

## THE GOLDEN RULE

By Danny Tunnell

When God created the world every thing He made was good. That is said repeatedly in Genesis, chapter one. When God created light, He saw that it was good. When he created the fish, the birds, and every living creature, God saw that it was good. When He created the cattle and every thing that moves on the earth, God saw that it was good. “And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31)

Since everything God made was good, how did sickness and disease get here? Where did they come from? God did create everything perfect, but sin messed things up.

Where did sickness come from, if God didn't create it? Sickness is of the devil. It is a work of the devil.

If what I am saying is scriptural, then I must have Scripture to support it. We read in Job 2:7 that it was Satan who smote Job with boils from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head. The Bible says that at the mouth of two or three witnesses let every word be established. (1 Corinthians 13:1.) Job

2:7 is one of those witnesses showing that sickness is a work of the devil. Who made Job sick? Satan did it.

Psalms 41:8 talks about an “evil disease.” Disease is a thing of the devil and it is evil.

We read in Luke 13 about a woman who was bent over and couldn't straighten herself up. Jesus spoke of this woman as “a daughter of Abraham whom Satan has bound for 18 years.” Where did her sickness come from? Who did that to this woman? This is a third witness.

Job 2:7 says the devil did it. Psalm 41:8 says that it is an evil thing of the devil. Jesus calls this woman's physical problem a binding of Satan. Sickness according to the Bible is from the devil, it is evil, and it is satanic bondage.

Let's look at one more witness from the Bible. We read in Acts 10:38, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” The Bible says

that those Jesus healed were oppressed of the devil.

If you are ill today, it is not God doing it.

Our hearts and prayers go out to all those who are suffering because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen so many healthcare professionals risk their own health and safety to help those in need.

This is Jesus' Golden Rule put into practice. “Do to others what you would want them to do to you.” (Luke 6:31.) The Golden Rule asks, “If I were in this person's situation, how would I want to be treated?”

The Golden Rule is simple. It is not complex at all. It doesn't use a bunch of \$75 words. The teachings of Jesus are often so simple, but they are hard to put into practice because they require self-sacrifice. Jesus taught us to love God with all our heart, to love our neighbor, and to do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

May God be with everyone who is helping during this national crisis.

— Miami, OK

## CAN WE LIVE FOREVER AND NOT BECOME BORED?

By Milton Smith

The title of this article may sound a little strange to some, but I have actually had this question posed to me on more than one occasion. To man's way of thinking, it would be next to impossible to live “forever” and not experience some sort of boredom. It is, of course, imperative that we understand that life on the other side of physical death will be dramatically different than our lives here on earth.

To begin with, there are two main words used for “life” in the Greek. One is bios. We get our word “biology” from this word, and it simply means “alive” as opposed to being dead. It is mainly a technical term used to designate something that has not yet experienced death. Jesus once said, “And this is life eternal, that they might know you as the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have

sent.” (John 17:3.) Interestingly, the word used here by Jesus for “life” is the Greek word, zoe. Scholars tell us that this word is the nobler of the two words generally translated “life,” and that it is used to express the highest and best of living. Obviously, eternal “zoe” will be exciting, abundant, and thrilling for all those who experience it.

Eternal life is not related to physical time. For example, God is eternal. He has always been. Consequently, there is no sense of time from God's perspective.

Are we to believe that God could ever say, “I'm bored with my own existence?”

The life we will experience on the other side will be a quality of existence that we have never experienced in this temporary, earthly walk. We will never

be bored with eternal life any more than God could be bored with his own eternal existence.

There are obviously some things about eternal life that we know nothing about, but we can all rest assured that “boredom” will never play a role in that abundant, never-ending life that awaits the faithful in Heaven.

— Tulsa, OK

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also . . . I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:1-3, 6.)

# Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

## THE DEADLY PANDEMIC OF SIN

By Mark Lindley

The COVID-19 pandemic is a tragedy of epic proportions. At the time of this writing, the virus has claimed the lives of more than 23,000 in the United States and more than 118,000 worldwide. In this country, within the past few weeks, millions have become unemployed and a thriving economy has come to a sudden halt. People are panicking and uncertain what the future holds. Death, hospitalizations, sickness and unemployment have become a daily reality for Americans. When will this terrible nightmare end? Only God knows.

