

## SEEKING FOR TREASURE

By Milton Smith

Did you know that many people in this country look for lost treasures each and every year? Today, these so-called treasure hunters often utilize very sophisticated equipment to seek after such valuables. They will hunt in caves, old houses, open fields, underground, and sometimes even under water. I remember reading about a man a few years ago who discovered nearly 200 silver bars buried in the floor of an isolated cave in Texas. Back in the late 1970's, some hunters discovered the sunken treasure of a long-lost ship. What they found was estimated to be worth nearly 50 million dollars.

Between the 16th and 18th centuries, Spanish merchant ships carrying valuable cargo were often attacked and boarded by roving pirates who roamed the Caribbean Sea. Pirates of the Caribbean were notorious robbers of ships on the high

seas. This period of time has often been fictionalized and romanticized by Hollywood. Today, many treasure hunters are convinced that valuables taken by pirates can still be found buried along the Spanish Main - a coastal region of the Caribbean Sea. Some believe that notorious pirates stole and buried priceless treasures in this area back when they roamed the high seas. There are also popular TV shows dealing with "treasure seekers." Shows ranging from men traveling throughout America looking for valuable collectables to programs about artful and shrewd shop owners hoping to purchase valuable "treasures" from their customers.

Treasures! Many seek for such precious fortunes. Amazingly, the greatest treasure of all is easy to find. It is called eternal life, and is available to all who will turn to

Jesus Christ. It was Jesus Himself who once said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupts, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupts, and where thieves cannot break through and steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matthew 6:19-21.) It is the wise man who spends his life laying up eternal treasures in Heaven. Jesus even once said that the kingdom of heaven is like a "treasure hidden in a field." (Matthew 13:44.) This treasure is the most valuable in the world; historically, it has only been sought after by the wisest of treasure seekers!

— Tulsa, OK

## O WHAT A SAVIOR!

By Danny Tunnell

"She (Mary) shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21.)

What is our greatest need? A Savior. A Savior from the guilt and consequences of sin. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23.) "God commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8.) "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." (Revelation 1:5.) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16,17.) "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you

through His poverty might be rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9.)

Every man of every race is a sinner. Theology without a crucified Savior, without His atoning blood, will not draw. Jesus said, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw *all men* unto Myself." (John 12:32.)

Who are the "all men" that Jesus spoke of? That would include all Europeans and all Asians, and the American Indian, as well as those from Africa. The highly educated men and women of science, but also the men and women who cannot read or write. It includes the king on his throne as well as the laborer in the ditch, servant girls, university professors, prisoners in penitentiaries, and brilliant lawyers.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself." While it is true that we must abide in the doctrine (teachings) of Christ, as 2 John 9

teaches, "Whosoever transgresses, and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, has not God," Jesus draws men to a Person, to *Himself*. He said, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28.)

Ed Crawford expressed his sentiments so well in the song, "O What a Savior." Here are his words:

Once I was straying in sin's dark valley  
No hope within could I see;  
They searched thru heaven, and found a Savior  
To save a poor lost soul like me.  
O what a Savior! O hallelujah,  
His heart was broken, on Calvary,  
His hands were nail-scarred, His side was riven,  
He gave His life blood for even me.

Truly, we can say with Ed Crawford, "O What a Savior!"

— Miami, OK

# Old Paths

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

## WITH A NAME LIKE EPAPHRODITUS

By Danny Boggs

We know the stories of a few of the early Christians. Peter, Paul, Mary Magdalene and others motivate us to live for the Lord. We know other Christians by little more than their names. What is in a name? (My thanks to William Shakespeare for his contribution to this article.)

Today we might choose names for our children that have a good ring to them, that carry on family tradition, that say how we feel about them when they are born, or that project what we want them to become. In ancient times, many names were common, but more often than today they bore significant meaning.

In Philippians 2:25-30 and 4:18 (and in those Bible passages alone), we meet a Christian named Epaphroditus. What were his parents thinking when they chose that moniker? His name was common among Greeks and Romans, but so was devotion to false gods. Do you detect the name of a false god in the name Epaphroditus? You have heard of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. When they named him Epaphroditus, his parents might have been praising Aphrodite for giving him to them. Or they might have been dedicating his newborn life to Aphrodite. It would have been hard to hear that name back then without thinking of her.

