

I THANK GOD FOR YOU ALL

By Don Deffenbaugh

“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all.” (Romans 1:8.) “I thank my God always on your behalf.” (1 Corinthians 1:4.) “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.” (Philippians 1:3.) “We give thanks to God always for you all.” (1 Thessalonians 1:2.) “We are bound to thank God always for you brethren.” (2 Thessalonians 1:3.)

Paul loved the brethren. He thanked God for them. He did not take the brethren for granted. He did not write disparaging things to them or about them. He did not condone evil lives. He did not tolerate false teaching. He loved the brethren and by the Spirit wrote those things they most needed and at the same time thanked God for them.

We should thank God for the

brethren because they have been born again and are children of God. (John 3:3-5.) “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” (Romans 8:17.) What a privilege to be brethren in the Lord!

We should thank God for the brethren because of the advantages of fellowship. “That which we have seen and heard we declare unto you, that you may also have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” (1 John 1:3.) Faithful brethren are in fellowship with one another and with God and His Son.

We should thank God for brethren because of what we mean to one another. We can exhort one another (Hebrews 10:25), pray for one another (James 5:16), love one another

(Romans 13:8), and comfort one another. (1 Thessalonians 4:18.)

There is no way to put a price on such valuable considerations. I thank God for you all. - Neosho, MO

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” (1 John 4:7-11.)

SEEKING AFTER ETERNAL LIFE

By Milton Smith

Is eternal life something that all people seek after? I think we would be forced to concede the fact that many do not. At least some would tell us this. Some will even add that they do not even believe in the reality of eternal life. But I've often wondered: is it really true that such souls have no desire to seek for a better life than this one?

It was not many years ago that I heard a Unitarian minister engaged in dialogue with a fellow Unitarian minister on a particular television program. They were contemplating the idea of life after death. Unitarians are generally very skeptical about certain fundamental issues taught in the Bible. The younger one confidently affirmed that he did not believe in life after death. I found it most interesting that the older one seemed somewhat troubled by such a thought. He even referred to his advanced age and openly asked if there actually was no

hope on the other side of death.

In John 11:25-26 Jesus spoke those immortal words, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.” The wise Christian will be ready to share this unmatched promise with anyone who might care to contemplate hope beyond the grave.

Most people will have some degree of desperation in their life. It might be because of some physical or emotional problem, but whatever the reason, it is there. In such cases the door is often open for us to reach out to them and offer them real hope. Make no mistake about it: there are many souls today who are tiring of the blatant skepticism of our age. They are the ones who often are sincerely seeking after something better.

The apostle Peter once wrote, “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He might exalt you in

due time.” (1 Peter 5:6-7.) But exactly how will the faithful be exalted? Through that blessed promise of eternal life found only in Jesus Christ!

Certainly watch for those people who are lost in sin but are sincerely seeking for something better. Let us never ignore such opportunities when they come our way!

— Tulsa, OK

Life is real! Life is earnest!

And the grave is not its goal;

Dust thou art, to dust returnist,

Was not spoken of the soul.

(Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)

“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven.” (2 Corinthians 5:1,2)

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

RACISM IS EVIL

By Danny Tunnell

Jesus ministered to everyone. It is true that He was sent to the house of Israel. There are good reasons for that. Grace came where there was a foundation of law.

Jesus ministered to a Syrophenician woman, to Roman soldiers, and to a centurion's slave. (Mark 7:26; Matthew 8:5-13.) He ministered to a woman of Samaria. (John 4.) She was considered interracial.

Pigmentation is simply the color of our skin. We all came from Adam and Eve. We didn't come from monkeys. We are made in the image of God and we have a spirit and soul. (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Hebrews 4:12.)

We all came from Adam and Eve, but in Genesis 6 God started all over again with Noah and his family . . . his three sons. Those three boys were named: “Ham,” meaning “hot or black;” “Japheth,” meaning “fair or light skin;” and “Shem,” meaning “name.” (Genesis 5:32.)

Noah was prophetic in naming his sons. Shem was where Abraham came from, his line. The house of Israel came from this line, and Jesus came from this line. The person Who has a name that is above every name came from a person named “name.”

God created us to not all look alike. He created us for some to be lighter and some to be darker. But God did not create racial division. It seems that God has always loved diversity in what He created. There is more than just one kind of flower or bird. He created light-skinned people and dark-skinned people.

