



# Shepherd's Voice.®

M A G A Z I N E

*Summer 2012  
Free!*

*In this issue...*

*Pentecost, The Pharisee and the Temple*

*Children of God: The Most Important Primary Years*

*Let Patience Have Its Perfect Work*

*The Thessalonians and the Coming of the Lord*



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# Shepherd's Voice.

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## Greetings!

It has been stated in various ways that the road to perdition is paved with the best of intentions. I am reminded of this from the historical lesson we can derive from our feature article, *Pentecost, the Pharisee and the Temple* by Jim Petersen.

The sect of the Pharisees began and was sustained with their belief that they were involved in the noble effort in assuming the responsibility of preparing Israel for the coming of the Messiah.

It is unfortunate that the Pharisees took the wrong path, ignoring what actually governs the application of the law, which is justice, mercy and faith. I wonder if they could have been an asset in preparing the way of Jesus in His time if they had kept these weightier matters of the law at the forefront of their minds. Jesus was instead confronted with a self preservation and self vindicating institution, which we find too often in religion today.

The message and lifestyle of Jesus and John the Baptist did not suit their paradigm. What revelation they could have received was blocked by the lack of humility, the kind of humility that can receive the Lord's message and His Person.

In parallel terms today, revealed knowledge is not a threat, neither are admonitions to change. There is still more that the Lord wishes to teach us, for our benefit and to supplement that which may already be understood. After the parables that described the hiddenness of the kingdom, Jesus then gave a description of what the new teachers of the law should be like:

*Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old (Matthew 13:52).*

It is therefore essential that those who profess to serve the Lord in a teaching capacity not allow various traditions to get in God's way, but to be facilitators and not hinderers. Hindrances are often born out of the best intentions, such as the need for control and adhering to traditions that may have years of recent practice to support them, but no Scripture or clear revelation from God.

The people of Jesus' day needed to continue to follow the righteous principles of the Old Testament, as well as learn the new spiritual truth of the New Testament.

And so today, we need to continue to follow all of our old practices that are based on Scripture, as well as do the new things that Christ shows His Church.

In this issue we take another look at Prophecy through Paul's words to the Thessalonians. It is not often we look at prophecy in this publication in light of current events, but there can be lessons derived from the Thessalonian letters that may be helpful for us to look at as they may mirror our own faith.

In Christ's Service  
Jim Patterson



## ***PENTECOST, THE PHARISEE AND THE TEMPLE***

A great change took place on the celebration of the Harvest of First Fruits for the people of God when the new covenant began. To understand the reason for this change one must first understand the thinking behind the expectations of the people of God prior to that time. It is best to examine some of the key figures who came into contact with Jesus and His message.

### **THE SCRIBE AND PHARISEE**

The Pharisee (along with the scribe and a limited few other sects), were involved in a very noble work for their day. It was their belief that the responsibility of preparing Israel for the coming of the Messiah had fallen into their hands. So they engaged in an effort to rightly divide and interpret the Torah for the purpose of establishing guidelines and rules of behavior for Israel. It was because of the illegitimacy and corruption of the priesthood and the temple authorities that they had loosely gathered together in this noble effort of promoting godliness and purity in preparation for that messianic event.

There was a realization that the Spirit of God had departed from Israel, and the Shekinah glory no longer abode in the temple.

The proof was confirmed when Titus the Syrian general came through Jerusalem on a campaign and vengefully pillaged the temple and walked into the Holy of Holies only to

find nothing. There was no devouring flame of fire that leapt out to consume him ([http://www.bible-history.com/tabernacle/TAB4The\\_Shekinah\\_Glory.htm](http://www.bible-history.com/tabernacle/TAB4The_Shekinah_Glory.htm)).

The Pharisee believed if Israel was to purify herself and make the proper preparations, the Messiah would come

According to Jewish tradition the radiance of the Shekinah, with its untold blessings, “rests” upon all those who are pious and righteous. According to ancient Rabbis the Shekinah appears in the midst of at least a minyan (minimum number, usually 10 men) of worshipers when they pray in congregation, and of two or more Jews when they engage in the study of Torah, or on a man when he recites the Shema. The Shekinah is said also to rest upon the chaste, the benevolent, and the hospitable, and upon husband and wife when they live in peace and harmony. The ancient Rabbis also said that the Shekinah appeared before Moses at the burning bush, rested upon the Tabernacle in the Wilderness on the day of its dedication, and in the holy of holies in the Temple at Jerusalem, and it has illuminated the bliss of the righteous (Heb. tzaddikim) in the world-to-come ever since.

and the Spirit of God would again be poured out upon God’s people as Joel and other prophets had promised. The former glory and function of the temple would resume and Israel would enter the final stage of the Kingdom of God in the conquering of the world where the law would go out from Zion.

This work was not so much for themselves but for Israel, an effort that had an inherent backlash where they were often unable to clear the height of the standard. Because of this, a good number of them got caught in a hypocritical lifestyle, where appearance, position and authority were more important than personal private practice.

### **THE PHARISEE’S DOCTRINE**

The doctrine was one of purification established through rightly dividing and explaining the Torah and setting a standard of behavior for Israel that would be accepted by God. In believing that God had elected them and given them the inspiration to do this job it came as an offense to have others challenge their findings and tell them what might be an alternative interpretation of the text. Their doctrine was based upon traditions and purity rites, and often ascetic behavior. It was the reason they were, for instance, offended that Jesus and His disciples were not fasting in accordance with the prescribed program they had recommended for Israel (Matthew 9:14), and the reason they were upset

when Jesus and His disciples took a few handfuls of the new grain on the second Sabbath after the first before the wave sheaf offering samples were taken by the priests (Luke 6:1).

Because the Scribe and Pharisee saw themselves as God-ordained to a job, it became important to have their appearance in order. They must look the part; have the right garb, setting forth the right image and fellowship practices. It is one of the reasons they accused Jesus of eating with sinners. The appearance of evil became more of a sin than other obvious transgressions. In some instances women were required to be double-veiled in public places. This attitude also bred one of the traps that the fledgling Christian Church fell into in the opening centuries, that of being outwardly pious. *“Outwardly they appeared pure, but inwardly they were full of dead men’s bones”* (Matthew 23:27).

### CUT OFF FROM UNDERSTANDING

This unwillingness to hear and see what others might have to say caused them to miss what Jesus was bringing to the table. What they missed was not missed by all however; the disciples had grasped it to a degree, and some others as we shall see. The place the Scribe and Pharisee had carved out for themselves in terms of authority and respect in Israel was the very thing that now gave them trouble. In Matthew 23:1 we observe that Jesus acknowledged their legitimate work of occupying the seat (job) of Moses, after all it was their dedicated pursuit of the study of scripture that had earned them the position. They were respected in Israel for being literate and well educated as a rule. Someone needed to fulfill that role in the face of the neglect on the part of the priesthood so they

filled the void. But as we read in the rest of Matthew 23, Jesus charges them with the abuse of that responsibility. His overall evaluation of their failing was that they had neglected the most important part of the law of God...that of mercy, judgment and faith.

No one, it seemed, would educate the Scribe or Pharisee...they were the educators. It could be well said of them “you can tell a Pharisee a mile away, but you can’t tell him much”. There was no meekness here. They did not have what Moses had. Perhaps Moses learned from his mistake in murdering a non-compliant individual to have the meekness to listen to good advice when it came and without judgment receive input and wise words. Jesus pulls no punches in His rebuke and time after time He judges them as hypocrites, and murderers for the purpose of trying to arrest their attention and show how their noble work had gone to their heads, and how they had raised themselves above their brothers.

When Jesus, a so-called “illegitimate” carpenter’s son, tried to tell them what He, the Messiah, would do with the temple they refused to hear. They had already established for Israel exactly what might be expected of a Messiah, and that did not include any destruction of the present temple and the rebuilding of a new one, and in particular, a spiritual one. Authority had gone to their heads and the lack of meekness took away from them ears to hear with and the eyes to see with which the disciples and others had.

### THEIR PROBLEM WITH JESUS

In John 8 we see what their evaluation of Jesus was; they accused Him backhandedly of being born illegitimate in v 41 and of being a Samaritan in v 48. The Jew customarily would not have dealings with either of those

parties. They also accused Him of being demon possessed. This charge was linked with Judea’s view of the rebellion of northern Israel and their substitute place for the worship of God. The resulting captivity and removal of the elite of the land also was a factor in shaping these people and their practices. In dealing with the woman who came to the well about her question of where was the official place of worship, Jesus made it plain that they (the worshipers at Mt. Gerizim) didn’t know what they worshiped. They were worshiping someone other than God. In light of this, the Pharisee’s charges against them was not altogether without foundation. It is even more interesting however, that Jesus was compelled to call her on this worship point, but does not condemn nor refute her other claim of being the inheritor of the well! To speak against Jerusalem and the Temple was offensive to the Jew, for it was ordained that salvation be of the Jews, and the law was to go forth from Judah. To top it off, the Ark of the Covenant was moved to Jerusalem.

Jesus instructs the woman that the time was upon them where a new place of worship was being built, one where people would worship God in spirit and in truth. This was good news to her as it spelled an end of the Temple system in Jerusalem. What Jesus spoke of however was the establishment of the spiritual temple of God that was being built upon the spiritual foundation of the law and the prophets. The building of that spiritual foundation through the physical temple, a physical sacrifice and physical high priesthood was now finished (John 16:16). This incident at the well is where Jesus addresses, in part, aspects of changes that were to come.

Not to be a part of the covenant and the temple in Jerusalem simply meant to the Jew to be illegitimate. Illegitimacy was offensive to the Scribe and Pharisee, but particularly so because of a problem they and others had with the illegitimate Hasmonian Priesthood. A corrupted temple system stood in the way of the purification of the Temple. Their problem with the inhabitants of Samaria where intermarriage was engaged in over the years was simply a copy of the same problem, a reflection of spiritual impurity. Contrary to some opinions the Jew interacted freely with the Gentile because by commandment he was the subject of their message of light. But for reasons of impurity they had disengaged with the Samaritan. The lack of interaction between Jew and Samaritan is not a Gentile/Jew issue. Amongst other problems they were seen to be illegitimate on physical and spiritual grounds. The Gentile was simply in darkness and open to conversion possibilities and was thus freely interacted with. Though some Samaritans claimed Israelite status they were viewed (along with others) as having broken the covenant with God.

What the Scribe and Pharisee (along with some of our modern variety) failed to comprehend was that to be a Jew was a relationship, not a nationality. To reject the Temple in Jerusalem was indeed a mistake, but to be of another nationality was not. We learn this in the message of scripture, where it is said of the people of Persia in Esther's time that many became Jews.

Mordecai walked out of the king's presence wearing a royal robe of

violet and white, a huge gold crown, and a purple cape of fine linen. The city of Susa exploded with joy. For Jews it was all sunshine and laughter: they celebrated, they were honored. It was that way all over the country, in every province, every city when the king's bulletin was posted: the Jews took to the streets in celebration, cheering, and feasting. Not only that, but many non-Jews became Jews—now it was dangerous not to be a Jew! (Esther 8:17, the Message).

### THE CHARGE OF BEING A SAMARITAN WOMAN

Being a Samaritan was then a customary avoidance for the Jew. The Samaritan was accused of being illegitimate from mixed marriages, also they had long rejected the temple in Jerusalem as being the place where God worked with His people. These people had established a place of worship in Mt. Gerizim where they diligently kept the festivals of God and held to the teachings of the Torah. During the time of the captivity of Northern Israel a priest was returned by the captors to this region, and no doubt through this the people and their practices were established. Where the Samaritan woman lived there was a group of people who laid claim to being the descendants of the tribe of Joseph to whom Jacob's well was given as an everlasting possession. As mixed and wayward as they were accused of being, we see Jesus not questioning the woman's claim of being an Israelite.

