

# Hearing Angels Sing

by Sis. Marie Counts  
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As a child, my father always took me to the nursing homes to visit. When I had children, I began taking them to the nursing home about once a week. After my children started school, I was unable to drive an hour and a half to the same nursing homes I had visited for the past 25 years. My 5 year old was missing the joys of visiting the elderly, and began asking, "When are we going to the nursing home?" I told him maybe we'd be able to go again during the summer and on holiday weeks.

My husband suggested we find a new nursing home on the island on which we live. I called the activities director at the nursing home on St. Simons Island and asked her if she had a list of patients who liked children, who didn't have family or friends to care for them. She gladly prepared me a list of patients and room numbers. The first time we visited, we carried flowers (impatiens) to each new friend. My children enjoyed potting flowers and delivering them to meet new residents. We walked in the first room, and the patient in the first bed was the lady we were to visit. I asked if she was Mrs. Jones, and her roommate said that she was Mrs. Jones. We gave the lady in the first bed a flower and went to the second bed to visit with the lady who said she was our lady to visit. We left and delivered the rest of our flowers.

The next week we invited friends to join us, and they did. The boy was in my oldest son's first grade class. His mother said she had always wanted to visit in the nursing home, but had never been and was scared to go alone. When we got to the first room, I tried again to visit with the lady in the first bed who I really thought was the lady I was sent to visit. The lady in the second bed again claimed to be the lady we were there to visit. Her daughters

were in the room, and I knew one of them. She told me later I was supposed to be seeing the lady in the first bed, but her mother loved children so much she would do anything to get us to come sing to her. Before Alzheimer's, she had led a children's church choir. We decided to add a friend to our list. The lady we were told to visit never responded from our very first visit, and she's now in heaven, but we're still visiting the lady in the second bed.

Last week when we were singing to "the lady we weren't originally sent to be singing to," a girl from my son's school stuck her head in the door. When we finished, we followed her next door and sang to her mother's aunt's roommate because her mother was preparing her aunt to go to the doctor. We got a call to pray for a lady at the nursing home whose husband died at the hospital and had no family. The activities director had to take the lady to the funeral home to make funeral arrangements because she had no family. The activities director also had to go to the hospital to collect the husband's belongings because there was no other family. I wondered how I could meet this lady and help her through the loss of her husband. When we got to the nursing home this week, I realized the lady whose husband died "just happened to be" the student from my son's school's mother's aunt's roommate that we met last week "by chance."

Yesterday we walked in to sing to "the lady we weren't sent to visit," and we asked her if she'd like to sing some Christmas Carols with us. She looked confused, and in her mind it obviously wasn't Christmas time. We sang Jesus Loves Me and Amazing Grace, and then she was ready to sing Silent Night and other Christmas songs. We were met in the hallway outside the

last room where we sang yesterday by a Hospice nurse who came to tell us what a blessing we had been to the family of the new roommate to "the lady we weren't sent to visit." She said that although the curtains were drawn and we didn't see it or know about it at the time, the roommate's family sang Jesus Loves Me, Amazing Grace, and Silent Night with us, and during Silent Night, the roommate went home to be with the Lord very peacefully.

God is working, and we see Him every time we go to the nursing home. God uses us in spite of us.

We invited another family from school to join us on our weekly visits, and they did. We invited a third family, and they joined us once. While there, the mother asked the activities director if she could bring her small dog in once a week with her son and visit. She was given a list of residents who would love to see a dog and a small boy once a week.

I have been amazed at the reaction from all I've invited to go to the nursing home. I now am joined weekly by two mothers and three children to sing. One lady and her son take their dog on another day weekly. Most people are scared to begin visiting in a nursing home, but if you can get them there once, they will be blessed and desire to go regularly. If you currently visit, please invite a family to join you. If you do not currently visit, please find a nursing home and spend time there weekly. It will be a blessing to those you see, but you will be amazed at the blessings you will receive too!

You never know when your "little angels" will be singing as someone is going to be with the Lord. No matter what happens, the Lord can use your children to bless other of His "older" children by visiting and singing with them.

# Love The Lord Thy God...

by Elder Jason Solomon  
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**“...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment” (Mark 12:20).**

## Man vs. God

When confronted by challengers to His wisdom and doctrine, Jesus most often provided more than was requested. Always the ideal teacher, He provided insight beyond the present inquiry. It is clear that even though the Pharisees and Sadducees meant to undermine or trap Him, Jesus used those opportunities not only to share the Truth, but also to debunk His detractors. One such occasion is recorded in the Gospel of Mark 12:28-31.

*“And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”*

Similarly, Matthew records this event in Matthew 22:35-40.

*“Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”*

When these Pharisees came to ask Jesus, “Which is the great command-

ment in the law?,” they did it not out of desire for wisdom, but rather to tempt Jesus into blasphemy or error. Little did they know that they merely gave another opportunity for Jesus to once again prove His sovereign knowledge as the Son of God. Jesus' famous response is at once simple and easy to understand but challenging to our very way of thinking about ethics.

Conventional morality posits that while you should care for your fellows, you must first see to yourself. Like the lion or lioness, we feel it natural to sate ourselves before seeing to anyone else. Our innate selfishness dictates that we attempt to satisfy ourselves before others at least most of the time. However, Jesus does not bow to conventional earthly philosophies. His wisdom comes from on high (John 7:16-18). Jesus recites this great truth first recorded in Deuteronomy 6:5 which states that we are first to love God with all our hearts, souls and might (mind & strength). Then and only then will we be able to fulfill God's other commands properly.

## Dedication

On this topic, the Apostle Paul writes, “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (I Corinthians 13:13). This charity is in fact not simply generosity, but Godly love displayed through service and sacrificial living. This is the same concept of love that Jesus refers to in John 15:13 saying, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” If this level of love is what Jesus defines as the greatest, then it follows that this same level of love is expected from God's children toward Him. Therefore, we ought to be willing both to live and to die in dedication to God. But what does dedication mean to you?

If we are to love God, we must not treat this matter like some immature “puppy love,” but rather we must devote

ourselves to God's service fully. Like Christ, we will serve both our heavenly master and our fellow man more completely. Only when we fail to truly love God do we find ourselves falling into sin and despair. It requires dedication to God on a day by day, moment by moment basis, to love in this manner. Like so many martyrs before us, we can live or die with good conscience saying, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). This is dedication.

## Deceptively Deep

It is easy for us to say that we love someone with *all* our hearts without any qualms about the real meaning of this word. On the other hand, it is important for us to give place to our feelings without compromising our dedication to our Lord. “All” is such a comprehensive word, and we use it flippantly. We say things like, “We're all winners,” or “There is good in all of God's children,” but do we really mean those things? I am afraid we do not take our words seriously at times, and therefore we do not always use words that best fit our meaning.

Take for example the word “deceptively.” What does the following sentence mean to you? The water at the pier is deceptively deep. Does it mean that the water is deeper than it appears? Or does it mean that the water is shallow and only looks deep? Think about it. Your understanding of this one word changes the entire meaning of this sentence.

Because we do not fully grasp the meaning of our own words, we can fail to grasp the meaning of the words of our Savior. As the Word of God in the flesh, Jesus is the most important source of Truth ever. His commandments and testimony are unparalleled in wisdom and insight into the human condition as they come from God, the Son. If we do not take His word seriously and correctly, searching out the Scriptures like the noble Bereans (Acts 17:11), then

we do not honor our King appropriately, and we will fail to follow Him properly.

### All

What does 'all' mean to you? Well, actually it does not matter what it means to you and me so much as what it meant to Jesus Christ when He said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37). Jesus is quoting from the words given first to Moses in Deuteronomy 6:5. This passage is not part of the vaunted Ten Commandments, but Jesus goes on to say that upon this commandment (and the second one to love your neighbor as yourself) hang all the Law and the Prophets. Why? Because we fail to keep the spirit of the commandments when we cease to love God fully as Jesus describes.

