

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The *Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

July 2007

JUDGE *NOT!*

What did Jesus mean when He uttered today's most popular Bible verse? Take part in an exercise in interpreting Scripture correctly.

* * *

That which love teaches us to call but a splinter in our brother's eye, true repentance and godly sorrow will teach us to call a beam in our own.

It is as strange that a man can be in a sinful, miserable condition, and not be aware of it, as that a man should have a beam in his eye, and not consider it; but the god of this world blinds their minds.

Here is a good rule for reprovers: first reform thyself.

--Matthew Henry

* * *

Jesus held out the necessity of the new birth to the noblest, best at any time any man should exalt himself above it; and the promise of the living water to the degraded one, that none may think himself excluded from it.

--R. H. Boll

My God, I Thank Thee

Adelaide A. Proctor

My God, I thank Thee, who hast made
The earth so bright,
So full of splendor and of joy,
Beauty and light;
So many glorious things are here,
Noble and right.

I thank Thee, too, that Thou has made
Joy to abound,
So many gentle thoughts and deeds
Circling us round,
That in the darkest spot of earth
Some love is found.

I thank Thee more, that all our joy
Is touched with pain,
That shadows fall on brightest hours,
That thorns remain,
So that earth's bliss may be our guide,
And not our chain.

For Thou, who knowest, Lord, how soon
Our weak heart clings,
Hast given us joys, tender and true,
Yet all with wings,
So that we see, gleaming on high,
Diviner things.

I thank Thee, Lord, that here our souls,
Though amply blest,
Can never find, although they seek,
A perfect rest,
Nor ever shall, until they lean
On Jesus' breast.

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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Something NEW *Might* Be Added!

Alex V. Wilson

Surprise! If you are savvy with the worldwide web (or internet), you can read this month's article by Brother Boll, "Grace—to the Worst and the Best," online as well as on page 201! Also 5 early articles from our series on the Sermon on the Mount. And our News & Notes. *How can such things be?*

Well, some months ago our printer, George Fulda Jr., secretly set up a trial website for W&W--just to see how it might look, and whether it might be a feasible future option! Wow—it was interesting. Besides articles he put other features in it, so we could explore various possibilities: An item you can click in order to gain access to many different Bible versions. A message board. Links to other Christian websites. A page for kids, and another for teens. Some movie-reviews from a Christian standpoint; etc. Just to give you an idea, and to get helpful feedback from our readers, we invite you to "take a look," then tell us your reactions.

The site address is www.wordandwork.org

Friends, W&W *might* (or might not) add a permanent, ongoing website edition to our 'hard copy' magazine of paper and ink. Or we *might* just do what's been done the past 99 years, and drop the on-line idea. Or the new postal-costs crisis *might* mean the magazine will come out every two months, or even three! Or sometime we *might* switch to online and drop the paper edition! (I doubt that, for we'd lose many of you, but the new postal costs make us consider it.) Or the Lord *might* will that W&W end its long race (for the present staff can't go on forever, and no replacements are in sight). Or He *might* have some fifth alternative (the blessed hope fulfilled?). Pray for us, as we do for you.

Sermon on the Mount—

“When There Are No Standards...”

Alex V. Wilson

In former days when polls were taken which asked, “What’s your favorite Bible verse or passage?” the answer would usually be either John 3:16 or the 23rd Psalm.

For many people today (especially non-Christians), the best-known and also most popular scripture is “Judge not,” or, to give the complete verse, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged.”

Why has Matthew 7:1 become so popular and widely quoted now? Because of the common view--almost universally believed by today’s young people--that there are *no absolutes*. That universal standards just don’t exist! The late Lewis Smedes, professor of ethics at Fuller Seminary, said, “Many modern Americans do not believe there are objective standards by which to judge. And *where there are no standards, there is nothing by which to measure behavior.*” That is one scary statement.

The prevalent attitude has become, “*How dare you condemn* abortion, homosexual behavior, pornography, ‘unmarried’ couples living together, gambling casinos, etc.? You Christians surely realize that Jesus said, ‘Judge not, that ye be not judged.’ So why don’t you obey his command? You-all are *experts* at judging people you don’t agree with! How come you break Jesus’ own command over and over?”

How Should We Reply?

First, though “Judge not” sounds like an absolute command--a total prohibition of judging of any and every kind--it really isn’t. We will present ample evidence that Jesus did not mean His statement to be taken in an absolute sense. Don’t get me wrong. He certainly did believe that there are absolutes (and so do I). But there is a difference between **general statements** (which are usually true, but not always) and **absolute ones** to which there are no exceptions. “Judge not” is definitely the former. We will consider the many difficulties that arise if anyone says Matt. 7:1 is an absolute prohibition, not just a general one.

Problems and Puzzles with the Belief, “Judging is Always Wrong”

#1: In *World* magazine, 8/03, Abby Nye wrote, “If ‘judge not’ is a universal ban, **positive judgments would be taboo as well as negative judgments.** We couldn’t judge that a movie was good, a book excellent, or a lecture challenging.”

But every person makes such judgments every day, as we evaluate both positively and negatively: “Wendy’s is better than McDonald’s.” “I like McCain more than Romney because....” “UK’s coach is better than UL’s.” “I don’t think ‘Whispering Hope’ is nearly as good as ‘Abide with Me.’” Is such judging wrong? Nonsense.

Problem #2 with believing Jesus meant “Never judge at all, *ever!*”: Professor Smedes pointed out, “No community can exist for long where nobody is ever held accountable: No teacher would grade a student’s performance [or vice versa]; no citizen would sit on a jury, or judge render a verdict; no citizen would call a failed leader to account” [recall them, or vote them out]. When you come to think of it, **nobody would ever forgive anyone for wrongs he had done:** we only forgive people for what we blame them, and we blame them only after we have judged them.”

Problem #3 (the most important one): If *all* judging is banned, then the Bible contradicts itself. For example, in Luke 12:57, Jesus said, “Why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right?” In Romans 12:3, Paul wrote, “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober [accurate] judgment....” Consider also his advice in 1 Corinthians 6: “I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? 6 But instead, one brother goes to law against another--and this in front of unbelievers! The very fact that you have lawsuits among you [i.e., between born-again Christians who sued each other in public courts] means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?”

Again, in 1 Corinthians 10: “I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say....” And in the next chapter, “Judge for yourselves....”

Solving Problems, Dissolving Contradictions

Well, then, what *did* Jesus mean when He said, "Judge not"? More than that, how can we solve problems like this in general—*when Scripture seems to contradict itself?*

1st, we should examine and determine Meanings [plural] of the Words used. In this case we discover the following facts. The word "judgment" is used in the NT in an ethical sense, with these meanings: (1) to decide, give a verdict, declare an opinion (Greek *krino*): Acts 15:19, James said, "It is my judgment that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God." (2) to investigate or scrutinize (Greek *anakrino*); 1 Cor. 4:3, I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court. (3) to discriminate, distinguish (Greek *diakrino*). 1 Cor. 14:29, Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully/ pass judgment / discern -- what is said.

So 1st, when facing problems of this kind, we should examine and determine meanings of the words used, by using an English dictionary or, better, a Bible dictionary, concordance, commentary or Greek lexicon. But in this case, that doesn't solve our problem, for according to our research judging seems o-k, yet Jesus says don't do it.

2nd, we should Examine the Immediate Context of the puzzling statement. So we look at Matt. 7:1 and the verses that follow it. "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Don't misinterpret that. One preacher said this refers to God's judgment of us. He taught that if we treat other people leniently and mildly, God will treat us that way.

