



# Shepherd's Voice.®

*Spring / Summer 2011*  
**FREE!**

*M A G A Z I N E*

*In this issue...*

**A Gentle Spirit**

**The High Priest That Wept**

**Stones for an Unseen Building**

**Would Jesus Eat a Cheeseburger?**

Managing Editor: Jim Patterson  
 Editors: Bruce Horne, Ph. D.  
 Norman Edwards  
 Assistant Editor: Jean Jantzen  
 Contributing Writers: Norman Edwards  
 Bruce Horne, Ph.D.  
 Jean Jantzen  
 L. Wade Johnson  
 Edward Malone, J.D.  
 Amy Nass  
 Duane E. Nicol  
 Jim Patterson  
 Webmaster: Kim Kozak  
 Layout & Design: Marcia Nicol

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in CANADA  
 Shepherd's Voice Magazine  
 P.O Box 74  
 287 Tache Avenue  
 Winnipeg, MB R2H 3B8  
 Canada

Email us at: [info@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org](mailto:info@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org)

Visit our web site: [www.shepherdsvoicemagazine.org](http://www.shepherdsvoicemagazine.org)



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## Greetings!

The invitation to salvation was expressed not only in words, but in the kindness of the Person Jesus is. “*Come to Me, ... for I am gentle and lowly in heart ...*” (Matthew 11:28-29). Those who wish to be a part of the spreading of the gospel as Jesus commissioned His disciples in Matthew 28:19-20 ought to be cultivating the gentleness that comes from above to be effective in His work.

The gospel must be preached in this manner, for it stands out in a fallen world. In a fallen world, needs often are met by matters of principle, desire for control, and other selfish pursuits, all manifesting themselves in aggressive and intimidating behaviors, and all under the belief one is entitled to assert one’s “rights” over others as the carnal mind feels it has every right to do. These behaviors manifest themselves in various forms from mild to severe, but the motives are always the same. The world’s resources, which include all the goodness that can be found in them, are being taxed by carnal ideas of right and wrong.

In complete contrast, when Jesus Christ lived on this earth in the flesh, He did not come to assert His rights on anyone, anytime. Although He lived a life that became acquainted with grief and sorrow, He lived a life of liberty. On one occasion, as related in Matthew in Chapter 17, Peter was confronted as to why he and his Master did not pay the temple tax. Although Jesus was King, the Son of God, He was truly exempt from paying the temple tax, for the sons of a king are free (v. 26). Instead he instructed Peter to pay it anyway. Why? Jesus did so to avoid giving offense, and in doing so He proved His liberty without expense to anyone. Although Jesus offended many people during the time of His ministry on earth, He did so only by obeying the Father and serving others. He was being true to His own heart of being a gentle person, just as He was to those given the duty of collecting the temple tax.

In Jean Jantzen’s article, *A Gentle Spirit*, she discusses the attributes of gentleness as the fruit of the Spirit. One

should not be confused with what gentleness is and how it should be interpreted. As we come to terms of who we are in Jesus Christ and the liberty we have been given, we learn to properly lay down our lives in humility that is appreciated by others, and in the praise to God. Such is the fruit of the Spirit that is gentleness.

This gentleness is not dependent on circumstances, nor can it be learned from the best intentions. It only can be learned in a true and sustaining way through the work of the Holy Spirit, by both its work on the inner person and by the examples that can be observed in those already being transformed. “*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy*” (James 3:17). When James wrote this he did so in the context of those who would be teachers, so gentleness is crucial, and gives the example to others. He immediately goes on to say that such attributes cultivate an environment that is peaceable (v.18). I bring this to our attention because in my experience growth and learning are abundant in a climate created by wise and gentle individuals, teaching and fellowshiping in the most appropriate ways. God’s people are working out their salvation in what often are not the best of circumstances in the world, but when in the community of believers where peace is cultivated it is a great blessing.

In the winter issue I touched on the merging of the *Servants’ News* with the *Shepherd’s Voice*. Two recent articles by Norman Edwards that have appeared in the *Servants’ News* are included in this issue. In *Stones for an Unseen Building*, Norman examines how we, as stones, are being formed in the world; he shows how great leaders of the Bible were “stones” hewn in humility. And in *Faith to Face the Future*, Norman helps us explore how to live by faith without fear as the future unfolds. We hope that they are as edifying to you as they have been to me.

Finally, in *The High Priest That Wept*, we look at the insights into the training of Jesus Christ as High Priest that often may be overlooked as we narrow in on some of scriptures of Hebrews. We re-examine a particular occasion where Jesus wept given in the gospel account by John. We must not underestimate the empathetic capacity of Jesus Christ as He intercedes for us before the throne in heaven.

In His service,

*Jim Patterson*  
Managing Editor

## The High Priest That Wept

The writer of Hebrews provided a comprehensive picture for his readers of Jesus Christ as our High Priest, perfected and unchanging, who always lives to intercede and save to the uttermost. The implication by the writer indicates that his audience at the time were unable to receive the full understanding of Jesus as High Priest due to their dullness of hearing - Hebrews 5:11. He also suggests that the failure to do so will limit their experience of the powers of the age to come and tasting the heavenly gift - Hebrews 5:4,5.

Fortunately, our epistle writer decided that he was confident concerning better things for them, and we are also subsequently blessed by the latter presentation of the superiority of the priesthood order of Melchizedek. If we can grasp what is truly being told to us, we also can advance in the faith and experience in greater measure the divine enablement, the grace of God, that Jesus intends for us.

This article is to encourage the recognition of Jesus Christ as our High Priest. The depiction of Jesus Christ as High Priest is not just an effective analogy created by God so we understand the salvation process better but something that is very real because of the manner in which it came into reality. Our lives--our ability to continue to exist--depend on the High Priest's ability to intercede for us at the Holy of Holies. It is my belief that the success of our sojourn in this world is the experiential awareness and the understanding of Jesus Christ as High Priest is paramount. To do this, we are going to explore the training of the Jesus Christ as High Priest and then connect it with our own. When we do, the appreciation for His empathic capacity may become more real to us, and we can begin to accept in full measure there is nothing He cannot handle as our intercessor before the Father.



### The Need for a High Priest

The writer of Hebrews makes a significant statement about the sojourn of Jesus Christ:

*“ ... who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who is able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.” – 5:7-8*

This is a powerful description of the life of Jesus Christ while living as a human, in the flesh, learning what it was to be human, and to qualify as High Priest.

*“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” 4:15*

The High Priest of Israel was a significant figure for the nation. On the Day of Atonement, when he entered behind the veil with the blood of the sin offering, and followed the instructions set forth to him in significant detail. (Leviticus 16) A successful atonement cleansed the nation of sin and guilt before the Lord. The significance of this day did not escape the

knowing. We are told to know we are saved, to know we are children of God, but do we know always the reasons why things happen as they do? The happenings of life of the Christian may not be understood for years. Mistakes can haunt us; the church seems divided; and solutions to issues seem elusive.

When this happens perhaps we get the subconscious impression that with the exception of the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus Christ lived a stoic, self-assured life on earth. This impression is heightened when we read some of the Gospel accounts. Take for example a young Jesus, who, when He went missing, was found three days later amongst teachers in the Temple, astonishing those around Him, seemingly indifferent to His parents' concerns. Then there is the account of Jesus sleeping through a treacherous storm at sea and calming the elements by His very words. And who can forget how Jesus was able to walk on water and answer with grace and wisdom all who challenged His authority? Or perhaps we think of the transfiguration on the mount. Always we see Jesus as someone who was frequently disappointed with the faith of many. If this is the impression we develop of Him, an unswervingly confident Jesus will thus seem far removed from the often unsteady experience of our personal walk on earth.

The life and mind of Jesus Christ are multifaceted, and we are exploring only one facet of the life of Jesus Christ our High Priest. We want to know if he can relate to times of not knowing, times of bewilderment. Times we feel our needs are not being considered when they appear unrelated to the larger scope of our Father's will. Therefore in this article, we will look at a particular incident in Jesus' training as High Priest commonly misunderstood for some of the reasons we have touched on thus far.

### High Priest Training

God the Father actually arranged circumstances and situations for Jesus to experience as part of His training as High Priest, and some specific ones are reported to us. However, if we believe the writer of Hebrews that throughout His life he made cries to

attention of all Israel. An error by the Priest, or an unsuccessful or unaccepted atonement for Israel would have meant national disaster. Atonement for Israel bought the nation time to continue to live and exist. Even in the Jewish culture of today, Yom Kippur remains the most significant high day. Therefore, ingrained in the culture of the Hebrews, which is the writer's target audience, is the significance and need of the high priest and his atoning and intercessory work.

Today, recognition of the even greater atoning power of Jesus Christ as High Priest must not be underestimated. When Jesus tells us to believe in him (John 14:1), He not only speaks from the standpoint of who He is and where He was going, He speaks particularly from the standpoint of His experience as a human. Doubt and attrition that have plagued the Church of God have had various causes, but the particular ones we are looking at in this article is this: disbelief and disobedience through excuse. The excuse has it that, although we believe He suffered at Calvary, the heart and mind of Jesus are too removed from the conditions in which we live and that the circumstances, offenses, and/or sins are too exceptional for Jesus to consider and atone for.