Somewhere along the way, Epaphroditus made his own choice to dedicate his life to the living God. Like Lydia, the jailer, their households, and others in Philippi, he heard the truth about the Lord Jesus, believed on Him, and was baptized. (cf. Acts 16:11-15,25-34.)

How devoted to Christ was he? Here is what Paul told his fellow Christians in Philippi about him: "I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also . . . So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life . . ." (Philippians 2:25-30.)

Might there be a message for you in the name of this Epaphroditus? Family heritage does not have to hold you back. Wrong religion need not trap you. You are not a captive of your culture. You decide!

Christ who died for you and rose from the dead is worth your life. Nothing else is. That's what Epaphroditus thought. What about you?

— Neosho, MO

## ARE THERE ANY SNAILS THERE?

By Dalton Key

I once heard a story about a crane who was pecking for snails along the muddy bank of a small farm pond. A beautiful swan alighted by his side. "Where are you from?" asked the crane. "From heaven," answered the swan, who then began to extol the myriad glories of the celestial land. The crane showed no interest. After a while, though, he did break in for a question. "Are there any snails there?" When the swan answered in the negative, the crane refused to listen to another word. He simply had no taste for anything that didn't include snails.

Aren't we all a little bit like that foolish crane? We become so involved in living here that we lose interest in living with the Lord "over there," beyond death's valley of the shadow. We come so engrossed with our snails of temporary power and pleasure and possessions in this life that we forget about the eternal joys of the better life God has promised to those obedient to Him and saved by His grace. How sad.

Jesus taught, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 6:33.) When we get our priorities in line with the Lord's, when we begin putting first things first, God will see to it that our physical needs are provided.

We live in a carnal world but we must never, as God's children, become carnally minded. "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." (Romans 8:5,6.)

Our treasure is not to be laid up here, but in heaven. (Matthew 6:19,20.) As those risen with Christ, we "seek those things which are above," and set our minds "on things above, not on things on the earth." (Colossians 3:1,2.) We are but pilgrims here. (1 Peter 2:11.) Our citizenship is in heaven. (Philippians 3:20.)

How is your spiritual appetite? Do you have a wholesome hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6), or are you satisfied with the snails of this sinful world?



## LOVE HIM BACK

By Bobby Key

Unrequited love is the story of man. It is heartbreaking to love someone dearly and not be loved in return, but the theme of unrequited love is a tragedy that runs through man's history upon the earth. Many of this world's most popular songs have dealt with the theme of unfaithful or unrequited love.

God has always loved His people. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.) "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us . . . Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (1 John 4:10; Romans 8:37.)

The history of God's dealing with man has been a one way street. The love of God which has been poured out without measure has not been returned to any great degree. God has given us life upon the earth. He has showered us with many blessings. He has provided us with food, clothes, homes and friends. And most of all the Son of God loved man enough to die for him. Man was without God and without hope. Christ died that man might have his sins forgiven - that man might find a home in heaven. But man hardly said "thank you" for the salvation that Christ brought.

The story of unrequited love is the most disappointing story in the history of the world.

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another . . . We love Him because He first loved us." (1 John 4:11,19.) We show that we love God when we love each other. We prove our love for Him by keeping His commandments. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:3.)

God loves you. Do you love God?

— Miami, OK

"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. . . That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge." (Romans 8:38,39; Ephesians 3:17-19.)

Editorial . . .

## A COMMAND LARGELY IGNORED

By Dalton Key

As divine commandments go, this one is rarely mentioned or understood as such. But the Scriptures are both forthright and unambiguous concerning the too-often sidestepped issue of worry, about which Jesus Himself said clearly, "Do not worry." (Matthew 6:31.)

Notice that Jesus did not merely advise His followers against worrying excessively; He mandated against worrying, period. Sometime later, the inspired Paul wrote, "Don't worry over anything whatever." (Philippians 4:6, Phillips.)