The love of God is the lens through which we must focus our lives. Beginning with Adam and Eve and all the way to the present population of the earth, we sin because we do not have the love of God first and foremost in our lives. On this point Jesus said, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments*" (John 14:15). With these things in mind, let us consider the depth of all thy heart, all thy soul, and all thy mind. Don't worry. The water is not deceptively deep. Whatever that means.

### All Thy Heart

I feel sure that this young Pharisee did not expect Jesus to quote from Deuteronomy 6:5. He probably expected Him to recite Exodus 20:3, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." However, this commandment and those that follow are minimum standards. The greatest commandment is greater than merely putting God first, because it is more comprehensive and far reaching, requiring all that man possesses.

It is no surprise that Jesus started with the heart. He also said in another place, "*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*" (Luke 12:34), testifying to the centrality of the heart in our works. He also knew the words written by Jeremiah, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" (Jeremiah 17:9), speaking to what novelist Joseph

Conrad called the Heart of Darkness. Knowing the dichotomy of these truths, Jesus put the heart at the top of the priority list of faculties to turn toward the Father.

Our hearts are the source of our deepest motives. Yet, our hearts are desperately wicked by nature. How do we find solace from this condition? How can we hope to escape this trap? If our hearts are desperately wicked and our treasure is found with our hearts, then wickedness is a trap. However, that assumes no outside force acting upon us to address our situation. Speaking through His prophet in Ezekiel 36:26, God says, "*A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.*" Consequently, while there is no solace or hope in ourselves, God works in the hearts of all His elect to insure that they can resist evil and choose the good.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, each child of God enjoys a new heart. This new heart comes with regeneration when we are born again, and it is the first requirement to seeing the Kingdom of God (John 3:3). With this new heart and the indwelling Holy Spirit, we can indeed resist the Devil and obey with a pure conscience. In this obedience is a blessing of God's increasing presence in our lives. In the same way, obedience draws us closer to those in earthly authority such as parents and grandparents, teachers and coaches, as well as pastors and mentors. Jesus said, "*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God*" (Matthew 5:8) Being closer to God through obedience to His ordained Law and Order, we enjoy His divine presence here and now, but we must keep His commandments from the heart to fully experience God in the present.

### All Thy Soul

The second part of our person with which we are commanded to love God, is our soul. But what is the soul? The answer to this question and others like it has baffled innumerable theologians and philosophers over the centuries, and it is beyond the scope of this article

to address that question fully. However, a decent working definition of the soul is "*the immaterial force instilled by the Creator granting life, animation, and rationality to a person.*" It is described in Genesis as the "breath of life" (Genesis 2:7).

If the heart is the center of emotion, then the soul is the center of life. The heart provides motive, but the soul provides means. Without it we are merely dust, manikins of fanciful design. It gives us the power to rise and the power to rest. The soul of man is wonderful and mysterious in that it cannot be seen, but yet we observe its existence each moment we take breath.

God commands our service from the heart, but He requires all our actions (means) to be focused on His glorification. Concerning this very matter, Paul admonishes the Corinthians to "do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). With our down-sitting and our uprising, glorifying God should be the beginning, middle, and end of our road. God said through Isaiah, "Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him" (Isaiah 43:7). He breathed life into man that he might glorify his Maker.

As a debtor to Christ, God's child is called to be a living sacrifice. Therefore, our lives are to be given daily to the service and glory of God. Whether that is by raising God-fearing children, or being a trusted deacon in the Church, or simply picking up trash in the park to better serve your neighbors, we are to use all of our soul to serve the One who granted it in the first place.

### All Thy Mind

A few years ago there was an ad campaign by the United Negro College Fund that said, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste." Why is this slogan so poignant? Because failing to use your mind to its potential leads to all manner of ills. When our minds are underutilized, they become atrophied like a dormant muscle waxing weaker and weaker with the passage of time. This weakness leads to problems with work and relationships, because we have not striven to maintain sharp minds.

In our relationship with God, the mind is the means by which we learn and understand God via the Scriptures, Prayer, and through grasping the Providential significance of our life experiences. If we are lazy mentally, then we will not take the time to search out the Scriptures or meditate upon His Word. For this very reason, the Old Testament commanded...

"When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose... And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel" (Deuteronomy 17:14-15a, 18-20).

This command was given centuries before an earthly king would reign in Israel, and we do not know to what extent the kings met this commandment. But we do know that many of the kings fell away from following after God, and only those that treasured God's Law remained faithful to the charge given them.

As priest and kings of the New Testament age, we too have an obligation to write the Law in our own hand, to read it continually as a reminder of God's holiness and our eternal need for Him. Let our minds be filled with His glory and a thirst for the knowledge and wisdom found in God's Holy Word. Remember, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever" (Psalm 111:10).

### **All Thy Strength**

If you only read the excerpt from Matthew, then the first and great commandment is to love with the heart, soul, and mind. If Matthew's record of the Gospel was all you read, then you may believe that either Matthew misunderstood the Messiah or that the Messiah mistakenly quoted Deuteronomy. Neither is really the case. The Gospels are real accounts from real men. Unlike modern historians, the Gospel writers were not journalists out to dictate the exact words and events being recorded so much as the important essence of the occurrences and their contextual significance. For this reason, the Gospels compliment one another, but they do not conflict one another.

Matthew records the words of Jesus as he was gifted of the Holy Spirit to remember them. Remember, it is not dictation but recollection and inspiration. Not likely being a first-hand observer of the events of the Gospels, Mark is believed to have relied upon the Apostles and other disciples to record the events of the life of Jesus. In both cases, their intent is the same as that of the other Gospel writers to record the life and times of Jesus for the spreading of the Good News of the Savior's birth, life and ministry, and chiefly His death on the cross, His burial, and His triumphant Resurrection. The events, people, and the lessons Jesus taught are the important part.

As previously stated, these accounts are complimentary. Reading them together gives us a fuller picture of the events. The minor differences in these Gospel accounts are like interlocking pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. You can put together the pieces of one account and make out the image, but the details get better when you add in the details of the other account.

All this highlights the fact that the passage in Matthew includes the word mind, and the passage in Mark includes both mind and strength. All the while the passage in Deuteronomy says only heart, soul, and might are required to love God. The Bible scholar must ask himself, which is right? The answer: all of them.

What is the mind without the physical strength, and what is physical strength without the mind to direct it? Without the

direction of the mind, strength is like the wind or electricity. It is merely a natural force that has neither reasoning nor moral agency. By contrast, the mind that exercises logic, reason, and intellect without the power of the body is less than useless; it is vain. What use is it to have ideas or dreams without the means to fulfill them? We can all say that we intended to do good. Together, mind and strength are mighty with imagination and means.

Therefore, mind and strength combine to form might. Not only does Jesus want our minds, but also our bodily efforts and physical strength dedicated to His service. If He left it simply at "mind," then you might be left with the impression that the Savior expected just your heart (passion), soul (life force) and your mind (intellect) to be dedicated to the Lord. While these things are good, he commands it all. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). We are given the grace to act out our sacrifice through physical means in service to others pleasing Him who said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:45b).

### **First and Great**

This commandment is called the first and great commandment by Christ. Why? Because it focuses our entire being right where it ought to be: On God. In Colossians, Paul admonishes the church to remember the Gospel as it was delivered to them and to hold fast to the doctrines of Scripture. Assuming that the child of God grasps these teachings, he continues in chapter 3 saying, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1-2).