The woman said, *“Sir, you don't even have a bucket to draw with, and this well is deep. So how are you going to get this 'living water'? Are you a better man than our ancestor Jacob, who dug this well and drank*

*from it, he and his sons and livestock, and passed it down to us?”* (John 4:12 the Message)

It is very clear that the woman shows her surprise that a Jew would talk to a Samaritan showing us that it was not because of her being a Gentile or a woman. (Clearly she was not a Gentile for she had Abraham as her father either legitimately, or like Ruth through marriage to someone of the household of Israel).

The Samaritan woman, taken aback, asked, “How come you, a Jew, are asking me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?” (Jews in those days wouldn't be caught dead talking to Samaritans), (V9, the Message).

She obviously knew Jesus was a Jew because He had the features, and because she did not recognize Him as one of their worshipers in Mt. Gerizim. Some have come away from this passage thinking that the surprise conversation was because she was a woman. This idea has little foundation in historical fact. No woman of the Middle East was better treated and given more honor than the Jewish woman, her place in society was highly respected. It would be well worth the while for those who think otherwise to update on the status of the Jewish woman in the first century for there are now some good works on the subject. (Women in First Century Judaism by Rachel D. Levine) It is true that there were some ultra orthodox Jews of that time who were much too godly to have dealings with women. In Samaria, and Galilee there seems to have been no such stigma.

### THE CONTEXT OF THE DISCOURSE AT JACOB'S WELL

The context of the discourse at Jacob's well was about the worship of God, and where and how that was to be

when the Messiah would appear. The woman who came to the well and her fellows were expecting the Messiah, as all of Israel was, and it was the thrust of Jesus' mission to reveal who He was, and open the door for their entrance into the new covenant.

In John 4:27 the disciples puzzlement as to why He was talking to this woman was, as the text shows, about what He might have wanted to know, or what He might have wanted from her. Shortly after that (v: 32) Jesus commented that He had food to eat that they knew nothing about, so they reasoned (v: 33) "has any brought Him something to eat", obviously thinking that His conversation with this woman somehow had caused that to come about. What the disciples had missed is what John, who pens the letter, holds in context, "His Father's business," which was preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.

We should be careful to hear the context of what Jesus delivered, for these people who were living at the city of Sychar and worshipping in Mt. Gerizim were somehow important to Jesus. Jesus words in Mat 15: 24-26, where He makes it plain to a Gentile woman that He was not delivering the Gospel to any other but the House of Israel, should say something to those who have ears to hear with. These people, unlike the Scribe and Pharisee, were humble enough to take the time to listen to Jesus' message and weigh it.

#### **THE PEOPLE OF SYCHAR HAD MEEKNESS**

The people of Sychar received Jesus openly and without prejudice to His origins, unlike the Scribe and Pharisee who rejected Him because of it. When we examine things in

this light we come to realize why the Scribe and Pharisee were without excuse and could have known what Jesus was driving at. They had accused Jesus of being illegitimate (John 8:41) with the backhanded comment "we be not born of fornication", (that which was in their heart came out of their mouth). They also accused Him of being a Samaritan and of having a devil (John 8:48), "Say we not well that you art a Samaritan and have a devil." These charges were founded on some things that were believed about Samaritans as we saw. Jesus, for all appearances was the same to them, the illegitimate son of a peasant carpenter from the area of Galilee. There was something about being from Northern Israel that was a problem. In fact, when Herod sought the new born King of Israel He had all the children under 2-years old put to death and the scripture says there was wailing and crying in Gilead. Now there is much to be understood about Gilead and it was in the Scribe and Pharisee's handbook for them to see as well as us.

If the Scribe and Pharisee had been open to input from the least of men they would have considered their history, for Jephthah the illegitimate son of Gilead who lived in the same northern region of Israel was summoned to come and defend Israel. He became in effect a Messiah to Israel in his day. It is with interest that Gilead is listed along with Ephraim and Manasseh as being the strength of God with Judah as the law-giver (Psalm 60:7). There was for the Scribe and Pharisee much to ponder and consider in their revered texts. In the end, the people of Sychar received their Messiah because they knew their station in life and their scripture it seems.

#### **NICODEMUS**

Not all of the Scribes and Pharisee's were in a bad state. We shall see now in the incident with Nicodemus (who was a Pharisee); that he had the meekness

to ask about some comment on the spiritual aspect of the Kingdom of God that Jesus had made during one of His messages (John 3:1).

Being born from above in order to enter the kingdom of God was something Nicodemus had missed in his studies, but the miracles and the soundness of Jesus' teachings arrested his and others attention to the point that they recognized He was a teacher sent from God. Jesus' illegitimate birth and place of origin was something Nicodemus was willing to overlook. He, though a Pharisee, displayed some meekness. Jesus chides him on his responsibility of being the teacher of Israel, by suggesting that he should have known this (John 3:10). Nicodemus was the ruler (v1) "archon", magistrate or first in order, of the Jews. We find him correcting his own when they tried to condemn Jesus before He was brought to trial (John 8:51). The looseness of the Pharisaical order comes out a bit here as some mocked Nicodemus by accusing him of also being from lowly Galilee.

In the final analysis Jesus pins down the root of their problem (John 3:19-21). They resisted the light. This fault was pointed out as well by Stephen in his address (Acts 7:51) where we notice that to hear and to see requires a circumcised heart. This was something available to those under an old covenant, (Ezekiel 44:7-9) a fact hard to turn one's eyes away from in light of Ezekiel's words. It was very much the state of affairs that existed in the Temple in Jesus' time.

#### **FOUR MONTHS TO THE HARVEST**

Jesus comment in John 4:35 is one of the worst explained passages of scripture, but if one knew the layout of the celebrations of God it would come clear to every eye that reads. This will demonstrate how scripture can be

glossed over, misread or misunderstood without the symbolic festival tools at hand that God so wisely set in place. Jesus' message of the change in the

Temple order was missed by many in that time, those who heard and saw it were few. One factor would have helped some to understand—a better grasp of the festivals of God and their symbolic meanings. It is easy for us to see, looking back, that the Lamb of God was Jesus. When John the Baptist declared Jesus the Lamb of God, few grasped what was being communicated. But it was used as a tool at that time. It becomes so much more binding upon us now to understand, for we have been given eyes to see and ears to hear.

In going back to the story of the woman at the well, we are confronted by some strange words of Jesus to His disciples. He said to them out of a bit of frustration (John 4:35), *“Do you not say four more months and then the harvest? I tell you lift up your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe and ready for harvest.”*

**What Jesus was telling them was that they had their eyes on the fall harvest, which was four months after the gathering of wheat just prior to Pentecost.** How do we know this? The barley harvest was over because it started with the wave sheaf offering during the days of unleavened bread. The crop Jesus pointed to that was ready to harvest was the wheat. This commencement of the wheat harvesting took place a little over half way between the wave sheaf offering, and Pentecost.

The next harvest was a great fall harvest, a time that was graced by God's third celebration called the harvest of In-gathering (Exodus 23:16). The disciples were looking to

the kingdom of God in these terms, a time when all nations would come to worship at Jerusalem, a time spoken of by the prophets as the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus was pointing out that there was an ongoing work to be done in gathering the First-fruits, those saints of God from the old covenant, and now those of a new covenant. This gathering is typified by the celebration of the Harvest of First-fruits, better known as Pentecost. Called as First-fruits into the kingdom of God means they would be components of the spiritual Temple Jesus spoke about. Those from the old covenant were harvested under a physical temple system, and those harvested under a new covenant spiritual temple system would comprise the church, or in other terms the bride of Christ. This woman, or church is clearly identified in Revelation 12 as being both old and new covenant—a church prior to the birth of Jesus and a church afterward. There is indeed an order to things, *“each man will be in his own order,”* (1 Corinthians 5:23)

The disciples not knowing the plan of God as outlined in His celebrations, would never have thought to approach these people who were rejected covenant breakers, but would have left them along with the unresponsive Gentile to another time and another resurrection to judgment. That of the harvest of In-gathering which occurred about four months after the time Jesus was speaking to His disciples.

The Harvest of First Fruits, or the Feast of Weeks, is typified in Lev. 23:17, 20 by the making and waving of two loaves. The significance of the fifty days and its symbolic meaning gave rise to the common reference to the Harvest of First Fruits as Pentecost, which is to say “the fiftieth.” The gathering of the loaves (end of barley and wheat harvest) was to be from

the people signifying that they were representations of, or gleanings from the whole; the gathering of an elect from the whole. They were to be baked with leavening, signifying that sin was present, unlike the first wave offering of grain that represented Jesus in the Days of Unleavened Bread. They were to be made of fine (sifted) flour showing the process of refinement that is accomplished, and baked to show the heat of trials that kill the leavening, (unlike the fine flour of the wave sheaf offering that had no need of baking).

This understanding was missing for the people of God in Jesus' day. They were in the work of building the foundation, a foundation that required physical things and physical actions, the laying down of symbols and practices with deep meanings, so when the finished work of God entered the final stages understanding could come. The foundation was a spiritual foundation laid down without hands and often without the workers knowing what it was they were building. Out from amongst the laborers of that era, God selected kernels of grain for a wave loaf. And out from amongst the laborers of the New Testament Church, God continues to select for another loaf. The Church is still engaged in the physical exercises of God's festivals in terms of gathering together. In this era a spiritual temple administers the work of God, one with a spiritual High Priest administering a spiritual sacrifice. Amongst those who gather are those God has picked as kernels for the New Testament wave loaf.

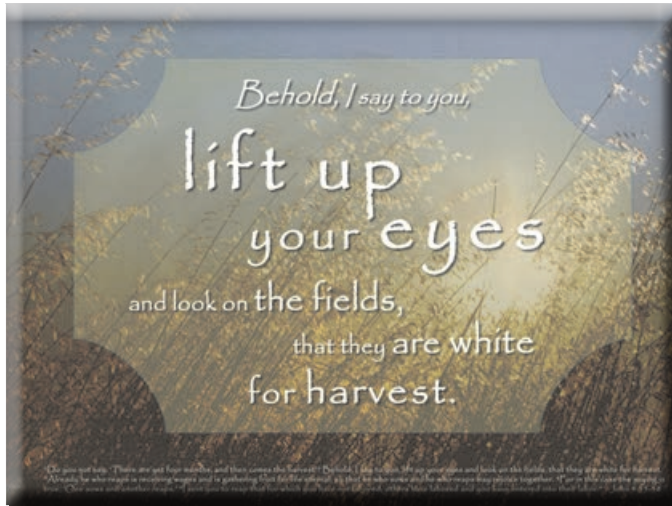
It was this fundamental change that some in Jesus' day didn't grasp, an understanding that some cut themselves off from through a lack of humility and meekness. It may be hard for us to cut through the traditional explanations and interpretations laid down by the



many years of theological wanderings in an attempt to determine what the scripture is saying. It is here that a good understanding of these three festivals of God pays dividends in holding the big picture together. History should be

where the spirit of God would be poured out once again upon their revered Temple system. The sudden realization of the spirit being poured out upon the people caused Peter to realize that the Temple was now a

he saw and put an end to what he believed was just another barrier to the restoration of Israel. It took Jesus to strike him down and show him that the system had changed, that the holy spirit of God was now opening up the scripture and those things revealed were like briars that Paul was kicking against. God had moved from an altar with the forefathers, to a tabernacle tent, to a Temple, and now to a Spiritual Temple, the church. It was this message that Paul gave in the same place where Stephen gave his message and was martyred for it. If not for the intervention of the church, Paul too would have met a similar fate. It should come clearer now why Stephen tailored his defense as he did. Acts 7:1-53 is a lengthy defense for one to put forward, and a bit of a puzzle to many. When read in the context of Jesus introducing the spiritual temple in place of the physical one, it makes all the more sense.



questioned in the face of the revealed word of God. History after all is simply the description of the view taken by the author of the time. It is much like the experience of a winters sleigh ride. “Oh what fun it is to ride in a one horse open sleigh,” goes the famous song about the wonderful experiences in life.

