

LIKING WHAT I GET

By Cecil Burch

The traveler asked, "What kind of weather are we going to have today?" The old shepherd replied, "The kind of weather I like." "How do you know it will be the kind of weather you like?" the traveler scoffed. The shepherd answered, "Having found out sir, that I cannot always get what I like, I have learned to like what I get. So I am quite sure we will have the kind of weather I like."

We read of another shepherd in the Old Testament, named David, who said, "This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 118:24.)

The Apostle Paul did not al-

low himself to be discouraged even though he knew he would face imprisonment, and he refused to let it affect the preaching of the Gospel. When he was on his way to Jerusalem he stopped at Miletus and met with the elders from Ephesus. After he had given them instructions he also told them, "I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there . . . but none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy." (Acts 20:22,24.) When Paul came to Caesarea, the prophet Agabus took the apostle's belt and bound his own hands and feet and said, "So shall the

Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt." They pleaded with him not to go. Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 21:13.)

In this world of wars, conflicts, and heartaches that try the very depth of our souls we can still say with confidence that we do not know what the future holds but we know Him who holds the future! — Amarillo, TX

AN UNFAILING FAITH

By Milton Smith

On a particular occasion, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan desires to have you that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed that your faith will not fail . . ." (Luke 22:31,32.) We clearly recall how Satan did, indeed, "sift" Peter to the point that he denied his Lord three times. Satan also tried to go after Job, but the great patriarch was able to stand fast against Satan's assaults.

Satan loves to go after God's faithful servants. This, of course, means that if you are a child of God, Satan desires to have you as well. It is a most unsettling thought to think that Satan actually wants to sift us as wheat! In other words, he wants to agitate us. It is an effort on his part to drive us from our steadfastness.

It is interesting that Jesus told Peter that He would be praying that his faith would not fail him. In a way,

Jesus was informing Peter that even though he was a chosen apostle, he would not be exempt from Satan's attacks. But his main protection from this dark adversary would be an unyielding faith, and for this kind of steadfast faith Jesus would be praying.

Paul once likened our faith to a spiritual shield that enables us to "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." (Ephesians 6:16.)

But what exactly is Satan's goal when he attempts to sift us as wheat? The answer is rather obvious: he wants our faith to fail us. And this enemy from the dark side can tell when his goal is being met. When we begin to drift away from the church, he is winning. When we neglect to read the Bible, our adversary counts this as a great victory. When we get out of the habit of praying, Satan rejoices. When we lower our moral

standards and begin to blend with the world, Satan is delighted. All of these things are clear signs of a weakening faith.

From his own unpleasant experience, Peter later warned us readers to be "sober" and "vigilant," because our "adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter. 5:8.)

Many centuries ago, God's faithful prophet Amos spoke of Jehovah's coming judgment on the drifting children of Israel with this simple warning: "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion." (Amos 6:1.)

— Tulsa, OK

Old Paths

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"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

LOVING COMMON PEOPLE

By Danny Tunnell

One of the qualifications of an elder is "a lover of good men." (Titus 1:8.) He needs to recognize "true goodness" when he sees it. The Bible says of Jesus, "the common people heard Him gladly." (Mark 12:37.)

Do we love common people? Common people are like you and me. They make up the great throng of people. They usually are not famous. They will probably never be listed in "Who's Who." They usually never win a Nobel or Pulitzer prize.

They are like most everyone reading this article. They are plain people. They are the great multitude of common folks that God made. (Genesis 1:27.)

The Bible also says that God made all the gorgeous plants and flowers that help to beautify the earth. (Genesis 1:11-12.) One of my greatest delights is to discover a single, common wildflower early in the Spring; the very first flower poking its head up out of the snow after a cold, dead winter. To me that is more beautiful than a finely crafted bouquet of flowers tended by a horticulturist and carefully presented by a skilled florist. And the wildflower costs me nothing - just the effort to see it.

Many times we find ourselves more at home with some of God's common people than we do with those who are highly regarded, even as "pillars of the faith." (Revelation 3:12.) We may be more at home with God's common people than with church leaders.

Jesus felt more at home with men and women whose hands may have been grimy from toil, such as fishermen. (Matthew 4:18-22.) They may not have learned all the things that a highly educated preacher or church member may know today. They had no diplomas or degrees.

We should not despise being one of God's common people. Zechariah asked, "For who has despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah 4:10.)