But that would imply that if we refuse to judge other people at all, God won't judge us at all! Wait a minute. If someone who cheats on his tax return does not condemn others who do the same, will God refuse to find him guilty for his cheating because he refused to judge others? If that's true, then the easiest way to escape going to hell is simply for us in this life never to judge anyone at all for anything. "You can't judge me, God, because I never judged anyone during my lifetime!" What is wrong with this picture?

No, when Christ said, "In the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you," I believe he was referring to the *human* consequences *in this life* of being sternly, severely judgmental. The hypocritical person--

showing others harshness, not mercy--will find that others treat him that way too. You reap what you sow, even in this life.

Commentators Jamieson, Fausset & Brown agree: "People shrink from contact with those who deal out harsh judgment upon others--naturally concluding that *they themselves* may be the next victims--and [many people] feel impelled in self-defense, when exposed to it, to roll back upon the assailant his own censures."

Now back to the context of Matt. 7:1. Jesus continued in v. 3, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

Hey, note that! Jesus says it's okay to judge another person--i.e., point out our brother's flaw--*IF* we have right motives, if we first judge and correct ourselves as far as possible. We should repent of *forming* a judgment hastily, harshly, and without allowing for every extenuating circumstance that may partially excuse the person of their fault or weakness. (Maybe that child is terribly hyper-active because he is constantly yelled at and slapped around at home.)

Also, once we form a reasoned, accurate opinion, we should be careful about *expressing* it. That is, we remove the log from our own eye by seeking never to pass on to other folks *who are neither part of the problem or the solution* our negative opinion. We avoid criticizing unnecessarily and harshly. (It's called gossip.)

Jesus says if we thus extract the log from our eye, we are qualified to assist a brother by first judging (that is, evaluating) him--"Oh, you have a speck in your eye"; and then by helping him--"If you want, I'll try to remove it for you" (adding, if it's true)--"You know, I myself have struggled with that problem, or a similar one").

But if we do not judge ourselves first, Jesus calls us "hypocrites"! We pretend to have 20/20 vision when really we're nearly blind! We act as if we are an eye doctor while actually we are an eye patient who needs thick lenses or maybe a seeing-eye dog!

Our Lord emphasizes this point in still another way by two words He uses here over and over: "**judge**" and "**brother.**" When we see a fault or failing in our friend, relative, or fellow-Christian, if we come on to them as though we are wearing a black robe and banging a gavel--as though we think we're a judge--we will do more harm than good! But if we approach them as a loving, concerned brother or sister, wanting to help them improve and overcome their

flaw or defect--but also admitting we are not perfect either, we too need to improve--then they will probably welcome our help and make changes.

We are *examining the context*, remember? We're looking at all Jesus said on this occasion regarding this subject--in order to understand those often-twisted words of His, "Judge not."

But Are We Interpreting This Correctly?

Is it correct to say that Jesus did not ban *all* judging, but only harsh, hypocritical judging? Let's investigate further, looking now at other statements of His.

Only five verses later he says, "Do not give dogs [that is, curs--stray mongrels--garbage scavengers, for in first-century Judea that is what dogs were] what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs [that is, "unclean" animals who wallow in the mud: Jews were forbidden to eat or even own them]. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces."

In other words, He says some people have no proper sense of values or appreciation for God and His nature and truth. They are human, but by nature, choice and conduct they strongly resemble curs and pigs.

Jesus sounds awfully judgmental, right? But it is a needed type of judgment! We need to make distinctions and draw conclusions regarding the attitudes of people, and what truths--if any--they are ready for *at this time*. We must not misapply this, of course. Jesus was a "friend of sinners" and preached to outcasts and rejects--and so should we.

Applying this verse, commentator Adam Clarke wrote:

The sacrament of the Lord's supper, and other holy ordinances which are only instituted for the genuine followers of Christ, are not to be dispensed to those who are continually returning like the snarling ill-natured dog to their easily predominant sins of rash judgment, barking at and tearing the characters of others by evil speaking, back biting and slandering; nor to him who, like the swine, is frequently returning to wallow in the mud of sensual gratifications and impurities.

Our main conclusion from this verse is, Jesus expects us to judge and make distinctions regarding people and their attitudes.

And we find the same thing just nine verses later: 15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but in-

wardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them.... 17 Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.... 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.”

So He urges us to measure and discern true teachers from false ones, and avoid the latter. There He goes contradicting Himself again, if verse 1 meant we should never judge others at all.

Our main point is, After saying “Judge not,” our Lord tells us to make judgments! Obviously He meant, as the context indicates, Don’t judge too soon, nor proudly, harshly, unlovingly. I ought not be “a fault-finder who is negative and destructive towards other people and enjoys seeking out their failings, putting the worst possible interpretation on their motives and being ungenerous towards their mistakes” (John Stott).

A True Story that Drives the Point Home

Before he went into a career in TV, the late Fred Rogers, of *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*, attended seminary. While there he took courses on how to preach. Then he had this experience, which he describes:

On a vacation trip my wife and I visited a little church with friends of ours. During the sermon I kept ticking off every mistake I thought the preacher--he must’ve been 80 years old--was making. When his seemingly endless sermon ended, I turned to one of my friends, intending to say something critical about the sermon. I stopped myself when I saw tears running down her face.

She whispered to me, “He said exactly what I needed to hear.” That was really a lesson for me. I was judging and she was needing, and the Holy Spirit responded to need, not judgment.

The Final Step

To make absolutely sure we are not twisting Jesus’ words, “Judge not” into meaning something different from what He intended, a 3rd step may be taken:

3. Study the Wider Context--not just the same chapter or book, but the whole Bible. When we do that, here’s what we find:

a) We Ought to Judge Ourselves: In 1 Cor. 11:28ff. Paul says we ought to examine ourselves before we eat the bread and drink of the cup: “If we [thus] **judged** ourselves, we would not come under judgment,” God’s disciplinary judgment. “When we are being

judged by the Lord, we are being **disciplined** so that we will not be condemned with the world."

b) Yet, in another sense, we should **Not Judge Ourselves**: 1 Cor. 4:3-5. "I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. 4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. **It is the Lord who judges me.** 5 **Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time;** wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God." Main point: realize that I don't see the whole picture, and don't fully understand the part I do see. "Now we know [only] in part" (1 Cor. 13:9).

c) We ought **Not Judge Others**: In Rom 14:3 Paul echoes Jesus. "The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. 4 **Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls.** And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand...."

In other words, that fellow-Christian is not my servant, but Christ's. Seven verses later, in Rom 14:10 Paul says: You, then, **why do you judge your brother?**... For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.... Each of us will give an account of himself to God.

I'm not the one Holding the Trial, but the one Standing On Trial. Paul wants us to remember that.

d) **Yet the Church as a body, a group, Should Judge and Discipline Members who Persist in Sin**: 1 Cor. 5:12ff. "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans. [A man was going to bed with his father's wife, his step-mother.] Shouldn't you have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?**What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church?.... God will judge those outside. Are you not to judge those inside?** "Expel the wicked man from among you."

Well, we have quite a jigsaw puzzle on our hands, haven't we? How do we fit all these pieces together?

How To Summarize All This?

We should not ignore the faults either of ourselves or of others. Rather we definitely need to discern between good and evil, pursuing and promoting right and opposing wrong.

Yet we should not harshly judge and condemn the faults of others, but show mercy as much as possible, treating others as we wish to be treated.

In addition, as Paul said to the church members in Corinth, "Examine yourselves to see if your faith is really genuine. Test yourselves." We can easily delude ourselves if we are not careful.