If we seek those things above and set our affections on those things, then our lives will be fuller and richer being closer to Him. When we err from the

faith, it is not that God has failed; rather In order to please Him, we must seek the kingdom of heaven promised to us  
it is when we sin and turn away from His conformity with the Son. Then and only in this life.  
presence, His teaching, and His service. then can we enjoy the blessed state in

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# Grow in Knowledge

1. "Tremble, thou earth, at the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;"
2. "...and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the \_\_\_\_\_ of the garden."
3. "Then shall the trees of the wood \_\_\_\_\_ out at the presence of the Lord, because he cometh to judge the earth."
4. "So went \_\_\_\_\_ forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown."
5. "The hills \_\_\_\_\_ like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth."
6. "I beheld, and, lo, the \_\_\_\_\_ place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger."
7. "But Jonah rose up to flee unto \_\_\_\_\_ from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa;..."
8. "For what is our \_\_\_\_\_, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?"
9. "Repent ye therefore, and be \_\_\_\_\_, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."
10. "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and \_\_\_\_\_ in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden."

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***It is better for both tools and men to be worn out than to rust out.***

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# Worry or Pray

<p><i>Worry? Why Worry? What can worry do? It never keeps a trouble from overtaking you. It gives you indigestion and sleepless hours and fills with gloom the days however fair and bright.</i></p> <p><i>It puts a frown upon the face, and sharpness to the tone. We're unfit to live with others,</i></p>	<p><i>and unfit to live alone. Worry? Why Worry? What can worry do? It never keeps a trouble from overtaking you.</i></p> <p><i>Pray? Why Pray? What can praying do? Praying really changes things, arranges life anew. It's good for your indigestion, gives peaceful sleep at night,</i></p>	<p><i>and fills the grayest, gloomiest day with rays of glowing light.</i></p> <p><i>It puts a smile upon the face the love-note in your tone. Makes you fit to live with others, and fit to live alone. Pray? Why Pray? What can praying do? It brings God down from heaven to love and live with you!</i></p>
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# Leadership (part 2)

by Elder Steve Pearce  
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As we discovered in the first chapter of Nehemiah, Nehemiah had a burden for the city of Jerusalem. The walls of the city had been destroyed and it was lying in ruin. Nehemiah had prayed and fasted for the city and for guidance. At this point he was saddened as he tried to determine the next step.

In the second chapter, Nehemiah found himself in the presence of the king. Nehemiah was the cup bearer to the king, so the king knew Nehemiah well. When the king saw Nehemiah, the king noticed that Nehemiah was sad, and that he had never seen Nehemiah sad. As a result, the king asked Nehemiah for the reason of his sadness. Nehemiah explained his burden about the condition of the city of Jerusalem.

After Nehemiah's explanation, the king asked him what request he had. This question from the king was the answer to Nehemiah's earlier prayer and fasting for the city. He now had the opportunity to ask the most powerful man in the nation what he wanted. Notice what Nehemiah did before he asked the king for anything. Again he prayed to the God in heaven.

Nehemiah was asked an extremely important question that could influence the success of his mission. If he asked the king for the wrong things, he might not be successful. Asking the king for the right things would increase his chance for success. We often find ourselves facing decisions that could influence our success or lack of success as a leader. Do we pray as Nehemiah did before making the decision, or do we simply act based on our judgment?

Nehemiah had a request for the king, and he asked his request based on finding favor with the king. I believe we also see something else about Ne-

hemiah as he came before the king. I don't think the king would have been so concerned about Nehemiah and his sadness if Nehemiah had not been a faithful servant to the king in the past. Nehemiah had quietly gone about his job, exhibiting loyalty and faithfulness to his supervisor. I believe he had also lived an upright and godly life before the king.

That is one of the keys for a good and successful leader. Whatever tasks to which we may be charged, we should do those tasks to the best of our ability. A leader will set the example for those around, who are watching whether or not we realize it. We must exhibit a good work ethic and the desire to do a good job. We must also be loyal and faithful to our supervisor, seeking to do what is best for the organization we are serving. The only exception is if we would be required to be disobedient to God.

Because Nehemiah had found favor with the king, he was willing to listen to and consider Nehemiah's request. Nehemiah asked the king for permission to go to the city and rebuild it. Naturally, the king had some questions for Nehemiah. He wanted to know how long the journey would take. We notice something else about a good leader. The leader is prepared. I believe Nehemiah had carefully thought through what needed to be done and how long it would take to accomplish his mission. Even before Nehemiah began, he had already thought about how to successfully complete the task. Because Nehemiah's response had been well thought out and because he had invoked the power of God, the king was pleased with his answer and allowed him to go.

Nehemiah's careful planning is evident in his next requests also. He real-

ized that as he traveled to Jerusalem, he would come across governors who would not know him and that he would have to cross the river. Therefore, Nehemiah asked for letters from the king letting the governors know who he was and to assist him across the river.

In addition, Nehemiah had already begun to think about the resources he would need to rebuild the wall. As a result, he also asked for a letter to the keeper of the king's forest so he could get the timber he would need to build the wall and the gates. Nehemiah had indeed asked for a great deal from the king: time off, introductory letters, and timber. The king gave Nehemiah all that he asked because Nehemiah was faithful to God and faithful to the king.

Then, when the groundwork had been laid, Nehemiah went to Jerusalem. He was there for three days, but he was not just wasting time. Nehemiah began to do something else that good leaders do, assess the situation. During this time, I believe Nehemiah was looking at the resources available, the strengths of the people, the weaknesses he would face, the opportunities that were present, and the threats the city faced. After this assessment, he did a physical assessment. Nehemiah rode around the entire city of Jerusalem examining the damage and the work that needed to be done. As he traveled, he was making plans and developing a vision.

During this time, he did not let anyone know what he was doing or planning. As any good leader will do, he was waiting for the right time and the right place to share what he had seen and his vision for the city. Nehemiah was laying the ground work for the task ahead.

It is interesting to me the amount of time Nehemiah spent planning and as-

sessing the state of affairs before he was ready to even share his thoughts with those around him. I also believe that Nehemiah was continuing in prayer throughout this planning and assessing process. Are we willing to spend the necessary time in prayer, planning and assessment? Do we act impulsively and do what we think is the right thing to do without considering direction from God?

In business and education, deci-

sions are not made without considerable research and discussion. The reason is that those involved are seeking the best and most profitable results. Those who do the best job of research and planning are the most successful. God's children should also carefully consider any decisions that we make, but most importantly consult the One who has all the answers, God. We should spend time in prayer, assessment, and planning under the guid-

ance of God just as Nehemiah did.

Nehemiah set the example of good leadership. To this point we have seen he developed a burden, sought God, carefully thought about his needs to complete the task, gained the support of those who could help, gathered his resources, assessed the situation, and planned his next steps. Next month, the Lord willing, we will examine Nehemiah's vision and how he conveyed that vision to the people.

