

FORGIVENESS

By Joe Dale Wilson

One of the greatest needs of mankind is to be forgiven. All of us sin and come short of God's glory. (Romans 3:23.) The wages of our sins separate us from God, but God's amazing grace brings forgiveness. (Romans 6:23.) It should move the world to learn of the great love that God has shown us. (Romans 5:8,9.)

Yet there is a problem in man receiving forgiveness from God. Jesus simply put it, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14,15.)

Jesus wants us to know that our forgiveness is conditional. Just because Jesus died for everyone does not mean everyone is forgiven. If we are not of a forgiving nature, then we will not be forgiven. We can give our time, money, and our talent to the Lord's Cause and not be saved because we have been bitter and held grudges against our neighbors or family. We

can attend worship services every time the doors of the church house are open, but if we have not forgiven others from our heart we will not be forgiven. (Matthew 18:35.) Jesus even tells us if we are worshipping God and remember that someone has something against us, we are to be reconciled before our worship will be accepted. (Matthew 5:23,24.) He also told us if our brother/neighbor has done us harm we are to go to them alone to work it out. (Matthew 18:15.) If both people believe the Bible and practice Matthew 5 and Matthew 18, they will meet halfway between their houses!

Without forgiving others we will never be forgiven! The inspired apostle Paul wrote, "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32.)

Many people in our world are mean to those they have not forgiven. They allow anger to grow to malice and malice to vengeance or even murder. God says, "Beloved, do not avenge

yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." (Romans 12:19.) He really brings the point home through John: "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." (1 John 3:15.) The American Standard uses "hate" with "eth" on the end of it to convey the idea of the original language, "continue to hate." If there are people with whom a person cannot be with in the same room, or walk on the same side of the street, or speak civilly, then there is a problem in the forgiveness practice of the person with the bitter feelings. It is not a matter of "rights" but a matter of doing right by forgiving.

Do yourself a big favor health-wise and spiritually-wise by forgiving. Jesus' attitude should be our attitude: "Father, forgive them . . ." (Luke 23:34.)

— Vernon, TX

SINCERE BIBLE STUDY

By Milton Smith

Bible study is not optional; it is expected of every Christian. A common phrase found numerous times throughout the Old Testament is the promise that Jehovah God will show mercy unto those who love Him and "keep His commandments." Deuteronomy 30:16 speaks of the duty of His people to "love Jehovah" and desire to "walk in his ways, keeping His commandments, statutes, and judgments." Most all are familiar with Jesus' words in John 14:15: "If you love me, keep my commandments." But Jesus also said in John 15:10, "If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love." It was the aged apostle John who wrote in his first general epistle that all Christians should love God and keep His commandments. (1 John 5:3.)

Clearly, God expects us to keep His commandments! But how can this be done if we choose to remain

ignorant of God's Word? This is where good Bible study becomes a must. I'm often asked what things might be helpful to insure profitable Bible study. Whatever my suggestions might be worth, I'm happy to offer them if they might be of any help. To begin with, any study of the Bible must be done reverently. Respecting the Bible as the Word of God is an absolute must. Any irreverent, haphazard attempt to study God's Word will always fall short of what is needful. The student must always have a desire to learn. This means that the reader must approach the Bible with an open mind and a willingness to do what the Book says to do; even if it means giving up previously held ideas that are not found in the Bible - no matter how cherished those ideas might have been.

Prayer should always accompany good Bible study. This does not mean that God will give us a "new"

revelation as we study (for such is not promised to us today). But we can pray - as I have often done - that God might provide us with clear minds and pure hearts as we venture into our study. It is always important to consult other scriptures that might relate to a particular subject that the reader is studying. For example, the gospel writers will often give complimentary information regarding certain events in the life of Christ. One should honestly desire to understand what a passage is saying, love the Word of God, respect it for what it teaches, and live by those teachings. After all, Jesus once said, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge . . . in the last day." (John 12:48.)

May each of us study our Bible every day and respect it for the great truth that it contains!

— Tulsa, OK

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

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

By Danny Tunnell

"Let them praise the name of the Lord: for His name is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven." (Psalm 148:13.)

A famous line in Shakespeare's play, Romeo and Juliet, is a question Juliet asked: "What's in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet."