A. W. Tozer was a well-known and gifted preacher in Chicago nearly a century ago. Often he would meet with other well-known preachers and talk shop. He said "If we talked about God or faith or good books, we hit it off for awhile. But mostly I wander off to hunt up some butcher from Atlanta or a carpenter from Detroit or perhaps a factory worker from Akron or a machinist from Minneapolis or a hog farmer from Ottawa. I always felt more at home among them."

Jesus, Himself, had worked as a carpenter, and the common people were those He seemed to feel the most comfortable around. After all, He shocked the scribes and Pharisees when they saw Him eating with publicans and sinners. (Mark 2:15-17.) "The common people heard Him gladly." Are they hearing us gladly?

— Miami, OK

"I WAS WRONG"

By Roger Johnson

You probably have not heard that phrase very frequently . . . especially among politicians. Oh, they might when they have been caught red-handed in something. It makes you wonder if they would have continued doing the wrong if they had not been caught.

I was taught that wrong is wrong, even if you are not caught.

I suppose it's human nature, but we don't like to admit that we have been wrong about anything. Consequently, we tend to rationalize and, in other ways, seek to justify ourselves. We put the best twist we can on something in order to make ourselves look good.

Admitting that we have been wrong, that we have sinned, is the most difficult challenge in becoming a Christian. Yet repentance is a requirement before one is baptized into Christ. Before repentance can take place, a person must realize the he has sinned, admit it, and have a change of heart and mind that results in a change of life. On Pentecost, believers were told to repent and be baptized. (Acts 2:38.) Simon the sorcerer, a baptized believer, was told to repent and pray that the intention of his heart might be forgiven him. (Acts 8:22.)

A notable example of people who failed to repent, but attempted to cover up their transgression and deceive others is that of Ananias and Sapphira. The apostle Peter said that in doing so, they lied to God. (Acts 5:4.) They paid the ultimate penalty for doing so. You may deceive yourself and others, but you cannot deceive God. He knows what is in man. (John 2:25.)

Whether we ever admit it or not, wrong is still wrong. We might rationalize the wrong in our own mind and say it is okay, but just because we think something is all right doesn't make it so.

Non-Christians need to repent and be baptized. Fallen Christians need to repent and pray.

— Columbus, GA

THE BIBLE

By Bobby Key

Several years ago a denominational preacher hurled his Bible across the church before the eyes of his startled congregation. He then shouted, "If the study of this book is going to hide the real Jesus from me, there goes my Bible!"

I wondered what this man could have possibly known of Jesus Christ apart from the Bible. Did he have access to a more trustworthy source than the Bible itself? Could the man have looked into his own heart and seen a better Savior revealed there than he could have seen on the pages of the New Testament? Surely this preacher had become vain in his reasonings and his senseless heart had become darkened. He was afraid the Bible would stand in the way of some new revelation of truth.

We can not help but pity such an exhibition and pity any preacher who could stoop to such cheap theatrics.

The Bible is certainly the word of God, the medium through which the will of God is revealed. By it the man of God is completely furnished to every good work. (2 Timothy 3:15-17.) We can know nothing of the real Jesus outside of what the Bible says about Him. We have no further revelation today. (Jude 3.) The Lord has already given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3.)

There is not one solitary thing a man needs in religion that he cannot find in the Bible. It is indeed all-sufficient.

It is true that the Bible does not flatter man, but condemns him as a sinner. However, the Bible also reveals a way of escape. Christ came to enable us to escape the servitude of sin and the devil. He came to make us free. The whole duty of man is to fear God and keep His commandments. (Ecclesiastes 12:13.) As I see it, the only thing left for me to do is accept God's sin offering and completely submit myself to the will of God - and all I know about God's will is what I read in the Bible.

— Miami, OK

Editorial . . .

THE FULL PICTURE OF JESUS

By Dalton Key

One of the more disturbing quirks of today's pseudo-disciple: A professed enthusiasm for Jesus unequally yoked with an obvious distaste for both His teaching and His church. Too many of those claiming faith in Christ are willing neither to submit to His will nor align themselves with His body. And many preachers are encouraging such nonsense.

Our Lord spoke plainly, proclaiming, "He that rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:48.) Jesus viewed a rejection of His words as tantamount to a rejection of Himself.

The inspired John clearly taught that our fellowship with both the Father and the Son depends upon our abiding "in the doctrine of Christ." (2 John 9.) And this "doctrine of Christ" is not meant to describe only those red-lettered words found in the four gospel accounts or the singular conviction that Christ has come in the flesh. Paul declared that the inspired words he wrote and spoke had been received "by the revelation of Jesus Christ," and affirmed such words to be "the commandments of the Lord." (Galatians 1:11,12; 1 Corinthians 14:37.)