So often we encounter the situation of simply not

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God, then we undoubtedly are privy to only a few. The word translated *supplications* in Hebrews 5:7 is an uncommon word in the New Testament. It describes entreats, or earnest requests, approaches for a favor. If we consider this in its totality in the context given, we are to recognize that Jesus Himself asked God to take action over and above what He was obligated to do, even for Jesus, God's only begotten Son. Moreover, Jesus did so with vehement cries and tears, and He was heard, not because of His status of Son, but for His Godly fear - Hebrews 5:7,8.

Yes, Jesus was motivated to go to God with requests with great need of an answer. Although He was confident in His Father's protection, He must have understood life as it is for us sometimes with all its bewilderments. Jesus must have understood what He was talking about from His own experience when He said "*Sufficient for the day is its own trouble*" – Matthew 6:34. The life of Jesus Christ is multifaceted, so we should be careful never to impose any limitation on Him.

When we are unsure of what to do, are bewildered, and are frustrated in our walk, we can potentially stumble when we begin to doubt the Father's will in our lives. At such times, we do not recognize how or why our will, our desires, and even our needs have come into conflict with the Father's will. When we fail to properly recognize this conflict and identify it for what it is, there is a temptation to deviate from God's will.

So this now brings us to pose a question. If Jesus Christ always stayed within the full knowledge of doing His Father's will, how does He qualify to be High Priest to all of us who fall short of this knowledge and who still are learning and growing in understanding of who God is?

The writer of Hebrews gives us a start in understanding the answer: "*... He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and having been perfected, He became the author of salvation to all who obey Him ...*" - Hebrews. 5:8,9.

By learning obedience the writer is not suggesting the Jesus was at anytime disobedient, which we must rule out, but he is telling us that Jesus learned what it was like to be obedient as a human, and the suffering that comes with it, to an Almighty and Holy God. He learned the temptation to be disobedient, but yet remained without sin - Hebrews 4:15. The suffering and temptation to be disobedient must have been so severe that He offered up "... vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death ..." - Hebrews 5:7. The only death that could be in view here is eternal death.

### Jesus' Fear and Our Fear

The writer of Hebrews writes that Jesus was heard because of His godly fear. Are our fear and Jesus' fear the same?

We are caught in a sense between and a holy God and a wise and powerful adversary. This is a precarious position, and we must realize our dependency on God for safety. We are never to take for granted our dependency on God knowing our own proclivities to disobey. The writer makes a point that Jesus never took His direct lineage to God as a means of an advantage to be heard but rather states He was heard for His godly fear. This fear is a religious reverence and calls for great caution. We are called to hold this same fear by the writer of Hebrews in chapter 12, verse 28. Our fears are therefore very much the same as were Jesus' own fears when He came in the flesh. We are motivated to offer up prayers and supplications to God in our time of need as did Jesus also. It is my belief that His occasions of need far exceeded the severity of our own. If we wish to be heard, we need to know we will be heard for our godly fear.

### Jesus Wept

One of the most expressive emotions of Jesus Christ during His time on earth that is recorded in the Gospels is found in John chapter 11, where we find the shortest verse in the Bible, i.e., "*Jesus Wept.*" The story is played out in unusual detail compared to some of the other activities of Jesus. In order to

understand what brought Jesus to shed tears, we need to develop an understanding of the events that led up to this. If we examine the details of the story as a whole, taking into account the unusual details of the event, something very profound regarding this story emerges.

I believe this may be one of the most misunderstood stories in the Gospel. There are two main ideas that I hear repeatedly presented regarding the emotions of Jesus in this account. One is that He was angered due to the disbelief of those around Him. Another is that He was caught up in the emotion of the moment and was sympathetic to the feeling of loss of a fellow loved one. Although we would like to believe our Lord is very capable of expressing His empathies for such reasons, the context of the story reveals a far more deeply felt, personal trauma than normally is considered.

For the purpose of this article, let's explore the story from where it begins. In John chapter 11 we are told that Lazarus of Bethany is sick, and he is the brother of Mary. In verse 2 we are reminded of Mary's faith, devotion, love, and gratitude for Jesus, for she had been forgiven much.

In their belief that Jesus could help Lazarus, the sisters sent a message to Jesus of his dire condition. Moreover, to persuade Jesus' attention in the matter and to come to Lazarus' rescue, the sisters reminded Him of His close relationship with their brother: "*Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick*" – v 3

The word the sisters used for love is *phileo*. *Phileo* is an emotional affection, often termed brotherly love. *Phileo can be considered* the outward demonstration of the kind of love we read in 1 Corinthians 13, *agape*, which regards another with spontaneous favor, or a charitable love. This would have been something visible in the past by the family of Lazarus in observing Jesus. In verse 36 of this chapter, the Jews observed the same of Jesus when he was in tears because of the matter of Lazarus. "*See how he loved (phileo) Him!*" – v 36

But Jesus reveals the purpose of the illness that has

been brought upon Lazarus, that it was for the glory of God, and that Jesus Himself would be glorified by it. Again, so that there would be no doubt about the validity and source of the personal connection that Jesus had for Lazarus, i.e., Mary and Martha, John himself tells us of the love (*agape*) He had for them in Verse 5. John is establishing for us the strength of Jesus' earthly ties to these people, which is necessary if we are to properly interpret the events that are to unfold. Jesus remained in the place He was for two more days.

This tarrying measure was to ensure that Lazarus was dead before He arrived. Although some would like to reconstruct the events with a timetable day by day, it is impossible without speculation to recreate the events in such a way. We do not know long it took the message to reach Jesus of the condition of Lazarus, nor how long he lived after the message was delivered. What we do know is Jesus had purpose in His delay to ensure there was no doubt about the death of Lazarus upon His arrival in Bethany. Jesus Christ invariably knew that He was executing the will of His Father by ensuring that Lazarus was dead. The Father's perfect will is paramount to Jesus and in the forefront of His mind. Jesus also wanted to take advantage of the occasion to get those whom He loved to believe in Him in greater measure.

As an apparent interlude in verses 8 to 10, the disciples expressed their concern for Him in visiting Lazarus as the Jews sought to stone him in the region of Judea through which they had to travel. Jesus reminded His disciples by analogy of walking in the light, that so long as He and those who follow Him walk in the daylight, they are walking according to His Father's will. So long as Jesus did His Father's will, He was under the Father's protection. There was nothing He should fear that the Father did not permit while doing His Father's will. The disciples did not appreciate at that point the Father's protection of His Son until the appointed time, or the inevitability of Jesus' death. After Jesus confirmed the death of Lazarus to His disciples he expressed the following:

*"And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him – v 15.*

The execution of the Father's will is again emphasized in Jesus' own words, that He was *glad* even, that He was not there to heal Lazarus. These plainly spoken words make clear His intentions that the disciples, as well as others, would believe in greater measure of Jesus' identity as the Son of God and His power over life and death. What we see here is the single-mindedness that is needed for Jesus to be successful, as well as an example to all who follow Him. John's emphasis of the determination of Jesus to hold His Father's will as preeminent is an integral part of the developing story that is unfolding.

### **“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died”**

Martha's words in verse 21 to Jesus expressed the profound disappointment of the Lord's failure to fulfill her need and Lazarus' need, to save him from the sickness, which she was absolutely confident He could have done, and indeed she was right. It would be no stretch of the imagination that Lazarus was calling for Jesus from his deathbed for help, which would have only amplified the anxiety of those around him. However, this did not cause her faith she had in Him to fail (verses 22, 27), but she was compelled to express her disappointment. Jesus responded by attempting to take her understanding to the level that the resurrection to life is so strongly tied to Him that He Himself is the resurrection and the life. Jesus does appear to be concerned in comforting her, which He could have perhaps done by telling her in specificity that He would raise Lazarus from the dead in a few short hours. He is more concerned about the victory over death that He brings in the greater context.

### **The Confrontation**

*“Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died”” – v 32.*

Mary collapsing at Jesus' feet likely came about by emotional exhaustion culminating by the sight of the One she counted on the most, but was there too late. Jesus undoubtedly felt it.

*“Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled” – v 33.*

I have heard various interpretations of the reasons behind Jesus' inner emotional response to what He found Himself confronted with. Let us review a few we may be familiar with. That the inner indignation or the feeling of strong emotion, translated here as *“groaned in the spirit”* expressed in this verse was at the evil of death that had afflicted those around Him. It would be highly unlikely that Jesus was not already acquainted with suffering and death. Throughout His life He would be acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3), and the death was necessary to fulfill the purpose for which He was already passionate about. This does not answer the question as to why He was troubled. For John to write that He was troubled, suggests He was for that moment not prepared, perhaps not certain as to what He had encountered. It has also been suggested that Jesus was angry at their lack of faith in Him, because they did not even consider that He could raise Lazarus from the dead.

This kind of thinking returns us to the discussion above where we erroneously get the idea He was disconnected from the angst of human experience. Besides this, was not the death of Lazarus allowed for the very purpose of bolstering their faith? At the other end of the spectrum we are sometimes asked to believe that Jesus was simply moved with compassion joining in with their distraught emotions over the death of their mutual friend. Such a Jesus is appealing to us, but when the context of the story is considered as whole, this starts to fall short of what was truly troubling Jesus.

As we stated earlier, John gives the account in some unusual detail, commencing when Jesus was first made aware of Lazarus' imminent death. John gives



us an account of Jesus being unmoved by the death of Lazarus, even though he had love for him and the family, taking the opportunity to demonstrate the protection of the Father, that he was glad for their sakes that He was not there, for the opportunity that they may believe in Him and increase their faith.

