

THOSE WHO COMPRISE GOD'S KINGDOM

By Danny Tunnel

Becca Stevens said it so well, "In some ways heaven is for the losers. When I think of who it is who can hear the message of eternal life, it is those who know what death is. Those who mourn. Those who are poor in spirit. Those who have known what it means to hunger and thirst, and be fed. The message of heaven was given to those who were willing to lose it all for the sake of the kingdom. My father was killed when I was a little girl. And my mother would comfort us by saying that my father was in heaven. He had lost so much, and so had we. In all the graceful paradoxes the gospel affords us: the last will be first, the poor will be rich, maybe seeing heaven is a prize for losing, allowing us all to see ourselves as loved abundantly and lavishly by God."

Jesus always found a heroic role for losers. He spoke to audiences

that honored wealthy people, strong kings, and victorious military heroes. But to their surprise, Jesus honored people who had little value in the visible world: the poor and the meek, the persecuted and those who mourn, social rejects, the hungry and thirsty. His stories often featured "the wrong people" as heroes: a good Samaritan, not a good Jew; Lazarus, not the rich man; the tax collector, not the Pharisee; the prodigal, not the responsible son.

Jesus asked, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37.) He said, "My kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36.) His kingdom is a spiritual kingdom.

The Apostle Paul spoke of those who comprise God's kingdom. "For

consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God." (1 Corinthians 1:26-29.)

Who comprises God's kingdom? It is certainly made up of those who are pure in heart. God doesn't see us as we see each other. "The Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7.) Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8.) — Miami, OK

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE

By Milton Smith

The Bible is a fascinating book. Among other things, it contains some amazing prophecies, beautiful poetry, and accurate history. Despite what some critics might suggest, the Bible is the only book in the world that gives inspired information about the beginnings of the universe, the earth, and man himself. The facts contained within this collection of sacred books are immense. While some of these facts are well known, others might tend to be a little more obscure.

If one were to ask what Miriam (Moses' sister), Gehazi (Elisha's servant), and Uzziah (the Judean king) all had in common, some might have a difficult time answering this question. The answer? They were all stricken with leprosy because of personal misconduct. Miriam was stricken with leprosy because of

her criticism of Moses. Gehazi was stricken because of his greed. Uzziah was stricken with leprosy when he attempted to act as a priest and offer incense in the temple.

Another question: How many different names and titles are given to the devil in the Bible? The list is long! Included in this lengthy list would be: Satan, Beelzebub, the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Ruler of Darkness, the Dragon, the Accuser, and the Wicked One. Some scholars would suggest that we might also add Lucifer, Apollyon, and perhaps Belial to this list.

What did Othniel, Ehud, Smangar, Jair, and Elon all have in common? They are all mentioned in the book of Judges as men who served as judges. Obviously, these names are not as readily recognized as other judges such as Samson,

Gideon, and Deborah.

How many false gods and idols are mentioned by their actual names in the Bible? Many! Among this number would be such names as Ashtaroath, Baal, Dagon, Diana, Jupiter, Mercury, Merodach, Molech, Nebo, Nisroch, and Rimmon.

Most people would agree that such questions as these are interesting, but may we never lose sight of the most important "fact" found in the Bible: Eternal life can only be found through Jesus Christ. He is the central figure in this Book of Books, and only He can save us from our sins and lead us to that beloved and longed-for home "over there." Facts surrounding Jesus Christ make the above-mentioned facts nothing more than trivia questions by comparison.

— Tulsa, OK

Old Paths

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

"OUR BELOVED BROTHER PAUL"

By Bobby Key

In speaking of Paul, Peter referred to him as, "our beloved brother Paul." (2 Peter 3:15.) I am deeply impressed with these words. Frankly, I like this kind of reference to a brother in the Lord. I am not a crank about it, but "brother" just sounds better and more relevant of our spiritual relationship.

How much better the way the apostle Peter spoke of Paul, than to have addressed him, or referred to him as Reverend Paul, or the Most Reverend Paul, or the Right Reverend Paul. The word reverend was never attached to preachers' names in the days of the apostles. God alone is reverend. (Psalm 111:9, KJV.)