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## It's in the Valleys I Grow

*Sometimes life seems hard to bear  
Full of sorrow, trouble and woe  
It's then I have to remember  
That it's in the valleys I grow.*

*I do not always understand  
Why things happen as they do,  
But I am very sure of one thing,  
My Lord will see me through.*

*Continue to strengthen me, Lord  
And use my life each day  
To share your love with others  
And help them find their way.*

*If I always stayed on the mountain top  
And never experienced pain,  
I would never appreciate God's love  
And would be living in vain.*

*My little valleys are nothing  
When I picture Christ on the cross  
He went through the valley of death;  
His victory was Satan's loss.*

*Thank you for valleys, Lord  
For one thing I know  
The mountain tops are glorious  
But it's in the valleys I grow!*

*I have so much to learn  
And my growth is very slow,  
Sometimes I need the mountain tops,  
But it's in the valleys I grow.*

*Forgive me Lord, for complaining  
When I am feeling so very low.  
Just give me a gentle reminder  
That it's in the valleys I grow.*

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of  
the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:  
for thou art with me; thy rod and thy  
staff they comfort me. Psalm 23:4*

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### Answers to Grow In Knowledge

1. Presence - Psalm 114:7
2. Trees - Genesis 3:8
3. Sing - I Chronicles 16:33

4. Satan - Job 2:7
5. Melted - Psalm 97:5
6. Fruitful - Jeremiah 4:26

7. Tarshish - Jonah 1:3
8. Hope - I Thessalonians 2:19
9. Converted - Acts 3:19
10. Dwelt - Genesis 4:16

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**A workman in time of need would part with everything before his tools,  
for to lose them would be to lose all. Reading the Word of God and prayer  
are the tools of the Christian's craft; without them he is helpless.**

**How is it, then, that when time presses, he so often foregoes these or shortens them?**

**What is this but to sell his tools?**

**Charles Spurgeon**

# Balaam

by Elder McKinley Wright  
Jacksonville, Florida

Before reading this article, it is suggested, that the reader first study the 22nd, 23rd 24th and the first part of the 25th chapters of Numbers.

Balaam is a very controversial person. With the possible exception of Judas, there is probably a wider division among Bible scholars about him than about any other person mentioned in the Bible. One group of scholars considers him to be a false prophet; really a messenger of Satan whose aim is to lead God's people astray. The other group considers him to be a prophet of God who was tempted by the desire for earthly riches and prestige. Those who subscribe to the first position (that he was Satan's prophet) are so intent upon their position that they cannot look objectively at the fact that he three times (23:8-10, 23:18-24; 24:3-9) refused to curse the Israelites, each time using the fact that he could not curse that people whom the Lord had blessed as the reason for his refusal. Those who subscribe to the second position (that he was a prophet of God) are so intent upon their position that they ignore the fact that in the second chapter of the Revelation he is described as having led the Israelites into idolatry and fornication. There is not enough space in this article for a discussion of which (if either) of these is the correct view. But no matter which is our position, we should be able to agree that we do not want to be like him. The lesson of this article, then, is an exhortation that we as individuals not adopt his standards as ours--that we not compromise our discipleship because we desire personal gain in riches or prestige.

We know little of Balaam's nationality. Most people think of him as being probably either a Midianite or a Moabite. These two nations lived in that area. Balak, the king of Moab, asked him to curse Israel. This suggests that he was a Moabite. He was slain along with

the five Midianite kings (Number 31:8), giving some credence to the idea that he was a Midianite. But he might not have been from either nation. In 23:7 Balaam describes himself as having come from "Aram, out of the mountains of the east." In 24:14, he told Balak (king of Moab), "And now, behold, I go unto my people:." This seems to show that he was not a Moabite.

Israel was on their journey from Egypt to Canaan. They had destroyed the Amorites, and the next land that they would approach was that held by the Moabites and Midianites. Israel's treatment of the Amorites was so severe that Balak (the king of Moab) was afraid of them and what they would do to his nation. He felt that he needed some type of supernatural intervention against them. He sent for Balaam and asked him to go with him, and to curse them, "for I wot (know) that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed." (22:6). Balak knew that Balaam had power to bless or curse effectively. The source of this power is beyond the scope of this article. Those who hold him to be a prophet of God insist that the power to bless or to curse was God-given, while those who hold him to be a false prophet insist just as fervently that the power to bless or to curse came from Satan. When Balak sent for him to come and curse Israel, Balaam replied, "Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me:" (22:8). The Lord told Balaam, "Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed." (22:12) The next morning Balaam sent word to Balak, "the Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you." (22: 13). If this had been the end of the lesson, there would never have been any controversy about Balaam. He would have been loudly acclaimed as being a true prophet of God. But the lesson did not end here. It should

be pointed out, however, that although Balaam had his faults, he did not curse Israel. He did not cross the line that God had set for him.

God had told Balaam not to go with Balak and his followers. He also told Balaam that he should not curse Israel because they were a blessed people. But when Balak offered him great honor and riches ("just name your price"--verse 17), Balaam wanted to go with them. Before we are too harsh toward him, we should examine ourselves. If we have ever been tempted to slack off in our service to God because of fleshly considerations, we can understand what he was feeling.

Balaam decided to ask God again for permission to go with Balak. He should have known that God does not change His mind. But he wanted to go so badly! When Balak made his generous offer in verse 17, Balaam said, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." (22:18). But he also told them to wait for him to go to the Lord and ask Him again. He wanted to go with them so much that he probably reasoned within himself about like this, "I need to be SURE that I heard Him correctly." In his heart he knew that he had heard the Lord correctly but he really wanted to go so he could have the riches and honor that Balak had promised him. This time God told him to go with them. But He still told him that he must not curse Israel (22:20). One might wonder why Balaam went with them after this commandment to not curse Israel. After all, the reward in verse 17 was conditioned on both his going with Balak and cursing Israel. God had not changed His mind. We know this because God was angry when Balaam went with them. (22:22). God's mind never changes. Sometimes He allows us to have something that is not in our own best interests because



we want it so much. But even though He allows us to have such a thing, He never relieves us of accountability for the fact that our choice did not take His way into consideration.

Balaam wanted to go with Balak so much that he asked God a second time for permission to go. God gave His permission but it is easy to see from the context that God was not pleased with this second request. This does not mean that we should never ask God a second time about anything. When Gideon asked for a second sign with the dew and the fleece, God was not angry with him. When we ask God a second time because we are not sure what His answer was the first time, He is patient with us and answers us a second time (and even more). But Balaam knew what God's answer was. He was just trying to get God to change His mind. And when we know what God's will is concerning a thing, but we keep on asking Him about it, He becomes very displeased with us. We need to be very careful in this connection.

God allowed Balaam to go with Balak (22:20) but forbade him to curse Israel like Balak wanted him to do. He reiterated this permission and restriction in 22:35. When they met each other, Balak scolded Balaam for not coming at first. Balaam told Balak (the other conversations had been between Balaam and princes whom Balak had sent to him) that although he had come, he would not necessarily be saying the things that Balak wanted him to say. Balaam still insisted, "the word that God putteth in my mouth, that I shall speak." (22:38).

In the 23rd chapter, Balaam twice asked God what message he should deliver to Balak (verses 4 and 15). Both times God pronounced a blessing upon Israel (verses 8-10 and 18-24) and Balaam told Balak what God said. Balak wanted Balaam to ask God a third time. Balaam seemed ready to do so (verse 29). However, there is a change in his attitude at the beginning of chapter 24. He saw that God was pleased to bless Israel so "he went not, as at other times, to seek for enchant-

ments, but he set his face toward the wilderness." (24:1). He seems to have become reconciled to the idea that he was not going to receive the riches and prestige that he had hoped to receive from Balak. So instead of asking God again what His will was, he just looked toward the wilderness. That is where Israel was, and he saw them abiding in their tents according to their tribes. This orderly assembly is a picture (type) of the church keeping house for God. When Balaam saw it, the spirit of God came upon him (24:2). Surely, when we see experimentally God's humble people (His church) keeping house for Him and not just for herself, our hearts are made to rejoice. Some of the most beautiful language in the Bible came from Balaam's lips (24:3-9). But this is still not all of the story.

In Revelation 2:14, Christ mentions the doctrine of "Balaam who led the Israelites to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." In Numbers 25:1-3, it is said that the people (Israel) began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. In His anger, God caused many of them to be slain. There was a great plague. Numbers 31:16 tells us that Balaam's counsel was to a large extent the cause of this ungodliness. There can be little doubt that this is the incident to which Revelation 2: 14 refers.

