

## TROUBLE AND SORROW

By Cecil Burch

“The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” (Psalm 90:10.)

I recently heard of a man who was looking out his window watching a violent storm that had struck a little farm community. The wind was blowing hard, lightning was striking everywhere, trees were blowing over and all of a sudden he saw a man coming down out of the clouds in a parachute. The farmer ran out to help him and said, “Sir, you are mighty brave to be coming down in a parachute in weather like this!” He said, “What do you mean coming down in a parachute? I went up in a tent!”

Our lives have many ups and

downs. We can be going along fine with few cares, when all of a sudden everything seems to fall apart. Our bodies begin having pain, illness and disease. Financial worries, troubles in relationships and so many other problems plague our lives. The apostle Paul wrote to a group of Christians and said, “We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed.” (2 Corinthians 4:8-9.)

It is a continual challenge for the Christian to remain faithful to the Lord. Paul told the Galatians, “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who

trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.” (Galatians 1:6-7.) Paul wrote, “Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 1:6-8.)

Jesus said, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions.” (John 14:1,2.)

We will have troubles in this life, but what a blessing to know of a better life in the hereafter.

— Angel Fire, NM

## DISCOVERING JESUS IN THE PAGES OF THE BIBLE

By Danny Tunnell

Jesus of Nazareth is the most famous and important person who ever lived. My Bible teacher used to say, “The beautiful thing about our Book is that it has only one subject. The Old Testament says, ‘Someone is coming.’ The gospel accounts say, ‘That Someone is here.’ The epistles say, ‘This is what that Someone demands.’ And then there are a few passages of Scripture that say, ‘He is coming again.’”

For hundreds of years, the knowledge of Jesus was pretty much confined to portions of the Middle East and Europe. Other great civilizations in the East, Asia, Europe and the Americas rose and fell largely oblivious to Jesus and His message. The majority of the people never had an opportunity to hear about

Jesus.

We should be very thankful that we live today in our part of the world because things have changed drastically. In the past 400 years Christianity has spread more rapidly worldwide.

Please do not take the Bible for granted. For centuries ordinary people had little to no access to the Bible. For centuries the Bible had to be painstakingly copied by hand and was very expensive. The only access most people had to the Bible was by hearing it read in church. Of course the printing press changed all that.

If we want to know about Jesus, we must start with the Bible. It is the only reliable authority on Jesus.

It is a tragedy today to have the Bible so available, and yet for

millions it remains a closed book. In our society many seem to know little or nothing about God and His word.

The Bible is for everyone, the young and the old. “How shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed to Thy word.” (Psalm 119:9.) The Bible is not a dead letter; it is living and active. “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12.)

When we discover Jesus in the pages of the Bible we see the reality of God’s love.

— Miami, OK

# Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

## IS THE CHURCH DYING?

By Phil Sanders

The most recent Pew Forum survey revealed that Christianity in America is in decline, and some have suggested that Christianity is dying. The number of “nones,” those who have no religious affiliation, has grown from 16.1 to 22.8 percent since 2007. The number of those who call themselves Christians in America has declined from 78.4 to 70.6 percent.

Most of this decline occurred among mainline Protestants (18.4 to 14.7 percent) and Catholics (23.9 to 20.8 percent). Evangelicals (which includes churches of Christ in this survey) declined less than one percent. The number of Christians with strong convictions has pretty much stayed the same, but many cultural Christians (people who call themselves Christians because of the culture) and nominal Christians (people who do not take their faith very seriously) are becoming “nones.”

The churches of Christ have declined in recent years. We are losing more than 8000 members and about fifty churches every year (147 congregations from 2012 to 2015). In spite of this, we still have the fourth most congregations of any religious group in America. In actual attendance on the Lord’s Day, we rank eighth. We surpass almost everyone in the percentage of members who attend church and who give.

As you can see, we have much to do to take the gospel to the lost. The world has always been worldly and deceived by false religion. We must do all we can to preach the truth in love, to that by all means we might save some.