This apparently unmoved Jesus, confident in doing His Father's will, is suddenly confronted with the grief that could have been prevented had not He delayed for the purposes of executing His Father's will. He is suddenly coming to terms with how the will of God on this occasion has conflicted and opposed the deep need that humans have and share. To further the acuteness of the impact on Him, it was the grief allowed to be inflicted on those on earth who were closest to Him. What we see expressed by John is Jesus being caught in the inner conflict of doing His father's will, and the needs of finite human beings. This sudden realization evoked a strong emotional response and troubled Him deeply.

### *“Jesus Wept”*

This popular and shortest verse in the Bible should also be interpreted in the context of the drama that has unfolded. In the creation of man, God saw to it that we should have a pressure release valve, and Jesus needed it here without question. The pressure of being human with divine purpose overcame even His personal mental capacity and required such a release. It is very difficult to express the true inner emotions of another, particularly when they are deeply felt as it was with Jesus during this account. John therefore leaves it up to his readers to discover with the level of detail he includes. John was perhaps the best to give the account over the other Gospel writers. It is my belief that John carefully observed Jesus in this occasion, and may have asked Jesus privately on what He went through internally during this encounter.

### **A Lesson Learned**

Jesus Christ is our High Priest, and is qualified to do so.

*“Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His*

*brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” - Hebrews 2:17,18.*

When tragedy or illnesses to death strike, Jesus must be aware of how the acuteness of loss might be a temptation for some to fall away. Their faith might not be as developed as it was with Mary and the others. The same applies to betrayal, and all temptation we encounter.

The account of John of the death of Lazarus is an important example for us to consider regarding the training of Jesus Christ as High Priest. We must try to understand it correctly, for it helps us understand how Jesus as High Priest can relate to finite human beings, who in their development as Christians, cannot fully comprehend God's will at all times.

### **Therefore, No Excuses**

The writer of Hebrews warns his readers in the early chapters to take earnest heed not to fall away as he develops the need and the superiority of Jesus Christ as High Priest. In the past, God spoke to Israel through His servants the prophets in various ways, but now speaks to us always by His Son - Hebrews 1:1. Therefore, although those who disobedient because of frustration were without excuse in times past, how much less excuse would we have now given all we have been provided by Jesus Christ as our High Priest? Yet, some in the Church of God drift away, using a myriad of excuses.

In my Christian experience, and in the observation of others I cannot help the sense of an undercurrent of frustration, leading to unbelief. The writer of Hebrews must be aware that there is nothing new under the sun when it comes to frustration. Let's examine the writer's words that involve our level of obedience in relation to Jesus Christ as High Priest. The writer's build up to all that Jesus is as High Priest is worth examining.

*“Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest,*

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*lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” - Hebrews 4:11,12.*

Why is it necessary that the Word of God be so piercing and dividing? Because your attention is needed – salvation is not a passive process, which frustrates many. For God’s Will to be successfully executed in our lives, we can be sure He will, when necessary, get our attention in ways that will stop us in our tracks. The flesh without bone is useless, totally dependent on one another to move, as is for us the soul and spirit. When the Sword of God penetrates, it will indeed stop us in our tracks and get our attention.



*For the word of God is living and powerful,  
and sharper than any two-edged sword*

*And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” - Hebrews 4:13.*

An essential point being illustrated by the writer to the Hebrews is this:

When the High Priest speaks, if the sword of His mouth is delivered (Rev 1:16), it is delivered with all the authority and empathy that leaves us without any excuse other than to respond in the correct manner.

*“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who*

*has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” - Hebrews 4:14-16.*

These words given from verses 14 to 16 are not an afterthought, but integral to the prior verses. We are warned not to fall under the same example of unbelief, but immediately we are exhorted to use the available

assistance all believers have in Jesus Christ our High Priest, so that we do not fail. The Word of God is not given as a sword to condemn, but to convict. By conviction we see ourselves as we truly are, and this is a key element in our development as Christians. Verse 13 advises not trying to hide anything from the One who can help you. Verse 14 introduces the

High Priest who is sympathetic to our weaknesses. The call to go boldly is to not fear retribution, but the opposite. It is the throne of Grace, not the judgment seat. Psalm 95 is quoted twice in chapter 3 and three times in chapter 4.

Let’s take a look at this Psalm also. Consider the transition in verse 7 of this Psalm.

The early verses in Psalm 95 give praise and thanksgiving and a call to worship the Lord, and do not appear to be heading in the direction for

a call not to harden our hearts. The transition is found when we are likened to sheep in His Pasture. Once there, it is as though the writer points to the Lord Himself, Who interjects with what He wants the least, from those who praise Him the most.

*“Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts” - Hebrews 4:7.*

Why would we harden our hearts upon hearing His voice? The answer is given in verse 12 - His words can be powerful, sharp and piercing. If the word of His mouth comes to us as described here, we can be sure we are hearing it for a reason. Remember, Jesus Christ did not come to condemn, but save. This purpose He continues to have as He extends every opportunity to believers who have problems with human weaknesses, and so we all do. Verse 7 tells us we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. The sudden transition is to the voice of the Shepherd. Recall Jesus words:

*“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father’s hand” - John 10:27-29.*

Notice that the Shepherd sees His sheep in His hand. To hear His voice is not just a call to privilege, but a call for repentance as well. Getting our attention is the theme. It is the Shepherd in view that wants His sheep’s attention.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

This throne of Grace, on which Jesus sits, was not just made or created, it was LEARNED! It was PERFECTED! There is not an ounce of frustration or despair or angst that this throne cannot deal with. I believe an important remedy for frustration is realizing and accepting the qualification experience of Jesus Christ as High Priest. Jesus Christ poured out His life to the last to qualify to live in the capacity of High Priest, and His Father also ensured that He would. If Jesus prayed in tears to His Father to save

him from death, then how close He must have felt He came to deviating from His divinely ordained mission. But He was heard for His godly fear. When we are at a point of giving up, or the point of being overwhelmed, consider the experience of our High Priest. He has been there throughout His life on earth, and if He is now at the right hand of God the Father sitting at the throne of the universe. Will He not hear the eternal echo of His own cries to Him? Jesus Christ insisted we believe in Him. This belief in Him must include accepting the entirety of His sacrifice, which includes His suffering on earth. If we can accept this, we have the recipe to navigate through our most difficult times.

As God wanted Jesus to qualify as High Priest over all, so does He desire even ourselves to be successful in our training as being kings and priests. Therefore, He will allow experiences to occur in our walk to stop and show us something we have not seen, or has not occurred to us. God’s intervention at times may leave us bewildered, conflicted and without full comprehension of what is going on. However, our High Priest knows exactly what we are going through, and can provide all the intercession we need as we work it out.

*Now this is the main point of things we are saying: “We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens ...” - Hebrews 8:1.*

Our High Priest is sitting at the very throne of God, it is a Royal Priesthood. The Levitical priesthood lacked power, but the priesthood of Melchizedek is a royal priesthood. Even the most sincere love in this world is a frustrated love, but the love of God is love backed by power, mighty to save. The intercessory capacity and love of Jesus Christ is powerful and alive, and the essence of His experience to perfection on earth as High Priest is also powerful and alive in Him today. So when it seems like it has all fallen apart, it is because it was designed already to be put back together by the One who saves. Praise God for His Wisdom and foresight in our lives.





## STONES FOR AN UNSEEN BUILDING

If the Creator of the Universe is all powerful then why does His church appear to be fragmented and disarrayed? Why do corrupt governments, businesses and the entertainment industry seem so powerful by comparison? As believers, we can understand this paradox only by continuing to focus on our Father's purposes for our lives.

*"You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"- 1 Peter 2:5.*

We are being shaped by our Father to rule with his Son upon His return. (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:10) When King Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, he had all of the stones prepared off-site so that they just fit together perfectly when they were finally assembled. Similarly, individual members of His Church will ultimately fit together, each in his own place in God's Kingdom.

*"And the temple, when it was being built, was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that no hammer*

*or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built"-1Kings 6:7. "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" -1Corinthians 3:16-17.*

What is it that distracts us from the great eternal reality of our Father's purpose? It is the temporary "buildings" in the world in which we live. We are not being formed in a perfect stone quarry, but we are being formed **in this world** and its evil:

*"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world"-John 17:15-16.*

Some believers may now be parts of temporary "buildings" such as churches, ministries, businesses, governments and other organizations of men. Others may exist as "clusters of similar stones" living together with families or friends. Still others of us

may be “stones” sitting out all alone. Even when we are together in churches or ministries, there are still “tares”—in this case “bad stones”—stacked in and amongst the chosen stones Matthew 13:24-30.

It is so easy to look at what we see now and wish that we had a better job, better friends, a better church, a healthier body, etc. We should not be so concerned about the appearance of our temporary “building”, “group of stones” or “isolated stone”—whichever represents us. We should be more concerned about how we will fit into what the Father wants for His building.