This actual experience by the author should help us to understand that there is often two sides to an event and this is so much more the case with history, for so often history is the record of the victor or just one man’s evaluation of an event. The great wisdom of God comes forth in providing four gospel records of the life of Jesus Christ to reduce the errors.

**PETER’S EVALUATION**

When the day of Pentecost had fully come for the new covenant church, the comprehension of the events of that day struck home to Peter. The people of God were anticipating the imminent arrival of their Messiah with fulfillments of such prophecies as Joel’s

spiritual one. Great boldness came from this realization and the people began to do exploits, and many of the priesthood and scribe and Pharisee became believers in a new covenant. The harvest of First-fruits met that day with the beginning of the garnering of the wheat crop we see Ruth symbolically engaged in, and a fulfillment of Jesus words to His disciples in the incident at Jacob’s well—indeed the fields were ripe for harvest. The disciples, true to Jesus’ words, began to garner where others had sown.

**THE NEW TEMPLE AN OFFENSE TO TRADITIONAL VIEW**

When the new church began to preach its message, it soon met with resistance. For those still dedicated to the restoration of the physical Temple and its rituals it came as a capital offense and a heresy. Paul was one such Pharisee whose motives were genuine and well intended. It was his desire to halt the corruption

All of what Jesus spoke to the disciples came flooding back to them as the Holy Spirit gave remembrance to them on that day of Pentecost 31 A.D. In Acts 3:24, 25, we learn that much was known by the prophets of old regarding this spiritual side of the kingdom of God, much that the Scribe and Pharisee had obviously missed. It was difficult for them to open their hearts to the light. It takes a circumcised heart to be sensitive to the light of truth, a heart that is meek and lowly and trembles at the word of God. Many in this day resist the light when it is passed before them, refusing to take the time to hear and see what it might be. No matter who brings you something that is against the grain of your understanding, you ought to be willing to hear it and see it for what it is worth, and with a circumcised heart be willing to separate fact from fiction and tradition from truth.





There is no more important time in the development of an individual than the all-critical ages of 3 to 10. During this age children are willing to learn, communicate and do things with their parents. They do not question their dependence on their parents. They are big enough to do useful work, but small enough to be easily managed—healthy adults can pick them up and carry them in emergencies or if they become difficult

To summarize development:

- In the infant years a child's feelings of self worth and confidence are established: whether he is wanted and loved; whether his needs will be met.
- In the primary years a child's operational capacity is established: his abilities and attitudes regarding learning, work, his peers, those in authority and ultimately God. Sure, the most significant things to learn and do will come later, but the overall ability to learn and do is established here.
- The preteen years are the time of

awareness. A child understands that he or she is a separate person apart from his or her parents. They become aware of their sexuality, their life goals and the things that make them and others unique individuals.

- The teen years are the time when authority for important life responsibilities is transferred to the maturing child—when he learns and does the things that will carry him through the rest of his life.

The believer without children still has a great responsibility in representing our heavenly Father to other people's children. Yes, most younger children are taught "not to talk to strangers", so the believer without children needs to lose the "stranger" status with the children with whom he has regular contact. To lose the "stranger" status, one must be interested in a child and talk to him in the presence of his parent(s). After that, most children will talk or play with another adult without their parents.

It is the goal of all parents and all

believing adults, to help all children grow to be successful adults in the eyes of our heavenly Father. We obviously are limited to what we can do with our one human life, and God does not expect us to do more than we can. But if anyone is bored with life and feels they do not have enough to do, remember James 4:17: "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin".

This article series continues the comparison between the physical child and the believer—the Child of God. The child's primary years correspond to the learning years of new believers—the time when they study the Bible, hear biblical teachings, learn to trust that they can live a righteous life and survive. They are not yet ready to do much ministering to others, but they are laying the foundation for that.

### **Continue the Principles for Infants**

The principles outlined for infants in Part 3 must be continued. If these things were not done during infancy, doing them later is better than not at all. They all take on more important perspectives as each child grows:

- **Love.** Sure, you want children to love you, but you have to love them—even when they don't love you. All of the time invested in showing love to a child will be more than paid back with less trouble.
- **Caring.** You need to know what a child needs. As they grow older, they are much more able to tell you what they need, but a child's requests are not always in line with his needs.
- **Faith, Peace and Patience.** Peaceful parents are usually rewarded with peaceful children. A parent does not need to yell at children for daily functioning—yelling should be reserved for only true emergencies. A parent can peacefully tell a child what to do and peacefully punish them if they do not do it. Punishment is not to quench a parent's anger, it is a sad thing that must be done for those we love so they can grow up (Prov 3:12). Even so, faith is required; not everything works as one would hope or expect. Adults do not have to pretend to a child that they know everything. They can acknowledge what they do not know, but explain that they are praying and trusting God for the answer. Parents have authority over children because God has given it to them, not because the parents are bigger, stronger or smarter.
- **Teaching and Consistency.** These two vastly vital areas for primary children are covered in detail below.
- **Grace and Joy.** Parents must still do some good things for their children, without them having to do something to "earn" or

"deserve" them. Some parents do this too little; some do it too much. A balance is best. We should know this from our own lives and our relationship with God. There are times to be disciplined and accomplished; there are times to relax and enjoy.

Of course, it is not difficult to see how our Father in heaven continues these things for the new believer. He cares for them and does them good. But He allows trials and correction to come, also, as we will see.

### Teaching

Whether adults think about it or not, they are teaching their children all of the time. The words they use, the choices they make, the way they solve problems, their knowledge of the world around them and the attitudes they reveal are all examples absorbed by children. While children may not understand the complexities of many advanced subjects, their minds more quickly absorb the things that they are able to understand. Teaching is not something that happens mostly in a classroom—it happens all the time.

Just after Deuteronomy 5, which contains the Ten Commandments, our heavenly Father explained how His commandments were to be taught

*"Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.... You*

*shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:1-2, 5-7).*

While these principles are given for the commandments of God, they certainly apply to teaching everything that is good. From these words we can derive these important principles:

1. Do what you teach. Children do not learn well from a "do as I say, not as I do" approach.
2. The more teachers the better. In a proper family, children will have two parents and four grandparents. Each will have a different approach, but they should all teach the same truth.
3. People live longer with good teaching.
4. We should love what we do and teach, not do it begrudgingly. A child is not helped when he is told "I don't like work or school, but I have to do it and so do you." If something is worth doing and learning, we should learn to like it—even if, while we are liking it, we are looking for a better way to do it or a way to avoid it.
5. Teaching goes on at all hours of the day, when we do our daily tasks, not just in a classroom.

Being a good example is much more important than any specific set of rules or programs for children. For example, suppose that parents want to teach their young child to keep their room neat. The first question parents should consider: Is their own room neat? If they have drawers, closets, shelves and

laundry baskets to put things in, does the child have the same?

This writer remembers being required to make his bed every morning as a young child, but being somewhat miffed that his parent's bed was at times left unmade. Are parents training children to be good adults? Or are we just trying to keep them busy? Why is it important that children consistently make their bed if it is not important for their adult role models to do it? If parents set up a system of rewards and punishments, children will learn to do whatever a consistent system requires of them. But if the system is arbitrary or unjust, they will grow to resent it, and probably rebel against it in their later years.

The principles of these few examples can be applied to almost every aspect of life. Parents must teach their children how to take care of themselves in life, as well as how to learn and how to do something useful for which they may earn a living. Teach at the edge of a child's capability: Do not repeat things frequently that the child already knows; they will bore him; do not teach so far "over his head" that he loses interest. Continually introduce new things that he has the foundation to grasp. Never make fun of a child's failures or sincere questions. Always respond positively to any sincere attempts to understand or to do what parents are doing—even if they end up in a mess.

This method of teaching is what our Father in Heaven uses for the growing believer. While some people might relegate God's teaching of believers to a weekly church service and Bible study, it is our whole lives that He uses to teach us. We should want to pay attention to Him; we should pray to understand His lessons in our major life events. But sometimes, like

naughty primary children, we want to ignore what He has for us!

### Consistency

Most parents would be better off with half as many rules for their children, but with consistent enforcement for those that remain. The most important



rules of any household are those that maintain its smooth functioning. Children need to be required to stay with their parents when asked, listen to parents when they are talking to them, respectfully answer parental questions, steer clear of screaming and temper tantrums, leave things alone that do not belong to them, avoid hitting, etc. When a child violates these basic rules of interaction, he needs to know consequences are coming.

What a parent may choose to do with the above situations varies tremendously with the age and nature of the child, and the environment a child is in. While the Bible shows that corporal punishment is very effective (Prov 13:24; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15-17), some governments and their agencies will take children away from parents for such punishment. Parents must pray and decide what will work in their circumstance. There are certainly many other methods of dealing with disobedient children, and each parent diligently needs to seek out which is effective for them. When a child is only a few years old, they need immediate consequences. As they get older, removing desired privileges becomes more effective. Here are some examples of the consequences

that have worked for some people:

- When a child runs away from a parent, hold his hand and don't let go, or use a "child tether".
- When a child refuses to hear or answer a parent, hold them firmly, face to face, until they listen and answer.
- When a child screams or throws a tantrum, isolate him in his bed, crib, room or "time out" chair until he is ready to rejoin the communicating, civilized world.
- When a child takes or plays with something that is not his, require him to "restore double" (Exodus 22:4). This means that he has to give it back or leave it alone, and give up something of equivalent value that is his (a toy or something).
- When a child hits another person, he needs to give them something of value for the injury he caused (Exodus 21:18-19).

These are only examples, and each family will need to develop rules that work for them. Reliable consistent consequences make for a peaceful household. Parents should judge their children with the judgment with which they would want to be judged (Matthew 7:2).

For example, if parents tell their children that their worn clothes need to be put away before they sleep for the night, then the parents should do the same. If the parents sometimes don't do this when some unexpected event keeps them up late, they should understand when a similar thing happens with their children.

Parents must work at avoiding arguments with their children. They should expect their children to follow

their instructions the first time, or provide some consequence for disobeying. Everyone has probably seen a frustrated parent go through a sequence like this, each command getting a little louder:

*“Johnny, put your toys away.”*

*“I said put your toys away now!”*

*“Johnny, if you don’t put your toys away, I’m going to take them away from you!”*

*“Johnny, did you hear me? I’m not joking! Put them away!”*

*“Johnny Franklin Smith, put your toys away this minute!”*

*“If those toys aren’t put away the next time I check, you’re really going to get it!”*

In some households, this can go on for hours. The child knows the parent will let him ignore numerous commands. First time obedience is a goal worth striving for, but it requires good masters—if used capriciously, it will engender anger. The parent should either give definite commands that they intend to enforce, or make requests instead of commands. In the above scenario, if the parent did not want to punish the child for not putting his toys away, it would have been much better to say:

*Johnny, I would like you to put your toys away. Will you do that?*

One last point regarding consistency that often escapes parents: Parents only need to consistently punish things they are sure that a child did. Neither the Bible nor secular law make anyone responsible for punishing “crimes” when there is not clear evidence who did it. For example, suppose parents have told a child that his bike will be put away for a week if he leaves it the middle of the driveway where the cars need to go. When he does it

and they know he does it, then they should follow through. But what should happen when the bike is found in the middle of the driveway, but the child says he did not leave it there, the parents did not see him use his bike, and it is possible that siblings or neighbor children may have left it there? The parents would be better off not to punish for this uncertain offence—there will be enough certain offences for which to punish. Pray that God will provide better evidence in the future.

What if the child is lying? That is covered in the next section. God tends to work with younger believers in a very consistent way, providing healings and encouragement, but also very consistent correction and teaching. As believers mature, He frequently leaves more decisions up to them and He lets natural consequences take more of a role. Speedy correction is the best for growth:

*Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil (Ecclesiastes 8:11).*

### Truth

Parents must be truthful with their children, and expect their children to be truthful back to them. Of the seven things that are detestable to God, most are centered around lying (Proverbs 6:16-19).