There are many names for God in Scripture. He is El Shaddai: God Almighty. He is Jehovah Jared: the Lord who provides; and Jehovah Nissi: the Lord my banner; and Jehovah Shalom: the Lord our Peace; Jehovah Sabaoth: the Lord of hosts; Jehovah Ro'd: the Lord my Shepherd; Jehovah Tsidkenu: the Lord our righteousness; Jehavah Shammah: the Lord Who is there; Jehovah Rapha: the Lord your healer. And God's name, Yahwey (YHWH), is found over 6,880 times in the Bible, which means: He that caused existence.

When Moses asked God His name, He said "I am that I am." (Exodus 3:14.) I was, I am, and I will be. I am the One that has always existed.

A story is told about a gentleman desiring to purchase a good horse. The fellow selling the horse said, "I've got a good one! This horse was a great . . . and he was a great . . ." as he continued bragging on the horse. The gentleman said, "I don't want a "was-er", I want an "is-er."

God is not a "was-er". He is an "is-er." He is still our provider, our peace, our healer, etc. No one has a right to change any of that. "For I am the Lord, I change not." (Malachi 3:6.) "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." (Hebrews 13:8.)

What's in a name, God's name? Exodus 20:7: "You shalt not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless (without punishment) that takes His name in vain." Why would God be so insistent in not using His name in the wrong way? It is because His name is His character. It is Who He is. All through Scripture, the name of God is synonymous with God. God's name is to be "hallowed" (Matthew 6:9), it is holy, it is separate from all other names on earth.

In Old Testament times, Israel often profaned God's name by the way they lived. They had the name of God on them, but they were worshipping idols. The people of the land could not tell the difference between people of God and those who did not know God.

Think about our culture and society today. How many people today call themselves "Christians" (Christ-like), but don't live like Christ? How many in our society use God's name in vain when they express surprise; or use the popular acronym, OMG (Oh, My God), with no reverence and no holiness in their minds. And then there are some so arrogant that they will curse someone or something in God's name.

We can proclaim God's name in the right way. We can praise his name. (Psalm 44:8.) We can enter into His courts with thanksgiving and praise, and bless His name. (Psalm 100:4.) "From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Lord's name is to be praised." (Psalm 113:3.) The best way to proclaim the name of the Lord is with praise and gratitude.

— Miami, OK

Change Your Clothes!

By Joe Slater

You come in from a hard day's labor. You're hot and sweaty. You don't smell good! After a bath it's better – much better. So you put on your filthy, smelly clothes and head for the supper table, right?

Oh, you wouldn't recommend that? OK, good! Now how about following the same wise course with your spirit?

When you came to Christ, you were grimy with sin. Jesus' blood washed away your sins as you were immersed into Him. How much sense would it make to return to the way of life you practiced before you knew Jesus?

Paul calls it putting off the old man and putting on the new man. (Colossians 3:9-10.) The old man, he says, walked and lived in such sins as fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, covetousness, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language, and lying. (Colossians 3:5, 8, 9.) Just as you would remove filthy clothes from your body, so Paul says to "put off" all of those behaviors. They must not characterize the new man in Christ!

With the filthy clothes taken off, of course you replace them with clean ones. Just so, replace corrupt behavior with godly deeds. Paul continues, "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long suffering; bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfection." (Colossians 3:12-14).

You can't erase your past, but you don't have to continue it. In fact you must not, for "because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience." (Colossians 3:6.)

Do you need to change your clothes?

— Justin, TX

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17.)

JESUS, HIS WORD, AND HIS CHURCH

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.)

Nothing is more oxymoronic than the image of disciples attempting to embrace the Lord completely removed 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. We can't honestly say "Yes" to Jesus while saying "No" to what He taught.

Further, just as Christ and His Word are inseparable, the same can be said for His church. 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. 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 of our Lord. Jesus, yes! His doctrine, yes! His church, yes!

Anything less is too little.

TEACHER, TAKE HEED

By Dalton Key

Those who proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ should have a good, working knowledge of the subject at hand. With respect to teaching and preaching, the ancient axiom, "Know thyself," might well be replaced with, "Know thy subject!"

Winston Churchill once described one of his opponents as "one of those orators who, before they get up, do not know what they are going to say; when they are speaking, do not know what they are saying; and when they have sat down, do not know what they have said." Sadly, this aptly describes much that passes for teaching and preaching in far too many churches today.

The apostle Paul urged young Timothy to take a more serious, and studious, approach. "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." (1 Timothy 4:13-16.)