### Hewn in Humility

The great leaders of the Bible were “stones” hewn in humility. The following examples show the patience of these believers as their Father in heaven shaped them:

- Abraham was promised to be the father of many nations, but then had to wait 25 years for his first son to be born Genesis 12:2-4; 21:5.
- Moses was told he would deliver his people from Egyptian slavery, but first God sent him to tend sheep in the wilderness for 40 years-Exodus 7:7.
- Joseph was shown that he would become the leader of his brothers, but then was sold into slavery and ultimately put into prison for something he didn't do-Genesis 37:6-8, 28; 39:7-20.
- David was anointed to be king over Israel. He had initial success as a warrior, but then had to travel about as a vagabond for years fleeing from jealous king Saul - 1Samuel 17, 2Samuel 1.
- Mary, entrusted with the most important child-rearing job of all time, had a home-birth in a stable, subsequently had to flee to a foreign country to keep her baby out of a mass murder. Then she had to raise her child in a town with a dismal reputation and was falsely accused of fornication all of her life-Luke 2:7, Matthew 2:13-16; John 1:46; 8:41.
- Our Messiah himself suffered in his ministry: *“For it was fitting for Him (Christ), for whom are*

*all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings”* - Hebrews 2:10. Even after His miracle-filled earthly ministry was finished, only 120 disciples gathered on Pentecost to receive the Holy Spirit - Acts 1:15.

• Those who believed in Christ were frequently cast out of the synagogue - John 9:22; 12:42. They were shunned by the others, which greatly limited where they could find work or buy necessities. Thus they formed Christian communities and had great peace there-Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37. But Saul raised up such a persecution that the entire Jerusalem church was scattered, except the apostles - Acts 8:1-4.

Why did our Father in heaven do these things this way? Could not He make His Work look a little more impressive to those who witnessed it? To continue with the last example when God called Saul to His ministry, Saul stopped persecuting the church and became the Apostle Paul - Acts 9:1-6. Only six chapters later, in Acts 15, we read that there is again a substantial church in Jerusalem. So why didn't God call the Apostle Paul “a couple of chapters sooner”—so that the Jerusalem church did not have to be first devastated and then rebuilt?

It was because our Father was working with those people. He was hewing out His “stones” for His Spiritual Temple to be built in the future. He was not simply trying to build a big church in Jerusalem! The trials that came upon those brethren built their faith and expanded their opportunity to preach the gospel to others while simultaneously fashioning them into the “stones” that they will be in the Kingdom of God. By contrast, the physical temple in Jerusalem was completely destroyed in 70 A.D, just as Christ prophesied: “not one stone shall be left here upon another” - Matthew 24:2.

*“For he [Abraham] waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God”*- Hebrews 11:10.

### Our Lives Are Much the Same

It is tempting to think the trials of men and women

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in the Bible are somehow different than ours. It is easy to think that they had a clear vision that their actions were right and that they were suffering for a righteous cause. Whereas, our trials often seem far removed from God and the Bible—they are just difficulties and there is no spiritual right-versus-wrong principles to be upheld. But indeed our Father is still hewing the stones—teaching us through our trials to live by the Scripture, find work to support ourselves, overcome sickness and injury, and live peaceably with difficult people. We need to see His work for what it is. The examples of faith found in Hebrews 11 demonstrated that these men and women suffered human temptations, poverty, sickness, and the like:

*“They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not*

*worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth” - Hebrews 11:37-38.*

There is no doubt this life can be very discouraging at times. This writer has spoken to young people who have grown up in very difficult circumstances and who cannot foresee a bright future. Similarly, he knows of older people who realize they have missed their chance to have a successful marriage and children. He remembers talking to a great-grandmother who had many offspring, but who was grieved that most had departed from God and were in so much trouble.

No person can tell us with certainty how much of our lifelong difficulties are a result of our own faults and how much were caused by circumstances beyond our control. But there are some things we can know with certainty.

•Our Father does not expect us to somehow go

backward in time and change the past.

- We do not need to worry about our past. *“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done”- Phillipians 4:6, NLT.*

- Even if we have struggled with sin for years, we can still repent and change now. Manasseh was king for 55 years—the longest reigning king in Judah and one of the most evil. Yet, he repented late in life and was restored to his kingdom - 2 Chronicles 33:1-20. Whatever sins have plagued our lives, it is never too late to face up to them, humble ourselves, repent and change - 1 John 1:8-10. This is how we allow our Father to make us into a “stone” that will fit into His future building in His Kingdom.

There is nothing wrong with praying for and working toward the pleasant things of this life such as good families, good friends and the physical needs of life. There are many good lessons of love, wisdom and stewardship to be learned. But the ultimate value of our physical lives is that which is being built for all eternity. Our Father is certainly watching to see where we place our priorities. That is what this life is about.

### **Don’t Let the Church Discourage You**

This writer has heard brethren say things much like this:

“I understand how the Eternal is working in my life. I have learned a lot of valuable lessons, but the state of the church discourages me. There are so many groups. Most cannot work together. They cannot agree on doctrine. They cannot even agree on what doctrine they would have to agree on in order to work together. Many groups are so small that they just do not have enough resources to accomplish much. Other groups are doctrinally tolerant and have more resources, but they have leaders or members with flagrant sins, about which they do nothing. The scriptures tell us not to keep company with certain people. I would like to devote myself to serving in a congregation, but something seems to be wrong with every congregation and ministry that I know about.”

This person should pray and ask Christ to show

them how and where they should serve with other brethren. The answer can vary greatly for each individual. Christ may send one to join a corrupt or erroneous group in order to help the people there. He may send another to a small group that he knows will do significant work in the future, and yet another He may use to gradually begin a new group.

Many people read the following Scripture and interpret it in the same way it has been viewed throughout history—that the Church is a big, powerful, observable organization.

*“And I [Christ] also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” - Matthew 16:18-19.*

But let us read the next verse:

“Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ”- Matthew 6:20.

Even though He was the head of the church, He wanted his position, to some degree, hidden from the world at that time. Is it not also likely that the church, His body, (Collosians 1:18) is also hidden from the world to some degree today? While the “gates of Hades” were not to prevail against His church, they may well at times get very close. Remember, He describes His church as a “little flock”:

*“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” - Luke 12:32.*

Similarly, the letters to seven churches (Revelation 2-3) describe, not a powerful organization, but a struggling body of believers with a variety of difficulties within each of them. But take heart, to each of the seven churches Christ promises that individuals, if they are willing to listen, can overcome and receive a reward. And yes, the rewards are all different, because the Master Builder is fashioning each stone for a specific purpose.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says

## Stone for an Unseen Building

to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give” [a different reward for each church] - Revelation 1:7, 11, 17,; 3:6, 13, 22.

### Becoming a Good Stone for the Kingdom

Is there anything that we can do to become a stone for the Father’s building in His Kingdom? Yes. Even though we cannot fashion ourselves to His specifications, we can yield to His work upon us:

*“Do you not know that if **you yield yourselves** to any one as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?” - Romans 6:16, RSV.*

Anything that we let come between us and our Father’s guiding hand becomes an idol.

*“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people” - 2 Corinthians 6:16.*

Let Him form us through prayer, fasting and Bible study.

Let Him test our strength as we

- struggle to support ourselves and our families in a failing economy and deal with a corrupt world,
- struggle to resist the temptations and errors of the world, and
- struggle to do His work.

Let Him see how we will fit together with other stones as we

- pray for our brethren,
- use our gifts to serve in our congregations, and
- help our brothers whom we see in difficulty - Galatians 6:1.

This article concludes with a few more verses from the many Scriptural analogies where believers are compared, in some way, to Stones for an Unseen Building:

*“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” - 1Corinthians 6:19.*

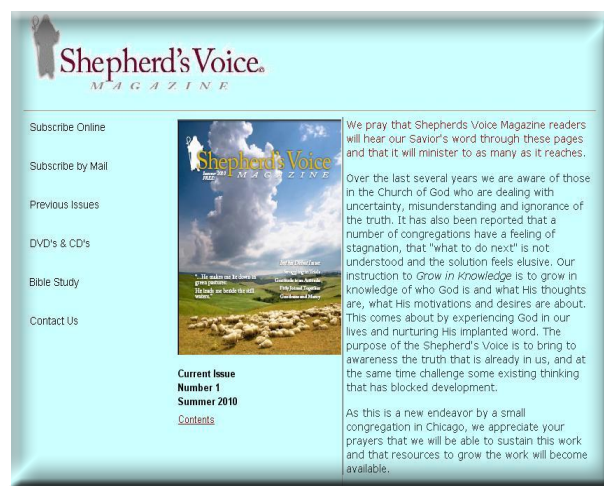
*“While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” - 2Corinthians 4:18.*

*“But Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are **if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end**” - Hebrews 3:6.*

While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. **“For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” - 2**



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## Sound Of Silence

On November 11, 2010, while riding my bicycle home from my weekly 26-mile ride, an elderly man driving a mini-van hit me from behind, claiming he just did not see me. I do not remember being hit and tossed in the air, or my recovery in the hospital. This time for me was silent, as I struggled with lost memory, understanding and communicating with others. You see, my brain was injured and I now suffer from a condition called aphasia, a result of my traumatic brain injury.

I spent 36 days in the hospital relearning to walk, to feed myself and in general recuperate from my injuries. Many people visited me or wrote cards and sent emails wishing me a successful recovery. Unfortunately, I do not remember their visits or their calls. I also suffered from amnesia and struggle to remember my past. Thankfully, over the past six months I have regained much of my past memory and through numerous therapy sessions, relearned how to read, understand words and communicate effectively in conversation.

Recently, I gave a 20-minute talk during a therapy session. I discovered that I need to follow a written outline very strictly or the aphasia will start working overtime and I will begin talking strangely. I am working diligently to continue to improve each and every day. God is bringing me back to normal. I have faith that I will become completely healed. It will take time, more than I had hoped, but I must be patient with the process. Aphasia is not widely known, although several hundreds of thousands suffer from this condition as a result of strokes or a traumatic brain damage. As a result of my brain injury, and learning to adapt to living with aphasia, I have found something changed in me. I am a much calmer person. I have more empathy for people in general. I am touched that people genuinely



cared about me, wanted me to get better and showed such deep concern for me. I am deeply concerned for my brothers and sisters in Christ.