***Parents also must avoid lying to other adults. How many times do children hear a parent tell the one who answers the phone, “Tell them I’m not here”?***

The previous section explained how a parent should not make rules or threats to children that they do not intend to carry out. A parent should also avoid taking “shortcuts” to controlling children by lying to them when they think they won’t know.

For example, a child might ask “Can you buy this toy for me? It is only \$12.” The parent might answer, “No, I don’t have the money right now; we have to go home.” Then the parent comes upon an unexpected great deal and pulls out \$20 to buy it. Children can be very brilliant when it comes to considering their own interests.

Some parents do this frequently. Rather than simply telling their children that they are not going to grant their request, they invent lies to make it appear that they are unable to grant their request. Or, some get their children to behave by promising them rewards—then never deliver. Sure, these things can help a parent have a little peace with the child temporarily, but when the child finds out that the parent is lying, then they have made more trouble for themselves than all of the “benefit” they received. Parents also must avoid lying to other adults. How many times do children hear a parent tell the one who answers the phone, “Tell them I’m not here”?

How often do they hear parents plotting what story to tell their difficult neighbors, their boss, the courts, etc.?

How often do children hear culturally acceptable lies about the “tooth fairy”, Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny or where babies come from? Children figure out most of these lies, later or sooner! These lies create huge mistrust in the parents and teach the children to live the same way. Selfish and lying parents are major causes of  
*Continued on page 25*

# Ask Norm!



Questions?  
[asknorm@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org](mailto:asknorm@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org)

June 15 , 2012

Norman,

Thank you for the *Servants' News*. I would like to start receiving *Shepherd's Voice* please.

This card is to announce that I finally just got my Permit and art supplies [to do art work in prison]. I've asked so many and tried so hard but still I'm without Bible pictures for Holy Day greeting card making. If you can help me, please do.

Because of Messiah

Nancy Crow  
703709, B-5, 302 Corrections Dr,  
Newport, AR 72112

Dear Nancy,

Finding and cutting out pictures has never been my forte, but I know there are many people that enjoy that sort of thing. I am publishing this letter with your address so some of our readers can send you Bible-theme pictures. The work you did making this card was very good. Christ spoke highly of those who visited someone in prison (Matt 25:36), and today, it is possible to "visit" by mail. I hope some of our

readers who have time to do this will help you.

May God bless your efforts.

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January 8, 2012

Hi Norm!

Thank you for sending the e-mail version of *Shepherd's Voice*! It looks beautiful, and the content is wonderful. I said I would send an article for the publication on my experiences with my one spiritual gift, the discernment of spirits. I intend to do that as soon as I get access to my computer files. It shut down, and I can not turn it on. At the moment I can not afford to get it repaired. Your prayers in this regard are appreciated. Right now, I am using my wife's laptop, but my files are on mine.

There is an important point that has never, as far as I know been addressed by any of the COG's [Church of God groups] in recent years. That is the question of imputation of righteousness by faith (Rom 4:24). I believe in it, and it has been a source of much comfort to me. Maybe I am unusual, but I

am a very flawed person, even at the age of 79. As I understand it, someone who has been saved by the sacrifice of Jesus is imputed by God as righteous even though there are still sins in his life. Overcoming, though a continuing process, is never complete in this lifetime. We are all works in progress. Imputation as righteous in the meantime covers us. When God looks at us, He sees not us, but Jesus' righteousness imputed to us. In other words, He sees Jesus! I have asked around, and both in the COG's and in other denominations, the doctrine of imputation is not at all understood, or known at all. I have told a few, and they have found it encouraging. Part of the reason that people may be afraid to talk about it is that they don't want to induce anyone to use it as an excuse to turn "the grace of God into lasciviousness" as Jude wrote of. But rightly presented, it can be a source of infinite comfort. Some like [a current Bible teacher] equate it to some abominable heretical doctrine.

Years ago [a now-deceased Bible teacher] made the comment that "God does not impute that which does not already exist". He missed the whole point of imputation! He may unconsciously have wanted to keep his flock off balance, perhaps

keeping their salvation in question so they might be inclined to “give more to the church” to try to “insure” their salvation. Anyway, you might consider this as a topic for Shepherd’s Voice. I pray for the success and fruitfulness of the new publication.

In Christ,  
Bob Macdonald

Dear Bob Macdonald,

You have raised a basic question that many believers have struggled with for millennia. The question is often woven into astute, well-crafted theological statements. Put bluntly, it goes something like this, “To what degree can a believer sin and still get into the first resurrection?” (Maybe “Kingdom of God”, “heaven” or some other reward.)

Most Christians do not believe they obtain their reward from their own righteousness: “As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one’... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:10, 23). “But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (Galatians 3:22). They believe it is the sacrifice of Christ that atones for their sins (Ephesians 5:2; Hebrews 9:14; 10:10).

Yet the New Testament is full of verses, written to Christians explaining that they will not be rewarded if they do not overcome sins. All of the seven letters to the churches in Revelation 2 & 3 end with a phrase like: “To him who overcomes I will give [some reward]”. Revelation 20:4, 6 says: “...Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for

their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years...Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection.” Also, “Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35). We have Bible lists of major ongoing sins which will keep people out of the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21). These verses are not saying that believers have the same sins as unbelievers, but God looks at them differently because of “imputed righteousness”, this is saying that believers should be different than unbelievers

But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them” (Ephesians 5:3-7).

As a practical matter, we know that we do not want to live next to a thief or a murderer, whether that person has imputed righteousness or not. If he kills a member of our family or steals our life savings, we do not suddenly feel better because the perpetrator says he has “imputed

righteousness”; our savings is still gone; our relative is still dead.

So if we are overcoming our sins, what is the “imputed righteousness” in Romans 4:24 and why do we need it? **In order to receive eternal life, we need to do much more than overcome the major sins that others see in our lives; we need to overcome all the sins that God sees!** We need to be “casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

The spiritual definition of sin is “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). We make mistakes we do not even know about (Psalm 19:12). No human being can possibly always do the perfect thing that Christ would do in every situation. That is why we need the righteousness of Christ imputed to us to receive eternal life.

So where is the dividing line? How do we know which sins will keep us out of the Kingdom and which sins are covered by the imputed righteousness of Christ? The answer is, “We do not know.” Sure, there are lists of more serious sins in various verses, but they all differ and none claims to be complete. **What God expects each believer is a matter of the individual judgment:** “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

God sometimes requires different things of different people. Christ said Peter would die a difficult death, but John would live a long time (John 21:18-22). A rich young ruler who had kept the commandments well was told to sell everything he had, give to the poor and follow Christ (Mark 10:17-22), but many other believers were not given any such command and kept their possessions. Believers in Thyatira who overcame certain difficulties were told by Christ, "I will put on you no other burden" (Revelation 2:24). Our job is to "put on Christ" (Romans 13:14)—to be as much like Him as we can be. We should not be trying to judge others or even ourselves as to what our reward will be: "But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord" (1 Corinthians 4:3-4).

We do not have to worry about His judgment—He is a righteous judge (2 Timothy 4:8). We do not need to try to figure out exactly how that judgment will work, but simply confess our sins as we come upon them. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8-9).

Believers should never try to figure out how much of our sin we can "get away with" because it will be covered by imputed righteousness. We should seek to become "perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt 5:48).

We can all trust in our Father's righteous and perfect judgment—he will do the very best thing for each of us. He will pass judgment, bring rewards and punishments where they are needed, and impute righteousness where it is needed. I am looking forward to that day. I hope other believers are, too.

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16 June 2012

Dear Brethren in Christ

Greeting from India. Thank You for sending me your Magazine. [change of address]

I am a member of the seventh-day Church of God, a small 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath Keeping independent local group. We are very less in members.

I am aged 70 and suffering from stroke. Now I could walk with the help of walker. The income from the groups is very small. Can you help me to get some regular funds for my treatment? I don't have friends in foreign countries. Will you help me to find out some generous friends? Hope you will do the needful in the matter.

Thank you very much. With Love and Prayers for your ministry. God Bless you., Hoping to get a reply soon. Thank you.

Yours in Him,  
Henry P V, Kerla, INDIA

Dear P.V. Henry,

Thank you very much for your letter of June 16, 2012. We have changed your address for our magazine. We hope it is a blessing to you.

You asked if we could help you with retirement and other financial needs. The short answer to that is "no", but I would like to explain why. In the Bible, we find the parable of the "Good Samaritan" and other examples where a person gave of his own resources to help a stranger. But in all the Bible cases where people helped others, they either personally saw that the needs were real, or sent someone along with the gift (2 Corinthians 8-9) to make sure they were being properly used.

We receive dozens of requests for economic help from poorer countries. From the few we have looked into, we find quite a few to be exaggerated or completely false. Some even pretend to be interested in our teachings and write questions about them, but when we answer those letters, they show no real interest—they just continued to ask for money or other resources. Some of them sold the literature that we sent. Others went as far as sending pictures they obtained from other orphanages and ministries.

It is not good for anyone to send money or other resources to someone who is dealing falsely. It causes them to continue in their false ways, and it takes money away from those who are truly in need. The best way for a group of people in the USA to help people in a distant land is to send someone they know and trust to them so that they can see that their needs are genuine. I have a friend who is on such a mission now in Rajupalem, Andhra Pradesh, India. Unfortunately, that is 700km away from you. Yes, the harvest is great, but the laborers are few.



I have prayed that God may send you what you need. Let me encourage you to trust God for these needs. He sustained Israel on manna, and ravens fed Elijah. He gave Israel clothes that did not wear out. He frequently supplies our need outside of money. For example, if you need a walker, pray for one—somebody may give you a used one, or maybe some in your church can build one that will work. Ultimately, God will either keep you alive, or take you into His Kingdom. Even in our country, the retirement system is completely broke and many people who expect to retire in ten years are not at all sure that there will be anything for them.

May God strengthen and bless you as you continue to obey Him.

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April 6, 2012

Greetings Norm,

May you and all your fellow laborers be surrounded and fully blessed by the Lord in this Spring Holy Day Season. The Shepherd's Voice magazine is very rewarding and appreciated. About a month ago a strange thing was happening in my hobby shop by the house here. Around the shop walls, inside, there is a string of about a dozen incandescent light bulbs—the old fashioned kind which seem to cast a sort of amber color or glow. One of them started flashing on and off each second. It finally got my attention away from a door-lock problem I was working on. I unplugged the light circuit, waited a few seconds, plugged it back in and the one bulb resumed its on/off cycle as before sort of like a flashing lantern light.

May God Bless and Protect.  
David Bush, Wisconsin

Dear David Bush,

Thank you very much for your encouraging letter.

While you did not exactly ask a question, the issue you took time to expound raises a question Bible believers frequently ask.

When an unusual and unexpected phenomenon occurs, is it a miracle? And more importantly, is it a sign from God? I think this is a very important question. Bible believers are quite diverse in the way they deal with these issues.

I have met some that take almost everything as a sign from God. If they set out to go somewhere and there is unexpected road construction on the way, they may conclude that they should not go there and go somewhere else. If they find a quarter on the street outside a store, they may conclude that God wants them to shop in that store.

At the opposite extreme, I have met some who can witness unexplainable healings, but who are not sure they are of God. Some can hear fellow believers pray for a very specific unlikely event to occur, see that event occur after the prayer, and still not be convinced God answered. Exodus chapters 3 through 14 tell of many great miracles and how the Israelites, the Egyptians and Pharaoh were at times convinced of them and at times doubtful. There are numerous other miracles throughout the scripture. They are used as proof of Godly authority:

*Many among the crowds at the Temple believed in him [Christ]. "After all," they said, "would you*

*expect the Messiah to do more miraculous signs than this man has done?"* (John 7:31, NLT).

Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds (2 Corinthians 12:12, the apostle Paul speaking of himself). You can read about all the Bible miracles on my web page: <http://cbtm.info/miracles/miracl01.html>

This still leaves the question, "Was your flashing light a sign from God?" It probably does have a physical explanation. Light bulbs fail when a conductor inside them melts, leaving an open circuit. When the light bulb cools down, the conductor may bend and again make contact, closing the circuit and turning the bulb back on. But then it heats up again, so the circuit opens again, and the cycle repeats. There are some bulbs specifically designed to do this ("flasher" bulbs). Even so, it is extremely rare for this to randomly happen to regular bulbs.

Even with a possible physical explanation, the question still remains, "Did God cause this to happen to this bulb at this time for a sign?" The biblical answer is fairly simple: Ask God to show you. When Joseph or Daniel were asked to interpret dreams, or when Ezekiel and the apostle John saw things they could not understand, they asked God for an explanation.

That seems to be the way God works; He divinely shows us something, then He expects us to ask to further understand His divine will. May God grant you understanding of this situation.



# The Thessalonians and the Coming of the Lord

## *Another look at Prophecy and the End of the World*

It is not good to be uninformed about the future. There is a place for eschatology as we are not given to be completely ignorant of the future, and the prophecies of the Bible are given to us to know that there are events, and conditions, that are predestined to occur. This however does not give us license to promote speculations regarding our Lord's coming. Prophecy is not the only answer for preparedness for the time of the end, as we will discuss shortly.

As for the sum of all prophecy pertaining and leading up to the Lord's return goes, it will be limited as all prophecy concerning the end of this age collapses to single reality and that is that the Day of the Lord will come about when we least expect it:

*Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming (Matthew 24:42).*

In fact it will be at a time we least expect.

*Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect (Matthew 24:44).*

*But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with the carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man (Luke 21:34-36).*

There are some key points to consider regarding the Lord's warning:

- Most SVM readers and contributors may not be carousing drunkards, but some may very well be weighed heavily by the cares of this life
- It will come as a snare upon all who dwell on the earth, both believers and non-believers, just and unjust.
- Lastly, the prayer of being counted

worthy is not a selfish one, or one of fear, or of escapism. It is a prayer to have strength, and those kinds of prayers are aligned with God's will and purpose. Those who are aligned with God's will are those who will be counted worthy, or have the worthiness to see their salvation through to the end.

Paul re-iterated the same understanding to the Thessalonians. We know for certain the time is coming, but we don't know the hour.

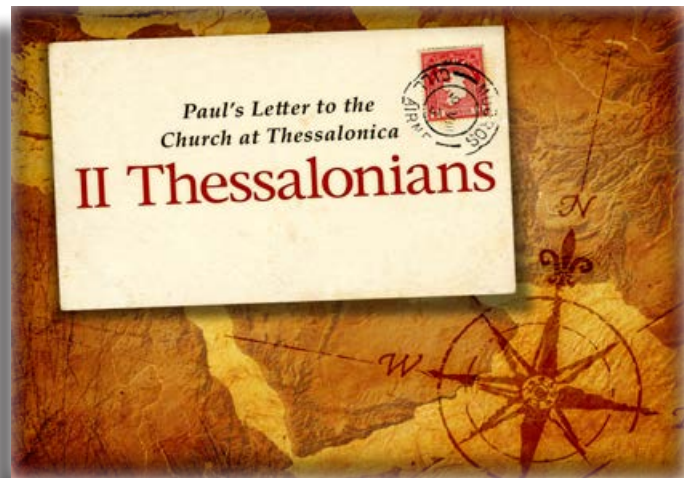
*But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2).*

This article is about what we may be able to garner from the letters from Paul to the Thessalonians regarding the day of the Lord, and what conditions might precede some of the prophetic events described in these letters. In doing so we can use these scriptures as a mirror to consider our own faith, that, though it may be challenged, our calling is to remain children of the light.

### **Partial Information, but Enough**

In both epistles Paul alludes to prior teachings regarding the end times and the day of the Lord, so we are not privy to all of the details to the extent that he had shared. We can however with reasonable assumptions with history and human behavior as our guide and background, put certain pieces together that would be advisable to understand considering the current world economic and socioeconomic systems that are developing.

*Let no one deceive you by any*



*means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4).*

In writing to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul brings up the topic of a man of sin, and a falling away that is to occur prior to the Lord's return. Chapter 2 has been the subject of much speculation, particularly surrounding the 'man of sin' where there are a number of divergent opinions to the future identity of this individual. Let's take a closer look from that point of view that should matter most to us.

The falling away has often been referred to as an apostasy within the Church of God; that believers would, in significant number, leave the Church or rebel in the form of lawless behavior. This view is not supported by the context of this verse or the letters to the Thessalonians as a whole. While apostasy, or falling away, can refer to leaving the true faith, it is not at all restricted to that meaning.

Paul does not specifically mention the Church either. Paul's intent is to comfort his readers. (1 Thessalonians 4:18, 2 Thessalonians 2:17) To promise them future loss of brethren (before

the hope of Christ's return) would be contrary to his intentions. This is a worldwide retreat from moral and ethical standards, perhaps anarchy. Moral and ethical standards still exist in the consciousness of the majority of mankind despite common observations to the contrary. What Paul describes to Timothy in II Timothy 3, a self seeking

world: proud, disobedient to authority, unthankful, without self control, brutal, and despisers of good. Admittedly, this is already manifest in today's society, but the suggestion we get from verse 7 and 8 is that there is a restraining influence against this mystery of lawlessness that is clearly already at work.

What we need to consider however is that the apostasy that lies ahead is not of a single nation, it is a worldwide phenomenon. Many financial experts believe that our greatest near term risk of social anarchy will be brought on by economic collapse. We have witnessed localized rebellious behavior when services are disrupted. Huge amounts of money that could be going to providing essential services and stimulating the economy are now going to service a massive debt. This is currently being witnessed in Greece, Spain and Portugal. When the economy of a nation collapses, almost everything changes.

### Expert Interviewed on the Worldwide Financial Crisis

Satyajit Das, internationally respected commentator and author of the global financial industry, does not give his readers and listeners optimism for those who are connected to the global economy.

He quotes the poetic phrase of "Endless growth, mindless growth is the ideology of a cancer cell".

Das is the author of the book *Extreme Money: Masters of the Universe and the Cult of Risk*. According to Das, global growth built on excessive debt is coming to an end. The real problem with excessive debt that has fueled growth around the world since the early 1980s is that it is unsustainable.

In commenting on the recent crisis in Europe, Das said "The problem, mark my words, is not going to end at Greece, Spain and Italy. This is like gangrene ... if you don't cut the limb, it spreads through the body poisoning it ... it will hit Germany. It is not going to be solved.

Das described what he calls the Sovereign Debt Express, which he believes is being derailed. Greece and the other debt-burdened European countries are merely the first carriages in the derailment of the Sovereign Debt Express train service to nowhere. The big carriage has "USA" painted on it.

"The best way to put it is we are all living in *Alice in Wonderland*."

According to Das, in the past when a country's debt burden became unmanageable, the debt would be written off, the national currency devalued and the country's economy, in effect, is forced to start over. The creation of the euro currency removes this option as there are too many other countries' finances at stake to write off on a nation's debt. Debts become very hard to be forgiven. Forgiving one nation's debt will wipe out enormous wealth, limiting the ability to consume or invest.

To comment on the austerity measures in Greece for example, he described it as "just a stop on the way to the Dark Ages. There is no way around it." Greece is like patient zero to Das.

Debt addiction is not limited to North America and the EU. When the United States and the European economies went into recession in 2009, China found its global customers had stopped placing orders and millions went unemployed. Since that time, China has pumped debt-financed infrastructure spending totaling 40 percent of its GDP into the economy.

"China prizes social stability," Das said "The Chinese Communist party knows that the only way they can keep control is to have society stable by improving living standards and increasing prosperity. It's the only way they can stay in power. And they panicked."

A full video interview can found at with Satyajit Das on the above can be found at <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/Cash-to-talk-with-Das-at--News-Cafe-149874105.html>

The reality is that we live in a global economy. The debt of nations can substantially impact neighboring and overseas nations (see text box).

At its core, it is not about money or standard of living, it will be about security. When a nation's security is threatened, immediate and short term resolutions are taken, and without regard to long term consequences. The Biblical History of Israel, and modern history show what appears to be the default mechanisms for a nation's population.

### The Need for a Savior

When it all falls apart, when a society is under threat, it immediately looks for a solution. Brutal dictatorships often appear on the scene by being the deceptive solution to a current problem that faces a nation. In fear and needing protection, democratic societies will give up their freedoms and hand power over to a single charismatic individual or political movement who promises to take care of them. Adolf Hitler's rise to power is a classic example. His message was to be the savior of the people, and built a cult surrounding himself. It is not until it is too late before the true nature and intentions of a ruler are revealed, and if history teaches us anything, so will it be with this man of sin.

The prophet Daniel spoke of such a person. He will make a covenant with the Jews but then break it after three and a half years (Daniel 9:27). The breaking of that covenant seems to be the event that unmask this individual for who he is, the opponent of Christ.

*Continued on page 30*

## Did Jephthah Really Kill His Daughter?



*Scribe's Square*

Yet another puzzling story in the Bible we shall discuss in this edition of *Scribe's Square* is that of the Israelite military general Jephthah who is thought to have sacrificed his own daughter pursuant to a vow he made in haste. Unlike the story in which God told the patriarch Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac only to stop Abraham at the last minute because it was a test of faith, it sounds like Jephthah's story ends with Jephthah doing to his daughter what he had vowed to do.

Some will explain these events as something that God allowed to happen rather than something He was pleased with. They argue that the writer simply wrote what happened and that the recording of certain conduct in scripture

does not necessarily mean that God approves of such conduct. Others reading this story see it as an example of sexism and God-ordained child sacrifice and go so far as to reject the inspiration of the scripture or even reject the God of the Old Testament altogether. But did Jephthah really kill his own daughter? Let us examine this passage once again as well as other useful scriptures.



According to Judges 11, Jephthah, the son of Gilead, was a mighty warrior. Because he was born out of wedlock, his brothers made him an outcast. But when Jephthah and his countrymen were faced with an impending conflict with the Ammonites, the people made Jephthah their captain (Judges 11:12-28).

At that time, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah. He gathered his troops and mobilized them for battle against the Ammonites. He then made a vow to Yahweh, saying, "If thou wilt give the Ammonites into my hand, then whoever comes forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall be Yahweh's, and I will offer him up for a burnt offering" (Judges 11:30-31).

Jephthah led his army against the Ammonites, and Yahweh gave him victory. He completely routed the Ammonites, capturing twenty towns. As Jephthah returned home, there was his daughter, his one and only child, coming out to meet him with girls, dancing to the tambourine!

When Jephthah saw her, he was shocked and tore his clothes because he knew that according to the law of Moses, he could not take back his vow (Deuteronomy 23:21-23, "When you make a vow to Yahweh your God, you shall not be slack to pay it; for Yahweh your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin in you. But if you

refrain from vowing, it shall be no sin in you. You shall be careful to perform what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to Yahweh your God what you have promised with your mouth”) Jephthah therefore said, “Alas, my daughter! you have brought me very low, and you have become the cause of great trouble to me; for I have opened my mouth to Yahweh, and I cannot take back my vow.”

Like her ancestor Isaac who agreed to be sacrificed by his father Abraham, Jephthah's daughter understood her father's dilemma and put up no fight. She only asked for permission to wander about the hills with her friends for two months and mourn the fact that she would never get married. Jephthah honored his daughter's request and sent her away. After Jephthah's daughter returned from her sorrowful wanderings, the Bible says Jephthah “did with her according to his vow which he had made.” And it became a custom in Israel for women to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah four days every year.