As devastating as the Coronavirus is, there is a spiritual “pandemic” that is far worse. The cause of this “pandemic” is sin. When the Pharisees asked why Jesus ate with sinners, He responded: “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Matthew 9:12-13.) Jesus affirmed that those who are “sick” need a physician. The “sickness” of which Jesus spoke is sin.

Of course, sin is not a sickness that comes into our lives uninvited. Rather, we become sin-sick by exercising our free will. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” (1 John 3:4.)

Since the fall in the Garden of Eden down to the present, countless masses have been destroyed through sin. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23.) There has been no tribe or nation that has escaped its deadly effects. Sin has shattered dreams, ruined lives, caused unspeakable pain and suffering, and ravaged the world more than all viruses of the world, combined.

If sin were the product of man's imagination, we might ignore any mention of it. But sin is real—just as real as any virus known to man. What viruses can do to the body, sin does to the soul. “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23.)

Viruses may end lives; sin destroys souls.

The good news is that there is a cure! The cure for sin is the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7). One receives the cure by obedience to the gospel of Christ. “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16.) The remedy is available. Receive it today!

— Ripley, MS

## SELF-DECEPTION: DENYING SIN

By Joe Slater

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8.)

Can you feature anyone having the nerve to say, “I have no sin?” The Gnostic false teachers against whom the apostle John wrote were doing exactly that! Their bizarre doctrine held that the sins committed by the fleshly body didn't affect the inner person (spirit). Such a radical disconnection between flesh and spirit meant that even the vilest immorality caused no harm to the spirit!

And yes, people actually believed it!

Surely no one today buys into that, do they? Perhaps not that precise scheme, but you might be surprised how many fail to see that their sin matters to God and threatens their eternal wellbeing. As long as they avoid the “big” sins (you know – adultery, murder, grand larceny), the rest are inconsequential. Laziness, pride, vulgar language, selfishness, ingratitude, and the like, are viewed as minor, run of the mill issues. As one popular slogan says, “Don't sweat the small stuff!”

Obviously, some sins are more severe than others. The Law of Moses recognized that, and so does the New Testament. Jesus Himself spoke of “weightier matters of the law.” (Matthew 23:23.) But He neither said nor implied that “less weighty” meant unimportant.

Only Jesus our Savior can truthfully say, “I have no sin.” He challenged His critics, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” (John 8:46.) Jesus “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15.) That's what qualified Him to give His blood as the supreme sacrifice for our sins.

Let us not deceive ourselves, but recognize our sinfulness and receive cleansing by the blood of Christ!

— Justin, TX

**DON'T BITE BACK**

By Ron Stough

When my brother and I were growing up, we had a little dog named Tip. Now Tip was a good old dog, but he was pretty irritable. In fact, he was known to snap at those who irritated him. On one occasion, however, he met his match. My brother apparently played too rough with him, and Tip nipped him. My brother's reaction was simple . . . he bit Tip back. Old Tip ran off yelping, with his tail between his legs.

That story illustrates the philosophy of a lot of people toward life. It's the old "eye for an eye" mentality. The world says, "Don't take anything off of anyone." The Bible, however, holds the Christian to a higher standard. We can achieve God's standard if we will:

Remember it is God's prerogative to avenge wrong. He has told us, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." (Romans 12:19.) Retaliation isn't an option for us; it is something God has reserved exclusively for himself.

Refuse to harbor resentment in our heart. As long as it is there, it will fester and we will never heal. As long as resentment exists, the urge to get even will be difficult to remove.

Realize that we cannot be forgiven unless we will forgive. Jesus taught that principle in his prayer in Matthew 6, "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." (vs. 14,15.)

Rest assured that one day every wrong will be set right. (2 Corinthians 5:10.) Those who mistreat us will not go unpunished. God deals with them in his own time. Paul describes the only acceptable way to destroy an enemy in Romans 12. We are to treat him with kindness, thus making our enemy our friend.

— Duncan, OK

"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:31,32.) "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.) "But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!" (Galatians 5:15.)

## EDITORIALLY SPEAKING . . .

**WHAT MATTERS**

By Dalton Key

If Frederic Maitland's age-old observation is correct, if "the essential matter of history is not what happened but what people thought or said about it," we can't but be concerned for those of us living through these days of cultural and factual uncertainty. Information has given way to disinformation. Policy too often finds itself embroiled in scandal. The more we learn, the less we seem to know.

And all the while we allow ourselves to be distracted from what really matters.

Precious lives - and souls - waste away as so many among us major in life's minutiae, ignoring the more serious and substantive issues of the day; and most importantly, the days of eternity yet ahead.