Nothing is more oxymoronic than the image of disciples attempting to embrace a Master wholly excised from His own teachings. Didn't Jesus once say, "If you love me, keep my commandments?" (John 14:15.)

Whether the matter before us concerns salvation from sin, personal conduct, pure and proper worship, or any one of the myriad spiritual concerns with which we grapple day by day, we who voice allegiance to Christ must heed His word.

But neither should Christ and His church be divided. Those voices crying out, "Jesus, yes! The church, no!," fail to acknowledge the following: Christ promised to build His church (Mathew 16:18); the church is His spiritual body over which He rules as head (Colossians 1:24); the church has been built upon Christ as foundation and has been purchased by His very blood (1 Corinthians 12:13; Acts 20:28); and there is but one body - one church - recognized of heaven as belonging exclusively to Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 4:4; 5:24,25.)

To speak favorably of Christ while disparaging, discrediting, or dismissing His church is neither fair to the facts nor honest with the truth. When Saul of Tarsus persecuted the church he persecuted Christ. (Acts 8:3; 9:4.)

We must, above all else, stress Christ, preach Christ, and ever "lift the Savior up." But how can we lift Him up while tearing down that for which he lived and died to build?

Preaching a voiceless, churchless Jesus leaves the world, and us, with a warped and distorted picture of our Lord. It's past time for us to busy ourselves with presenting the full picture. Jesus, yes! His doctrine, yes! His church, yes!



THE COPERNICUS CONCLUSION

By Dalton Key

Centuries ago, an astronomer named Nicolaus Copernicus studied the sky and boldly declared, "If man is to know the truth, he must change his thinking! Despite what we have said for years, our earth is not the center of the cosmos - but just one celestial body among many. The sun does not move around us; we move around the sun." With this one revolutionary thought, Copernicus shook the world, triggering what came to be known as the Copernican Revolution, and changed scientific thought forever.

Here is a sad but undeniable truth: many of us could use a Copernican Revolution in our own lives, admitting, perhaps for the first time in a long time, that the universe does not revolve around us! We are not the center of the Cosmos!

This simple shift in thinking would go a long way in reversing our petty selfishness and shifting our "my way or no way" approach to life and relationships. When we see ourselves as the prime pivot around which the rest of the world revolves, perspective is blurred, relationships are ruined and life becomes miserable, both for us and those around us. Considering other points of view becomes impossible when we become so obsessed with ours that we fail to even acknowledge the right for others to have theirs. Serving others becomes impossible when we waste all our mental energy wondering why others aren't dutifully serving us.

Listen to the Lord: "Whoever desires to become great among you let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him

be your slave - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26-28.)

And give heed to one of the Lord's inspired apostles: "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." (Philippians 2:3,4.) And still again, "Love . . . seeks not her own." (1 Corinthians 13:5.)

Friend, you are not the center of the cosmos and neither am I. And the sooner we come to grips with this fact; the sooner we begin living for the Lord and in service to others, the happier and more Christ-like we will be.

FOR A BETTER WORLD, CHANGE YOURSELF

By Luke Bower

There is an old story of a king who ruled in a very rich nation. One day he set out to see all the land over which he ruled. After his journey, his feet hurt from the rocky roads on which he had traveled. Determined to do something about it, he ordered all the roads in his kingdom covered with leather, so his feet would not have to walk all the rocky roads. This would cost a fortune and, most likely - because of having to butcher so many cows for the leather - cause the people of his kingdom to starve. However, the king was determined to do something about his hurting feet.

Finally, one of the king's servants got over his fear of upsetting the king and offered a suggestion. "Instead of covering every road in the country with leather, why don't you just get a small amount of leather and strap it to your feet?" The King was surprised at his servant's boldness, but

later decided to fashion a "shoe" for himself.

The deeper moral of this story is this: in order to make this world a happier, better place to live, change yourself - your heart and understanding - not the world.

In Philippians 4:12-13, we read that Paul learned to be content in any situation he found himself in. He wrote, "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through Him who gives me strength."

As Christians, we should learn not to get too upset and down about the circumstances life has thrown our way. Instead, we should learn about the strength, understanding, and

peace we are offered in Christ Jesus.

You can't always change the things that happen to you, but you can change what you do with those things. — Abilene, TX

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