Conservative scholars often argue that Jephthah literally killed his daughter, stating as grounds the following: 1) early Jewish and Christian writers believed that Jephthah took his daughter's life; 2) the actual sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter is the most natural way to interpret the context; 3) the time of the Judges was a corrupt era in which everyone did exactly as they pleased and Jephthah was no exception. They concede that God does not approve of human sacrifice, but they claim that Jephthah acted against God's will.

These arguments, however, fail to take into account two important things. First, the writer in Judges says “the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah.” (Judges 11:29). And secondly, Jephthah is regarded in the New Testament as one of the great heroes of faith (Hebrews 11:32).

Jephthah offering his daughter as a burnt offering would have violated other laws of God. Literal “burnt offerings” had to be male (Leviticus 1; Leviticus 22.18-19). Jephthah's daughter obviously wasn't male. More importantly, God strictly prohibits human sacrifices (Deuteronomy 12:3, “You shall not worship Yahweh your God in that way; for every abomination to Yahweh which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.”) Not only would no decent priest in the land accept an innocent girl as a sacrifice, but God, himself, would not accept it.

Another important thing to realize is that Jephthah would only be allowed to sacrifice something that he actually owned. No worshiper of God is ever authorized to sacrifice to God something that does not belong to him. Nowhere in the scripture does God authorize his worshipers to steal something from someone else and then sacrifice it to God. God clearly says, “Thou shalt not steal” and “Thou shalt not murder” (Exodus 20).

Suppose the first thing Jephthah had seen on his way home from victory had been a Philistine mercenary. Would the Philistine have simply rolled over and allowed Jephthah to offer him as a burnt sacrifice in honor of Yahweh, the God of Israel? Not likely. Jephthah would have had a fight on his hands.

Theft and premeditated murder have always been wrong in God's book. To obey the laws of God is better than to sacrifice. Mercy is better than sacrifice. The same God back then and the same God today does not accept human sacrifices, dirty money, hot gifts, or blood money (Exodus 20:13; Romans 13:9; Matthew 27:3-10).

A careful examination of the Jephthah account, as well as a reconciliation of this account with legal and moral principals in other scriptures, should lead us to the alternative explanation that Jephthah really consecrated his daughter to a life of perpetual virginity rather than killing her.

Some might argue that Jephthah's vow says nothing about dedicating his daughter or any person for that matter, to a life of celibacy. Jephthah promised that if God gave him victory over the Ammonites, “then whoever comes forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall be Yahweh's, and I will offer him up for a burnt offering.”

However, the “and” (*Heb.*, *vau*) of verse 30 does not always have to literally be a conjunctive “and.” It may be an idiomatic disjunctive in the sense of “or.” In Exodus 21:15, God used the same word when he literally says that “he who curses his father and his mother shall be put to death”. Would a child in ancient Israel be able to get away with cursing his mother by saying, “Well, I cursed mama but I did not curse daddy, so I can go free”? Probably not therefore, most English Bible versions correctly translate this declaration as, “he who curses his father or his mother shall be put to death.”

In the same sense, Jephthah could very well have been saying,

“If thou wilt give the Ammonites into my hand, then whoever comes forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall *either* be Yahweh’s *or* I will offer it up for a burnt offering.” Perhaps Jephthah was vowing that the first living thing he saw on his way home from battle would *either* be consecrated to Yahweh if it were a human being *or* sacrificed as a burnt offering if it were an animal. He may have been merely suggesting that whatever met him as he returned home would *either* be dedicated to Yahweh *or* offered as a burnt offering — depending upon which was appropriate. (What about Jephthah’s Vow by Wayne Jackson, at <http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1081-what-about-jephthahs-vow> )

Notice that Jephthah’s daughters and her friends traveled about to bewail her virginity. If Jephthah’s daughter was really about to be killed, one might think she and her friends would have traveled about bewailing her imminent death rather than bewailing that she would never marry. Please also notice that after Jephthah fulfilled his vow, the Bible nowhere says that the girl died. The Bible simply says that “she had never known a man” (Judges 11:39). Her fate, according to verse 39 was not death, but that “she had never known a man.” These facts support the proposition that Jephthah did not kill his daughter but dedicated her to a celibate life of service to God without marriage.

Is such a vow to dedicate a child to the service of God farfetched? No. Hannah made a vow to dedicate her son Samuel to serve at the

Tabernacle (I Samuel 1:21-28; I Samuel 2:18-21). Concerning girls, Moses speaks of women who ministered at the door of the tent of meeting (Exodus 38:8). And in the days of the judges, God punished Eli’s sons because they were having sex with women serving at the door of the Tabernacle (I Samuel 2:22). These women were God’s “holy ones” and were not to be prostituted (Deuteronomy 23:17). It is not inconceivable therefore, that Jephthah’s daughter, rather than being murdered by her own father, was dedicated to Yahweh to serve in God’s tabernacle.

If Jephthah had the option of dedicating his daughter to Yahweh as a servant in the tabernacle rather than killing her, one might ask why Jephthah was so grieved when he saw his daughter on his return from battle? The answer may lie in the fact that Jephthah’s daughter was his only child. With no other children, Jephthah’s only heir at death would be his daughter. And with his daughter not marrying or having any children, Jephthah’s estate would pass to his nearest relatives, the same people who had denounced him as the son of a harlot and chased him away.

*The death of Jesus Christ  
is the only sacrifice  
necessary and sufficient to  
save humankind.*

The account of Jephthah and his daughter does appear to say that the daughters of Israel went yearly to “lament” the daughter of Jephthah, supporting the notion that the young woman was literally sacrificed. But the use of the word “lament” is probably a poor translation. The Hebrew word translated “lament” is tanah, which means to rehearse, recount, or tell

again (Strong’s Concordance, <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H8567&t=KJV>)

In Judges 5:11, the word tanah is translated “rehearse” (“there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of Yahweh”). This Hebrew word comes from a root word that means to give gifts as in to hire a person (Hosea 8:9-10). Therefore, the word tanah in Judges 11:40 should properly be translated “recount” or perhaps “honor.” Believe it or not, the New International Version, often ridiculed by fundamentalists as the “Non-Inspired Version” gets this right. The NIV reads, “From this comes the Israelite custom that each year the young women of Israel go out for four days to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.” Young’s Literal Translation even goes so far as to state that the daughters of Israel visited Jephthah’s daughter year by year to talk to her. This version of Judges 11:40 reads, “From time to time the daughters of Israel go to talk to the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite, four days in a year.”

The scribe understands that reasonable scripture readers may not agree that Jephthah dedicated his daughter to a life of perpetual virginity as a servant at the Tabernacle of God. Whatever one’s opinion of what happened in the book of Judges, the scribe hopes that no one will charge Yahweh, the God of Israel with moral culpability for the death of Jephthah’s daughter. The death of Jesus Christ is the only sacrifice necessary and sufficient to save humankind. Therefore, let us all follow the charge in Romans 12:1, to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, holy and acceptable, which is our spiritual worship.



## LET PATIENCE HAVE ITS PERFECT WORK

*“Patience - the gift of being able to see past the emotion.”* Rodney Williams



We’ve all read the book of Job and haven’t we all thought, self-righteously I might add, that we aren’t like him at all. No, God would never have to do all those things to teach us a lesson. We never think more highly of ourselves than we ought, do we? And, of course, we are not self-righteous at all!

I think we all tend to take a little credit here and there for what we do and what we accomplish when raising a family, working, or learning and we work very hard at what we do. Most of us follow the admonition to do everything with all our might. And sometimes, perhaps, we forget where the source of our power comes from. We read the scripture that says we are less than a drop in the bucket, yet our human nature is a deceitful thing, trying to make us out to be better in our own minds than what we truly are. Job was intelligent, successful, and scripture says he was a God-fearing man. He tried to do what was right. He helped the poor and the fatherless, in fact, what he accomplished in his lifetime was astounding. There is much evidence he was trying to please God. But the following verses show his physical life was difficult.

Listen to Job’s conversation with his friends:

*“Human life is a struggle, isn’t it? It’s a life sentence to hard labor. Like field hands longing for quitting time and working stiff with nothing to hope for but payday, I’m given a life that meanders and goes nowhere—*

*“What are mortals anyway, that you bother with them, that you even give them the time of day? That you check*

*up on them every morning, looking in on them to see how they’re doing? Let up on me, will you? Can’t you even let me spit in peace? Even suppose I’d sinned—how would that hurt you? You’re responsible for every human being. Don’t you have better things to do than pick on me? Why make a federal case out of me? Why don’t you just forgive my sins and start me off with a clean slate? The way things are going, I’ll soon be dead. You’ll look high and low, but I won’t be around.”* months of aimlessness, nights of misery! I go to bed and think, ‘How long till I can get up?’ (Job 7, the Message)

Job doesn’t sound much different than you and I minus the kingship. Satan is an accuser of the brethren and nothing has changed. Our responsibility is to look to God and put on His armor because like Job:

*“...we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”* (Ephesians 6:12)

Listen to Job describe himself:

*People who knew me spoke well of me; my reputation went ahead of me. I was known for helping people in trouble and standing up for those who were down on their luck. All my dealings with people were good. I was known for being fair to everyone I met.*

*Oh, how I miss those golden years when God’s friendship graced my home. When the Mighty One was still by my side and my children were*

*all around me, When everything was going my way, and nothing seemed too difficult.* (Excerpts from Job 29, the Message)

Yes, when things are going well we tend to take God for granted. And it seems Job was too. He was too busy earning his salvation. We get complacent and forget the real purpose of our sojourn here.

But Job hadn’t read about trials. Sometimes God needs to open our eyes and get our attention. That is what He did for Job. We need to get some perspective on God. We need to quit limiting Him and what He is doing in our lives. We tend to minimize the importance of our trials. We need to embrace them, know that God will work them out in His time, not ours. When life gets too difficult and problems pile up we tend to do what Job did...question God. And ask questions of our trusted friends. *“Why is this happening to me?”* What am I supposed to learn from all of this? We ask. We even begin to doubt ourselves and our relationship with God. And the old thought was that God blessed the good and cursed the evil and that’s what Job’s friends thought. So if trials came upon you it was because you were sinning, they hinted at this very loudly. Sometimes we think God is on our case. We forget it’s all good. It is not what we learn through a trial necessarily, it is what we experience.

Evidently, Job didn’t know why he was having a trial either. We should know better. We have been given the information that we should count it all joy and know that trials bring us closer to God and will ultimately perfect us. We, like Job, can begin

## Let Patience Have Its Perfect Work

to feel sorry for ourselves and then try to understand why bad things happen to us and try of ourselves to find solutions. We forget that emotions blur our vision. When looking through this veil of emotional pain we cannot make sense of what is happening to us. Maybe we get angry and bitter. We don't want to wait for God. Ultimately, the prize of learning patience is what we need and that comes at a cost—but I thought we had counted the cost of our calling.

Peter tells us it is not strange that we experience trials

*Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;* (1 Peter 4:12)

James takes it one step further, we are to expect trials and find joy in the fact that it is a necessary part of our earthly education.

*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.* (James 1:2-4)

In the wake of so many unimaginable, crushing, life-destroying tragedies and plagues, Job felt abandoned by God. He felt overwhelmed by grief and personal loss and did not understand the purpose of the trial. Just that it was not fair. We can see that it was patience that Job developed through this trial. He had to wait on God for answers and so must we.

Patience (or forbearing) is the state of endurance under difficult circumstances, which can mean persevering in the face of delay or provocation without acting on annoyance/anger in a negative way; or exhibiting forbearance when under strain, especially when faced with longer-term difficulties. Patience is the level of endurance one can take before negativity. It is also used to refer to the character trait of being steadfast. Antonyms include hastiness and impetuosity. (Wikipedia)

That is a hard thing! Probably the one thing we do not have [or not enough of and do not want] is patience. We want answers now and we want to fix it now. God has other plans. Peter gives us insight and encouragement.

