

LEARNING TO LIKE WHAT WE 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 allow 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

"Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me . . . Indeed I have all and abound." (Philippians 4:11-13, 18.)

SPEAKING WITHOUT THINKING

By Joe Dale Wilson

Recently in "The Furrow" published by the John Deere Company, there was a joke about a young college student and a farmer. The agriculture student: "That wheat field looks like it's in trouble. I'd be surprised if you get five bushels an acre on it." The farmer: "I'd be surprised too. That's my corn field." The farmer knew that what he planted he would harvest. (Galatians 6:7-8.) It was something that God set in order when he created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:11-12.)

The college student was totally without knowledge of what was planted but he wanted to talk to make himself look smart. James said, "But let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." (James 1:19.) Solomon added, "He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit. Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace: when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive." (Proverbs 17:27-28.) He also said, "He who restrains his lips is wise." (Proverbs 10:19b.) Many people want to be thought of as wise or intelligent but speak about

things of which they have no knowledge, thus revealing their ignorance. While the little joke is funny, the actual result of such speech is not funny at all.

It is common today to see someone act like they have superior knowledge. This gives the person recognition. It can also cause a person to have a super ego. Such a person is destined to fall on their face. Around 1966 my Dad had read about an accumulator for stacking alfalfa bales of hay. He needed one as his two stackers were leaving the nest. He asked a Vernon, Texas dealer to handle the new device. When it arrived on the farm, it came with great accolades about how it could handle any hay. It did not work on 80 pound bales of hay. Three engineers flew in to see why it would not work. They found that it had been assembled correctly and attached to the baler and tractor correctly but would not work. They said that it should be working and praised their work in the shop. They investigated the accumulator for two days and finally came up with the idea that they needed to install a larger pump. The accumulator did not live up to its

original hype. All the advertising and praise in the farm magazines were not true until a major change was made. They had advertised their product heavily but did not have the actual knowledge of its ability to work in Texas.

This is too common a mistake in our world today. People often gossip about others without knowledge. People often brag about how much they can do without ever really having accomplished such success. Once I listened to a football and track star brag about how fast he was while a few of us were waiting on the hay to case up for baling. A forty-year-old trucker listened to that for awhile and said, "I'll race you here in the hay field and see how fast you are." They walked a distance into the dark and asked me to tell them when to go. The trucker beat the eighteen-year-old badly.

Dad had a rule for us growing up: "It is better to be silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt."

— Vernon, TX

Old Paths

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

"IT IS FINISHED"

By Richard Dent

"So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And he bowed his head and gave up His Spirit." (John 19:30.) What was finished? May I suggest the following things that were completed.

Many Old Testament prophecies were made concerning the life of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Prophecies such as where He would be born and how He would suffer for the sins of the world are found. See Micah 5:2. Isaiah 53 is one of the most prophetic of all chapters about Jesus. The last verse of chapter 53 states that Jesus "was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." When Jesus died on the cross he completed the Old Testament prophecies that foretold His death.

When Jesus died on the cross He completed the final conclusion of the Old Law. The Mosaic Law had served its purpose as our schoolmaster to bring us into the Christian dispensation. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:24-27.) Under the Old Law such things as animal sacrifices were offered in the temple and the Sabbath Day was observed. Today, we offer ourselves as living sacrifices holy and acceptable to our Lord (Romans 12:1) and the Lord's church meets on the first day of the week to worship Him. (Acts 20:7.) Some religions want to cling to portions of the old Mosaic Law in their thinking today, but the writer of Hebrews, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote, "Now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises." (Hebrews 8:6.) "For if that first covenant had been faultless, no place would have been sought for the second. . . He has made the first obsolete." (Hebrews 8:7,13.) We now live and serve God in this Christian age of time. No animal blood need be shed. Jesus is our supreme sacrifice.

Last, when Jesus uttered the words, "It is finished," He meant that His earthly journey was over. Yes, He died but was resurrected to appear before His disciples again before ascending into Heaven. Read Acts 1:9-11. You and I will one day pass on from this life but only our physical body will decay. Our spiritual soul will not die. We must some day face Judgment. (Hebrews 9:27.) Brothers and Sisters, be thankful that death cannot cause us to be finished forever. May our souls live on with God in eternity.

— Liberal, KS

"I WILL COME AGAIN"

By Bobby Key

While our Lord was yet among men, He promised, "I will come again." Though many centuries have come and gone, this promise still echoes through the ages, bringing comfort to the suffering saints. "So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him will he appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation." (Hebrews 9:28.) Over three hundred times in the New Testament our Lord makes the promise, "I will come again."

Yes, our King is coming - not to be crowned and begin His reign, but rather, to end His reign and receive His own! Let us notice some of the characteristics of His coming.

1. It will be majestic. "When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory." (Matthew 25:31.)

2. It will be sudden. "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." (Matthew 25:13.) "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." (Matthew 24:44.)

3. It will be the end of preparation. "And the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats." (Matthew 25:32.) "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:46.)

4. It will be the beginning of supreme joy for some. "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" (Matthew 25:34.)

5. It will be the beginning of great sorrow for others. "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" (Matthew 25:41.)

— Miami, OK

"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation." (Hebrews 9:27,28.) "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17.)

Kicking Against The Goats

by Joe Slater

Before tractors were invented, farmers used oxen and other animals to pull plows and other implements. If a tired (or stubborn!) ox refused to pull, the farmer goaded him, jabbing him from behind with a sharp stick. Such unpleasant stimulation might prompt the animal to kick. However, if he succeeded in kicking the goad, it would only poke him harder and increase his pain. His wisest option was to move along pulling the plow.