It seems strange that Balaam could have been so influential in leading Israel in this ungodly way. He had been in the area (he had come from the East) for only a few days. And even then, he was with Balak and the Moabite people, not with the Israelites. Some scholars believe that he advised the Moabites to use their women to seduce the Israelites. But this does not seem consistent with his behavior in refusing to curse Israel. Others teach that at some time after he went to his own place (Numbers 24:25), he returned to the area, this time joining himself to the Israelites. This suggestion is more plausible than the first; however, if this happened, the Bible is completely silent about it. It seems strange that the Bible

is silent about an event as significant as this would have been, so this writer is of the opinion that this was not what happened.

The writer's opinion is that the seduction (intentional or otherwise) of Balaam was more subtle. Being of the heathen, Balaam's way of life involved idolatry and fornication. That kind of life was all that he knew anything about. When a person is born again, he/she does not automatically change his lifestyle. Idolatry and fornication are the two most prevalent forms of sin in the world even today. So it was the normal thing for Balaam to practice those things. He had done them all of his life, and this fact was known by everyone. He was a famous seer. Balak was not the only one who knew of his fame. No doubt the Israelites had heard of him too. Then the Israelites learned that Balak had sent for him to curse them, but instead of pronouncing a curse he had pronounced a blessing from God upon them. They learned of the glowing words that he had used in his pronouncement. He had said all of the correct things. They might have reasoned like this, "If a man can preach like that he must be all right." So they adopted his lifestyle. How much confusion has been wrought in Zion by someone who comes from afar and, by smooth talk and seemingly powerful preaching, gains a following before it is learned that he had done something to disqualify himself before he came!

Many Israelites strayed by following the example that Balaam set before them. Things should have gone the other way. Israel was the nation that had been taught how to worship and serve God. They should have resisted the temptation to follow his example. But, sad to say, it is usually this way. God's people are so easily led astray by smooth words and glittering generalities. **A LITTLE LEAVEN LEAVENETH THE WHOLE LUMP!**

It is still true that the spirit of desiring high honor in the eyes of men causes trouble in the church. Christ condemned that attitude in the church at Pergamos. He condemns it in us today.

# Blessings of Grace

by Elder Lee Price  
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We studied several things in the Word of God last month. We saw again that God and His word are inerrant or flawless, which we need to always remember. His Word should always be considered the final authority. We saw that man has a depraved nature that will not allow him to approach a Holy God, which results in his being dead in trespasses and sins as we find in Ephesians 2:1. Since he is dead, only God can save him from his lost and ruined condition. For this reason salvation can only be by the grace of God, which means it is a gift of God. As a part of that marvelous gift of God, Jesus Christ died for us and paid the penalty for our sins. Because He redeemed us from sin and its penalty, we will be just like Him when He comes to earth the final time to take us on to the glory world of eternal heaven.

It is wonderful that Jesus has already died for us. It is wonderful that heaven will be our home in the future. Even though these are great truths and so great that all else pales in comparison to them, we need to know there is something for us now. There are blessings for us here in the world today, and it is not necessary to wait to enjoy the blessings of God. The question is, since we are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, **how can we enjoy blessings now?**

Listen once again to the word of God from Ephesians 2:1. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." In the past, I have emphasized that we were dead in trespasses and sins, but there is more in the passage. When Paul wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians, he told them what they were in the past. Then he told them they had been quickened. The word quickened is translated from a Greek word which means to be made alive. The text implies in the surround-

ing context that they were made alive with Christ. I said earlier that salvation is by the grace of God. Man by nature is dead, and only God by His grace can give life to the dead.

A person who has been quickened is now alive and will remain alive. We will never lose our spiritual life. You do not need me to tell you that one can lose his natural life, because that is a fact of life. We will never lose our spiritual life, however, because that is a kind of life that is eternal. As God Himself, it will never die. We may lose the joy of spiritual life, as David had when he prayed to God in Psalm 51:12, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit." David lost the joy of salvation, but his calling unto God is evidence he never lost his salvation or spiritual life. This is one reason we say that once a person is saved by the grace of God, he is always saved. I believe everyone will say that a saved person is a child of God. Think about this. When does a person cease being a child of his biological parents? The answer is never. When a person is a biological child of someone, that will never change. The child may be put up for adoption, be adopted by someone else and consider them his parents for the rest of his life, but that does not change who his biological parents are. Both of my parents are yet living, but if all three of us were dead, I would still be considered their child. We may say that once a person is someone's child, he is always his child. When a person is God's child, he will always be God's child. That is one reason we say, "once saved, always saved." Remember, God has given us some common words in the Bible to help us understand it better. Child is one of those words. Once a person is someone's child, he is always that person's child. Once a person is saved, he is always saved.

Quickening is not the only term used to describe the way God gives us spiritual life. A term more commonly used is the new birth or being born again. Jesus spoke of the new birth in John 3:8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." He said the wind bloweth where it listeth. The meaning of the word listeth is intends or pleases. This means the Spirit goes wherever He intends or pleases to go, and we can say by this that the new birth is a work done wholly by the will of the Spirit. Remember, the term is the new birth, and notice we just used a Biblical term which has in it a very common word, which is birth.

What does it mean to be born? Several years ago, I was sitting in a congregation and the minister asked me if I did anything to be born into the Price family, and of course I told him I did not. I gave him that answer, because no one does anything to be born. A baby being born is passive, and, the mother is active. He is born and the mother gives birth. This is consistent with what Jesus said in John 3:8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." In the beginning He said the wind blows wherever it pleases. At the end, he said so is everyone born of the Spirit. Since He used that expression at the end, He said the Spirit goes to whomever He pleases to give the new birth. He said as trees and other objects are passive to the wind, so are people passive in being born of the Spirit. If a tree is blown by the wind, is it making the wind blow in its direction or is it giving evidence that the wind is blowing on it? If the Spirit of God

touches one of His in the new birth, faith and other attributes that follow are **evidences** of the Spirit's work, and not causes of it. Remember, we saw in a previous article that God is omnipotent, and this includes the Spirit. If the Spirit needs man to help accomplish His work in the new birth, He is not omnipotent. There is one more word we need to consider, which tells us about God giving His people spiritual life. Please pay attention to the Word of God in Ephesians 2:10. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." This verse of scripture tells us we were created. What does it mean to create? It means to form something from nothing. This is much like what we find in Genesis 1:1. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." What did God use to make the heaven and the earth? He made it from nothing! Can man do this? No, only God can form something from nothing. This tells us that only God could create in us spiritual life. Think about this example in Genesis 2:7, "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Adam was a dead body without life, and God breathed life into him. Without this breathing, Adam would have remained only a dead body; but with it, he became a living soul! He had no ability to reach up for breath or even acknowledge that there was such a thing, so it could have only been given to him. Man dead in trespasses and sins is spiritually like Adam. He will only receive spiritual life by the grace of God.

We have briefly examined the fact that we are given spiritual life. In this brief examination, we have seen three terms to describe the method God uses to do it. Those terms are quickening, new birth and creation. Why would God give us three different terms in His Word to describe the same thing? It may be that each of the terms tells us something different about it. While there are three different terms, there

is a consistency about them. To be quickened means to be made alive. To be born again means one is passive in the process. To be created means to be made from nothing. The consistency is that in all three, man is passive and God is active. Man cannot make himself alive, give himself birth, or create himself. We must conclude by this plain language that God gives us spiritual life, and by the grace of God we are the recipients. May God help us to praise Him for making us recipients.

I said earlier in this article that Jesus has already redeemed us from sin and that Heaven will be our home sometime in the future, but what about now? Must we wait for heavenly blessings in the future, or can we enjoy them now? We can enjoy them now, even though spiritual blessings we can enjoy now are just small foretastes of what the eternal heaven will be.