When my doctors and therapists told me I was getting better, it gave me hope and encouragement. I am still required to do the work to continue to improve. It is hard work and means daily reading assignments, studying words, and writing lessons, all to help me recover. While my doctors did not know for certain how well I would recover, I am grateful for the help of doctors and therapists, constantly working with me to improve.

I recall what Matthew 24:48, says, “My Lord delay His coming.” Will Christ actually delay His coming? Or will Christ wait until I am ready? Will Christ wait until the weather is exactly correct? Can I do anything to hold off His return until I am better prepared? Matthew 24:50 tells me, “The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of.” The answer is that Christ will return when He is ready. That is why I must be ready at all times. It was horrible to be caught unaware as I was when hit by a vehicle at 40 mph! I am reminded to not be caught off guard and unprepared. Don’t wait for tomorrow, start preparing today!



## A GENTLE SPIRIT- A TOUCH OF THE DIVINE

“Gentleness means recognizing that the world around us is fragile, especially other people. It is recognizing our own capacity to do harm and choosing instead to be tender, soft-spoken, soft-hearted, and careful. When we are gentle we touch the world in ways that protect and preserve it.”

The best index to a person’s character is how he treats people who can’t do him any good--and how he treats people who can’t fight back. - Abigail Van Buren

My eldest son died last week, an occurrence that brought home to me once again how temporary we are. As I looked at his lifeless body and held his cold hands in mine, I realized the only good thing was the fact that his spirit was in a safe place with God. I knew this because my son loved God with all his heart and soul and mind. And so through my tears, I was able to rejoice.

That is where we all need to be...in that kind of space. My son was such a gentle spirit when he died. I have to be honest here though, he was not always so. Before he had health problems he was a self absorbed and quite self centered young man, as we all were. He was far too handsome for his own good— athletic, tall, tanned and blonde.

Peter tells us quite succinctly that it is not the outward appearance that is important to God. “Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of

your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight” - 1 Peter 3:3-5. Gentleness eliminates the tendency to make pretenses before people – outward appearances designed to impress or to change or control others; this kind of attitude ends only in manipulation. During the time Doug suffered health problems—over a span of a dozen years—I saw a miraculous change, he became soft spoken, kindly, thoughtful, and caring toward others. He was patient and loving. He always thought about the other person. His wife said he would put his hand on her shoulder and she would instantly feel a sense of peace. Animals loved to be near him. Even a little humming bird fluttered near his face. The old man was dead. He was a new man.

According to Galatians 5:20, gentleness is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It comes from God. We need to ask for more of God’s incredible gift of His Spirit so we may grow all the fruits thereof, which include gentleness. We need to understand this particular fruit of the spirit, and we need to practice this gentleness in our lives. My son was not perfect and had the same feelings of anger and frustration that we all face, but he was able to deal with these emotions through the gift of the Holy Spirit because he was in close contact with His Lord and Savior. I would like to look more closely at this wonderful fruit of the Spirit.

***Gentleness: the quality or state of being gentle, well-born, mild, benevolent, docile, etc.; gentility; softness of manners, disposition, etc.; mildness. (Miriam Webster Dictionary). Gentleness includes true humility that does not consider itself too good or too exalted for humble tasks.***

A good example is in the following story titled Service and Humility. Once when George Washington was riding near Washington City with a group of friends, their horses leaped over a wall. One steed kicked off a number of stones.”Better replace them,” suggested the General. “Oh, let the farmer do it,” replied the friends. When the riding party was over, Washington turned his horses back the way they had come. Dismounting at the wall, he carefully replaced the stones.”Oh General,” said a companion, “you are too big to do that.””On the contrary,” answered



Washington, "I am the right size." (<http://www.consciouslivingfoundation.org/InspireStory.htm>)

George Washington was fulfilling the edict, "Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near" - Philippians 4:5.

The Interpreter's Bible says gentleness is the opposite of hubris, the Greek word for haughty, boastful insolence. Gentleness was a quality Christ wanted us to develop with the help of His Spirit. "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience" - Colossians 3:12. "It is the grace which pervades the whole nature, mellowing all which would be harsh. Gentleness is likened to the harmlessness of a dove" (Spiros Zodhiates - The Complete Word Study Dictionary). There are so many Christians who regard real gentleness as a weakness—a soft sentimentalism—that in some way interferes with thorough righteousness, boldness, plain dealing, and a pushing zeal for God.

Gentleness, however, is the expression of humility, like the fragrance emanating from a beautiful flower. Having a gentle spirit does not mean we do not have feelings of anger or other emotions. Christ was a gentle spirit, but "He went into the temple of God

and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" - Matthew 21:11-13. Jesus must have felt something other than gentleness at that particular event, yet He remained a gentle spirit.

You just know when you meet a gentle spirit. It is so rare and is akin to a gentle breeze on a hot brow. It is like seeing a calla lily amongst a field of thorns. You feel a peaceful tranquility and are soothed and comforted by it. That was what it was like to be around my son. It was evident to me that he followed Christ's example. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" - Matthew 11:29.

Gentleness is never a false modesty, a self-deprecation, or a spineless refusal to stand for something. Gentleness is never a cowardly retreat from reality, which substitutes a passive selfishness for real gentleness and avoids trouble in ways that allow even greater trouble to develop. Neither is it a false humility that refuses to recognize that God has given us talents and abilities. To have a really gentle spirit, there must be no secret feeling of anything bitter, or sour, or severe, or combative, or

dictatorial, or judgmental. There must be no religious braggadocio. If we do not know how to suffer then we will never know how to be gentle. Therefore, let us cry out to God to bestow upon us the divine fruit of the spirit and we will grow into perfection. It takes the death of self. Jim Patterson, in his article *The Joy of Overcoming*, tells us that “our own will is often self-serving and self-preserving and is often ...an underestimated factor in what brings us difficulty.” He goes on to say “The will of man is so often, in our own assessment, reasonable and worthy, but often, has its roots in selfish motivation and in seemingly innocent ways” (SVM, summer 2010). If we are more aware of this proclivity in our nature and more willingly submit ourselves to Christ’s way then we will have that gentle spirit Christ desires of us.

The Greek language was a precise and expressive language. In the Greek, gentleness (*prautes*) was “power under control.” Gentleness to the Greek mind was a powerful animal with its power completely under control. So when you think about gentleness think about power under control, anger under control, and our emotions under God’s control. We know we do not have that kind of power in and of ourselves. For that we need God’s Spirit.

Power under control is superbly illustrated in this event with Elijah in the Old Testament. The LORD said, “*Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by. Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave*” - 1 Kings 19: 11-13. It was the gentleness of God that Elijah responded to.

In the New Testament there is the story of a woman who was caught in the act of adultery. She was guilty and Jesus could have judged her harshly. She deserved condemnation. She deserved punishment. She deserved judgment - John 8. But Jesus treated her

gently. He wrote in the sand, and shamed her accusers into slinking away. Then He said to her, “Neither do I condemn thee. Go your way and sin no more.”

Let me suggest that is exactly what the word “gentleness” is all about, i.e., dealing with people who have been broken and twisted and mangled in life. Why did Jesus not condemn her? Because His motivation was very different. He did not come just to judge. Rather, He came to restore and to save. And He came in a gentle whisper and a gentle spirit. “*A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth*” - Isaiah 42:3.

Another illustration of the gentleness of Christ is found in Isaiah 40:11. “*He tends His flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart; He gently leads those that have young.*”

We learn gentleness at the hands of those who are gentle with us. One of the reasons God allows suffering is to provide us with opportunities to express gentleness to others. This concept is reflected in the definition of the Hebrew word gentleness (*anah*): “to abase oneself, to afflict oneself, to chasten self, to deal harshly with oneself.”

Twice in scripture, David testifies, “*Thy gentleness hath made me great*” - II Samuel. 22:36; Psalms 18:35. *In these passages the Hebrew word for great is rabah. It means “to increase in abundance, to excel exceedingly, to enlarge in every way, to gather much, to multiply.”* Gentleness begins with pain and sorrow and ends in an abundant increase. This is the way of God. If we die to ourselves, we will live. If we give bountifully, we will receive bountifully. If we sow in tears, we will reap in joy. So I was privileged to watch that miraculous transformation in my son, Doug. God transformed him into a gentle and loving spirit. It will be wonderful to have Doug greet us when we rise. We, too, can become that gentle spirit if we are willing to pay the price and yield ourselves under the hand of God.



## A Promise to Claim

I had just typed the date at the top of the memo, February 9, 1981, when the silence was pierced by the attention signal from the Tri-Community Volunteer Department Scanner located in the outer office. Several members of my staff were Volunteer Firemen and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's). I had heard the scanner many times before but this time I listened to the next set of tones that alerted the on duty ambulance crew. "Pedestrian struck, Ooltewah High School. Be advised EMT required, time, 11:10 eastern standard time."

A cold chill engulfed me, as I left the memo, headed out of my office past my secretary. "I am taking an early lunch, I said, I may be late getting back."

I drove the three miles to my house, as fast as I could. When I pulled into the driveway, my wife was coming out the door.

The look on her face verified what I had suspected; it was one of our sons. "Lance has been run over by a school bus, she said, they are taking him to East Ridge Hospital." Out of the drive we went and down the narrow winding Standifer Gap Road, to East Brainerd Road as fast as we could.