There are dark-skinned people in the Bible. The man who carried Jesus' cross may have been a black man. (Matthew 27:32.) There were black people gathered on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:9,10.) Read about the North African nations listed there. In Acts 13 when the church at Antioch sent out Paul and Barnabas, five leaders in the church are listed, two of which were black. Two of the five leaders in the church of Antioch were black, and when Paul and Barnabas left, two of three were.

Racism has several definitions: it can mean hating a person because of his race, or simply believing one race to be superior while another is inferior. The more predominate racism today is merely prejudice toward another race.

“Prejudice” is making a judgment toward another person without having all the facts. “Pre” is a prefix meaning “before” and “judice” meaning judgment.

Why is racism evil? Racism is pure self-righteousness. The Pharisee thanked God that he was better than other people. (Luke 18:11.) Racism violates the great commission. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.” (Matthew 28:19.) The word “nations” is from the Greek, “ethnos,” from which we get the word “ethnicity,” thus “make disciples of all ethnicities.” Racism violates the great commandment to love. (John 13:34,35.) Racism questions God's creation. Racism questions God's plan to redeem people out of every nation or ethnic group. (Revelation 5:4.) And racism questions or defies God Himself. God so loved “the world,” not one race. (John 3:16.)

— Miami, OK

OF BOOKS AND COVERS

By Dalton Key

My mirror is mistaken in what it shows to me,
The me I see not even close to true;
I'm fooled by my reflection and
what my eyes can see,
The same pertains to how I look at you.

There's more to you than meets the eye,
You're more than you appear;
Beneath, behind your clear disguise,
Lies truth I need not fear.

It matters little how you look,
The color of your skin;
You're not your cover, you're the book,
You are the you within.

The poorest may be wealthy
(I know it may sound odd),
And beauty may be difficult to chart;
How sweet would be, were we like God,
Who sees and loves the heart.

“The Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7.)

“Oh Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it . . . For you formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well.” (Psalm 139:1-6, 13,14.)

In (no) God We Trust?

By Joe Slater

Not long ago the Metroplex Atheists organization put up banners in several downtown Ft. Worth locations saying, "IN NO GOD WE TRUST." Of course it was an "in-your-face" to believers and, predictably, a public outcry ensued (which is exactly what the atheists wanted). Apoplectic citizens inundated city officials with calls asking why the banners were permitted. At least one less-than-intelligent individual defaced several banners and then posted his vandalism on Facebook – again, exactly what the atheists wanted.

The Mayor and other city officials correctly explained that, although they did not agree with what the banners said, the atheists' right to freedom of speech is constitutionally protected. I would put it this way: from a legal perspective, Metroplex Atheists' freedom to make fools of themselves (Psalm 14:1) is my freedom to proclaim God's wisdom. Civil government should restrict neither. Yes, the banners were "offensive," but we are not guaranteed the right not to be offended! This point ought to be made to secular progressives who incessantly whine about being offended by whatever triggers their allergies this week; but it applies equally to believers who want Big Brother to shield them from challenges to their faith.

Of far greater concern to me is the sad fact that the motto "In God We Trust" simply isn't true for most Americans, including far too many church folk. Our conduct betrays our lack of trust; in most cases, God is merely an emergency first-aid kit we use when we crash. If we really and truly trust in God, we had better busy ourselves demonstrating that trust in far more significant ways than having it stamped onto our coins or lining the streets with banners.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their lie has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world . . ." (Psalm 19:1-5.) "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20.)

EDITORIAL . . .

SHAKEN, NOT STIRRED

By Dalton Key

"But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up." (1 Kings 21:25.)

King Ahab was far from perfect. He wasn't the best of men and certainly wasn't the best of kings. From Israel's throne his crimes included idolatry, lying, defiance of God, and even murder. Yet Scripture asserts that Ahab was not alone in shouldering the blame for these misdeeds. The blame was shared with his wife, Jezebel. No accusation of evil is leveled against Ahab before his marriage to this Phoenician princess. As the Bible clearly states, she stirred him up.

Ahab's case is not unique. Consider the stirred up mob who cried out those infamous words so long ago concerning our Lord. "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" they shouted. (Luke 23:21.) Here was a crowd of otherwise good people who had, in just a few days' time, been twisted into a frenzied fit of hate and violence. What happened between the time, less than a week before, when they had cried out "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matthew 21:9), and now, near the time of the cross, as they scream, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"?

