

Good News Unlimited

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Kickers

-Desmond Ford

**Jesus, Narcissus,
and the Quest for
Self-fulfillment**

-Noel Mason

July 1986

**Summer
Congress
Information
Inside**



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Editorial

It is a matter of almost unanimous agreement among those competent to judge today, that neither history nor geography can show us any tribe or people who are devoid of all religious awareness. The first thing we learn from the archaeological digs of older civilizations is that ancient man was very religious. The countries surrounding the Mediterranean have been called the graveyard of the gods.

Over the last three centuries we have tried to deny our religious instincts. Yet no other civilization has spent as much time, energy and money on searching for a clue to the ultimate meaning of the universe as has ours. As I see it, the pursuit after the answers of life's ultimate questions is an intensely religious enterprise. The scientific pursuit of the origin and meaning of the universe, conducted with the aid of the most sophisticated equipment is a sure sign that modern people have not lost their innate religious instincts.

According to the well-known writer, Arthur Clarke, part of the attraction of modern science fiction, with its talk of other worlds and other beings is that it ministers to the sublimated desire we have, to be in touch with someone from outside our confined world. There is a deep feeling within man that is not complete without another.

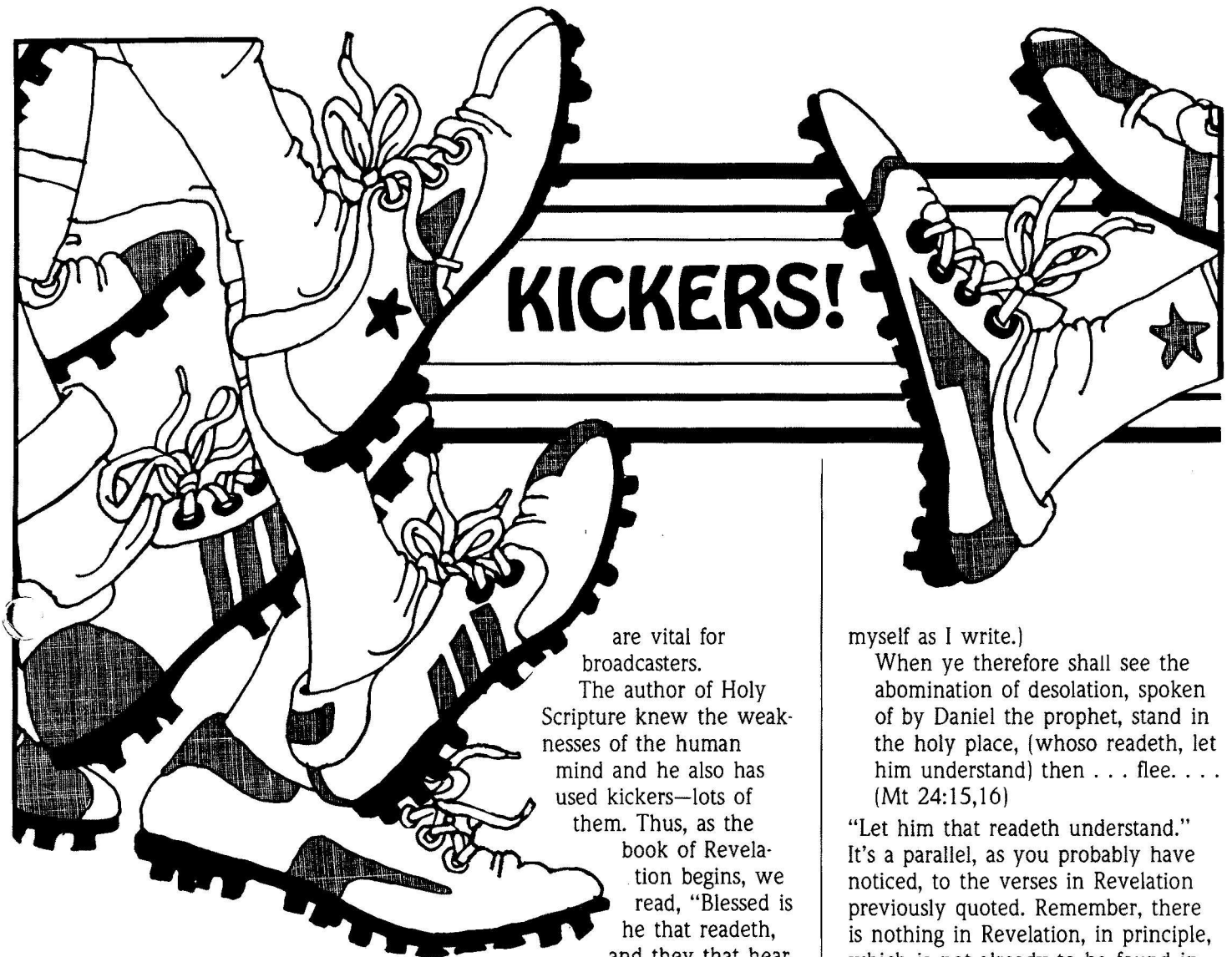
If the Apostle Paul were alive today, he might say something a little like his address to the ancient Athenians, "While I was passing through and examining your laboratories, your colossal telescopes, etc., it occurred to me that you are indeed very religious. All your scientific gadgetry is really an altar to an unknown god. What therefore you are pursuing in ignorance, this I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:23).

