle, targeted by the rebels because they refuse to take sides against the government.

Over the years, thousands of believers have faced harassment from the rebels, and hundreds of Christian believers have been murdered in cold blood. Just recently--on October 18, 2002--two leaders were murdered by gunshot on the same day. Yet the church is growing in Colombia--in spite of the opposition!

China

Over the past 12 months, Open Doors has reported on the new wave of repression against Christians in China, as revealed by secret government documents smuggled out of China. Recently four female church leaders were arrested and interrogated. Hours after a provincial court freed these women, the Public Security Bureau rearrested them and sent them to three years of hard labor in a prison camp. They were sexually molested and tortured repeatedly until they signed documents with false accusations against their pastor.

Situations like these are increasingly common across China today. Because of the great needs facing the Persecuted Church in China--and the thousands who come to Christ every day--the nation of China will continue to be Open Doors greatest area of emphasis in 2003.

In each of the six persecution hot spots described in this article, Christians need our prayers most of all. They are caught in a supernatural struggle between God and Satan--and only prayer can empower them to stand strong against the overwhelming onslaught they face.

--From *Frontline Faith*, Jan. 2003

Your Hometown

by David Smith

"You know that the household of Stephanas ... have devoted themselves to the service of the saints ... they have supplied what was lacking ... they refreshed my spirit and yours, too. Such men deserve our recognition." (1 Corinthians 16:15,17-18 NIV)

1984 was an incredible year for rock music. Amidst the ocean of tunes, one powerful wave after another rocked the American shores. However, among those waves one loomed particularly large -- Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band's album entitled *Born in the USA*.

Springsteen is a compelling storyteller and some of the best evidence for that truth is found in the last song on the *Born in the U.S.A.* album, a song entitled "Your Hometown." It's the story of a young father's reminiscences of how his hometown has changed through the years -- not for the better -- and how that forces him to decide whether or not to raise his own children there. Hear the lyrics afresh:

I was eight years old
And running with a dime in my hand
Into the bus stop
To pick up a paper for my old man
I'd sit on his lap in that big old Buick and
Steer as we drove through town
He'd tousle my hair and say
Son take a good look around
This is your hometown
This is your hometown

In '65 tension was running high.
At my high school
There was a lot of fights
Between the black and white
There was nothing you could do
Two cars at a light on a Saturday night,

In the back seat there was a gun
Words were passed,
In a shotgun blast
Troubled times had come to my hometown
My hometown.

Now Main Street's whitewashed
Windows and vacant stores
Seems like there ain't nobody
Wants to come down here no more
They're closing down the textile mill
Across the railroad tracks
Foreman says these jobs are goin' boys
And they ain't comin' back to your hometown.
Your hometown.

Last night me and Kate we laid in bed
Talking about getting out
Packing up our bags
Maybe headin' south
I'm 35, we've got a boy of our own now
Last night I sat him up, behind the wheel
And said son take a good look around
This is your hometown.

Not a few of us have had to wrestle with this very decision. And even if not, strictly speaking, in the realm of our own home town, certainly in regard to our own home church.

With time, age and perspective, changes come. Not all of them good and most of them beyond our individual control. A community's freshness and vitality begins to wane and, consequently, so does some of the church's potential for growth and expansion of ministry. Church tensions occasionally flare up. A church may even come to find itself facing something it had never planned to see -- it's own mortality. And so the question -- "Do we stay or do we go?"

When a congregation has apparently seen its best years, great is the temptation to leave and find what appears to be greener pastures. To find a new hometown. Still, it is no small thing to leave one's roots and familiar ties behind to start again. Which is best -- to make a fresh start or to stay and fight valiantly for freshness?

The choice is never easy. Clearly, resolve and courage are called for on both paths. And who can say which is best? Surely there is no one-size-fits-

all answer to this question for every situation. Still, the road most often taken is to leave -- and naturally so for it has the least grade.