John Stott summarizes: "We need to be as *critical of ourselves* as we often are of others, and as *generous to others* as we always are to ourselves."

Which words do others think of when I come to their mind? "Judge, critic, harsh"?

Or "Brother, sister, loving"? Or--perish the thought--"Hypocrite, pretender, make-believe"? More important, which words does God think of when He thinks of me?

"Grace levels all distinctions"

G R A C E -- To The WORST and The BEST

R. H. Boll

God's word often moves in extremes. Most of us are average people, and our condition lies between the extremes of human character. For this very reason God showed His dealings with extreme cases, that the case of the average man might be well included. Side by side, in two successive chapters, the Lord shows us His attitude toward two human beings as far removed from each other in circumstances and condition as the poles--the one on the summit of human excellence, the other in the depths of degradation. There are no doubt some in the same condition, respectively, as these two, but the vast majority of us are neither as high as the one nor as low as the other; and what the Lord said to them applies, therefore, to every one of us.

Nicodemus

The first was Nicodemus--a Pharisee, one of the strictest sect of the purest religion the world knew. Not only that, he was "a ruler of the Jews." Those who knew the stringent, almost unreasonable standards required of a member of the Sanhedrin, know that this man's blood was of the purest, and his conduct unblemished, his reputation and character irrefragable, humanly speaking.

The person that appears in the next chapter is a woman of low race--the mongrel race of the Samaritans, hated and despised by the Jews, and that with more or less good reason. Nor was she a good specimen of even that race, as one finds in the worst of families and surroundings here and there a sporadic saint; but her record had been appalling, and she had apparently lived for the flesh in its worst tendencies.

Now with these two, with one of the best men of the best race on earth and one of the low members of one of the lowest races, the Lord Jesus held conversation and spoke to each according to need. He met Nicodemus with the startling announcement that unless he were born again he could not see the kingdom of God; and except he were born of water and of the Spirit, he could not enter the kingdom of God. If He had said that to the Samaritan woman, it would have seemed vastly more reasonable. That her birth, her heredity, her character, were too mean and low for her admission into the kingdom of God--that would be nothing so strange. But if the best man on earth, a scion of the stock whose were the promises, is insufficient, and must abandon his high name and claim and cast away his advantages of birth, character, good works, be circumcised of all his old self, and begin a new existence as a new creature--that is staggering.

We can almost sympathize with Nicodemus's perplexed question, "How can these things be?" For the natural man counts on his morality and makes much of his goodness. But the word of the gospel sweeps all such foundation from under him and sets his feet upon a Rock and gives him a true righteousness which is not his own (Philippians 3:3-9). But the fact that it was Nicodemus to whom Jesus said, "Ye must be born again," lays the same necessity upon the best and most moral men today, and, as a matter of course, upon the meanest and lowest also.

The Woman at the Well

No less surprising and wonderful was the speech of Jesus to the poor and dissolute woman at the well of Samaria, who, according to Jesus' own word, had had five husbands, and was at the time living with a man who was not her husband, and had thus offended against the most fundamental moralities. To her, Jesus freely, without preliminaries, offered "the gift of God"--namely, "living water," whereof a man might drink and never thirst, but it "shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life" (John 4:10,14).

If it had been Nicodemus to whom Jesus made the offer, we would have said: "Yes, naturally so. A man as good and as great as

Nicodemus is worthy of such a gift. Build up your character like Nicodemus and you may have the living water, also."

The fleshly man delights to reason that way. It pleases his pride. He likes to think, "God will save anyone worth saving."

But God commends His own love toward us in that He sent His Son to seek and to save that which was lost. He comes to us, not because we are worthy, but because we need Him. Now the very fact that it was precisely to the degraded Samaritan woman that our Lord made this promise and held out this incredible prospect, putting it within easy reach, is the guarantee that the same promise is to all. We are probably not as low in the scale by human measurement, as that woman, and so the Lord would not probably withhold that promise from us on the grounds of our greater sinfulness. But if we were as low, or lower, it would yet be for us, if we but trust Him and boldly lay hold on it.

On the other hand, to men of Nicodemus's rank and type comes the same promise. For the woman of Samaria must be born again as well as Nicodemus, and Nicodemus may have the living water as well as the Samaritan woman. But Jesus held out the necessity of the new birth to the noblest, lest at any time any man should exalt himself above it; and the promise of the living water to the degraded one, that none may think himself excluded from it. Grace levels all distinctions.

SUFFERING

"The purpose of our lives in this world is not comfort and security but training; not fulfillment, but preparation. The world is a lousy home, but a good gymnasium. It's like an uphill bowling alley. The point is not to succeed in knocking down all the pins -- but to train our muscles.

We misunderstand the point of this world if we expect it to be happy. "Paradoxically, those who expect happiness in this world are usually the most unhappy people, while those who expect unhappiness are the happiest people.... The world is a soul-making machine." --Peter Kreeft

VOICES from the FIELDS

[Also see the reports re: China and Russia, following these letters.]

Dan Wilson
July 9, 2007

Association of Cn. Schools Internat'l.

The main purpose of my trip [to Hungary] was to visit a community of Christians in a small town about 3 hours from Budapest. In the late 1980s six Hungarian families moved to this isolated town of around 500 in order to form a Christian community and to each adopt five gypsy children. They now serve about 150 children from their families and the surrounding villages through their kindergarten, school and music academy. And they have about 100 people in attendance at their church. Many of those adopted children are now in college or are active members of the community. And this part of the country is an old nominal Catholic stronghold.

As the director said, it is really difficult, but they have seen more miracles than they can count.

Our hope is that we can recruit a Christian school from the U.S. or Canada that will send a team next summer to help them with construction of their new school building and run an evangelistic English camp.

[Then] it was a great joy for me to get to return to St. Petersburg after a two year absence. Our two teams were able to have some wonderful ministry in their respective camps in spite of some trials and tribulations. (i.e.--having to contend with ever-changing Russian schedules and one team only having an outhouse to use for two weeks!). One team focused primarily on two groups of orphans, comprising roughly 100 kids. The camp had almost no programming for the orphan groups, not even allowing them to participate in activities such as camp-wide games, so the counselors are pleased to have our team there to provide programs and crafts.

The Bethany Academy team had the joy of leading eight children and teens to the Lord. Please pray for these eight, that God would lead mature Christians across each of their paths to disciple them. I thank God especially for keeping Masha and me safe as we drove about 850 miles through city and countryside while I was there. St. Petersburg now has over 1.5 million vehicles as opposed to 400,000 when I first started driving there in the late 90s.

New calls for our teams seem to be multiplying daily. On Friday I was asked if we could send teams to our national schools in Indonesia and yesterday I was asked if we can send teams to Tanzania. These are in addition to our adding Mexico and Hungary to our growing list of destination countries. I am feeling a bit overwhelmed, but this is certainly not beyond God's capabilities. Please pray for me to have wisdom to know when to say no and when to say yes in faith.

Philip and Heather Ashley
July 20, 2007

Papua New Guinea

[The following was greatly condensed and adapted. Though the prayer requests are long outdated, we can pray for the Lord's ongoing blessing on these ministries, and all who took part. Philip is the son of James and Karen Crowder Ashley in the Solomon Islands. - avw]

We are writing from Madang, Papua New Guinea. Twenty four hours from now we will be on the road to Tiap [a remote tribal area where Heather's parents formerly served as missionaries for years], along with a VBS team of four people. Others will come later.