Perhaps modern man's greatest need is a course on what to do with his religious instincts, for it is obvious that they are alive and well today. It is here that we recognize the great value of the Bible. Within its pages there is a *spiritual roadmap*, plotted by the greatest religious geniuses the world has ever seen. True, some know the way better than others, but all are pointing in the same direction, and none make that way clearer than Jesus of Nazareth.

William Neil, in his thoughtful little book, *Message of the Bible*, states that it is important that we should not put off reading the Bible by looking to it for the kind of information it does not claim to provide or try to provide. "It does not profess to be a guidebook to modern science, ancient history or religious philosophy. It is primarily a book of theology, a book about the knowledge of God" (p. 2). I suspect that if the Bible was intelligently interpreted to modern people, very few would find it irrelevant and many would be saved from the cruel experience of trying to find hope and meaning in the mishmash of bad religions so prevalent today.

What is the fundamental message of the Bible? Is it not that all people, the weak and the strong, the rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated may trust a righteous yet gracious and loving God? Of all the religions and philosophies of life that are offered to us today, I know of none that surpasses that revealed in the Bible. Fundamental trust in the God who has revealed himself unsurpassably in Jesus of Nazareth is for me the answer to life's ultimate questions.

—Noel Mason



are vital for
broadcasters.
The author of Holy
Scripture knew the weak-
nesses of the human
mind and he also has
used kickers—lots of
them. Thus, as the
book of Revela-
tion begins, we
read, “Blessed is
he that readeth,
and they that hear

the words of this prophecy and
keep the things that are written
therein for the time is at hand”
(Rev 1:3). Later in the book, others
appear. For example: “Here is
wisdom. Let him that hath
understanding count the number of
the beast,” and, “And here is the
mind which hath wisdom” (Rev
13:18; 17:9).

On my lap as I type is a tiny
white kitten. Occasionally she
raises a paw to get my attention. A
kicker is just like that. Despise
them not, for even the Lord Jesus
used them. “He that hath ears to
hear, let him hear.” That’s another
one, and Jesus often used it.

An Interesting Kicker

But the most interesting kicker
in the Bible is attached to the most
difficult verse in the entire
Scripture. Observe it well. (You
see, I just can’t resist using kickers

myself as I write.)

When ye therefore shall see the
abomination of desolation, spoken
of by Daniel the prophet, stand in
the holy place, (whoso readeth, let
him understand) then . . . flee. . .
(Mt 24:15,16)

“Let him that readeth understand.”
It’s a parallel, as you probably have
noticed, to the verses in Revelation
previously quoted. Remember, there
is nothing in Revelation, in principle,
which is not already to be found in
the Olivet discourse.

***The author of Holy
Scripture knew the
weaknesses of the human
mind and he also has used
kickers—lots of them.***

If you read this verse in some
translations, you will get the idea that
these words of admonition do not
come from Jesus at all, but from the
Gospel writer—a bit like the
unexpected sign which suddenly
appeared on this manuscript, when
the kitten put its paw on one of the
letters of the typewriter keyboard.
Many have thought that Jesus himself
did not say these words, but that the
reporting apostle wished to interpose
a special call to attention.

We think that view is incorrect. As
indicated above, the Apocalypse has

NO. YOU MUST NOT confuse
the term with words that
may come rushing into mind
associated with more earthy matters.