Heaven's message is inescapable: Christians are prohibited from worrying.

When discussing this matter with other Bible students, whether in a Bible Class or as part of a more private conversation, an interesting question is often posed. "What about concern? What is the difference between concern, which is necessary to a productive life, and worry, which is clearly condemned of heaven." The question may be the result of genuine curiosity. It may be an attempt to avoid the Lord's expectations. But regardless the motivation, the question deserves an answer.

Both worry and concern are alike in that they require a certain, focused attention directed toward a situation of interest. While there is certainly nothing wrong with holding interest for the "nuts and bolts" of life and living, this interest can easily morph into a consuming, life-draining preoccupation. Concern, which is normal, too often becomes worry, which, for the Christian, should not be.

Here lies the fundamental difference. Our cares and concerns are easily cast aside. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7.) Our worries, though, take on a life of their own, taking control of us. The word "worry" comes to us from a Middle English term meaning, "to strangle."

When concerns begin consuming us, strangling our very souls, we have entered the dangerous domain of worry.

But there is more. The Lord, in His condemnation of worry, reveals the real root of the problem with the words, "O you of little faith." (Matthew 6:30.) Faith may be involved in a healthy attitude of concern, but it has nothing at all to do with worry!

Simply put, worry is concern permitted to control us in the absence of faith.

As we focus on life's problems, real or imagined, we have a choice to make. We may choose to obsess over them, allowing them to dominate our minds and strangle our very thoughts; or we may choose to live as people of faith, casting our cares upon the Lord.



## ON BEING RESPONSIBLE

By Wayne Robbins

A young man answered an advertisement for a responsible worker. "What makes you think you're responsible?" asked the employer. "On every job I have ever had so far," the youth answered, "whenever anything has gone wrong, the boss has always said to me, 'You're responsible!'"

Responsibility is a great virtue to be seen in others, especially if they are being depended on. To give someone a responsibility, and then have confidence that the job will be completed and done right, brings contentment to the one delegating. That is one less problem to be dealt with.

The Bible is full of illustrations concerning responsibility. Moses led the people to the promised

land. Abraham carried out all his instructions and is noted as the father of the faithful. David was so faithful in his duties that he is called a man after God's own heart. Jesus completed the task given to Him in dying on the cross.

Though we may never have such monumental tasks as given to these men, we do have responsibilities given to us. The local church has constant needs where people of responsibility must accept, shoulder and relieve the need. We must see our works through faithfully. Someone said, "We measure ourselves by the responsibility we shoulder successfully."

Being a preacher, I have seen my share of people accepting responsibilities but never completing

them. No one likes to see irresponsibility in others; why should we tolerate it in ourselves?

When we see something that needs doing, or if the elders give us a particular job to do, let's be determined to see it through and do it right. Let's be responsible.

— Arkansas City, KS

"Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." (1 Corinthians 4:1,2.) "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Revelation 2:10.)

## WHY IS CHURCH ATTENDANCE IMPORTANT?

By Wes McAdams

I think it helps to understand the word in the Bible that we translate as "church." The Greek word used by the New Testament writers is "ekklesia." In passages like Acts 19, "ekklesia" is used to describe a group of citizens who had come together to discuss a problem. In that chapter, "ekklesia" is translated "assembly."

And that might be one of the better ways of thinking about "ekklesia" - as an assembly of people. So when you see the word "church" in the Bible, you might think to yourself, "That means assembly."

In other words, "church" isn't an activity for Christians to attend. The church is the assembly to which Christians belong. It is their family, their community.

So if a group of people is called "an assembly," doesn't it make sense they would assemble regularly?

From the beginning, the church - or the assembly - of Christ has come together (or assembled) every

Sunday to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus (see Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2) by singing together, praying together, reading and studying God's word together, giving together, and taking the Lord's Supper together.

This time of assembly is so important, not just because God tells us to do it and expects us to do it, but because it characterizes who the church is - "the assembly of Jesus Christ."

One day, when the Lord returns, all of God's people will assemble around His throne and worship Him forevermore.

— Abilene, TX

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of

some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:23-25.) "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." (James 4: 17.)

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