The last few weeks have been full of stress, worry, hard work, and some amazing answers to prayer as well. Heather finished working at her hospital on June 15th and started packing all of our stuff [to move later to Galveston] while I continued to work for another two weeks. Heather was also trying to help her Mom and siblings get ready to travel with us to Papua New Guinea (PNG) for the special evangelistic outreach and also training of the Christians in the tribe there.

Then, doctors discovered that Marsha (Heather's mom) had an ovarian mass. They asked Marsha to cancel her trip just 24 hours before she and Heather's siblings were to leave for New Guinea. Brigitte and Bobby, able to run the VBS camps on their own, flew over to Papua New Guinea as scheduled, but Marsha stayed behind. At that time her husband Nathan was in Thailand at a Bible Societies conference!

Marsha was scheduled for surgery in Dallas on July 6th. We were scheduled to leave for PNG on July 7th. In the midst of doctor's appointments and concern for Marsha, we were trying to pack to move to Galveston before our departure for Papua New Guinea. Heather especially struggled with knowing she was moving for a minimum of four years to Galveston ; it was hard not to wonder what was going on with her mom's health. The Lord brought many wonderful friends to our house, however, and they spent hours help-

ing us pack and move. We were truly blessed by the outpouring of love around us. Philip stopped work on June 29th, and we moved to Galveston June 30th.

Nathan returned from Thailand to be with Marsha July 1st. We returned to Dallas from Galveston for Marsha's surgery. The Lord was so very merciful--Marsha's tumor was benign, and was successfully removed. We were so relieved!!

However, Marsha was still unable to travel to New Guinea as she needed to recover from surgery. It became more apparent than ever why we had felt led to help lead the team to PNG--without Marsha we needed to take on more responsibility to make the outreach crusade happen. This whole process has truly been a walk of faith for us. We felt that we were supposed to go to PNG this summer--so we went ahead with those plans. The Lord has confirmed this as the summer has gone on.

We had a safe trip to PNG, met up with Brigitte and Bobby, and bought and packed supplies for the village. There is no Walgreens if you forget the toilet paper!

We are eagerly expectant for what the Lord will do. People from several different language groups will be present, so the gospel will be preached to many. In addition, there are leadership seminars, and teaching for more mature Christians, and unity seminars.

Michiya and Tomoko Nakahara
August, 2007

Shizuoka, Japan

Tomoko and I are so very grateful for your faithful support both financially and in your prayers. It is comforting to know that you are praying for us as we labor for the Lord in Japan. I would like to begin by sharing some of the **highlights and blessings over the past year:**

1. August, 2006 - Church School Summer Camp. We had a wonderful Bible study time surrounded by the beauty of God's creation.

2. April - July, 2006 - Michiya taught for Osaka Bible Seminary via satellite, twice weekly

3. November, 2006 - Special Thanksgiving and Child Dedication Service

4. December, 2006 - Church School Christmas Program - many neighborhood children stepped into the church building for the first time. We also had an Adult Christmas Worship Service. 500 tracts were handed out throughout the neighborhood prior to this service.

5. June, 2007 -Annual Flower Sunday - Children from the Church School visited retirement villages, the police station, and the fire station with bouquets of flowers showing our appreciation for them.

6. August, 2007 - Church School camp to be held. We are looking forward to a great time in the Lord.

7. "Reading Club" held throughout the year. We have just had our 15th meeting, and are getting an average of 15 kids monthly. This has become a very effective ministry to reach out to the lonely children in the neighborhood.

Prayer Requests: 1. The empty lots in front of the church were sold to a real estate company and we now have three new houses built there which totally block the view of our church from the street. If you remember from my previous letters, the house in front of the church (the only access to the church is a small alley besides this house) would be an ideal lot to purchase once it goes on the market. Considering the expense and the financial status, we are beginning to consider and pray for a different option: If and when this house goes on the market, we would sell our lot along with it and relocate to another place that is less expensive but more visible. Please pray with us as we are just beginning to research this alternative.

2. Several members are too ill to attend the weekly worship service.

3. For the children in the church school, for their salvation.

4. For Tomoko Takahashi who will soon be baptized.

5. My health: I just had another round of tests on my neck/back, this time, by a different specialist. His opinion was very similar to that of my regular physician. The praise is that the bones are beginning to fuse a little (I mentioned this in the previous letter). He stressed that the fusing process is the most crucial time for the new bones. They are so fragile that any amount of stress on them might cause them to break and develop further damage. This is why I cannot be with you this summer. The doctor said that I should not travel for another 2-3 years because the fusing process takes that long to heal. Please pray that it will heal much faster and my new bones will become stronger so that I can be with you next year at this time, God willing. I know that this fusing is taking place because of your prayers, and I want to thank you for them.

Thank you for being partners in our ministry.

[Bob M. Yarbrough, Treasurer, 19930 County Road 324, Terrell, TX 75160]

A Call to Prayer--

100-Plus Missionaries Expelled by Secret Chinese Government Campaign

Michael Ireland

Midland, Texas -- In what looks like the largest expulsion of foreign missionaries since 1954, when the Chinese Communist government expelled all foreign religious workers after taking power in 1949, China Aid Association confirms that a central government-directed campaign to expel suspected foreign missionaries has been ongoing since February 2007.

According to reliable China Aid sources and collaborated reports by at least five different mission agencies, over 100 foreigners accused of being involved in illegal religious activities in China have been expelled or deported this year between April and June.

Expulsion program code-named 'Typhoon No. 5 Campaign'

Sources inside the Chinese government informed CAA that the Chinese government launched a massive expulsion campaign of foreign Christians, encoded Typhoon No. 5, in February 2007. This campaign is believed to be part of the "anti-infiltration" efforts to prevent foreign Christians from engaging in mission activities before the Beijing Olympics next year.

Citizens from six countries working in Xinjiang, Beijing and Tibet targeted

Most of those expelled are citizens from the United States, South Korea, Singapore, Canada, Australia, and Israel. They were expelled when they were either working or visiting in Xinjiang, Beijing, Tibet, or Shandong.

According to an American who had been working in Xinjiang for 10 years and wants to remain anonymous because of the sensitivity of the topic, over 60 foreign religious workers were expelled from Xinjiang alone. Some of the workers had been serving the local people for 15-18 years before they were asked to leave in the past few months.

At least 15 Christian couples from the United States and other countries were expelled from Beijing in the month of May. Two American English teachers sent by the English Language Institute/China (ELIC) were expelled from Tibet. ELIC (www.elic.org),

a California based Christian organization, is the largest English teacher-sending organization to China and has trained thousands of Chinese college and high school students since the 1990s.

On May 31, 2007, one Israeli Jewish Christian and an American were arrested and expelled from Linyi City, Shandong province when they worshiped together with 70 House Church leaders. On July 1, three American Christians from Indiana were detained in Beijing and then forced to leave China after their US passports were taken away for 3 to 5 days by Chinese security agents.

Consulate Protection Rights Violated

According to CAA's private interviews with some of the expelled Americans, the Chinese PSB confiscated their passports for 2-7 days and treated them professionally while they were interrogated. They were not allowed to have access to US Embassy in Beijing, a direct violation of US-China consulate protection agreements. Some will not be allowed to return to China for 5 years.

This is the largest expulsion of foreign missionaries since 1954 when the Chinese Communist government expelled all foreign religious workers after taking power in 1949. The Chinese government refuses to recognize foreign missionary status in China so many missionaries choose to work in the education or business sectors as ways to stay in China.

“Given the significant contribution to the Chinese people made by those expelled foreigners, this campaign is certainly misguided and counter-productive,” said Bob Fu, President of CAA. “We call upon the Chinese government to correct this wrong by allowing these selfless good-hearted people of faith back into China.”