In the song, we're left to marvel at the courage and determination of the father to raise up his son in a dying town. It surely would have taken great strength to leave, but we sense that it took far more strength to stay. And we're also left to wonder what trials were faced and how the story ends. We don't know, for the story is still being written.

The same is true in churches everywhere. Too many churches are slowly, and unnecessarily, hemorrhaging to death by the steady trickle of members leaving their hometown for what appears to be places of greater personal promise. **It's ever easier to go along with growth than to strive to help bring growth.** What is needed is more resolve and dedication, more determination and grit. To choose the best roads, not necessarily the easiest.

Long ago in a church which surely must have appeared to be on the downhill slope, Corinth, there were some who dared to stay. They dared to continue to call the church in Corinth their hometown. Such men deserved recognition. And two thousand years later we still remember the name of at least one of them -- Stephanas. Long after, mind you, the names of many others, no doubt, pulled up stakes and left.

Having said all that, what is the point? Just three thoughts. But I'd ask you think about them carefully and pray about them seriously.

One -- if you're considering leaving "your hometown," consider again. To leave is to follow the path of least resistance. Consider the possibility of deliberately choosing a more challenging path for the good of others. It may be that you must go. And you should not be faulted if you prayerfully conclude you must. But bathe the matter in prayer, and personal sacrifice, whatever you decide.

Two -- pray for those who labor in fields which are not nearly so large or outwardly productive as your own. Many of those who labor there do so by a deliberate choice to devote themselves to the service of the saints. Such people deserve our recognition.

Three -- wherever you find yourself, dedicate your ways to the service of others. Lay down your life in sacrifice for the generation to come.

Isn't that what Jesus did for you?

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Rethinking Harry Potter

James Girdley

Is it okay for a child to lie? Is it right for a child to disobey parents and teachers if that child feels he or she has a good reason? Most people, both Christians and non-Christians alike, would say certainly not! This is, however, exactly the kind of message being sent to our young people through J.K. Rowling's wildly popular series of books about Harry Potter. For those not familiar with the story, at the age of 11 Harry discovers he is a wizard. As an infant Harry survived an attack by the evil Lord Voldemort, which left behind the trademark lightning bolt scar on Harry's forehead. In each book Harry learns progressively more about wizardry while at the same time having dangerous and exciting adventures with his friends Ron and Hermione.

The Christian response to the Potter series appears divided. One side sees the series as a harmless fantasy story similar to Lewis' Narnia tales or Tolkein's hobbit stories. The other side takes serious issue with the use of magic, sorcery, and witchcraft found throughout the Potter series. They point out that these are areas Christians are biblically commanded to leave alone. While much of the debate in the Christian world centers on the use of magic, I believe there is an even deeper and subtler danger at work in the Potter series--the defiance of moral authority. Throughout the series, Harry and his friends consistently break school rules and directly disobey their professors. From leaving their rooms after curfew, to sneaking off school grounds, to even using magic to temporarily disable one of their professors, Harry and his friends lie, sneak, and mislead. The most troublesome part is that Rowling nearly always portrays Harry as doing the right thing when he breaks the rules; his professors are often cast as the villains for trying to enforce the rules or attempting to punish Harry. From his perspective, Harry always has a good reason for breaking the rules or disobeying his professors--he is either trying to help someone or trying to get a clue that will help him solve the mystery. Harry often decides for himself that a rule can be broken if it serves a greater good of his own determining, and he is portrayed as the hero for doing so. With this "ends justifies the means" mentality Harry becomes his own moral authority.

Christian readers need to realize that this "breaking the rules for a greater good" approach runs counter to our relationship with God and contradicts the heart of Christian scripture. In his word, God makes it clear that we are not our own moral authority deciding what is right and wrong based on how we feel and what we want to accomplish. God plainly states we are to respect our elders and those in authority. God clearly sets the boundaries of right and wrong for us, and there are serious consequences for stepping over those boundaries. These are foundational elements of the Christian faith and they are dismissed if not openly mocked in Rowling's books. I strongly believe that the Potter series sets the wrong example for our young people. It tells them they can decide for themselves when they want to obey or disobey.