### How Bad Is It?

When we arrived we were greeted by nurse who tried to comfort us by saying "Doctor Rowe is with him, he is the best surgeon on our staff." she appeared visibly shaken, as if she was need of comforting herself. A series of blurry activities happened over the next several minutes, that neither my wife nor

I can remember very well. We heard the doctor say "He is injured very badly; we are going to take him to surgery and see what we can do. Those large rear tandem wheels ran over his mid section."

I heard someone ask "Are his injuries so bad that he may not walk again?" The doctor was looking at me when he answered so it must have been me that asked the question. "I am not concerned about his walking", He stated directly, "I am concerned about keeping him alive."

"Well" - it was me again- What are the odds of him walking again?"

"There are no odds."

"I am not thinking straight, doctor, I confessed, let me put it another way: when you had to work on people who were hurt this bad, how many recovered well enough to walk again?"



"Mr. Johnson" He replied, "I don't get to work on people who are hurt this badly."

"Well is there another doctor available who has worked on this type of injury?"

"Mr. Johnson, we don't usually work on people who are hurt this badly, because they are dead before they get here. But he is alive now - why I don't know. - but I am going to take him up and see what I can do."

*Mr. Johnson's personal testimony continues in the next issue of SV (Fall/Winter 2011).*

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**FAITH!**

## To Face the Future

**Billion-dollar bank failures!** Government rescues with trillions in bailouts, but somehow, nobody is at fault!

**Global crop failures!** Caused by global warming, or by genetic engineering and mass agri-business practices? Solved by the carbon tax—governments charging us to use the atmosphere?

**Who are our enemies and who are our friends?** Europe, Russia, Arabs, China, Korea? We do business with them all, but we don't trust each other. We waged expensive war, based on lies, and have not reduced terrorism. We claim to bring freedom to other nations, but our own government wants to imprison and torture people without trial, to completely control healthcare, schooling, and just about everything else.

**We need not fear any of this!** The Bible shows us how we may have faith to face the future without fear—whether the “great tribulation” (Matt 24:21; Rev 2:22; 7:14) occurs in our day or many generations later. This faith is not dependent upon correctly understanding Bible prophecy! This is not to say that Bible prophecy is false or that nobody can understand it. **It is saying that faith goes above and beyond Bible prophecy!**

### Faith not Fear

The following short verses tell us the story: “*But He [Christ] said to them [disciples], “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?”*” - Matt 8:2.

Are we fearful? Do we have Faith?

“*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love*” - 1 John 4:18.

With the love of God in our hearts, we know He is working things for our good (Romans 8:28)

and we do not need to fear what happens to us.

“*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we may boldly say: “The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”*” - Hebrews 13:5.

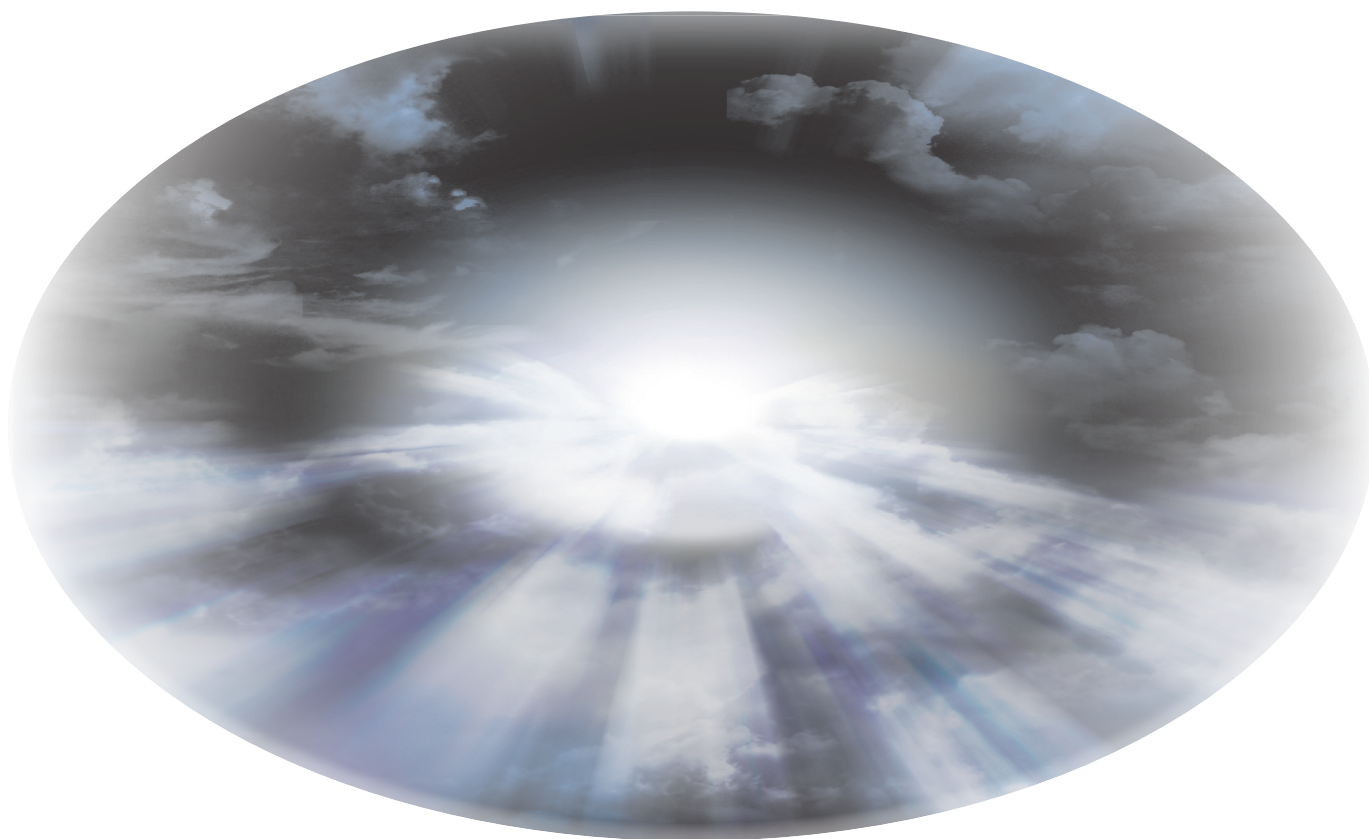
It is easy to fall into the trap of covetousness. Big government and big business still live lavishly, and more media continue to trumpet money as the means whereby security and pleasure come to us. We hope to build a solid financial foundation for the future. But trust in those things is what produces **fear** in us. Indeed, the financial crisis and wars ahead might claim our homes, our cars, our savings and almost everything we have. But they will not claim what is eternal and important - 1Peter 1:3.

“*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*” - Romans 8:14-15. “*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus*” - Galatians 3:26.

Good human fathers will let their children earn their own living and take care of themselves as they are able. But if they fall into disaster, especially not of their own making, their father will take care of them. God will take care of us!

“*I [Paul—and all believers] have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*” - Galatians 2:20.

Our purpose on the earth is to grow to be sons and daughters of God, to live forever with Him. We are here to learn to live by faith in God and reflect Him. We can continue to serve Him with the resources we



have now, knowing that we can trust Him to take care of us wherever we have to go, and whatever kind of good or evil leaders we may find ourselves under.

### The Results of Fear

People who fear the future often spend a lot of time and money on prophetic books, videos, CDs, etc. While it is good to read Bible prophecy (Rev 1:3), one can waste a huge amount of time trying to prove or disprove the thousands of prophetic interpretations of the Bible. These things often make their authors wealthy or powerful, but rarely can one find anything that accurately predicts events before they happen without error.

Prophetic interpreters usually have elaborate charts showing how Bible prophecies predicted the dates of past events and how yet unfulfilled prophecies predict the dates of future events. What is virtually always missing is a past “track record” of the prophetic interpreter, showing that his predictions of ten years ago all came to pass as stated. Rather, one usually finds that the prophetic interpreter has revised his prophecies over the past 10 years because they **did not** come to pass as stated. Sure,

they will claim that God gave them new revelation or changed His plan to give mankind more time. But how do we know that God will not do that again with their current prophetic interpretation?

So do we need to know the dates of anything in advance? Indeed, it is **the people who do not have enough faith in God that desperately want to know when the major trials will come upon the world.** They will take time “to figure out prophecy” or spend money for someone else to do so to protect their lives and possessions. They want to pull their money out of the banks or stock market before they collapse. They want to flee to another city, state or country if trouble is coming to theirs. They want to store food and supplies for themselves before a famine strikes. None of those things are wrong by themselves. But trusting in our ability to physically take care of ourselves produces fear—because we might not be able to do it. But trusting in God does not.

*“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, **do***

*not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” - Matt 6:24-26.*

While the Bible teaches the wise use of our physical resources, no scripture says that we will be judged by how much wealth we acquired during our life. The decisions we make in how we treat others, in developing the love, mercy and justice of God in our lives are far more important. God may choose to show us personally when a disaster is coming so that we may save our resources to share them with many people. If he chooses not to show us, and we lose everything we have to military action or a natural disaster, he does not hold us responsible.

Let us consider an example in concrete terms. Suppose a Christian has a million dollars that he wants to save for difficult times in the future—for his family, friends and neighbors. The best thing he can figure out to do with it is spread it out among several accounts so that all the money is insured. But suppose the banking system collapses with no bailout and he loses all his investment. Is God going to hold him accountable for not interpreting prophecy or finding out about the secret backroom deals that bankers and governments make? Probably not. While this writer has seen and read about this kind of case occurring, there is another kind that is far more common.