I am also alarmed at the title of Doctor attached to so many preachers today. It seems that some papers published by our brethren must always use Dr. before the author's name. Many congregations want to be able to brag of their preacher as Dr. So and So on the sign in front of the building. I care not how many Doctors degrees a brother has earned, he still has no right to wear this as a title in a religious sense.

We will call no man Reverend or Doctor in place of the simple and more accurate term, brother. We make this a matter of conscience. There is no more reason or gospel authority for addressing a preacher differently from other men than there is for a preacher to be dressed differently. If a man is not preacher enough to be known as a preacher, without the white collar or the priestly robe, let him pass by without being known. We desire no special preacher's garb, nor special titles, and will recognize none of them. It is bad enough for those who have never been born again – those who are not in the kingdom of God - to wear such titles, but members of the body of Christ should know better.

When such titles are used we are drifting away from the simplicity and purity of Peter's description of his co-worker as "our beloved brother Paul."

— Miami, OK

MORE OF CHRIST

By John Banister

Congregations today need not greater plans and programs, but more of Christ! Not more up-to-date schemes and gimmicks, but more of Christ! Not more business meetings and gatherings, but more of Christ! Not more highly educated preachers, but more of Christ! Not a more elite and socially minded people, but more of Christ! Not more wealth, but more of Christ! Not greater numbers, but more of Christ!

Elders, deacons and preachers should pray, work and plan for Christ to dwell in the congregation. Christ must be in the worship, in the business meetings, the classes, the personal work programs, benevolent programs and in all other activities of the church.

No amount of planning and scheming can ever be a substitute for the power of this indwelling Christ in the congregation. We need to put less emphasis on material matters, and concentrate more on the transforming of the congregation into the image of Jesus Christ! Herein lies the real strength of the congregation, and the salvation of the church in our day. Let Christ be all in all!

(Brother Banister, though now deceased, still lives on through writings such as the foregoing. Like Abel, "he being dead yet speaks.")

GOD, SHAKESPEARE AND ANDY GRIFFITH

By David Deffenbaugh

Andy Griffith certainly was not noted as a man of literature and philosophy, but his explanation of the famous Shakespearean line, “a rose by any other name . . .” hits the mark. As he explained the story of Romeo and Juliet to two love-struck youngsters from feuding hill families, he said, “It means you can change the name of the flower but you can’t do nothin’ about the smell!”

Truth and reality are what they are no matter what we might call them. Take, for instance, the parable of the talents in which the master designates the one talent man as “wicked.” (Matthew 25:26.) He hadn’t gone out and purposefully hurt anybody. He wasn’t taking advantage of others. But he was failing to use what the master had given him, and that made him wicked.

Or how about the Hebrews writer’s warning to Christians of the threat of having an “evil, unbelieving heart?” (Hebrews 3:12.) They had not renounced their faith in God, nor had they begun to live lives of moral degradation. Yet the prospect of their departing from God’s means and plans for mankind’s salvation warranted the designations of “evil” and “unbelieving.”

We may be much more limited in our understanding and use of words such as “wicked,” “evil,” and “unbelieving,” but that does not change reality.

— Oklahoma City, OK

Editorial . . .

“I NEVER GET MY WAY!”

By Dalton Key

Sometime back, in a church in another state, an elder stomped out of a business meeting muttering, “I never get my way about anything!” He never came back to another meeting. In fact he never set foot in that church building again. His pride was wounded. He wanted his own way.

How often is a worthwhile project started, gaining support of most everyone in the congregation, everyone that is, with the exception of a few very vocal grumblers? Though truth is not at issue, these naysayers are upset. They say the project won’t work, isn’t being handled properly, or is mistimed. If truth were known, they are really upset because the project wasn’t their idea and they aren’t in charge. If they can’t be out front, if they can’t get the credit, they will take their marbles and go home. What do they do? They go to the phones and social media to begin organizing opposition. At least they can lead in the opposition! In short, they want to have their own way, and if they can’t, everyone else will pay the price.