* * *

Excerpts from Another Organization's Report

The book *Jesus in Beijing* and the VCD series *The Cross* woke very top government officials to the fact that the reports they previously received on the Christian population and their activities in China from the religious Bureau were much watered down. The actual impact of Christianity is much more pervasive than what they had known before. The religious officials had kept the facts from the top government for their own sake - that they might not lose their positions.

In response to this, the government came up with another way to collect statistics about Christian impact in China - they sent out their own spies on a wide scale across the country. The statistics they got

are massively higher than what was previously provided by the religious bureaus.

The government connected this status with the fall of the communist control in the former Soviet Union which was directly related to 2 key issues - religion and racial issues. (End of quote)

Meanwhile, in Russia...

There have been some crackdowns in Russia too, though we have not heard of such widespread deportations as mentioned in China.

Here is a brief excerpt from some paragraphs we received from Paul Kitzmiller of Goin' Fishing ministries - known to many of our readers. He explains, "This information was issued as part of an email newsletter from (apparently) a medical missions ministry called Agape. I am not familiar with this group, but the newsletter was forwarded to me from an acquaintance who knew about the experiences that Duane Jolibois and I had in April. It has no direct connection to us, but may offer a little more insight to what happened to us."

July 12, 2007 Our arctic team has just returned from a fantastic week in a remote village in the middle of the Taiga. This remote village located about 150 miles below the Arctic Circle can only be reached by helicopter or an all day or night drive thru some extremely bad roads through the Taiga. Agape has been to this village several times in the past....

Life in Kedva is like stepping back in time a hundred years. There is electricity, some of the time, but no running water. Water is drawn from wells, outhouses are behind each house, and cooking is often done on wood burning stoves. As one man in the village said while Ron and I were visiting him and his wife one night, "It is as if you have fallen from a star!".... Overall, I think everyone felt the program made a tremendous impact in the community, both for the children that we worked with, and for the adults and older children that we interacted with during the week....

The Final Day: On Tuesday, we made the journey back to Ukhta. We loaded everything on to the truck, traveled down to the river, unloaded the truck, ferried the supplies and people across the river, loaded the truck, traveled for 3 hours, unloaded the truck, loaded the train, traveled for an hour, unloaded the train, loaded the bus, traveled an hour, and finally arrived at the church and unloaded.

It was a rather exhausting 7 hour journey back to Ukhta, and we had a surprise waiting for us. The FSB (former KGB) and the passport/migration officers wanted to see all of us at 9 am Wednesday morning!

Russian law concerning foreigners changed as of January 2007 and being in complete compliance with the new laws is virtually impossible now.... The outcome of all of this is that we spent 7 hours on Wednesday being charged, fined, and fingerprinted for perceived migration law violations. Please pray for this situation in Russia. I now potentially have one strike against me concerning migration law, and they have a policy of not issuing a visa if you have 2 strikes during a 12 month period. Currently, the new laws are VERY restrictive and virtually impossible to be in 100 percent compliance with if you travel very much in Russia. The officers were nice though, serving tea and cookies and asking us how we liked Russia while charging, fining, and fingerprinting us!... Agape, David [Emphasis added]

God's Ways Sometimes Baffle Us

James Packer

Ought we be surprised when we find ourselves baffled by what God is doing?

No! We must not forget who we are. We are not gods; we are creatures, and no more than creatures. As creatures, we have no right or reason to expect that at every point we shall be able to comprehend the wisdom of our Creator. He himself has reminded us, "My thoughts are not your thoughts. . . .As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are. . .my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8-9).

Furthermore, the King has made it clear to us that it is not his pleasure to disclose all the details of his policy to his human subjects. As Moses declared when he had finished expounding to Israel what God has revealed of his will for them: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us. . .that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29, KJV).

The principle illustrated here is that God has disclosed his mind and will so far as we need to know it for practical purposes, and we are to take what he has disclosed as a complete and adequate rule for our faith and life. But there will remain "secret things" that he has not made known and that, in this life at least, he does not intend us

to discover. And the reasons behind God's providential dealings sometimes fall into this category.

Job's case illustrates this. Job was never told about the challenge God met by allowing Satan to plague his servant. All Job knew was that the omnipotent God was morally perfect, and that it would be blasphemously false to deny his goodness under any circumstances. He refused to "curse God" even when his livelihood, his children, and his health had been taken from him (Job 2:9-10).

Fundamentally he maintained this refusal to the end, though the well-meant platitudes that his smug friends churned out at him drove him almost crazy and at times forced out of him wild words about God (of which he later repented).

Though not without struggle, Job held fast his integrity throughout the time of testing, and maintained his confidence in God's goodness. And his confidence was vindicated. For when the time of testing ended, after God has come to Job in mercy to renew his humility (40:1-5; 42:1-6), and Job had obediently prayed for his three maddening friends, "the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before" (42:10, KJV). "Ye have heard of the patience of Job," writes James, "and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:11, KJV). Did the bewildering series of catastrophes that overtook Job mean that God has abdicated his throne or abandoned his servant? Not at all, as Job proved by experience. But the reason God had plunged him into darkness was never revealed to him. Now may not God, for wise purposes of his own, treat others of his followers as he treated Job?

--J. I. Packer, **Hot Tub Religion**

* * *

Something Better than Changed Circumstances

Patricia St. John, who has been described as an ordinary woman with an extra-ordinary faith, poured out her life ministering to people in the neediest places on our planet. She was in Sudan when war refugees flooded that country. They had suffered terribly and had lost everything, yet those among them who were Christians still gave thanks to God.

Patricia said that she stood one night in a crowded little Sudanese church listening to those uprooted believers singing joyfully. Suddenly a life-changing insight burned its way into her mind. "We would have changed their circumstances," she said, "but we would not have changed them." She realized that God "does not always lift people out of the situation. He Himself comes into the situation. . .

He does not pluck them out of the darkness. He becomes the light in the darkness."

* * *

Why Ask "WHY?"

In all fairness, if we ask the 'Why me?' question in regard to our burdens, we should also ask it in regard to our blessings.

We take for granted 100 days of perfect health, and then grumble about one day of aches and pains. We drive the freeway hundreds of times without incident, and then ask, 'Why me?' the one time we have a flat tire or engine trouble. We casually accept the fact when our family is together for the holidays, but when we are separated, we dwell on our loneliness.

How often do we say, "Why me?" as we count our blessings?

Rather than feeling sad about what we don't have, doesn't it make more sense to feel a kind of rollicking rejoicing over everything we do have?"

--Dr. Dale Turner

* * *

If God sends us on stony paths, He will provide us with strong shoes. --Alexander Maclaren

What the New Birth Does, and Doesn't Do

Carl-Kitzmilller

Question: Does God take away the sinful appetites when one becomes a Christian? For example, does He take away the taste for alcohol from the drunkard, the ambition for material things from the thief, the sexual appetite of the sex offender, etc?

God does what He has promised to do! But let us be careful that we do not have a preconceived or false notion as to what He has promised. It seems to me that the thing God has promised to the one who comes to Christ is power for victory over sin. Christians are new creatures in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17). Those who "transact business" with the Lord come out of the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). Of this there can be no doubt. The indwelling of the Spirit of God in the Christian is a fact (Rom. 8:1-10; 1 Cor. 6: 19-20), and one of the great works of the Spirit in the Christian is enabling him to overcome the flesh.