This is one of the reasons God gives us spiritual life while we yet live in the world. We are not given spiritual life and then taken on to Heaven, but we are given it to praise the One who gave it. When we praise Him as we should, the blessings are ours, and we are happy people. Can you think of people praising someone or something and being sad at the same time? Can you imagine a parent bragging about a new born baby with a sad face? Can you imagine a grandparent speaking of the accomplishments of grandchildren and being sad at the same time? Can you imagine a frantic fan speaking about his team winning a championship game with no enthusiasm? Obviously, when a person speaks of things that excite him, he is usually very happy about them.

If we are happy when we speak the praises of earthly things, we certainly should be even happier speaking the praises of heavenly things. We should be happier praising God for spiritual blessings because those blessings are lasting, while earthly blessings are temporary. Cars wear out. Houses need repairs. People lose jobs. All earthly things eventually lose the appeal they once had, but spiritual blessings never change. God described Himself to Mo-

ses at the burning bush by saying, "I Am That I Am." He meant among other things that He is always the same. Since God is always the same, His blessings are always the same. They do not wear out or tarnish. They are new and refreshing every day.

Now that we have spiritual life, we can enjoy or enter into the blessings God has for us now. We are no longer dead in sins, and we are to use the life God has given us. God intends for His people to be happy people. Sometimes we are not happy, but that does not mean happiness is not there for us or that God does not intend for us to be happy. Notice the Scripture in Acts 14:22, "confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." We can define the Kingdom of God later, but who was able to enter the Kingdom of God? Who did they exhort to enter the Kingdom? The answer to both of these questions is the disciples. This was not for the unsaved, but for the saved who had shown evidence of salvation because they were disciples.

They exhorted the disciples to enter the Kingdom of God. What is the Kingdom of God? It is defined in Romans 14:17, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Of the three qualities included in the Kingdom of God, the last of them is joy in the Holy Ghost! There it is. There is joy and happiness for the people of God. The second thing is peace, which means there is some of that in life for us also. The first quality mentioned is righteousness, meaning God's righteousness. All three of these go together. That means that the message we get from the world saying the service of God is boring will just not hold water. It is boring for some people. It is for those who have not been born again; and even for His children, when they are worldly minded. However, for His children who love Him and want to serve Him, there is great joy in His service, and we find that joy when we walk

in God's righteousness.

It may be safe to say that most of us find joy in pleasing someone. When we were children, knowing we pleased our parents or teachers brought us a lot of happiness. It makes us happy now when we please our supervisors at work and others. Just making someone happy brings joy to us, whether the people are superiors of ours or not. Think about this for a moment. If we find joy in knowing other people are pleased with our efforts, think of the joy we find in knowing God is pleased with us. Since God is greater than all others, the joy we find in pleasing Him is greater than the joy we experience in pleasing others.

How do we know when we have pleased Him? I cannot cover all the ways but maybe I can answer the question to some degree. We can please Him by doing what He has commanded in His Word. We have some specific commands there, and when we follow them, we know we have done what is pleasing to Him. He lets us know when we have pleased Him by manifesting His presence to us in the person of His Holy Spirit. Those are just a couple of ways and there are no doubt others. The more we please God, the more He blesses us with His felt presence; and the more He blesses us with His presence, the more we want to please Him.

We have touched on the area of praising God and enjoying His blessings while praising Him. Let's ask ourselves another question. Why should we praise God? He is worthy of praise, because He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us from our sins. Jesus came into the world as the Father sent Him, and did just exactly what the Father sent Him to do. He died for our sins. In dying for our sins, Jesus suffered the most agonizing death known to man, which is crucifixion. It was a very slow and painful form of death. Sometimes men hung on the cross for two weeks while they slowly died. Men usually suffocated by the weight of their own bodies. According to sources I have read, sometimes

friends of men would steal their bodies from the cross, but they would never recover from the shock. All other forms of capital punishment, that I know anything about, brought quick deaths, but not crucifixion. It was very slow, painful and agonizing. Jesus suffered that for us, and anyone who will do that for someone else deserves some appreciation. Jesus is not only worthy of praise because He died for us; He is worthy of it because He suffered what we should have suffered. Notice the scripture in I Peter 3:18, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." Here we see Jesus was just, and yet died for unjust people as we. This is the great love He has for us. The Scripture also says Jesus accomplished something in dying. He brought us to God. We were separated from God because of sin; and when Jesus died for us and removed sin from us, He brought us back to God. He redeemed us, which means to buy back. He removed from us the very thing that separated us from God, which is sin. Notice the Scripture in Colossians 2:14, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." Why was the handwriting of ordinances against us? We had sinned and broken the ordinances of God. Jesus took away what was against us and nailed it to His cross, which means He put it there to stay permanently. I know this is figurative language, but it shows us He died for us, took our sins away, and they are never to be remembered again. They will never keep us eternally separated from God. No one could love us better, and that is reason to praise Him above all others.

We have more reason to praise Jesus. Because He died for us and put our sins away forever, we anticipate an eternal home in Heaven with Him. God has something special for us in the future. Someday we will be just like Jesus as we find in I John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not

yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." There is no one greater than Jesus, and in fact, He is greater than all others. While many of us look up to other people and would like to be more like them, someday we will be just like Jesus! Nothing could be better!

Why do we look forward to being like Jesus? It is because the Spirit of God has quickened us or given us spiritual life. He has also led us to the truth of our hope or expectation in a heavenly home. He leads us into that and other truths by allowing us to see them in the Word of God or the Bible. This is another reason for praising God. He gave us His Word so that we might know His ways. Through His Word, we can know that salvation is by the grace of God or is a gift of God. We can also know how to serve Him as we live here in the world. God did not have to give us His Word, but that is just another one of the reasons we have to praise Him.

I have tried to give some specific reasons we should praise God, but I want to give one that is very general. We find reasons to praise God in James 1:17. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James was inspired to write about good and perfect gifts. Good gifts are the blessings we need to sustain our physical lives, such as food, clothing and shelter. Perfect gifts are the spiritual blessings such as salvation by grace. In this he said every physical blessing for our good comes from God. Even the air we breathe comes from God. He created air and created other living organisms to sustain the amount of oxygen for us to breathe. He also said every perfect gift comes from God. Salvation by grace and everything which results from it are perfect gifts of God. This tells us without God we are nothing. He is definitely worthy of our praise. May we praise Him with every fiber of our beings.

# Reaching Out - Success Stories

by Bro. Brad Kersey  
Leesburg, Georgia

I have written to the Trumpet in the past about our need as a denomination to make more of an effort to be “the light of the world” and reach out in ministry and evangelism to our communities. I would like to revisit this topic and share with you some success stories from our church, both as a way of giving thanks to God and also as a means to encourage and give practical examples to our churches to get more involved in their communities.

When our pastor first arrived, he asked many of the members about times when the health of the church was at its best, when things were really going well, and when they felt that the church was truly upholding its responsibilities to Christ in the world. Almost to a one, they cited the times after the floods of '94 and '98. For those in other parts of the world, much of Southwest Georgia (and other areas as well) was devastated by a flood of epic proportions in 1994 and then again by a less severe flood in 1998. Everyone said that our church was known as a major help to flood victims by providing assistance in the cleanup effort and helping get people back on their feet, as well as even providing temporary shelter for many victims.

He determined that the challenge now is – there's no flood. So his next question was, what are current needs of our community that we can find ways to meet, in order to recapture that same spirit, albeit under different circumstances? Here are some of the ways that we have been reaching out.

A couple of months ago, volunteers from our church provided coffee, hot chocolate, and availability of restroom facilities to parents of Pre-K students camping out all night. Among the many thank-yous received was one from a co-worker of mine. She told me that comparing the experience this

year to the one a few years ago for her now second-grader, it was “about a thousand percent better!”