How often is a sensitive member slighted, either intentionally (the less likely possibility) or unintentionally (the more likely case)? She cries, “foul,” while sobbing on the shoulders of anyone willing to lend her an ear. She persuades her circle of friends to choose sides and join her in berating and avoiding the offender. She refuses to speak to the offending party and even ceases attending worship services where the vile person attends. “How could one worship with such a deplorable person,” she thinks (and says). Her rights have been violated and she will have satisfaction. In short, she wants her own way, and if she can’t, a price will be paid.

As ridiculous as these scenarios seem, they have played out time and time again among otherwise faithful church members from the church’s earliest days and continue to plague the Lord’s body to this day.

But is this Christianity as the Lord intended? Is this the spirit of which Paul wrote, teaching, “Submitting yourselves to one other in the fear of God?” (Ephesians 5:21.) Is this the Golden Rule in action? (Matthew 7:12.)

We think not. Remember, and never forget: “Let all that you do be done with love.” (1 Corinthians 16:14.)



“TOO CLOSE TO MY PRICE!”

By Dalton Key

The best and surest way to avoid sin is to stay as far away from temptation as possible.

Paul urges, “Abstain from all appearance of evil.” (1 Thessalonians 5:22.) Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Matthew 6:13.) And young Timothy was warned, “Flee also youthful lusts.” (2 Timothy 2:22.)

During the Civil War, trading or transporting certain commodities was illegal. In spite of the law, however, many unscrupulous opportunists bought contraband in the South, smuggled it aboard riverboats, and brought it north to be sold for huge profits. The story is told of one such shady character whom approached the captain of

a Mississippi riverboat, offering one hundred dollars for the transport of his illegal goods. The captain declined, explaining that it was against the law. The man upped his offer to five hundred dollars. Again, the captain stood his ground and refused. The offers kept increasing until a sum of three thousand dollars was reached. This was an enormous amount of money and more than the captain had ever seen at one time in his lifetime. At this point the captain drew his pistol, pointed it at the man and said, “Sir, get off my ship! You are getting too close to my price!”

The captain gained victory over temptation by getting completely away from it.

Similarly, when Potiphar’s

wife attempted to seduce Joseph, this young hero did not hesitate; he ran! (Genesis 39:10-12.) He did not tarry in the midst of temptation. Paul’s later advice to “flee fornication” (1 Corinthians 6:18) had long before been illustrated by Joseph’s sterling example of moral purity.

Do you wish to live dangerously? Do you wish to risk your very soul’s salvation? The best way to do both is to simply “toy” with temptation, seeing how close you can come to sin without actually sinning.

But if spiritual safety is your aim and heaven your hope, stay as far away from sin (and temptation) as possible!

LOOKING FOR THE GOOD

By Wayne Robbins

Someone has said that if we look hard enough we can find the worst in the best of us and the best in the worst of us. The New Testament portrays the Christian as one that should be looking for the best in others.

I heard about a lady one time that was noted for not saying anything bad about anyone, and always found something good to say about everyone she knew. One time her friends put her to the test in bringing up the name of a woman chasing, wife beating, drunk and deadbeat. They wondered what she could possibly find good to say about this man. Finally, the lady said, “He sure can spit good!”

Barnabas is a good example of a Christian that saw the good in others. After Paul became a Christian, Barnabas looked past Paul’s sordid background and saw the good in

him. Barnabas got Paul involved in the work of the church in Antioch. Another example was when he was determined to take John Mark on the second missionary journey, when Paul strongly opposed the idea. Even though Mark had turned back on the first missionary journey, Barnabas saw something good in him and was not willing to give up on him. Apparently his insight was good concerning this young man, because later he proved to be an asset to Paul.

Let’s live up to the Bible’s portrait of a Christian and look for the good in others. – Arkansas City, KS

(EDITOR’S NOTE: Mark your calendars now for our annual Old Paths Family Retreat, May 28-30. Our theme: Food to Fuel our Faith. We’ll be meeting once again on the site of Flint Hills Christian

Camp, just a few miles north of Sedan, Kansas. The cost: \$45 per person, with savings for couples and families. For more information, call Wayne Robbins, (620) 660-5425 or Dalton Key, (918) 845-4886. Make plans to be with us!

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Dalton Key Editor

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