Moreover, one of the greatest promises in the entire New Testament in this writer's judgment is 1 Cor. 10:13 -- He will not permit us (Christians) to be tempted above that which we are able to bear. He can do this by limiting the temptation or by enabling us to face it victoriously. I do not find that He anywhere promises to remove temptation in an absolute sense. Temptation is not sin. Christians are tempted. But Christians have power to be victorious over sin.

While God is not a respecter of persons, neither does He have to be mechanical in His dealings with mankind in order to maintain that standard. He knows us individually and personally, not just as a computer figure. He knows our needs. He knows our "load limit." Just as a wise parent does not deal mechanically in the same way with each child but recognizes the make-up and need of the individual child, how much more our heavenly Father is able to deal with His children. There are those who being converted to Christ declare that their temptation for some particular besetting sin was completely taken away. I don't believe in putting God in a strait jacket or denying that He has such power. So far as I can tell there may be genuine cases in which this happens. There are also those who in a given environment and because they are expected to do so, declare the removal of an appetite but who later yield to the same and fall, showing that they were tragically deceived. The experience of many Christians is that they may have to continue to struggle with some weakness. The temptation will still be there in some measure. Like the apostle Paul with his thorn in the flesh, they may pray for removal of the problem and find the Lord's answer that His grace is sufficient. It is not the removal of the temptation that makes us strong, but the overcoming. The temptation may make us lean all the more on the Lord, finding strength for our weakness.

Now it is evident that genuine repentance will have a strong effect on the power of temptation. For example one man does not like the thing that alcohol does to his family, his job, etc., and may want to quit drinking, but he does not regard drinking as a sin. Another faces up to the fact that he is sinning and genuinely repents before God. The latter stops making excuses and has a real change of mind toward his old ways. He can expect to have a great deal fewer problems with continued temptation than the former. The person who becomes subject to God and who in harmony with that resists the devil (Jas. 4:7) will find the devil fleeing. Decisive action, as we look to God, is one of the ways we can take a great deal of power from temptation. It may not totally eliminate temptation in a lot of cases, but there will be cases in which it will be so completely set aside that it will seem that God has taken away the taste for the wrong. God calls for us to act decisively about sin, to choose whom we will serve, and those who go limping between the two sides will have much more trouble with temptation. It is no secret that a lot of the

powerless, defeated "Christianity" we see today is because people are trying to hold to Christ with one hand and to the world with the other. What some may see as the Lord removing all taste for something may be in great measure the result of genuine repentance.

It is a dangerous doctrine, however, which says that becoming a Christian removes all the taste for the wrong. The old man, the flesh, must still be contended with. We are new creatures, but also babes in Christ who must grow up spiritually. We do have power to overcome, but we may not have learned how to use it. If the Lord always removes the taste of alcohol from the drunkard, then any slip into temptation after the individual supposedly became a Christian must prove that there was never any new birth. And that is simply untrue in some cases. We do not deny that there are those who try to play games with God, so to speak, but there are also genuine Christians who stumble. And they stumble because they are tempted. How better could we destroy a person than to lead him to expect that in the process of his conversion all his old appetites are going to be miraculously removed? He turns to the Lord in all sincerity but the temptation is still there in some measure. So, he concludes, his change was only a mockery. Certainly we want to claim every promise the Lord has made us but to enlarge a promise beyond what He has promised is not only wrong but may have destructive consequences.

We repeat that what is promised is power for victory. The Christian never has to sin. He will never be put in the position that the only thing he can do is sin. He can never plead that there was no righteous way out. God will provide either way out of the temptation or power to overcome. If, indeed, removal of the taste is needed or according to His Will, He can surely do that. But if He chooses to exercise us unto godliness by allowing us to have a practical victory, that may be the better thing. We do not say victory is always easy. It is possible, however, to the one who belongs to God.

Our age has marked some sin as almost impossible to overcome short of a miracle from the Lord. Nor would we deny that there are sins which get such a hold on people that giving them up is very difficult. God's power as seen in the lives of some of the people at Corinth is still available though (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Fornicators and adulterers became Christians. Homosexuals became Christians. Thieves and those greedy of gain became Christians. Drunkards became Christians. Note that we did not say that they continued to live in those evil ways as Christians. This is not a mere show of religion while they continued to live in the old ways. They were "washed... sanctified... justified." It is declared that God had done His work in their lives. They had repented of their sins. There was victory for them in Christ!

TWO FACES OF GOD

GracEmail by Edward Fudge

A *gracEmail* reader in the Southwest asks why God's "personality" seems to change throughout the Bible from mercy and kindness to harshness and judgment. This brother notes that God brought Israel out of Egypt, then left them to die in the wilderness. Why does the Old Testament picture God as strict and vengeful, he wonders, while the New Testament portrays him as loving and forgiving?

* * *

Beware of easy stereotypes -- including this common one! A careful reader will not overlook either the tender mercies of God in the Old Testament -- or the strict judgments contained in the New. True, God punished Israel severely in the wilderness, but only after he had delivered them singlehandedly out of Egypt, brought them safely through the Red Sea, provided them with miraculous food and drink, kept their clothes or shoes from wearing out, and guided them with columns of fire and cloud by night and by day.

Their response to all this was to grumble about missing those juicy Egyptian cucumbers, to complain that God had brought them out to die in the desert, to work up a frenzy of orgiastic "worship" to a golden calf which they praised as their deliverer, and later to decide that God could not make good on his announcement to give them the Promised Land because they looked like grasshoppers in comparison to the "giants" their spies had spotted. It seems to me that God was being very patient!

Whole books of the Old Testament illustrate and highlight God's longsuffering, kindness and mercy. The book of the prophet Jonah relates God's mercy to the cruel and wicked Ninevites -- grace which the small-minded prophet himself anticipated in advance and resented when it occurred. The book of Hosea tells the story of another prophet whom God directed to marry a prostitute, who bore him another man's child, to teach Israel an object lesson about God's faithfulness despite Israel's unfaithfulness to him. The New Testament reveals God's great kindness to sinners through the death of Jesus Christ, but it begins and ends with judgments. John the Baptist opens the story with an announcement that God's fire will soon scorch the desert floor, sending the hypocritical "snakes" scurrying in all directions. Revelation closes with a Lake of Fire which spells the everlasting death of evil and all those who prefer the darkness of sin to the bright light of God's presence.

Between John the Baptist and John of Patmos, we find the divine execution of Ananias and Sapphira, an opponent of Christianity struck blind, and warnings to fear God who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. At the core of the gospel message is the Cross of Christ -- the ultimate judgment of God against sin, willingly borne by the Son of God in place of all sinners who finally are saved.

We really are not talking about an either/or. God is merciful and he is also severe. Romans 11:22 puts these traits together in perspective: "Behold, therefore, the goodness and the severity of God." God is good to those who do not push him away. For those who reject God's freely-offered goodness, there remains only that judgment which, apart from Christ's atonement, God's holiness and justice require.

POLITICS

GracEmail by Edward Fudge

A *gracEmail* reader writes, "I am so discouraged by the shenanigans of our national politicians in both parties. But it seems to me the strongest 'Christian' voices are often overly simplistic and sometimes extreme in their views as well. What are we to do?"

* * *

The best we can, my friend. The best we can. Measured by God's standard, no human act or agenda, platform or program is totally pure. And some sinful people—at every strata of society—will abuse any system we have, proportionately to their power and opportunity. If we look closely at either political party, any illusions of moral innocence quickly drown in a sea of self-interested supporters, official lobbyists and tainted contributions. Only the most naive can fail to recognize this reality.