It convinces them they can be their own moral authority. It encourages them to break the rules if they believe the situation warrants. This defiant attitude left unchecked will harm young people's earthly relationships and will also have a damaging impact on the relationship with their heavenly Father.

How should Christian parents respond? I think for older teens parents ought to read the series with their child, then use the opportunity to talk with their teen about the issues of moral authority, how to decide between right and wrong, and how God is the one who establishes our understanding of right and wrong. Because of the series' use of magic, the presence of adult themes (a child dies in one book), and because the series runs counter to the biblical teachings on moral authority, I believe the Harry Potter series is not suitable for pre-teen audiences.

[James Girdley ministers at Highland Community Church in Louisville.]

MODEST CLOTHING

Edward Fudge, in GracEmail

A Christian sister writes that she has a friend who is dedicated to the Lord. This friend is a "very beautiful woman" who sometimes wears dresses that reveal more of her beauty than the sister thinks is appropriate for the general public. The sister has pointed this out to her repeatedly to no avail. She asks for my advice.

The New Testament urges Christian women to dress in proper clothing ("modest apparel," KJV), which it defines as garb that is neither grandiose nor overly-conspicuous, coupled with hairstyles and jewelry which do not detract from the priceless adornment of good deeds and a godly spirit (1 Tim. 2:8-10; 1 Peter 3:2-5). The Apostles Peter and Paul would be at least as concerned today about the woman whose extravagant apparel and accessories turn every head as they would be about her Christian sister whose neckline might be a little low or skirtline a little high.

Christian women are admonished to be pure (Titus 2:5). Attire that is sexually provocative is contrary to that goal. Exactly what that means is left to each individual conscience to decide, attuned to God's Spirit. God desires us to be noticed, known and remembered for what is eternal and invaluable, not for physical appearance which at best is short-lived and has absolutely nothing to do with inner and lasting beauty. Since the Bible does not specify the details of proper dress, and since you say that your friend is seeking to please God, I believe you will need to trust the Holy Spirit to convict her of any shortcoming in that area. You can pray for her to be sensitive to the Spirit -- perhaps even gently encourage her to do so -- but "preaching" at her would be both inappropriate and counterproductive. The best way you can teach is by your own example, which you can control and for which you are personally responsible.

Fallen Asleep in Christ

Frances Overman of Lyons, Indiana and formerly of Switz City, went home to be with the Lord on Friday, May 9, 2003 at the age of 89. She was the faithful wife of Orell Overman for over 63 years and the devoted mother of James (of Millersburg, Ohio), Joe (Lyons, Ind.), Jerry (Louisville, Ky.), Jean O. McLean (Millersburg, Ohio), and Joyce O. Lyon (Louisville, Ky.). There are also 22 grandchildren and 21 great grandchildren. In addition to serving as a wife and mother she taught elementary school for 32 years, supported Orell in his ministry and worked in the churches and Woodland Bible Camp where he served. Innumerable former students, church members and friends (some from 450 miles away), attended the visitation and funeral to pay their respects to her. The visitation hours were prolonged and the church was filled, not only to honor her memory, but also to support the family. The funeral service was at Pleasant Grove Church of Christ with Brothers Bryan Whitehead, Dick Lewis, and Jerry Carmichael officiating. Please remember Brother Orell and all the family in your prayers.

— J. Richard Lewis, Johnson City, TN

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Whoops- another Goof by the W&W editor (n.o.t the News & Notes editor)! I forgot to think of it beforehand, and didn't even notice it afterwards. But Henry Terrill, an alert librarian at Harding University, notified us of an ongoing error. In our Jan. 03 issue we forgot to change the volume number in W&W's masthead from XCVI (= 96) to XCVII (97, in case you've forgotten your Roman numerals).