Over the past several months, we have been developing a food ministry to help struggling families ease their food bills by providing them with two or three sacks of groceries a month, mainly from direct donations of food or by using financial donations to purchase food in bulk from the Southwest Georgia Food Bank. Last month we provided food to 30 families. That's not a large number, and we hope to increase it, but it's a big help to those families. We've been told of a church in tiny Colquitt, Georgia, that is able to provide assistance to a couple hundred families. They also have a “clothes closet” ministry!

Over the past year-and-a-half, we have facilitated several courses from Financial Peace University, which is an organization headed up by financial advisor Dave Ramsey (you may have seen him on Fox News Channel or other media outlets). I haven't taken the course yet, so I can't speak to its doctrinal soundness, but I do know that it is a Biblically-based approach to personal finance and debt. It is designed to help people achieve a real sense of peace about their financial situations by properly handling the things that we have control over and putting trust in God to handle the rest. Given the times that we are in, I can't think of a more pressing general need. So far 71 people (most church members, but some not) have gone through the course at our church. They are learning how to better manage and budget their money and to be better stewards of the financial resources God has given them.

Our youth group recently participated in an event called “30 Hour Famine”, where they fasted (with only juice

and water to drink) for a day and a half, in order to raise money to fight world hunger. They were able to raise almost \$3000, which ends up getting multiplied by 5 by matching donations from WorldVision, the organization which sponsors the event. As little as \$1 a day can feed a child in many places around the world.

Over the summer, our youth helped out in inner city Albany with a group called “Hope for the Hopeless” that they have worked with in the past. They took a special program that we had used in Church earlier, and did it for the neighborhood kids there. Both groups enjoyed it very much and looked forward to that day each week.

These are some of the ways that we have been blessed to reach out to the people where we live and elsewhere. I tell you about these not to “toot our horn” about the good things we're doing or to brag about all the new membership it has brought us – it hasn't. I can say, though, that I think it has contributed in a major way to the overall spiritual health of the church by instilling a servant's attitude in our members. And it has certainly benefited others by meeting real spiritual and physical needs in their lives. I tell you about these things to encourage you to reach out. Most of our Primitive Baptist churches are fairly small compared with other denominations, and it's easy to say, “We're too small to do community outreach”. If you think that your church is too small to change the world, you're probably right. If you think your church is too small to make a difference in people's lives, you're dead wrong. Making a difference is as simple as this threefold approach.

First, identify real needs in your community. With economic times as they are, you shouldn't have to look far. We are all experiencing some degree

of hardship, but there are some whose hardships are almost too much to bear. You don't have to be able to solve all problems for everybody. Also, remember that there are other needs than just physical. The Pre-K Campout fulfilled very different needs than the food ministry for example.

Second, identify ways to help meet these needs and single out ones that are realistic for the church of your membership to be able to take on. Our church doesn't have a goal of feeding every hungry person in the Albany area. It must be a manageable ministry with a goal that is realistic and achievable. You may even need to "practice" some at first. The first couple of times that we tried the food ministry we were instrumental in getting the kinks worked out and in simply figuring out who around us is in need of help.

Third, get out there and do it! Turn

your goal into a viable plan of action, and follow through with it. If it doesn't go so well, don't give up. Figure out what could be done differently to make it better next time. You will eventually figure out what's right for your circumstances. Hopefully some of your efforts will turn into recurring or "autopilot" ministries, where they take place regularly (monthly, annually, whatever) and people know how to run them.

Finally, remember that ministries will be different from church to church. I have told you about some things going on in our church not so that you will decide to do the exact same things. It might not be a good fit for your church or your community. I listed a variety of things to show how creativity and awareness of needs develop into ministries. The key is to identify what needs there are in your community and how you can meet them. I encourage

all churches to find ways to be a light of truth and compassion by meeting the spiritual and physical needs of those around them.

"For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. ...Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matthew 25:35-36; 40)

"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." (James 2:15-17)

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# Plants, Animals, and Humans

by Bro. Robert Varn  
Jacksonville, Florida

There are certain plants and trees that are protected from harm by the federal government. Those who destroy, injure, or take these are subject to severe fines and/or imprisonment.

Recently, I was leaving the beach after doing some surfing when I noticed

a fenced-off area that protected sea turtle eggs. Another time, I was rafting down a river when I noticed a fenced-off area for some type of snail. Again, there are severe penalties for taking or injuring these eggs or snails.

I honor and obey these laws pertain-

ing to plants and animals. But don't you think an unborn child who is made in the image of God should also be protected? I do. If you do, please write your Senator and Congressmen to ask that they value human life as much as they do plant and animal life!

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The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil,  
but because of those who look on and do nothing

Albert Einstein



Freedom prospers when religion is vibrant  
and the rule of law under God is acknowledged.

Ronald Reagan



# Bible Reading Calendar for January

DATE	MORNING	EVENING
1	Gen. 1,2	Matt. 1
2	Gen. 3,4,5	Matt. 2
3	Gen. 6,7,8	Matt. 3
4	Gen. 9,10,11	Matt. 4
5	Gen. 12,13,14	Matt. 5:1-26
6	Gen. 15,16,17	Matt. 5:27-48
7	Gen. 18,19	Matt. 6
8	Gen. 20,21,22	Matt. 7
9	Gen. 23,24	Matt. 8
10	Gen. 25,26	Matt. 9:1-17
11	Gen. 27,28	Matt. 9:18-38
12	Gen. 29,30	Matt. 10:1-23
13	Gen. 31,32	Matt. 10:24-42
14	Gen. 33,34,35	Matt. 11
15	Gen. 36,37	Matt. 12:1-21

DATE	MORNING	EVENING
16	Gen. 38,39,40	Matt. 12:22-50
17	Gen. 41	Matt. 13:1-32
18	Gen. 42,43	Matt. 13:33-58
19	Gen. 44, 45	Matt. 14:1-21
20	Gen. 46,47,48	Matt. 14:22-36
21	Gen. 49,50	Matt. 15:1-20
22	Exod. 1,2,3	Matt. 15:21-39
23	Exod. 4,5,6	Matt. 16
24	Exod. 7,8	Matt. 17
25	Exod. 9,10	Matt. 18:1-20
26	Exod. 11,12	Matt. 18:21-35
27	Exod. 13,14,15	Matt. 19:1-15
28	Exod. 16,17,18	Matt. 19:16-30
29	Exod. 19,20,21	Matt. 20:1-16
30	Exod. 22,23,24	Matt. 20:17-34
31	Exod. 25,26	Matt. 21:1-22