Many Christians, unfortunately, intend to hoard their resources for their own benefit during the troubled times to come. Even worse, some have wealth that they have dedicated to God, but which they are still using largely for their own benefit. Sure, these people probably do not think of it that way—they think they are taking care of their own **needs**, not **desires**. But if they would tell their story to an impartial group of brethren—or to Christ in the Judgment, the conclusion would probably be that they are serving themselves.

*And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground*

*of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. “And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ “So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there I will store all my crops and my goods. ‘And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.”’ “But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” - Luke 12:15-21.*

This writer has seen the above happen—Christians who amassed wealth, and died young. He has also seen cases where selfish Christians amassed wealth and lost it—their life being spared. Maybe God preserved their life so they could learn from the experience and go on to grow and be in the first resurrection.

The circumstances of each case vary considerably. Some people simply had much-above-average savings and investments, knew that they could help others from their abundance, but chose not to do so and lost it due to unexpected illness or financial reverses. Others had property or investments that they believed God wanted them to use for a specific purpose, but instead of selling them right away for a moderate price, they hung on to them hoping to get more—only to later see their value dwindle to little or nothing. These unfortunate situations were almost never foreseeable from a human perspective and in most cases the technical financial advisor might have said the people were doing the right thing. But they were not putting God first.

### The Results of Faith

If disastrous days are nearing, we need to have the **faith** to be ready for them. If we believe that God has told us to sell our house for a third of its current value and move elsewhere, would we have the faith to go through with it? What kind of revelation would it require for us to do something like that? A personal revelation to us? One to our local congregation or our church headquarters? What if our church leaders or members were divided on



the validity of the revelation? (This writer has seen this happen.) Sure, we might receive \$100,000 more by waiting for the right buyer. But if we stay, our city may be destroyed by a cataclysmic event, one for which insurance companies will not pay. If we wait for evidence so obvious that everyone knows a disaster is coming, nobody will be buying houses.

We need to learn to live by faith each day. We need to be led by the Spirit of God in what we do: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” - Romans 8:14.

We can oppose the evil of our day, without fearing it—even though it comes to pass. When we see corrupt laws passed or injustice done in our nation, we can speak, write and sometimes vote against it, just as John the Baptist, Christ and the apostles condemned evil in their day and as the “good and just” Joseph of Arimathea voted against it - Luke 23:50-51, NWT. If we are successful in resisting evil and implementing righteousness, praise the Eternal. However, we cannot make the mistake of thinking that either our salvation or the salvation of mankind depends upon our successes in dealing with corrupt human governments. If our efforts to implement righteous rule do not succeed in implementing it, they do succeed as a public witness that there are Godly people with righteous options, who were rejected by the masses.

**But even when the evil that we strongly opposed comes upon our nation, we need not fear it.** Most of mankind, and specifically those who believed in God, have suffered under corrupt governments ever since the Tower of Babel. Hebrews 11 chronicles righteous people who suffered, and who are going to reign with Christ in the first resurrection. Some people mentioned there lived a long time, others died young. During the first couple of hundred years after Christ, the church was persecuted greatly, but it grew!

While we realize many people will suffer in difficult times, we also realize that many people come to God in those times. The goal of the Christian is to bring people to God, not to live the middle-class American dream. Peace and protection come from God, not from getting ourselves (or our children and grandchildren) into nice houses, good schools and good jobs. It

is not wrong to have good things, but all of these things should be used to advance the Kingdom.

As we see the time of the end approaching, we should not be hiding ourselves and our provisions away where we think we will be safe. Rather we should be:

1. “...*Consider[ing] one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching*” - Hebrews 10:24-25. See also Malachi 3:16-18.

2. “...*Sigh[ing] and cry[ing] over all the abominations that are done within it [our nation]*” (Ezekiel 9:4). “*And [God] delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed [or distressed—NIV] by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) — then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment*” 2 Peter 2:7-9..

3. Resolving to refuse to cooperate with evil religious and economic systems, even at great risk to ourselves. We may not know exactly what the “Mark of the Beast” is, but we know that people both worship the Beast and receive economic benefit from his mark, and that we should do neither - Revelation 13:16-17; 14:9-11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4..

4. **Making preparations to reach people with the gospel during troubled times as many people will come to repentance because of it** - 2 Corinthians 7:10; Revelation 7:9-14. This seems like such an obvious idea, but this writer has heard few ministries that are stockpiling Bibles or booklets to bring people to God in difficult times. Many plan to escape the tribulation, but they should consider Matthew 16:25; 24:45-47; and Luke 12:42-44.

5. Making sensible preparations—even secret preparations—to sustain lives of people in danger, even at a risk to our own lives - 1 Kings 18:3-4. This would include basic things like food, water and shelter, and maybe more sophisticated things like alternate energy, agriculture and construction facilities. The question to always ask: Is it for you or is it for the kingdom?

6. “*Let[ing] no one seek his own, but each one the*

other's well-being" - 1 Corinthians 10:24. "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" - Phillipians 2:4.

7. Realizing "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it"- John 12:25.

### Knowledge and Power

There is a tendency among Sabbath-observing believers to value the spiritual gifts of knowledge, wisdom and teaching very highly. These gifts are indeed valuable. Sabbatarians have managed to come out of much error that entered Christianity through paganism and unbiblical church tradition. However, knowledge must still be kept in perspective. God does not always work through knowledge. As difficulty increases toward the end of the age, even correct knowledge of prophecy, governments, business, farming, food preservation, alternate energy and other survival skills will probably not be the only means by which God takes care of his people.

Several different Scriptures contrast the **knowledge** and the **power** of God.

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the **knowledge** of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine **power** has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the **knowledge** of Him who called us by glory and virtue" - 2Peter 1:2-3.

The Greek word for "power" here is *dunamis*, from which we get words like dynamic, dynamo, etc. It refers to "**miracle working power**" as in "And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for **power** [*dunamis*] went out from Him and healed them all" - Luke 6:19. This word *dunamis* should always be understood as miracle working power, as there are other Greek words used for being strong, full of energy or political/military power. The Bible shows that the corrupt Sadducees did not understand either the Scriptures or the Power of God, but that God wants us to understand both: Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not **knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God**" - Matthew 22:29.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and

peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the **power** [*dunamis*] of the Holy Spirit. Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all **knowledge**, able also to admonish one another" - Romans 15:13-14.

The Apostle Paul teaches that certain people tend to seek after different things, in this case the Greeks sought wisdom, an off-shoot of knowledge, but the Jews sought a sign.

"For **Jews** request a **sign**, and **Greeks** seek after **wisdom** but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the **power** [*dunamis*] of God and the **wisdom** of God"- 1Corinthians 1:22-24.

Of course, Christ gave the Jews a miraculous sign, his resurrection from the dead (Luke 11:29-30), but most of the Jewish leaders started a conspiracy to defame it rather than accept it - Matthew 28:11-15). The apostle Paul showed the Greeks at the Areopagus the wisdom of God, but most mocked him or put him off indefinitely, not accepting the wisdom of God. - Acts 17:18-34.

When the Corinthians were being deceived by false teachers, Paul said he would not enter an argument with them, deciding the issue through knowledge, but would deal with them according to the miraculous **power** of God.

"But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the **word** of those who are puffed up [**knowledge** puffs up—1Corinthians 8:1], but the **power**. For the kingdom of God is not in **word** but in **power** [*dunamis*] -1 Corinthians 4:19.

### Future Understood by Power of Holy Spirit

When it comes to the trials at the end of the age, Peter made it very clear that the power of God would see us through, not someone else's understanding of biblical prophecy. This author realizes that many people are very serious in their desire to understand Bible prophecy and work very hard at it—many

hours per week for many years. But even so, much of that work may be out of their own fear of the future, or from a desire to be considered spiritual by others. Even so, unless one's prophetic understanding is inspired by the Holy Spirit, the most intricate prophetic interpretation, even if it explains every prophetic verse, is still a "cunningly devised fable."

*"For we did not follow **cunningly devised fables** when we made known to you the **power** [dunamis] and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain [the "Transfiguration" Matthew 17:1-9]. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed ["more sure word of prophecy"—KJV], which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that **no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation**, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" - 1 Peter 1:16-21.*

Prophecy cannot be understood simply by man trying to understand it! While some of the New Testament writers wrote as if Christ might return in their lifetime, there is not one place where they said that God had revealed that to them—because He hadn't. Nor did they ever claim that they knew Christ was returning based upon the prophecies of Scripture. They just knew the times they were living in were extremely difficult—so much so that Paul's human wisdom caused him to recommend that single people not marry, though he said it was not sin to do so - 1 Corinthians 7:25-28.

*"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of **wisdom and revelation** in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; **that you may know what is the hope of His calling**, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His **power** [dunamis] toward us who believe, according to the working of His **mighty power**" - Ephesians 1:17-19.*

Paul is speaking to all believers here. The "spirit of revelation" gives us understanding of the hope of our calling. This revelation is a part of his "miracle working power" (Greek *dunamis*). This theme of revelation by the Holy Spirit to all believers is found elsewhere in scripture.