*In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* (1Peter5:6).

The Message translation puts it this way.

*God is keeping careful watch over us and the future. The Day is coming when you'll have it all—life healed and whole. I know how great this makes you feel, even though you have to put up with every kind of aggravation in the meantime. Pure gold put in the fire comes out of it proved pure; genuine faith put through this suffering comes out proved genuine. When Jesus wraps this all up, it's your faith, not your gold, that God will have on display as evidence of His victory* (1 Peter 5:5-7, the Message).

*Better is the patient spirit than the lofty spirit. Do not in spirit become quickly discontented, for discontent lodges in the bosom of a fool* (Ecclesiastes 7:8,9).

Strong words those, but we really need these trials because we all sadly lack godly patience. How otherwise will we be perfected? And that's the purpose of our sojourn here isn't it? So we need to fall on our knees in thankfulness, for without this most important ingredient added to our godly character we would have no chance at perfection. So maybe our prayer should be "give me strength to wait on you oh Lord through this trial."

Job's story helps upright people to learn to trust God when going through traumatic experiences, while with patience we wait for God's resolution to our problems. God tests His children to prove the quality of their faith. It was sound theology, not his feelings, that enabled Job to weather the immediate shock of the news that his children and everything he owned were gone forever. This is why sound theology is so important—and so intensely practical. A trial helps us experience God personally and to prove the truth of God's Word. Listen to Paul in the Message translation.

*"Distress that drives us to God does that. It turns us around. It gets us back in the way of salvation. We never regret that kind of pain. But those who let distress drive them away from God are full of regrets, end up on a deathbed of regrets. And now, isn't it wonderful all the ways in which this distress has goaded you closer to God? You're more alive, more concerned, more sensitive, more reverent, more human, more passionate, more responsible. Looked at from any angle, you've come out of this with purity of heart* (2 Corinthians 7:10-12).





*Continued from page 13*

teenage rebellion and runaway. By the time a child is angry enough to leave home, it is too late to undo all of those childhood lies and manipulations.

When parents tell the truth, they can and should expect their children to do the same. When it appears that a child may have done something wrong, but the parent is not sure, it is good to offer not to punish them when they will tell the truth. Truth is that valuable. This is often the best way to handle situations where the parent does not have enough evidence to be sure that the child did the wrong deed anyway. When parents are fairly sure that a child did

*continued on page 25*

some bad thing, but the child claims he has not, it is better for the parents to say that they are not sure than to possibly falsely punish the child. They can teach the child about the evil of lying and assure him that God knows the truth and He will render a just judgment (Ecclesiastes 12:14). If the child continues to insist he is innocent, they can accept is a solemn statement from him using the principle in Exodus 22:10-11.

When children are taught to be truthful, they also need to be taught that they do not need to answer every question that non-parents ask of them. They should not lie, but they do not need to say everything that they know (Proverbs 12:23; 29:11). This is especially true of someone who might use their information against them. Our Father in Heaven is a God of truth. In the Old Testament, he had His law written in plain sight for all to see (Deut 27:4-8). Today, His Bible is the most printed book on earth. The wealthy and leaders have the same access to His word as the poor and lowly. Nearly every non-Christian religion, as well as many religious denominations have

“secret knowledge” which only their religion’s leaders know—the common people do not have access to it at all. God does hide some of His truth in parables (Matthew 13:13-15), but He will show His truth to those who seek Him (Jeremiah 19:13). God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), but He reveals His truth to us as we are ready for it.

### **Responsibility**

The reason many young people have a difficult time getting their first job or living on their own has little to do with lack of intelligence or knowledge. They usually suffer from irresponsibility. When children are young, it is very important for them to be responsible for things that they can do: keep their things picked up and clean, be ready for meals on time, do their school work, etc. Taking care of a pet is a wonderful teaching of responsibility, provided the parents have the fortitude to either give the pet away or let it die if the children do not take care of it. (That may sound awful, but a child learning the lesson that carelessness can cause an animal death is far better than learning it by a human death.) Today’s tendency toward smaller family sizes, myriads of mandated protective devices and lack of real experience until age 18 makes the problem worse. It is not that protective devices are bad, but the idea of “whenever a child is hurt the cause is a lack of safety devices” causes parents and children not to think about a child learning responsibility.

A hundred years ago, it was common for children to work around potentially dangerous farm animals, machinery, fires, guns, etc. The children learned that they must not tease the horse that could kill them with one kick, must not be silly around fires or machinery that could do the same if they fell in. When my father was in elementary school, he and other children would

leave their rifles in the coat room with a shell or two in their coat pockets so they could hunt on the way home. They never had a school shooting or any kind of gun accident. Today, there are no guns in schools and children are kept away from cars and dangerous machinery, but many of the children have spent hundreds or thousands of hours playing video games where people get “another life” after they are shot or crashed. A couple of 14-year olds in my children’s school borrowed their parents’ car one day and tried to take a corner at 90mph—and died doing it. The lack of gradually accepting serious responsibility proved fatal. Children in larger families frequently must be responsible for watching other children and doing important household work. It is good to safely teach children to learn to use kitchen appliances, power tools, and things like that as long as they understand the dangers and take them seriously. They must be directly supervised until they have an established safe track record.

Of course, a child who is being silly or making light of dangerous things should immediately be taken away from them and told that he will not be able to do it again until his approach changes. Our Father in heaven is training us for an exceedingly responsible position—reigning with Christ (2 Timothy 2:11; Jude 1:15; Revelation 20:4). He is very serious about our commitments to him. If we make a promise to Him, we need to keep it (Deuteronomy 32:21-22; Ecclesiastes 5:4-5). If God gives us a job to do, we better do it (Jonah 1; 1 Corinthians 9:16; Colossians 4:17). If we do not do what we know is right, it is sin (James 4:17). If we are responsible to our Father, our children will be responsible to us.

### The Joy of Work

If a parent does not like to work, either in a job or at home, they must pray for a change of heart to be a good example to their children. On the other hand, parents who learned to work when young sometimes make the mistake of trying to give their children a happy and fun life—not requiring the child to work as much as they did. That is not good. Someday, the parent will be hurried with too much to do, and demand that the child do some of the household work. The child will be introduced to work from a tired, frustrated parent.

The parent may say: “nobody likes work, but I have to do it and so do you”. It is no wonder that children raised like this flee every kind of work and are unable to be a success in school or the working world. Work should be introduced as a good thing—the means by which one takes care of oneself, obtains what one wants, helps others and improves the world. Solomon said, *“I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God”*(Ecclesiastes 3:12).

Parents should not give their children busy work, but should teach them to be effective and efficient at mundane tasks so that they can get on to things they like. They should not load them down with so many tasks that they cannot visualize finishing them. Parents should work along side their children to start with, realizing that they will be slower, but having them stay with a job till it is done. This usually takes longer than if the parent did the job himself, but it will pay off eventually—for both child and parent. Children should learn the satisfaction of seeing a job through to completion. Just working for some number of minutes without a goal is not good. When a child is able to do a job without the parent, then they should be

expected to do it. Children working on their own should be given some degree of choice, within reason, of how and when to do the jobs—that further helps them take ownership of work.

Household jobs that are necessary for everyone to live should normally not be paid work. The child must learn to use his time to contribute to the needs of the family. However, if a child does a job that provides income to the family, the proceeds should be shared with the child to teach the economic benefit of work. This writer still remembers bundling up the family’s old newspapers at age six. A recycle business paid a few cents per hundred pounds, but I received some of the money for doing it. I always wanted that job! I also remember paying my own children by the piece to collate a couple thousand copies of the newsletter I was publishing. They quickly became faster at it than I was, and they now run their own businesses!

As God grants believers spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 28-31; Ephesians 4:11-15; 1 Peter 4:8-11), parents, through heredity, grant their children physical gifts or aptitudes. We are all different; we do not all learn the same; we are not all good at the same things. A parent must help their child find the kind of work they are skilled at so that they can enjoy their work and benefit from it. Many books have been written on the subject, but this writer has used the principles from the Johnson O’Connor Research Foundation (<http://www.jocrf.org>) for 30 years.

While they offer very accurate but expensive testing to determine an individual’s inherited aptitudes, simply reading their free book ([http://www.jocrf.org/Understanding\\_Your\\_Aptitudes.pdf](http://www.jocrf.org/Understanding_Your_Aptitudes.pdf)) and understanding

its concepts enabled this writer to understand himself, his children and many others interested in finding the work they enjoy.

God Himself enjoys his work. There was great joy when He created the heavens and earth (Job 28:1-7). Jesus Christ, who had the most difficult job in the world, enjoyed His work. The night before He died He said, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do... But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves” (John 17:4, 13). God is looking forward to His greater work, when He raises us from the dead: “If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, Till my change comes. You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands” (Job 14:14-15).

### Healthy Home & Community

This section is not about how the parent interacts with the child, but how the parent deals with other factors that have great influence on children.

- A good marriage is the best gift parents can give their children. Parents must work hard to run the home in peace and to set an example for their children. A bad marriage requires much prayer and counsel. Sometimes an abusive unbelieving spouse must leave in order to provide peace (1 Corinthians 7:15). When older children see religious parents with a bad marriage, they usually reject their parents’ religion and often the concept of marriage itself (which isn’t all that popular in the media today, anyway). Parents with marriage difficulties must address them when their children are young; it will be too late when they are teens. Sometimes parents have a marriage that would be acceptable for



raising children, but one or both spend so much time criticizing the other that their children believe their parents' marriage is no good. Philippians 4:4-8 has a plan for them.

- A healthy household must be maintained as well. If relatives, friends, foster children or even older siblings living in the home become a threat to younger siblings, they must be dealt with. Threats would include violence, sexual perversion, substance abuse, crime or other things that are likely to have a long-term destructive impact on other children. It may be possible to require the troubled resident to stay out of the quarters where the young children live, but most often it is necessary to give them an order to "shape up or ship out."

- A parent whose job prevents them from parenting must look for a new job. Immediately quitting a job might produce a greater disaster, but if a parent does not have enough time or money to raise his family—or is involved in some job that is dangerous to the family, then he must make plans for a new job.

- Carefully choosing the children's community is another essential aspect of parenting. Community includes neighbors, church, schools, scouts, clubs, sports teams, friends and other

associations. During the primary years, parents have great control over these things; their young children go where parents take them and make friends among those whom they meet. There is no list or magic formula of good and bad churches, schools or organizations.

A parent must be involved in each decision as much as possible. A church of a certain denomination may be great in one area and terrible in another. Public schools can be dangerous places where little learning goes on, or they can be marvelous places full of teachers with good Christian values in spite of public policy. Also, parents vary greatly in their ability to home school. All parents should investigate and pray about their public, private, home school and group home school options—and do what is best for each child. Parents should always want to get to know their child's friends, teachers, coaches and counselors.

These people are shaping their child's life—are they helping the parents, or opposing them?

- Children need to see God in action in the lives of their parents. They need to see their parents pray and study the Bible. They need to hear their parents talk about scriptural principles when they consider issues

and make decisions. They need to experience their parents repentance and apologizing when they have made mistakes. God does not hide the mistakes of His servants in the Scripture; parents should not try to hide theirs—children eventually find out.

### **The Toughest Part Is Yet to Come**

If this article seems overwhelming, and if the trials of teenagers are twice the trouble, relax:

*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me* (Philippians 4:13).

The primary years are the time when a parent can get the most good accomplished for the least effort. Making up for mistakes is much more difficult in the teen years. Use the primary years well!

Those of you who are not parents, but have read this far can appreciate what parents go through and lend a hand (not just telling, but doing) to those who might desire your help. We can all see how God works with his growing believers. Articles on pre-teens, teens and adult children are yet to come. Life is exciting! *Be a good child of God today* (1 John 3:1-2).