Most readers, not only the editor, never pay attention to the volume number. But librarians do, for purposes of cataloging the periodicals they keep. So, cheers to brother Terrill for his help. Maybe you are puzzled as to why we celebrated W&W's 95th anniversary in our March issue of this year, but are currently publishing our 97th annual volume. I'm puzzled too! Probably someone goofed in an earlier year, and no vigilant librarian told the edi-

tor. Or maybe it just resulted when the "new math" came in. --avw

SCC REUNION. About sixty alumni of Southeastern Christian College met at the Sellersburg Church of Christ Christian Center on Memorial Day for a time of fellowship and pot luck dinner. Dick Lewis, a member of the board of Southeastern Christian Education Corporation, gave a report concerning the distribution of SCEC funds. He also gave names of the colleges to which grants have been given for student scholarships. J.R. Satterfield presented a challenge to raise \$4000 for a monument to be erected in Winchester on the site of the campus. Checks can be made out to SCEC and mailed to 399 College St., Winchester, KY 40391.

Addresses that were collected several years ago have been lost. So all alumni who were not present this

year are asked to send address, phone no, e-mail, years attending to Janell Lewis, 100 Quarry Drive, Johnson City, TN 37615.

Change of Address: Julius & Claudia Hovan are moving in June to 14 Woodholme Lane, Palm Coast, FL 32164. Phone: (386) 986-4992.

From Bob Morrow: I would like to be back in full time preaching and teaching if there is a congregation looking for a minister. At present I am teaching Sunday School at the McArthur Church of Christ in Alexandria, LA and working part time for a funeral home. I also fill in for congregations when the minister is on vacation or needs time off. Contact me at: Bob Morrow, P.O. Box 406, Glenmora, LA 71433.

Phone: (318) 215-1297.

Elmer Pacheco, along with Jenny and their 2 children, has been ministering at the Lilly Dale Church in Gatchel, Ind. since Sept. 1998. Now Elmer has accepted a call to minister at Silver Spring (Maryland) Church of Christ starting Aug. 18th. This is a Hispanic congregation where he can use his knowledge of Spanish. The Pacheco family will be missed in the Lilly Dale / Tell City area.

Japan: Pray for Michiya Nakahara whose illness has required him to curtail his seminary teaching. We lack further details at present.

Japan: Pray for Moto Nomura as he has opportunities to counsel confused and disillusioned ex-members of the International Church of Christ (formerly called the Boston Movement). For 15 years there has been in Tokyo a branch of that zealous but ultra-legalistic, sectarian & dictatorial group. Some months ago the world-leader of the movement, Skip McKean, resigned--confessing

the harm he had caused to many members. Since then other leaders are seeking to pick up the pieces and heal its ailments. Only time will tell the direction it will take.

In the meantime Bro. Moto is receiving a number of calls from former members, workers & leaders. They desperately need to know the love of God; a grace-centered basis of holiness, discipleship and service; and the meaning of spiritual leadership. He heard that about 100 people, mostly young, are seeking various kinds of help.

Dan Wilson, St. Petersburg, Russia: " A survey taken last year showed that well over 60% of Russians identified themselves as Orthodox, even though over a third of those had never even been in an Orthodox church. When I mentioned this to a Russian friend, her response was very typical- 'You don't have to go to church to be Orthodox ('saved'), but in my case I go every time I have trouble, like an illness, and it makes me feel better.'"

More on Russia, from July '03 *Christianity Today*: "The Russian Evangelical Alliance started anew during an April meeting in Berlin. The first Russian Alliance began in 1906 before dissolving the next year. [I believe it was spearheaded by a Restoration Movement leader and preacher, Ivan Prokhanoff -- avw]

"There were 150 participants..representing 40 churches and organizations. Some groups chose to stay away for fear of losing some autonomy. There are 720,000 Protestants in Russia, constituting 0.5 percent of the population. Top priorities for the new alliance include an annual prayer week, joint Bible conferences and evangelism, and political and social responsibilities."