They had allowed themselves to be stirred up.

People have always been willing to do and say things when stirred up by others that they would never imagine doing ordinarily. From the legendary lynch mobs of the old west to the out-of-control protests dominating so much of today's news cycles, it is evident that, as Paul Harvey was wont to say, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." People are still, as ever, easily stirred up.

Even children of God can be stirred up. The wonderful, blood-bought body of Christ is comprised of the best people the world has to offer. The Lord's church is made up of disciples, men and women, striving day by day to become more and more like the Master they serve. They shine as lights in a world of ever-increasing darkness. Taken as a whole, the family of God on earth is a varied collection of good, well-meaning people trying to do right and be right in a world gone wrong. But these same people (you and I!) can easily lose our moral and ethical moorings as we find ourselves "stirred up" by friends, the internet, the media, etc.

A cause considered right and righteous never justifies wrongdoing. Kindness must not be sacrificed on the altar of truth; brotherly love and compassion must never be forsaken in the name of religious zealotry. Bullying, name-calling, cutting, hurtful sarcasm - whether face to face or on social media - are beneath us, and should ever stay beneath us, as we strive to be like Christ.



WHAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM

By Danny Boggs

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Corinthians 2:9.) What could it be?

Those promising words build on what we can read in Isaiah 64:4. In that context, those who love Him are those who wait for Him, who rejoice and do righteousness and remember Him in His ways. Sin had left its mark on the land and on souls. Isaiah prayed that God would come down in power and mercy and that people would love him for it.

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" sounds like when people go up to heaven. But in Isaiah it's about when God comes down to earth.

When the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to pen the words again, God had come down. The ultimate answer to the prayer of Isaiah was Christ and His cross. Eyewitnesses saw what happened at Golgotha. Their ears heard Jesus say that he was giving His life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45.) No better answer to the problem of sin could be imagined. Long before Isaiah's prayer, God had prepared to redeem people "with the precious blood of Christ." (1 Peter 1:19.)

In the first century "Christ crucified" sounded like scandal to many Jews and nonsense to many Gentiles, "but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:23,24.) The cross of Christ is the well-planned answer of the all-wise God to the problem of sin. And the writings of Paul and the rest

of the apostles and prophets form the Holy Spirit's explanation of how good those who love God have it both now and forevermore.

By reading Scripture we "know the things that have been freely given to us by God," thanks not to "words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches." (1 Corinthians 2:12,13.) If you think there must be a better way to deal with sin, a better life now than the one we have in Christ, or a better hope than that which we hold, then you just don't understand. Keep reading. And if you do believe, keep reading. Keep loving Him. Keep waiting for Him. Keep joyfully working righteousness. Always remember Him in His ways.

Oh, what God has prepared for those who love Him! - Neosho, MO

OUR ONLY HOPE

By Bobby Key

Often I have been called to try and comfort those who have just received the stunning news from a doctor, "I'm sorry, but there is no hope."

We never feel more helpless than during those days when life is being sapped from a loved one, and we have no cure for the malady. What can be worse than trying to comfort someone, knowing that it is only a matter of time because there is no hope.

Regardless of how heart-rending the thought, the doctors of our land could point to everyone who is out of Christ and diagnose the case by saying, "There is no hope." Paul wrote to the Ephesians of a time when they "were without Christ . . . having no hope and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:12.)

Man has sinned. Sin separates man from God and results in spiritual

death. (Romans 5:12.) Unless man locates the Author of life he is doomed to die; there is no hope.

The apostle Peter, in Acts 3:15, refers to Jesus Christ as the "Prince of life." A bright ray of hope is suddenly seen when Paul writes that "Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." (Romans 5:8,9.) Our only hope for escape from the dungeon of death is through Christ who died for us.

The time will come for each of us when there is no hope for this physical life; however, for those who obey the Lord and faithfully serve him, there is hope. "The wicked is banished in his wickedness, but the righteous has a refuge in his death." (Proverbs 14:32.)

The child of God can triumphantly acclaim with Paul, "For to me, to live is

Christ, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21.) In Christ there is hope, both sure and steadfast. (Hebrews 6:19.)

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