**ANSWERS TO  
CROSSWORD  
PUZZLE  
DECEMBER 09**

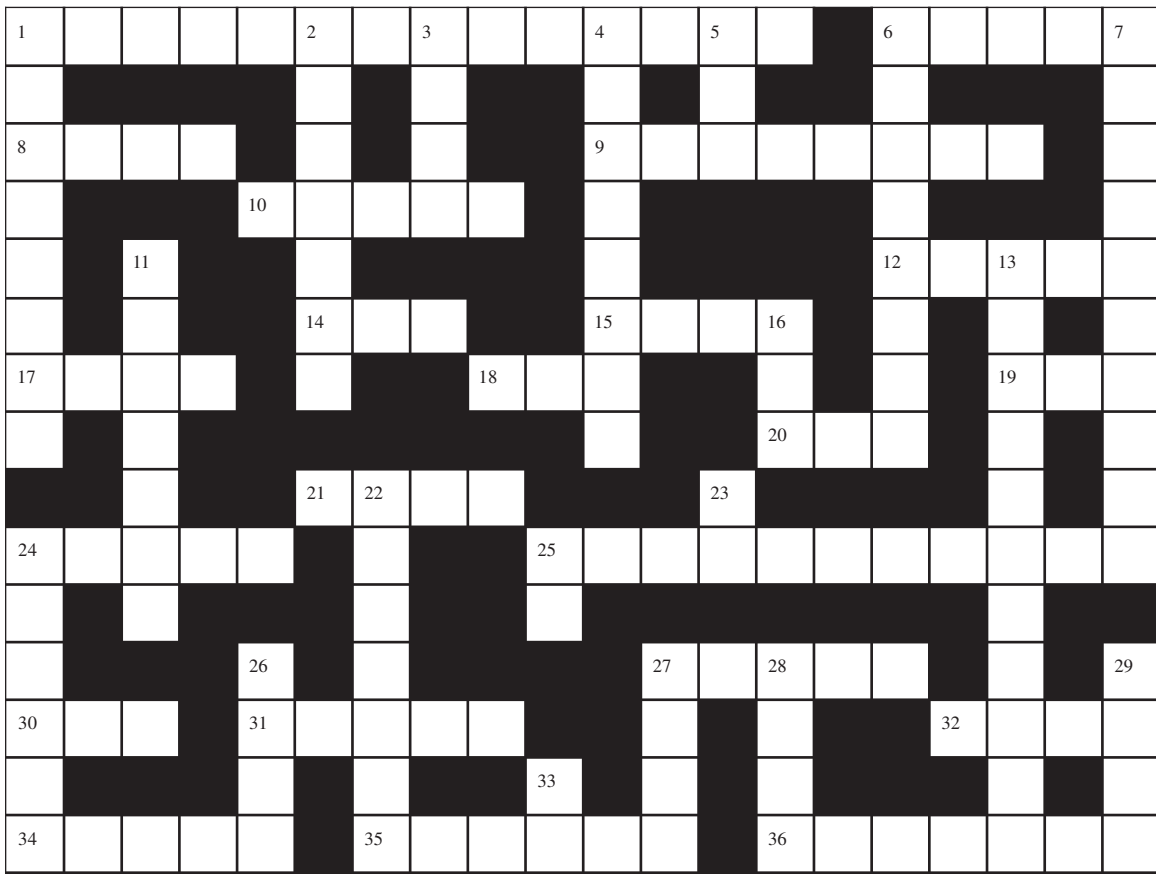
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25	B			C		A			26	A		27	H		L		E						E
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# Crossword Puzzle

## ACROSS

1. "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren. that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God. to make \_\_\_\_ for the sins of the people." 6. "Then said Jesus unto them again, verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the \_\_\_\_." 8. "Now when all the people were baptized, it \_\_\_\_ to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened." 9. "And thou shalt make holy \_\_\_\_ for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty." 10. "Nor yet that he should \_\_\_\_ himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;" 12. "...I am thy part and \_\_\_\_ inheritance among the children of Israel." 14. "And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the \_\_\_\_ of God." 15. "For in that he himself \_\_\_\_ suffered being tempted, he is able to succumb them that are tempted." 17. "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for \_\_\_\_ and ever. Amen." 18. "For all that is in \_\_\_\_ world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 19. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through \_\_\_\_ poverty might be rich." 20. "And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he \_\_\_\_ minister unto me in the priest's office " 21. "But whosoever shall \_\_\_\_ me before men, him will also deny before my Father which is in heaven." 24. "And the Lord \_\_\_\_ unto Aaron, saying." 25. "But there is a spirit in man: and the \_\_\_\_ of the almighty giveth them understanding." 27. "But if we walk in the \_\_\_\_, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." 30. "He first findeth his \_\_\_\_ brother Simon and saith unto him we have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." 31. "Heaven and \_\_\_\_ shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." 32. "And they bring him \_\_\_\_ the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, the place of a skull." 34. "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the \_" 35. "God, who at sundry times and in \_\_\_\_ manners spake in time past, unto the fathers by the prophets." 36. "The Spirit itself beareth \_\_\_\_ with one spirit, that we are the children of God."



## DOWN

1. "And they gave him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he \_\_\_\_ it not." 2. "Whosoever therefore shall \_\_\_\_ me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." 3. "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man \_\_\_\_ me, he will keep my words:..." 4. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified \_\_\_\_." 5. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of \_\_\_\_ infirmities;..." 6. "And thou shalt put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and \_\_\_\_ him;..." 7. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our \_\_\_\_." 11. "Search the scriptures: for in them ye think ye have \_\_\_\_ life: and they are they which testify of me." 13. "And the Lord spake unto Aaron, thou shalt have no \_\_\_\_ in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them:..." 16. "If we say that we have fellowship with \_\_\_\_, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:" 22. "For Christ is not \_\_\_\_ into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:" 23. "And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take \_\_\_\_ the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people " 24. "Do not drink wine nor \_\_\_\_ drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when we go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die:..." 25. " \_\_\_\_ the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God." 26 "Jesus saith unto them, my \_\_\_\_ is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." 27. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but \_\_\_\_ for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord:..." 28. "But \_\_\_\_ in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ " 29. "And thou shalt bring Aaron and his \_\_\_\_ unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water." 33. "But what things were gain to \_\_\_\_, those I counted loss for Christ."

# ARE YOU A ROLE MODEL?

by Bro. Robert Varn  
Jacksonville, Florida

Every one of us is a role model to some degree, whether we like it or not. Someone is usually watching us, and many times they are learning from us.

One of my heroes and role models was my Grandmother, Leona Bussey. As my sister, Penelope once said, "She was as close to perfect as any person could be." But "Mom," as we called her, was much too humble to believe this about herself, which made her that much better, to me.

Mom was not a materialistic person, but she worked hard all of her life in one way or another. She loved her children and grandchildren. I would spend many weekends with her when

I was a child, and on Friday nights she would cook me fish sticks and grits, then waffles on Saturday morning.

On Sundays, we would attend the Waycross Primitive Baptist Church. She prayed nightly, and taught me many things, such as, "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." I still need to remember that important lesson!

"Mom" knew how to forgive and forget, and I almost never heard her say anything bad about someone. I say, "almost" because there was one time she spoke something "less than flattering about someone." But very shortly thereafter, she said she felt so very bad about it.

My grandmother knew how to handle most situations. She was wise enough to know when to speak and when to listen.

"Mom" loved to visit her family. Usually when she came, she would even bring my dog, Rocky, chicken livers and gizzards.

Mom went home to be with the Lord on July 4th, 1990. I really miss her! She is the person I want to become more like. Looking at her life, I know I have failed in many ways, and have a long way to go! With the Lord's help, I can grow closer to His way each day. We should all want to be a role model, following the perfect role model, Jesus Christ!

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## **Minister Joe Wright's Prayer** **(Given in Kansas at the opening session of their Senate.)**

*Heavenly Father, we come before  
you today to ask Your forgiveness and to  
seek your Direction and Guidance.*

*We know Your Word says,  
'Woe to those Who call evil good,'  
but that is exactly what we have done.  
We have lost our spiritual equilibrium  
and reversed our values.*

*We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery.  
We have rewarded laziness and called it Welfare.  
We have killed our unborn and called it Choice.  
We have shot abortionists and called it Justifiable.  
We have neglected to discipline our Children  
and called it building Self Esteem.  
We have abused power and called it Politics.  
We have coveted our neighbor's possessions*

*And called it Ambition.  
We have polluted the air with profanity and  
Pornography and called it Freedom of Expression.  
We have ridiculed the time-honored values  
Of our forefathers and called it Enlightenment.  
Search us, Oh, God, and know our hearts  
Today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free.  
Amen!*