Simply put, life's most serious questions - questions of moral, ethical, and spiritual concern - are not being adequately addressed. In fact they are not even being acknowledged as legitimate by a shocking number of today's more influential spokespersons. While we obsess over issues of health and safety, while we concern ourselves with looking better, eating better, and smelling better than any of our forbears before us, we, as a people, are slowly but surely rotting away from the inside out.

And like the self-congratulatory cannibal who thought himself civilized because he had learned to use a knife and fork, we content ourselves with self-delusion. "They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace!' when there is no peace." (Jeremiah 6:14.)

The progress of any society depends more on its measure of character than on its economic, academic, political, and military weight all considered together. Any people ignoring or belittling such fundamental tenets as honesty, morality, and a common respect for the rule of law does so to its own peril.

Truth matters. Integrity matters. The Golden Rule still matters.

Yes, the world is facing a grave medical pandemic; but what of the even more pervasive sickness of the soul? True, economies are collapsing; but what of that true treasure laid up for us in heaven? What is of greater importance? that which lies before us, or He who lives within us?

No doubt we know not the future. But then again, we never have, at least in this life. "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead we ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.'" (James 4:14,15.) We do know, we must know, the One who holds the future in His hands. Ours is not to understand the why of it all; ours is to trust the great I AM above it all and remain faithful to Him.

That which was true for Solomon's day is no less true for ours: "Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." (Proverbs 14:34.)

**GOD'S POWER AND OUR WEAKNESS**

By Bobby Key

It is good to acknowledge our weaknesses. We are all weak in certain areas and the devil tempts us at our weakest point. Let us never allow Satan to take advantage of us; we must be fully aware of his schemes. (2 Corinthians 2:11.)

Many times there is strength in weakness! The Lord told Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness." The apostle then wrote, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:9,10.)

In time of grief, suffering, and struggles, we sometimes ask, "Lord, where were You?" When Lazarus died,

his sisters, Mary and Martha, wondered where Jesus had been and why he had not been present when they needed Him. Both sisters said, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." (John 11:21,32.) Many sincere souls have asked the same question and made similar statements down through the years.

Jesus prayed for the cup of suffering to be removed. On the cross, he asked, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Don't be afraid of your weakness, your doubts, your fears. It is alright to feel anxious, empty, lost and alone. Struggling with weaknesses forces one to turn to God for strength.

In 1948 J.R. Baxter wrote the song, "Just a Closer Walk With Thee." He wrote, "I am weak but Thou art strong. Jesus keep me from all wrong; I'll be satisfied as long as I walk close

to Thee. Through this world of toils and snares, if I falter, Lord, who cares? Who with me my burden shares, if I walk close to Thee. When my feeble life is o're, time for me will be no more, guide me to that peaceful shore, let me walk close to Thee."

When life tumbles in and we feel weak and helpless, may we be assured that God is near by. God is always present, and ready to help His children in times of struggle.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though mountains shake with its swelling." (Psalm 46:1-3.)

— Deceased

**THE GOOD ADDICTION**

By Danny Boggs

"Now I urge you, brothers - you know the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints - be subject to these, and to every fellow worker and laborer." (1 Corinthians 16:15,16, ESV.)

Nobody in Corinth was a Christian before Stephanas and his family. And what did that family think being a Christian was all about? They "devoted themselves to the service of the saints." As the KJV puts it, they "addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." Nobody had to beg them to do good works. They served and served to the point of exhaustion but never wanted to stop.

Is that the way you think about service?

Take note that "service" and "ministry," and "servant" and "minister", are interchangeable terms. Nobody is a minister without being a servant. And everybody who is a servant is a minister. The lines drawn in religion between ministers and the rest of the church are unbiblical in

that regard. Some of the best ministers would never claim that label or have it applied to them by other people. Their work may not get much attention. But God knows who they are, and His work in the church and in the world depends on them. (Hebrews 6:10.)

Service, especially toward their fellow Christians, was a way of life for the household of Stephanas. They followed in the footsteps of Jesus, who "came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45.) Stephanas probably led the way with his wife and children as eager partners.

What should we do when we see such Christians? Be subject to them. Be like them. If they say they could use some help, jump in eagerly.

Who are some fellow Christians you know who have this good addiction? "There is much to do; there's work on every hand!"

— Neosho, MO

"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem

others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:3,4,12,13.)

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