— Edmond, OK

(The foregoing was lifted from The Search Light, the monthly paper attached to the Search television program. We appreciate the good this program has done over the years in bringing the gospel to the ears of countless thousands under the sound and able teaching of Mack Lyon and, more recently, our good friend, Phil Sanders.

— DK)

## THERE IS ONLY ONE WHO IS ABLE TO SAVE

By Bobby Key

Men of today are depending on everything except God to save them. Politicians are depending on legislation to save people. Educators are depending on education and scientists are depending on scientific research and discovery. Philosophers are depending upon the potency of their philosophical speculations. The rich are depending on their riches. All these things may be good in their places; they may bring benefits into our world, but they embellish and build up the outer man and leave the heart untouched and the soul unsaved.”

Only through the grace of our great Redeemer shall we see the face of God. You cannot possibly be saved on your own efforts without the healing balm of the cross. You cannot be saved by a legal system. You cannot reach heaven by your own moral achievements. You are only building on the moving sands, leaning on a broken reed. You might just as well try to climb a moonbeam to heaven as to try to pass through the gates of pearl on your good works. There is nothing that can save you but the blood of Jesus.

Men sometimes depend on their fraternal orders, benevolent societies or lodges to save them, saying, “If I live up to the demands of my lodge, I’ll be saved.” However, such cannot save. They have never had the power, nor will they ever.

Remember this: “There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.” (James 4:12.) This wonderful Savior is our Lord Jesus Christ. Depend upon Him, and Him alone, for your salvation! — Miami, OK

## THE VALUE OF FAMILY

By Joe Dale Wilson

Jesus, as the eldest son of Mary, wanted His fleshly mother taken care of when He was on the cross. Jesus did what He could to provide for Mary, asking John to take her to his house. (John 19:26-27.) He set the example to all Christians of caring for family.

A good wife is a gift from God. (Proverbs 19:14.) A man is blessed that has children. (Psalms 127:3.) Believers are instructed to take care of their families. (1 Timothy 5:8.)

Accidents, illness and other calamities affect the human race from time to time. When such things happen, Moms, Dads, husbands, wives, children, brothers and sisters step up and come to the aid of the individual in distress. Aid is provided in various ways: money, transportation, housing, food, clothing, prayers, visitation, calls, personal care, cleaning, washing clothing, sitting, running errands, and in a thousand other ways. And none of these is less important than the others. Every act of selflessness demonstrates the value of family. Such is a work of God and a labor of love. Sometimes it is short-term and other times it is “for better or for worse.”

None can place a value on family because it is immeasurable.

People of Jesus’ day were trying to excuse themselves of coming to the aid of their family in time of need. They developed a word for it: “Corban.” It meant, “given to God.” (Mark 7:8-13.) Anyone too busy in God’s work to aid his own family in distress is without excuse. Tending to family is God’s work! God values family and wants them taken care of in the difficulties they face.

How valuable is your family to you?  
— TX

Editorial . . .

## I’LL TAKE MY TRUTH STRAIGHT, THANK YOU

By Dalton Key

“Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, ‘Why have you not brought Him?’ The officers answered, ‘No man ever spoke like this Man!’ Then the Pharisees answered them, ‘Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him. But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.’” (John 7:45-49.)

Apparently the thinking of the people meant nothing unless strained through the minds of the rulers and Pharisees, the self-proclaimed religious and ethical “experts” of the day.

Have things changed that much from then to now? Is this not still a problem, nearly two thousand years later, when . . .

. . . we are ridiculed for believing in the Genesis account of Creation because the evolutionists say it makes no sense?

. . . we are chided for making up our own minds concerning moral and ethical matters such as abortion, euthanasia, and same-sex marriage and are expected instead to rely upon the media and other proponents of political correctness to let us know what we should be thinking?

. . . we are warned against blindly believing in the words of Jesus or the Bible until recognized religious theologians inform us as to what Jesus really said or which parts of the Bible are really authentic?