*"But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." **But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.** For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, **not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual**" - 1 Corinthians 2:9-13.*

Christ taught his followers that they would understand the future through the Holy Spirit:

*"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, **He will guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and **He will tell you things to come**" - John 16:13.*

The same knowledge and power duo is here, too. The spirit guides us into truth—helps us to study the Bible and history so that we understand the plan and purpose of God. But it also shows us things to come, something that can only be done by miraculous power.

## How Do We Experience

### the Power of God?

We receive the miraculous power of God by asking, by asking a lot, by asking for it to do God's will, not for our own benefit. We receive it by faith.

*"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing" - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17.*

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## Would Jesus Eat a Cheeseburger?

*A closer look at the Jewish law regarding separation of milk and meat*



*Scribe's Square*

**H**ave you ever wondered why Jewish people do not eat cheeseburgers? The scribe is about to tell you. It is because the Jewish Talmud, a written collection of ancient Jewish traditions and exegeses regarded as an inspired supplement to scripture, prohibits mixtures of milk and meat. Jewish adherents base their restriction on Exodus 23:19 (repeated in Exodus 34:26 and Deuteronomy 14:21) in which Yahweh tells Moses and the children of Israel, “You shall not boil a kid in its mother’s milk.”

Accordingly, religious Jews have set up a three-prong prohibition which dictates:

- 1) Not cooking meat and dairy products together (regardless of whether the result was eaten).
- 2) Not eating dairy products and meat together (regardless of whether it was cooked together).
- 3) Not benefitting from the mixture of dairy products and meat in any other way.

Observant Jews even extend this restriction to utensils. They go so far as to set up two sets of dishes, pots, pans, and utensils in their homes; one set for dairy products, one set for meats. They also wait six hours after eating meat before eating dairy food.

The restriction against benefitting from the mixture

of dairy products and meat is followed very scrupulously. Therefore a religious Jew would not be allowed to sell cheeseburgers to a gentile. However, since this milk and meat restriction only applies to kosher foods and because gentiles generally do not place themselves under the Hebrew dietary laws, it would be perfectly fine for that same religious Jew to sell a ham and cheese sandwich to a Gentile!

This custom of not eating meat with milk is not only followed by religious Jews but by some Messianic Jews and is even gaining traction among Seventh-Day Christians.

But is God’s command in Exodus 23:19 really a restriction on cooking or eating meat and milk together? Let us see.

### **Plain Language of the Law**

The plain language of God’s command was that the Israelites were not to “boil a kid in its mother’s milk.” As the Hebrew word for kid is *gdi* which means a young male goat, this was an injunction not to boil a goat in the milk of its very own mother. The injunction said absolutely nothing about eating meat and milk together or cooking milk and meat together.

But just like self-righteous folks today who conjure up their man-made commandments, ancient Jewish rabbis expanded God's prohibition by using speculation and conjecture and stretching the meaning of certain words. Talmudic writers believed that since other domesticated clean animals such as sheep and cattle—and birds for that matter—have meat similar to that of goats, they therefore should prohibit these latter meats too from being boiled “in [their mothers'] milk.” The term milk, which literally means the white liquid produced by the mammary glands of mammals, was expanded to include all milk products such as cheese, butter, or cream. This created a general prohibition against mixing dairy products of any kind with meat from any kosher animal except fish.

Does God, however, approve of such judicial expansions of the meaning of His laws? Does he approve of building such walls around the law? No. Yahweh told the children of Israel in Deuteronomy 12:32 to be careful to do everything He commanded them to do and that they were not to “. . . add to it or take from it.”

### **Intent of the Law**

Proponents of the separation of milk and meat might object and say, “No. We are not adding to God's law. We are simply enforcing the spirit of the law rather than just the letter of the law because interpreting the law too literally would enable crafty lawyers to find loopholes to get around what God intended.”

It is certainly true that the spirit of the law is more important than the letter of the law. After all, Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:5-6 that “our competence is from God who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

A closer examination of this law based upon God's

intent would yield a less restrictive prohibition than meets the eye, not a more restrictive one. The injunction not to boil a kid in its mother's milk was probably a prohibition against the pagan practice of boiling an animal in the life-giving milk of its own mother. The goal of this ritual was to either obtain supernatural assistance in increasing the yield of one's flocks or to insure agricultural fertility. (See Solomon Ephraim Luntschitz, *Keli Yakar*, to Exodus 23:19; Obadiah ben Jacob Sforno, *commentary*, to Deuteronomy 14:21; and *Peake's commentary on the Bible*“) “In the polytheism of Canaan and Mesopotamia it was an accepted practice to prepare a sacrifice by cooking it in milk. The law here is evidently a rejection of the pagan custom in order to avoid obvious imitation.” (*Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, volume 2, page 424.)

It is important to note that God accompanies all three of His commands against boiling a kid in its mother's milk with reminders to Israel to offer the firstfruits of their harvest to God. These acts of faith in the true God – not pagan rituals – result in supernatural assistance in increasing one's yield.

We see then that the law against boiling a kid in his mother's milk was not a dietary ban on eating meat with milk but really a ban on the pagan religious practice of sacrificing a goat in its mother's milk. God disapproves of strange rituals performed to honor false gods, and He also disapproves of these strange rituals ostensibly performed in His honor. God makes this clear in Leviticus 20:23, Deuteronomy 12:30, and Jeremiah 10:2. Let us allow scripture to explain scripture rather than allow the Talmud to explain scripture.

### **Abraham, Milk, and Meat**

If the above evidence were not proof sufficient that God does not prohibit eating meat with milk, then an anecdote involving Abraham serving meat and milk to three journeymen should seal the deal.

In Genesis 18:6-8, Abraham prepares a meal for three of his guests, one of whom the author calls "Yahweh." The account reads, "And Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and give it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds, and milk, and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate."

If eating milk and meat violated God's law, then this would have been a perfect time for Yahweh Himself to correct Abraham. Instead, Yahweh Himself ate the food along with his two travel companions.



### **Let Us Obey God's Commandments**

If God intended to forbid the cooking or eating meat and milk together, then He would have had no problem coming out and saying so without mincing words. If God wants His people not to do a certain thing, He has no problem telling them not to do so. David once said, "The law of the Yahweh is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Yahweh is sure, making wise the simple"- Psalm 19:7.

Unless one sacrifices goats in their own mothers' milk in honor of false gods or supposedly in honor of the true God, one has nothing to worry about. And unless one buys his or her meat from a farmer who sacrifices goats in their mothers' milk, he or she has nothing to worry about.

This scribe does not know if Jesus would eat a cheeseburger. Sometimes it may be expedient to refrain some partaking of something which God does not restrict to avoid offending others - ICorinthians 8:13. A combination of milk and meat might be bad to consume for various reasons. However, it is not because of a dietary injunction God allegedly issued to Moses and the children of Israel. Let us obey the commandments of God and be careful not to make void the word of God through our man-made traditions.

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*“...Yet you don’t have what you want because you don’t ask God for it. And even when you ask, you don’t get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure” - James 4:2-3, NLT.*

Does not James understand the way many believers are? How often do we ask our Father for His miraculous power to serve others? How often do we ask for miraculous revelations of the future, so that we can know what to do now? Some people, who claim to believe in God, would think we are “nuts” for doing such a thing. This is not power so that we can become a religious leader and have a following after ourselves. This is power so we can serve others and do his work now!

*Then He spoke a parable to them, that **men always ought to pray and not lose heart**, saying: “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’ And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, ‘Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.’” Then the Lord said, “Hear what the unjust judge said. **And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him**, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, **will He really find faith on the earth?**” - Luke 18:1-8.*

Some Christian writers have gone as far as to say that God is no longer working by miracles, but only through the efforts of church organizations, collecting and spending money to do His work. Certainly, some of His work has been done that way and He will give His servants credit for it - 1Corinthians 3:12-14. But it is also understandable why people who only understand this kind of work would fear the future. The financial structure of the world—and also these church organizations—is likely to fall apart.

Those who trust in the power of God realize man can do nothing to exceed God’s power. We do not need to fear the future, even the collapse of our economy or nuclear war. If we do not feel

close enough to God that we are comfortable with His care, then we need to begin to get there, now.

**One way to strengthen ourselves is to get in the habit of continually speaking to others, confirming our trust in God to deliver us in difficult times.**

*“Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another; And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name. “They shall be Mine,” says the LORD of hosts, “On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them As a man spares his own son who serves him” - Malachia 3:16-17.*

We should be able to talk about our trust in God for miraculous deliverance with the same practicality that we talk about our jobs, our school, going shopping, etc. We should not have a “practicality voice” which we use to discuss physical things, and a sanctimonious voice we use to discuss religious things. The same God that created the food we eat and the ground upon which we stand is the one that will deliver us by his miraculous power. Our Messiah and Savior commanded that we not be ashamed of Him and His words:

*When He had called **the people** to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? **For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels**” - Mark 8:34-38.*

Through our prayers and ongoing sharing of His words with those we meet, we can have faith to face the future, through the miraculous power of His Holy Spirit. Amen.



## Western Canadian 2011 Feast Site



**This year the Feast of Tabernacles 2011, October 12-20, will be held in Canada's "Napa Valley," at the city of Penticton in British Columbia's spectacular Okanagan Valley.**

For Feast and accommodation information, go to <http://cogwebcast.com/>. Or you may contact Jeff Patton @ 250-716-1141 or email Jeff at [cinnabarvista@gmail.com](mailto:cinnabarvista@gmail.com) for additional information. The Western Canada Feast is sponsored by the Winnipeg Church of God and other participating ministries. All are welcome.