## Port Austin Bible Campus

### *Biblical Rehabilitation*

Since our last report, PABC continues to provide a place for an average of 27 people, now totaling 11,000 bed-nights. We presently have 10 men, 9 women and 9 children. Our daily hour-long Bible classes continue with numerous basic videos and open discussion. We have shown some reruns, so we would be happy to accept videos from our readers who might know of good basic Christian material. (If anyone has a functioning large-screen TV that they are not using, we would thankfully accept that as well.)

The local police and parole/probation officers continue to be happy with our service. They know that jails and prisons are not able to do much in the way of reforming. These institutions are closed environments largely designed to physically stop people from making bad decisions that hurt people. It is when inmates exit them that important questions arise: Will they find something useful to do and get along with others in society, or will they revert to a life of crime? We should all know how difficult it is today for young people to get on their own in life. Starting wages often do not pay the cost of a minimal existence. According to USA Today, 43% of adults under age 25 still live at home, up from only 32% in 1980.\*

Sometimes, adults experience their own problems, sickness or death that cause these children to have no place to live. That is usually when we hear from them at PABC. A person who is just leaving prison or jail usually has all of the difficulties of a young person just starting out in life, and a great many more. It is much more difficult to get jobs and housing. Many jobs and housing programs will not accept people with certain criminal records. It is also difficult to find good friends.

Our guests with police records have asked, “Why do so many people keep trying to offer me drugs, get me to steal something or pay me for sex?” Some people will answer by saying, “they should have thought of that before they committed a crime.” Yes, it would be good for everyone to think through the ramifications of committing a crime before they do it. But once they have done it, how can they deal with it?

Neither the Bible nor our present governments prescribe life in prison or the death penalty for committing a minor crime.

What should happen to the man who got in a fight, the woman who embezzled from her employer or the teen who stole to have the same clothes as his or her friends? Should they spend the rest of their life being unable to find legitimate work or a place to live? Should they continue in a life of crime?

The Bible never teaches imprisonment as a punishment. Nearly all minor crimes are solved by the offender paying restitution to the victim. “... He should make full restitution; if he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft” (Exodus 22:3). One who committed a crime for which he could not pay the restitution would become

a slave. While the word “slave” causes many of us to think of ruthless treatment, the Bible teaches: “*Do not rule over them ruthlessly, but fear your God*” (Leviticus 25:43).

Many of today’s prisons and jails are worse than the biblical concept of slavery. For most inmates, there is nothing useful to do and little chance to learn to make right choices. Extortion, beatings, rapes and other criminal activity still go on within the walls, and most inmates emerge more hardened and more skilled at crime than when they went in.

When inmates are released, they are usually placed on probation (from jail) or parole (from prison). These systems are much closer to the biblical method of correction. Instead of a master, the offender has a probation or parole officer to report to. The offender lives in society and has great latitude to choose right or wrong, and an officer to check up on him at regular intervals. Conditions can be imposed upon the offender that do not exist for other members of society, and the offender can be quickly punished (Ecclesiastes 8:11) for breaking those conditions without a trial, much like a slave’s master could. For example, a person who committed crimes while under the influence of alcohol will almost always be required not to consume any alcohol while on parole/probation. Modern technology makes it possible to attach monitors to people to detect this. If the offender drinks alcohol, even if they don’t commit a crime, they can be brought back to jail or corrected in some other way.

A difficulty with the parole/probation system is that the officers see each offender for only a few minutes each week or month. They do not know how they work, who their friends are or what they say. They are not present

\*<http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2012-08-01/boomerang-adults-recession-kids-at-home/56623746/1>

to encourage them when they are tempted to fall back into their old ways. That is where PABC is making a big difference in people's lives. With the positive influence of daily Bible teachings, caring people who live in close proximity and positive work to do to help maintain the place where they live (PABC), it is much more like the caring master that the Bible prescribes. While we try to be very diligent in our determination of facts, there is no need for a judge or jury to take immediate action. We can call their officer and report behavior contrary to their required conditions, or we can ask a person to leave—take away their place to live—based upon our own rules and judgments.

The Bible teaches mercy; it also teaches just judgment; it also teaches wisdom. The Holy Spirit shows us how to use each. The Bible teaching is also much more merciful in that seven years was the maximum time a person could be a slave, and his owner was commanded to give him a new start in life when he left:

*"If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed; you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From what the LORD has blessed you with, you shall give to him" (Deuteronomy 15:12-14).*

Today, most people leave jail and prison owing housing fees (for their incarceration), court costs, attorney's fees, parole/probation supervision fees and in some cases restitution. In general, they are not given anything of value to start a new life. A few ex-convicts qualify for government programs providing housing for a short time. But many leave jail or prison without enough money to get into any kind of rental housing. So, they rely

on relatives and friends for a place to stay—often the same relatives and friends that helped them get into a life of crime.

This is another area where PABC helps. It provides a place to live where crime and substance abuse is discouraged. Some of the Guests coming to PABC were taught or forced into these things while they were growing up at home. Juvenile detention, foster care, half-way houses or stays with other relatives were sometimes more of the same thing. Most of them want a support system where they can stay free of these negative influences. Whose job is it to help them when their own family and government support systems are inadequate?

*"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me'" (Mathew 25:37-40).*

For centuries, Christian groups have been doing the job of providing essential physical sustenance to those who need it, whether they are former inmates, victims of crime, victims of unfortunate circumstances or people who have not yet learned to take responsibility for their own actions. Over half of the PABC Guests have no criminal record of any kind, nearly all of them fall into one of these categories. Along with the Biblical principles of material success, we teach that the power to live a righteous life can only come

through the love, forgiveness, and power of our Father in heaven, by repentance, baptism and the receiving of His Holy Spirit.

We welcome participation of like minded believers—whether you want to come to PABC as a teacher, mentor or worker, or help us from afar: Port Austin Bible Campus, PO Box 474, Port Austin, Michigan 48467; 989-738-7700; pabc@portaustin.net.

### PABC Success Stories

- One man came to us after 12 years in prison, having been hospitalized there from violence done to him. He stayed at PABC five months, found a job, and moved out. Now, a year later, he still has the same job, a stable place to live and has completed his parole term with no difficulties.
- Another young man at age 17 was taken on a burglary job by his father. He was sentenced to a year in jail and his father several years in prison. His parole officer felt that he should not stay with any of his relatives or friends because they are a bad influence. He is staying at PABC, has done some good work for us and is starting a full-time job.
- We have helped another young woman regain partial custody of her children. She had been living on the streets and in drug houses

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He will eventually seek to make everyone worship himself and will claim to be God (Revelation 13:5-8). His authority will be fueled by the deceptive signs and lying wonders. Those who are deceived by this cult of personality which turns God, or rather God's character, into the enemy, now have a new counterfeit god.

But before he is revealed, he will bring what the people want: security and prosperity, they will exalt him with gratitude (Revelation 13:4). He perhaps is the one who brings "*Peace and Safety!*" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). He is the world's savior, albeit a deceptive one.

Scripture suggests he attacks all religions, as he exalts himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped, claiming that he is God (verse 4). The Church of God will be a target of this rebellion because they are the people of the true God and represent God's will on earth, which is extremely unpopular for the climate of this time (Daniel 12:7). Matthew 24: 9-13 describes a Church persecuted; brethren betraying one another and the love of many brethren growing cold. The apostasy will negatively affect the people of God.

The scriptures speak of end time conditions with a world largely under the sway of the man of sin, but it is not a world without God's call to repent. Verse 10 suggests that the truth of God will be made available, as many other scriptures in the Bible, but not received by many that they may be saved. God will pour out His Spirit in the last days (Joel 2:28), but despite this, many will reject His salvation as described in verses 11 and 12.

Should we care about the identity of this man of sin? By no means is the salvation of an individual attached to the correct identification of the man of sin, or understanding end time prophecy in general. We also see Paul did not hold the whereabouts or identity of the man of sin in high importance. Paul states that this individual will be revealed 'in his own time' (verse 6) so we are not to be concerned if we do not know his identity or timing. Paul's conclusion is also notable; he does not

seem to complete his discussion on the matter, but diverts his readers away from the topic and expresses gratitude for the Church in Thessalonica (verse 13). One can sense his reluctance to worry his brethren with the subject, so neither should we. Nevertheless, we are aware of this eventual occurrence as God does not leave his servants completely unaware of what will unfold (Revelation 1:1)

In Matthew 24, Jesus Christ describes the signs and conditions that will have a sorrowful affect on the people of God and the world at large. Only the elect 's would be able to discern between good and evil (Matthew 24:24). In fact, the pressures on believers will become so great that for the elect sake the times will be cut short, for their faith would surely fail (Matthew 24:22). The lesson of Matthew 24 is to be prepared and to make use of our time till then to do His will (Matthew 24:14-30).

### **A Lesson from the Thessalonians for Us**

Prophetic truth is a vital part of the whole counsel of God that is needed for victorious living. It is essential however that, as with all scripture, it be used for proper edification. Paul used it effectively with his audience to reassure and comfort; to protect them from needless distraction. Their readiness for the future is to be sons of light and sons of the day (1 Thessalonians 5:5). See also *Faith to Face the Future*—SVM 2011 Spring/Summer edition.

If there is something to communicate in this article it is this:

**We will be tested throughout our lifetime of faith, and it may well be that the test will become severe as this age closes out, and prophetic understanding will not fully prepare us for it but it gives us forewarning. It is only by the power of God we are preserved, and faith evokes the power of God. Prophecy gives us hope and the ability to identify things for what they are as they unfold.**

The Thessalonians were worried that the day of the Lord had come, and they had somehow missed it. They were anxious about mixed messages they had received by some means (2 Thessalonians 2:2). Is there a lesson

for God's people today in these verses?

It is not the first time or the last that predictions on the timing of the Day of the Lord have been in error. The real challenge in making predictions we are not called to make is the distraction, and this was experienced in Thessalonica.

*"False starts have been a common phenomenon among movements predicting the imminent end of the age as people's expectations exceed their patience"* — Charles A. Wanamaker

Why were they concerned? Was it lack of Knowledge? That does not appear to be the case:

But concerning the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write you.

Maybe they forgot:

*Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?* (2 Thessalonians 2:5).

Perhaps they did forget, and that is a problem sometimes with knowledge, we forget, particularly during times of stress, or what we know does not manifest itself as we might have expected, or hoped.

Perhaps they lacked faith, but that suggestion would not be consistent with Paul's words about them:

*For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything* (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

And

*We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you amongst the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure ...* (2 Thessalonians 1:3,4).

We cannot be sure, as we were not  
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and lost her ability to walk when she was shot there. She realize it was God's way of waking her up to her responsibility and now she is struggling to take care of her children, learn to walk again and get a job. (If there is anyone who would like to help her specifically, we would accept offerings for her, keeping them and making sure they are used only for legitimate family needs only.)

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there. But there is a certain reality we must face at the end of the day regarding our limitations regarding knowledge and even faith.

Our faith is not going to be 100% all the time, and that is a reality. Even great icons of faith in the past, now and in the future may find that their faith falls apart, and indeed it will. We do not know what God is doing much of the time, and even if we did I am not sure if that would make a big difference. Jesus is again our true Savior, He saved you before, and He will save you again. Even when faith fails, we can see His intervention again and again, and He will indeed intervene again (Matthew 24:22).

Love only never fails (1 Corinthians 13:8); indeed God is love. It is greater than faith for that reason.

Paul's expectation of the Thessalonians was not to know with accuracy the future, but to fulfill the expectations of God:

*Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power; that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11, 12).*

The Thessalonians may have stumbled on the matter of prophecy, and we have benefited in part from that, but the weight of the glory of God coming to fruition in them was of greater emphasis.

Our calling is not to know the future, for the future will come and go. The greatest revealed truth is to know the glory of God. So let's keep prophecy in proper perspective and use it to our best advantage.



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