News from a Christian brother in India: Excerpts from a letter from an Indian who has been receiving W & W for 7 years: "I know of no other magazine so educative as the Word and Work. It is my chief source of encouragement next, of course, to the Bible. I belong to the rigid "Anti" segment of the church of Christ. But 30 years of Christian experience and studies have led me to re-evaluate my beliefs. Our strong commitment to doctrine led to a legalistic view of God, salvation and

worship. Some in their great zeal for true doctrine make matters of opinion a test of Christian fellowship.

"I am struggling with legalism and I am thankful it is W & W which has shown me the Scriptural way! I am also reading Rubel Shelly, Cecil Hook and others. Some congregations have black-listed me. But there are many congregations who are no longer satisfied with our legalism. Please remember me in your prayers. "

S.B.S. IS ON THE MOVE

By the grace of God, The School of Biblical Studies plans to have its library and office moved into the Buechel Church of Christ building by July 1, 2003. SBS makes this move with the support and blessings of the Portland Christian School Board of Directors.

After much prayer and discussion, the SBS committee accepted the invitation to move to the Buechel site. Portland Christian School and The School of Biblical Studies benefit by this move. PCS regains much needed classroom space and SBS has access to several classrooms at Buechel. SBS continues to function as a division of the PCS organization.

The SBS Board of Directors expresses great appreciation to the PCS staff and board for many years of cooperation and support, and look forward to that continuing fellowship.

SBS is a non-traditional Christian institution, intending to serve all people desiring a deeper knowledge of God's word. The move to Buechel allows SBS to offer an excellent opportunity for church leaders and their wives -Elders, Deacons, Sunday School Teachers, Song Leaders, Trustees and all others, to refresh and increase their understanding of the glorious promises of our God!

The committee asks for your prayers for SBS. If the education of Bible teachers and preachers of the gospel is important to you, please consider sending SBS a tax- deductible gift throughout the year.

If you desire to increase your knowledge of God's word, check out SBS.

--Bud Ridgeway, Chairman of SBS Board of Directors

SBS Board Members are: Mike Abbot, Jerry Carmichael, Jim Embree, Earl Mullins, Sr., Dale Offutt, Buford Smith, Alex Wilson, Joyce Zimpelmann.

[Sometimes a class or two may still be offered at P.C.H.S.'s campus (and extension classes may be offered at outlying churches) --just as classes were occasionally offered at Buechel before.]

Z: 1 (Qty: 1)
James R. Satterfield
114 Brandywynne Lane
New Albany, IN 47150

11/30/03

SCHOOL OF BIBLICAL STUDIES

Class Schedule for Fall Semester, 2003

Classes begin Aug. 19 - End Dec. 22

>> We have moved to the Buechel Church of Christ <<

2105 Buechel Bank Road, near Bardstown Road,

Louisville, KY 40218; (502) 499-0724

All Classes will meet there unless marked otherwise

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Day/Time</u>	<u>Teacher</u>
Apologetics	Mon. 9:00 - 12:00	Mike Abbot
Old Testament Survey	Mon. 1:00 - 4:00	Jerry Carmichael
Scientific Creationism	Mon. 1:00 - 4:00	Earl Mullins, Sr.
Christian Growth and Development	Mon. 6:30 - 9:30*	Alex Wilson
Christian Counseling	Mon. 6:30 - 9:30	Bud Ridgeway
Life of Christ	Tues. 9:00 - 12:00	Bud Ridgeway
Personal Evangelism	Tues. 1:00 - 3:00	Bennie Hill

* At Portland Ave. Campus,
2500 Portland Ave.

Each credit hour @ 25.00. Audit @ 12.50/hour.

Senior citizens accepted tuition-free so long as space is available.

Study to deepen your knowledge of the Lord and His Word.

**Train so you can serve Him better, as disciple, Bible teacher,
deacon, elder, preacher, or missionary.**