. . . we are belittled for claiming to understand the Bible’s teaching on issues such as marriage and divorce, worship, the role of women in the church, instrumental music, or even salvation itself, without the gifted guidance of scholars schooled in the latest fads of inventive hermeneutics?

Laying all the nonsense aside we are left with this simple truth: God’s message to man does not depend upon the biased blessing of ego-driven, self-appointed experts in order to be understood, appreciated, or obeyed.

“A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray.” (Isaiah 35:8.)

“And the common people heard Him gladly.” (Mark 12:37.)

“Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (1 Corinthians 1:20.)

(ATTENTION MEN: Make plans now to be with us for Old Paths Men’s Retreat, September 10-12, to be held once again on the site of Flint Hills Christian Camp, just outside Sedan, KS. Our theme: Who Is This Jesus? Cost is \$45 per camper. For more information, call (918) 845-4886.)



## A TOWER OF PRAYERS

By Luke Yates

Once the church began, we read about the great diligence that Christians had in praying. They devoted themselves to prayers. (Acts 2:42.) They prayed for boldness to speak the word. (Acts 4:29-31.) After choosing seven devout men to serve the widows, they prayed for their work. (Acts 6:6.) Saints were urged to pray for forgiveness when they were in sin. (Acts 8:22.) They prayed for God to do miracles. (Acts 9:40.) Earnest prayer was made on behalf of prisoners. (Acts 12:5.) Elders were appointed with prayer and fasting. (Acts 14:23.) They prayed in front of non-believers. (Acts 16:25.) The disciples prayed for one another when they departed from each other. (Acts 20:36-38.)

They prayed whenever they were in fear for their lives. (Acts 27:29.) As one can clearly

see, prayer was an important and integral part of the early church; and I believe that prayer is an important and integral part of that same church today.

As human beings, we are a very physically minded species, seeing how almost everything around us has matter. We are limited, though, to our five senses. If scientists could somehow convert all of the prayers that have been uttered on behalf of you into some material object, you might be surprised and very thankful to see how much space the material of those prayers occupied. Every one of us, whether we are Christians or not, would have a large tower of prayers to behold!

Even if you don’t have a care in the world about your soul, I promise you that many people do. The diligence of the Lord’s church in their prayers attests

to that fact. Whether people are praying for you to come to the point of obeying the gospel, for your strength, your health, your repentance, or in thanksgiving that you are a part of their lives, I promise you that people are praying for you.

I hope you realize how much people care for you, and most importantly, how much God cares for you. He showed His love for us by having His Son, Jesus Christ, die for us. (Romans 5:8.) He sent His one and only Son for you. (John 3:16.) Jesus Christ, before His terribly great death, prayed for you. (John 17:20,21.) And people are praying for you right now.

Are you helping answer the loving prayers of the church by submitting to God’s will?  
— Neosho, MO

## CRYING IT OUT

By Luke Bower

This last week has been a long one. My wife and I were trying to teach our infant son to sleep through the night. This has meant many hours of crying; and, yes, the baby was upset as well. The doctor suggested we allow him to “cry it out.” This means letting the baby cry himself back to sleep. It normally takes about three nights for babies to learn nighttime is the time for sleep and to begin going back to sleep on their own. If they awaken, it is a hard thing to sit and let your child cry, but we know, in the end, we will all be happier and healthier.

I cannot help but think that sometimes our Heavenly Father lets us “cry it out,” too. There

are many times we go through a trial or struggle and wonder why God doesn’t just take it away. Maybe that’s not always what’s best for us. As followers of Christ, we know whatever we are facing is temporary. Consider what Paul says in Romans 4:3-6, “We also have joy with our troubles, because we know that these troubles produce patience. And patience produces character, and character produces hope. And this hope will never disappoint us, because God has poured out His love to fill our hearts. He gave us His love through the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to us.”

Next time you find yourself “crying it out,” remember you

have a loving Father just on the other side of the door watching, listening, not wanting us to suffer – but wanting us to grow.

— Abilene, TX

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