Most political issues are far more complex than partisans on either side usually indicate. Consider the abortion controversy. Where is the "pro-life" position which also includes practical proposals for quality life after birth? Why, on the other hand, does "pro-choice" rhetoric not address moral choices which result in conception? One party talks much about personal morality (holiness), while the other publicizes its commitment to social morality (justice) in the form of concern for the powerless and needy. Why must we choose between the two? The biblical prophets consistently demand both. Yet Scripture does not describe how government is to advance or to accomplish either.

Amidst the ambiguities, it is comforting to remember the certainties. The Bible assures us that God ultimately presides over all the nations. Earthly rulers govern at his pleasure and finally are accountable to him. Unlike most of the human race throughout history, God has given us the freedom to participate in selecting our leaders. As Christians, let us pray diligently for all those in office. Let us remember that God does not belong to any political party. God's kingdom does not depend on a majority in any legislative body, either for its agenda or its final success.

Both of the two preceding articles are reprinted from gracEmail by permission. To subscribe free to gracEmail, go to www.Edward-Fudge.com

The FAX of Life--

Where to Begin

by Rubel Shelly

Have you ever had the feeling that something needs to be done to straighten a crooked thing? Right a wrong? Slay a dragon? Perhaps the issue at hand was a social evil, a family matter, or a church problem. It could have been abortion, teen-age rebellion, or division.

Most often the outcome is merely that we wring our hands, lament the problem is larger than our resources, and do nothing. There's a better approach.

"But what can just one person do about problems of such immense proportions?" somebody asks. In Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle*, the character who appears to speak for him is named Nerzhin. At one point, Nerzhin is pondering this question: "If you wanted to set the world to rights, who would you begin with - yourself or other people?"

The frustration most of us feel about solving great problems is that we have no control over others and their behaviors. Thus we are willing to let the problem remain unaddressed - but feeling pious now that we are at least aware of it and concerned. Every problem you have a true concern about, however, is one with which you can begin with yourself to make a difference.

What can you do about the abortion problem? How about opening your home to a scared teen-ager whose choice is between an abortion and being kicked out by humiliated parents? The crisis preg-

nancy center in your city would love to have you as a volunteer to provide shelter for one of those girls.

What can you do about adolescent rebellion? Spend more time with your own children to build bridges of love and communication. Or stick out your neck to share the pain of fellow-parents in their nightmare of alienation.

What can you do about division in your church? Call a person from whom you have been estranged to have lunch and talk. Or host a luncheon for two people who are at odds to see if you can be a peacemaker for them.

Problems that remain someone else's responsibility go unresolved forever. At some point, somebody has to begin to set a matter right. Decades ago now, a London newspaper asked its readers to respond to this question: "What is wrong with the world?" Letters began pouring in and were printed. One simply said, "Dear Sirs, I am. Sincerely, G. K. Chesterton."

Can you think of anything that needs to be put right today?

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"NEVERTHELESS" or "EVEN SO"

Leroy Garrett
"Occasional Essay 35," 2004

Karl Barth in his generation was arguably the most renowned theologian in the world. It is understandable that when he visited an American seminary the students were curious to see and hear him. One of the seminarians had a question for the noted Swiss scholar: *What is the most profound thought you ever had?*

The student may have expected something out of Plato or Aristotle, and was probably surprised when Barth responded with: "The most profound thought I ever had I learned at my mother's knee -- *Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.*"

Scholars are sometimes humble enough to surprise us with that kind of simplicity -- that the great profound truths are often the simplest ones. As for Barth, he cited Psalms 73:23-24 as identifying the one simple truth that was the basis of his theology. It is one of the lament Psalms where the writer complains to God about the way life is going. He complains about the prosperity of the wicked, while the righteous are consumed with terror. His heart is grieved and his

mind vexed. Life is like a bad dream, as the Lord himself will see if he ever wakes up. He finds it too painful to try to make sense of life. He even moans, "I was like a beast before you."

Then comes the faithful resignation that impressed Barth: "Nevertheless I am continually with you; You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." *The New Jerusalem Bible* renders verse 23: "Even so, I stayed in your presence; you grasped me by the right hand; you will guide me with advice."

The "Nevertheless" or "Even so" principle is the taproot of religious faith. Life may be incredibly difficult and cruel, and there may be inexplicable injustices and tragedies. *Nevertheless*, I will remain faithful, for God is in the shadows. *Even so*, I will hang in, for God will sustain me.

This principle accepts life the way one finds it. It is realistic in that it recognizes that life by its nature is difficult and sometimes seemingly impossible. And it is unfair and cruel for many people. It is a brave faith -- one anchored in deep conviction -- that can say amidst the storms of life, *Nevertheless* . . .

Ouida and I take our turn in the Prayer Room -- an hour each week--at our congregation. Prayer requests are written on cards, from members and non-members alike. Some are called in from outsiders. A team of us takes turns in praying about the requests, all day long, five days a week. Ouida returned from her turn while I am preparing this essay. She quietly said to me -- as if she felt the pain -- "I am amazed that there are so many prayer requests about cancer -- all kinds of cancer."

Yes, all kinds of cancer -- and other serious illnesses -- some of them terminal, even children. But the prayer cards tell of other concerns and call for other prayers. Unemployment or underemployment. A place to live. Financial problems. Dysfunctional homes. A wife who fears her husband is going to forsake his family. Sons at war. Children astray. Teenagers killed in an auto accident. Wavering faith. Old folk who feel lonely and forsaken. On and on it goes.

Can one hold up those cards to the God of heaven and lament -- as did some writers of the Bible -- "Why so much pain and heartache in a world that God loves and over which he rules?" But then add, as if wrenching the last vestige of faith from deep within our soul, "*Nevertheless, you are with us, even amidst the darkness . . . and light will one day overcome the darkness.*"

The prophet Habakkuk was given to lamentations. "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and you will not hear?" opens his prophecy. He

complained about all the violence and injustice. Like the lamenting psalmists, he dares to question God, "Why do you show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble?" Violence was everywhere, and yet God would not save, he lamented.

And yet Habakkuk ends with one of the most encouraging passages in all the Old Testament. It expresses the "Nevertheless" principle.

*Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls ---
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

I returned this week from a series with an African-American church in Jacksonville, Florida. While it bears the name "The Worship Place," it is of Churches of Christ background. Its minister, Harold Rollinson, was educated at Abilene Christian University. On the program with me was Ivory James, Jr., a longtime soulmate of mine. Ivory and I were put on trial by leaders of the black Churches of Christ and were excommunicated. It is an incredible story that I tell in my autobiography but will not repeat here. It was good to see dear Ivory again.

I'm relating this so as to tell you of a conversation I had at dinner with Harold and Ivory and their wives about growing up black in the South -- and the present state of racism in America, as they see it. Ivory told of how when he was a six-year old boy he was informed by his mother he could no longer play with a white boy his same age, even though bosom friends. "Why, Mamma?" was at last answered by the sympathetic mother of the white boy, "You are black and he is white." That was when Ivory learned that he was black. "I didn't know I was black or that my playmate was white," he told me, laughing. "We were just little boys."

Nor could Ivory attend the school his playmate attended. Later in life Ivory -- still naive about it all -- told his father he wanted to attend the state university. "Son, you can't go to the university. You keep forgetting that you're black!" Nor could he use a public toilet, eat at a restaurant, stay in a hotel, or even drink from a water fountain. And certainly not get a decent job. He was black.