Few scenes are as painful to witness as that of an unprepared, disinterested teacher or preacher feebly attempting to "use up his time." A man such as this may provide bushels of boredom and a foolproof cure for insomnia, but precious little else; and certainly nothing by way of biblical knowledge or spiritual motivation.

The teacher or preacher of the Bible should possess a deep and discernible love for both God and His Word. He should be able to say, with David of old, "Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day." (Psalm 119:97.) As the most eager and avid student in the room, he should thoroughly immerse himself in the inspired text and splash about freely in the invigorating truths of Holy Writ.

Of the renowned preacher B. C. Goodpasture it was said, "He impressed his audiences that he knew what he was talking about and that he knew more than he was telling." Gus Nichols, another beloved preacher of the same era, referred to this kind of consummate preparedness as "preaching from the overflow."

Bible teachers and preachers today would do well to "go and do likewise."

(ATTENTION: Make plans now to attend the annual Old Paths Family Retreat, May 31 - June 2, on the site of Flint Hills Christian Camp, just north of Sedan Kansas. Our theme for this year: "A Matter of Trust." For more information, call (620) 506-6155 or (918) 587-4023. We look forward to seeing many of you there.)



GOOD AND BAD LIONS

By Joshua Ortiz

How can both Jesus and Satan be referred to as lions?

A lion, by itself, is not an evil creature or demon. Therefore, using the lion as a figure does not automatically mean a negative point. Let's consider how both Jesus and Satan can be lions.

The lion seems always to have been labeled a dominant creature in nature. This is why we call it "the king." God uses certain characteristics of the lion to figuratively describe aspects of both Christ and Satan.

In Genesis 49:9,10 the tribe of Judah is prophesied to be a lion because out of that tribe would come the royal line of Israelite kings. Out of that lion tribe would come the lion of the tribe of Judah - Jesus. (Revelation 5:5.) He would be the King of Kings.

Why is Satan described as a lion? God focuses on the aspect of the lion's hunger. Satan is like a lion because he

wants to "devour" us. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8.) Satan is angry (hence, he roars), and he wants to kill us spiritually. He does not want us to have life from the Son. Satan actively seeks Christians whom he can lead away from the faith.

Of course, in another sense, Satan is a "king." 2 Corinthians 4:4 is plausibly talking about Satan being the "god of this world." This does not mean he is the Creator or The God. Rather, Satan is a god in the sense that many people follow Satan's will (whether they know it or not). Furthermore, God recognizes the existence of earthly kings (even today), but Jesus is still higher than these kings.

Jesus is the "King of kings and Lord of lords." (Revelation 19:16.) This means Jesus is over all kings.

Many people have made Satan king or god in their lives, but in that sense Jesus is still the higher King.

Who is your king?

— Miami, OK

"He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence." (Colossians 1:15-18.)

FROM THE ARCHIVES . . . JOSHUA LIVED WHAT HE PREACHED

By Bobby Key

The destiny of a nation is bound up in its leaders. This is no less true of the church. Very seldom can a congregation rise above its leadership. Men by nature follow the examples of this about them. Relatively few think for themselves or decide, rationally, on their course of conduct. For the most part we all like to play "follow the leader." This should be a sobering thought for those who stand in the place of divine leadership.

Joshua, who in earlier years was the servant and minister of Moses, led the people across the Jordan into the promised land. It was Joshua, supreme head and leader of the people, who read God's law from Mount Ebal. There was never any doubt as to where this godly man stood. He called on the people to make a choice that would determine their destiny and the destiny of their children's children. They had but two alternatives: Serve Jehovah God or serve either the gods of their fathers

which were "on the other side of the flood" or "the gods of the Amorites." Joshua's example inspires us all: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15.)

"And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old." (Joshua 24:29.) At this point his life was ended but not his influence. We are not surprised to read from Judges, chapter two, verse seven: "So the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua."

No greater tribute could be paid Joshua than this. His faithful life of devotion and service to God led an entire nation in the right direction. Not only did he influence the people for good during his life but during the days of the elders that outlived him as well. He was dead, but his works continued to live on. (Revelation 14:13.)

It would be impossible to over-stress the importance of godly leaders. If those who speak for God fail to be steadfast in doctrine and moral purity, what may God expect of the people in general?

Joshua, God's servant, lived the way he preached.

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