Speaking to Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus road, Jesus said, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." (Acts 26:14.) Saul had heard the gospel numerous times as the Christians he was persecuting gave their defense; but he firmly rejected it, growing ever more fierce in his opposition to Jesus. God was poking Saul with the gospel goad; Saul was kicking against it, unaware that he was only hurting himself worse and worse. The more he kicked, the more he hurt; and the more he hurt, the harder he kicked. At long last, Saul encountered Jesus, realized how wrong he had been, and became as dedicated to proclaiming the good news of Jesus as he had previously been to stamping it out.

God's word often tells us things we may not want to hear. Whether it pertains to moral standards, the way of salvation, scriptural worship, or anything else, we can submit to God by faith to our eternal benefit, or we can rebel (kick against the goads) to our own hurt and eventual destruction. The wise course is to submit to God right away. Unfortunately, people can be as stubborn and (may I say it kindly?) as dumb as an ox!

God doesn't jab us with the gospel goad because He enjoys seeing us in pain. He is guiding us along in the direction He wants us to go. Of course that is the direction which is best for us. Only when we refuse to move, or when we try to turn off some other direction, does He have to poke us with the gospel goad.

May each of us, like Saul, see our mistakes, repent of them, and zealously seek to obey the Lord's word.

— Justin, TX

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9.)

Editorial . . .

JESUS, HIS WORDS, AND HIS CHURCH: A HUGE YES TO ALL THREE!

By Dalton Key

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.)

Yet here is 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.

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 (Matthew 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.

Never forget: When Saul of Tarsus persecuted the church he persecuted Christ. (Acts 8:3; 9:4.)



SOUND ADVICE ON MARRIAGE

By Danny Tunnell

June is often called the "wedding month" because it is the month in which so many couples decide to get hitched. The Bible has much to say about marriage, and the best advice to young people is to look to your Bible when thinking about any matter, especially about getting married.

Young men, to find a wife can be a good thing. "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord." (Proverbs 18:22.) That good wife is described in Proverbs 31: "She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her." (vs. 26-28.)

Unfortunately today, that is not how many marriages turn out. Few families today are not touched to some extent by something that God hates: divorce. (Malachi 2:16.) Those who have experienced the heartache of divorce hate it too. Could it be that too many husbands

and wives enter into marriage with the idea that their spouse exists for one purpose: to make them happy?

The Bible gives much sound advice on marriage. Nothing brings more joy than a good marriage, and nothing brings more misery than a bad one. There are millions of witnesses all around us who will concur with the truthfulness of that statement. Every divorce represents a broken dream, a shattered hope, and a ruined experience.

Every young person needs to realize that a happy marriage depends not only on the present, but also upon the past. If they did, they would be more reluctant to enter into loose, intimate relations with just anybody and everybody. "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled (kept pure, DT): but fornicators and adulterers God will judge." (Hebrews 13:4.)

Every good marriage is based on mutual respect. Paul taught in Ephesians 5 that husbands are to love their wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave

Himself for it, and that wives are to respect their husbands.

It has been said, "A good marriage consists of two good forgivers." Husbands and wives need to remember that marriage is not a reform school. Marriage is not an institution where you try to reform your spouse; instead what's going to happen is that he or she will probably influence you. Someone has wisely said, "If you marry a son or a daughter of the devil, you will have trouble with your father-in-law!"

Marriage is God's invention, not ours. Society didn't establish it; God did. It is God's will that marriages work out well. Jesus said this to the inquiring Pharisees: "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?'" (Matthew 19:4-6.)

— Miami, OK

DID THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST ACTUALLY HAPPEN?

By Milton Smith

Like all other Christians, there was a time in my life that I had to intellectually decide if the resurrection of Jesus actually took place. The reason this is such a critical question is because the entire claim of Christianity rests solely on this historical event. Paul himself conceded the fact that if our Lord's resurrection did not take place, Christianity is a false religion offering false hope. (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:13-19.) I, like so many others before me, had to weigh the evidence and determine whether or not I would commit my life to this claim. When I looked at the evidence, the choice was a simple one to make.

The lines of evidence that Jesus rose from the dead are many. The empty tomb must be seriously considered. Who opened the tomb? Jesus' followers had not the opportunity and his enemies had not the motive. Yet the great stone was rolled away and the tomb stood wide open. But not only this, the open tomb was empty. Jesus' enemies went to the "nth" degree to guard that tomb and make it secure, yet it was found vacated early that Sunday morning. But also the shroud was left behind inside

the tomb. Robbers illegally entering that sepulcher to steal away the body would have been in a very big hurry to leave. So, why would they have taken the time to remove the shroud from the body? If Jesus himself did not remove this shroud, the reason for it being left behind remains a mystery. We are also told that the headband was rolled up and placed precisely and neatly by itself; it was not hastily removed and thrown to the ground but neatly folded. Whoever removed this headband was in no hurry.

Yet, if the tomb was opened and vacated but Jesus was never seen again, the claim of resurrection would have been less credible. But hundreds of people claimed to have seen the risen Christ. Some even testified that they ate and drank with him after He rose from the dead. Jesus' own apostles were persecuted and imprisoned (most were executed) for their claims, yet they never recanted nor repudiated what they had seen. The very existence of Christianity nearly 2000 years later - with those magnificent memorials such as the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Day - cannot

be brushed aside as irrelevant. All the facts mentioned above demand explanation. Only the resurrection of Jesus from that tomb agrees with every fact. I have always stood secure in my personal, life-changing decision to follow the One who obviously rose from the tomb.

— Tulsa, OK

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