We all recognized that the Civil Rights Movement has made a difference. We noted that the time was when we could not be together in a restaurant as we were that day, served by a white waitress no less. But racism still exists, even if more subtle, and sometimes not so subtle. White folk did not want this African-American church erecting a building in their neighborhood, however impressive the facility. They created obstacles. Pressure was put on the white lady who sold them the property, but she would not yield. It is much more difficult for a black family to make a loan for a home. There may be laws about job, salary, and housing discrimination, but there are ways of ignoring them.

Harold, himself a minister, reminded me that on TV a black minister is always stereotyped -- the shyster, conniving, woman-chaser type. Ivory pointed out that in social intercourse a white couple will be Mr. and Mrs., while the black couple will be called by their first names. Ivory said his father advised him to marry a light-skinned woman, for his children would be lighter and more acceptable to whites. The black-black African-American has a harder time of it than his lighter counterpart, especially the males.

There is less prejudice toward the black woman. She can get a job when her husband can't. It causes friction in the home. "I got a job and I'm black," she scolds her husband, "why can't you get one; you must be lazy." The black male can hardly get a job that calls for being on the phone. His voice is unmistakable and unacceptable on a business phone, but not the black woman's voice. Harold says this causes lots of hate and resentment, and may help explain why our prison population has an inordinately high percentage of black males.

All this in a nation that claims to be Christian! One would think that Christ's call for discipleship -- following him! -- would make us color blind. Have you ever tried doing what William James, famed Harvard philosopher, advised -- "imagine foreign states of mind" -- and put yourself in a black person's shoes? There would be one big difference in your life. Whatever you did, wherever you went, whatever your dreams, you could never forget your color.

That is one more reason why I love and admire my old friend Ivory -- and now my new friend Harold. In a white man's world the fig tree hasn't always blossomed for them, the vines haven't always borne fruit, and their flock has often been cut off from the field. *Nevertheless . . .*

Cruel discrimination! Those who bear it a lifetime, and can still say, "*Even so*, the Lord is with me, and I rejoice in his promises," may enter the kingdom of God before the rest of us.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill, BHill40482@aol.com

Pray for our Missionary Editor Brother Dennis Allen has recently had several spells of irregular heart-beat. A few times he even fainted. Update: Dennis Allen gets Pacemaker, recovers from Heart Troubles: July 17, 2007 "Dad came through the [pacemaker-installation] surgery beautifully, with no complications. He was alert when he came out of the operating room and able to communicate clearly. It was just amazing to learn that [the next day] he had climbed the long flight of steps on his own without any problems or the shortness of breath that had been troubling him. We are deeply grateful for everyone who prayed during this rough time. The Lord has been a present help throughout! --Linda Allen [his daughter]

Brother Glenn Baber, whose wife, Opal, went to be with the Lord on July 11, 2007, has been admitted to the hospital with a blood clot in each lung. Tests have been made to see if he has blood clots in his legs, etc. with no report at this time. He was receiving treatment in the ICU unit. He will appreciate your prayers. (From email received July 19)

Larry Kranz On July 20 this good brother suddenly went to be with His Savior. He was 66. Survivors include his wife Nancy, three daughters and a son. While my times of face-to-face fellowship with Larry were not many, each of them was joyful (though too short). I was impressed by his desire to keep growing in the Lord and keep studying His word. Just a few years ago he commuted to Louisville from his home near Cincinnati to

take a class in the School of Biblical Studies. He desired the Lord's work to advance, and was eager to help in any way he could. His regular and generous support to Word and Work magazine in recent years was a great encouragement to us. He was our only every-month donor, though occasionally others have made large gifts. -- A.V.W.

Senior Citizens Week at Woodland Camp Turns 20 This September, Senior Citizens Week designated for campers ages 50 and over, turns 20 years old. Since its beginning in 1987, this has been a popular week enjoyed by many of Woodland's mature campers. Dick & Janell Lewis and J.R. & Pie Satterfield--this year's directors--have been hard at work planning the week, Sept. 10-14. Note the new schedule: Mon. afternoon-Fri. noon (a break with tradition!). Contact Dick at (423) 477-3707 or see the online newsletter, Woodland Wanderings, edited by Larry Miles: larrymiles@insightbb.com The camp has renovated cabins and upgraded camper sites (30 & 50 amp service; water and waste connections available). There are 2 nearby motels too. The next day, Sept. 15, the annual homecoming & annual meeting will be held. To learn more contact David Pound: (317) 298-4730 or Poundhouse@aol.com

The 17th annual Ladies Retreat: Using Our Spiritual Gifts for God's Glory. The dates are Sept. 28 (starting at 6:15 p.m.) - 29, 2007. Location again is Camp Kavanaugh, Crestwood KY. Learn more about spiritual gifts--yours and others. Speakers: Carol Miller, Melanie Mitchell, Jan Rake Ryner-

son. Cost for ladies is only \$25 IF paid by Sept. 4; \$30 afterwards. Cost for teens is only \$15 IF paid by Sept. 4; \$20 afterwards. For other important details call Ruth Wilson, 502: 897-2831; or Sandra Naugle, 812: 246-2918.

Mackville Church of Christ in central Kentucky is looking to the Lord to provide a preacher. For more information write or call Norman Darland, 195 Hwy 433, Mackville, KY 40040. (859) 262-5530

Ralph Ave. Church of Christ (Louisville, KY) Revival services Wednesday, August 15 through Sunday, August 19, 2007. (2501 Ralph Ave., Shively, Ky. 502) 447-0047. Sonny Childs, evangelist and founder of Missionaries to America Program. Wed. - Fri. 7:00 p.m. Youth Rally - Sat. 1-5 p.m. Homecoming Service - 10:50 a.m. Sun. night - 6:00 p.m.

Visit Sonny's website: sonny-childs.com

Borden Church of Christ (IND) hosted a reception on Sunday, July 29th in honor of Mike Abbott, minister for the past 18 years. He and his family are moving to Denham Springs, Louisiana to minister there.

Julius & Claudia Hovan were honored during the month of July in Harrodsburg, Kentucky for celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. Many friends gathered from Central Kentucky, the Louisville/Indiana area, Jacksonville, Florida, and the Gallatin, Tennessee area. It was good to be re-acquainted with their children and grandchildren who hosted the reception. We thank the Lord for this fine Christian couple whose lives have been an encouragement to so many and pray that the Lord will

continue to use them. Bro. Julius has been serving the Bohon Church of Christ as minister since the passing of Bro. Kenneth Preston.

Parksville Church of Christ (KY) is announcing their fall revival for September 23-26, 2007 with evangelist Bennie Hill. The meeting begins on Sunday (9/23) with Sunday School at 10:00 a.m. - morning worship at 11:00 a.m. followed by a "Homecoming Basket Dinner". Sunday night through Wednesday will begin at 7:00 p.m. with the theme: "The Second Coming of Christ." Prayers are coveted as God's Word is presented in each service - that believers will be edified and souls will be saved!

Church of Christ Worldwide (Lexington, KY) continues to forward funds to designated missionaries and various works around the world. Many have remained faithful in their giving to the various works. David & Betsy Harding, and Sis. Stanna Page continue to serve in this great work of faith and labor of love. The office looks forward to receiving updated material and the publication of our Prayer/Praise Booklet to be distributed by Thanksgiving. If your church is not receiving a monthly financial statement, please contact us at: Church of Christ Worldwide, P.O. Box 54842, Lexington, KY 40555, Bhill40482@aol.com

Why All The Hype...about Harry Potter? In July of this year - the seventh and final book in the Harry Potter series broke sales records to become the fastest selling book in history. The book "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" sold more than 8.3 million copies in the US in less than 24 hours. Christians should beware to what many seem to believe are "harmless" for young minds. See Deut. 18:10-12

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