Our title is not related to haberdash-
ery, sports or ballet. It is an expres-
sion used freely by technical
engineers such as Stan Bisel (who as
a member of the GNU team keeps
me up to the task of producing the
daily radio broadcast).

Kickers are those brief interest-
rousers used at the commencement of
each new broadcast. They hint at
what is to come and are an endeavor
to keep the listener tuned in. Living
as we do in an age when bored folk
are continually changing channels in
the hope of dissipating ennui, kickers

by Desmond Ford

similar interruptions, somewhat like grace notes in music which are a type of ornamentation rather than something strictly necessary.

Secondly, there is no other example in the Gospels of the disciples interrupting their Lord to put in their own words (which is not to deny the inspired verbal artistry with which the apostles edited their sources to make theological truth stand out). When we consider the parallel passage of Mark 13:14, if we know Greek, we recognize that Jesus, according to Mark, has already used the same word (anaginoskon) or its Aramaic equivalent three times before (see 12:10; 12:26; 2:25). Christ was in the habit of admonishing his readers (e.g., Mk 4:23). That was not the case of the Gospel writers. There is certainly no similar instance in Mark, Matthew or Luke, the three Gospels which give us the Advent sermon. On the other hand, it is certainly significant to discover that equivalent words for "understand" occur in the very prophecy our Lord was quoting from Daniel. In fact, such equivalents occur more than twenty times in the Old Testament Apocalypse (e.g., 9:2,22,23; 10:1; 12:9-12; and 8:27). The last four-and-a-half chapters of Daniel are avowedly given so that the reader might understand the prophecy about the wicked power which was to ravage the sanctuary (the emblem of the kingdom of God and its people).

***Do you like puzzles—
crossword puzzles, jigsaw
puzzles? Christ has sent
us one of much greater
import.***

So here in Matthew 24:15 is a "kicker" given by Christ himself. Those inquiring about the last days are told to be sure to understand his prophetic allusion to the coming abomination of desolation that had been foretold by Daniel. And how much that admonition was needed has been proved by the succeeding centuries. This enigmatic prophecy has been considered by scholars to be the most difficult of all Scripture and

when the present writer spent two years in its study at Manchester University, he could not find a single book in English, German, French, or Dutch or any other language wholly given to its examination. The libraries of Manchester, London, Oxford, Cambridge, Washington, D.C., etc., were ransacked in vain as well as current theological indexes. I began my own book (a doctoral thesis) on the topic with these words: "The abomination of desolation phrase is the enigmatic heart of the most puzzling chapter in the primary book of the New Testament."

Do you like puzzles—crossword puzzles, jigsaw puzzles? Christ has sent us one of much greater import. Not only does he challenge us to understand, he *commands* us so to do—"him that readeth let him understand." Christians are required by their most holy faith to understand the prophecies of Daniel about the abomination, and our Lord's elucidation of them. Let's try to understand.

Some Clues

Here is our first clue. All the "kickers" we have quoted have to do with the theme of Antichrist. That even applies to Revelation 1:3. The word there translated "time" is *kairos* and means a time of crisis. In other words, even Revelation 1:3 is pointing to the crisis described in Revelation 13 when the whole world must decide for or against Antichrist. Many scholars have pointed out that Mark uses a grammatical abnormality in 13:14. He connects a personal participle and a neuter noun, thus making a deliberate reference to somebody special. 2 Thessalonians 2:6ff is similar, and Antichrist is meant!

Clue number two. The expression "abomination of desolation" enshrines two motifs—one relating to worship and one relating to aggressive civil power. To the Jew, the word abomination suggested idolatry—evil worship. Notice, for example:

For Solomon went after

Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. (1 Ki 11:5-7)

***As sun and rain together
make the rainbow, it is
the glory of the gospel
which transfigures all the
sad scenes of Scripture
and life.***

The Hebrew word translated "desolation" can also mean to be stunned or appalled as many translations show. But the evidence for the more literal meaning is abundant in several Old Testament chapters which link with abominable worship the judgment of desolation (e.g., Jer 4,7,44; Eze 5-7, Dan 8,9,11,12). Apocalyptic scholar, S. B. Frost, has told us that "desolate" rather than "appall" was the current interpretation before Christ and that it should be respected. When Daniel 9:17 and 9:27 are compared and seen within the context of the whole book, it becomes clear that "desolation" has to do with the ravaging of idolatrous nations upon the people who know the true God. In this light it becomes evident why Christ, after alluding to the coming abomination of desolation, foretells the worst persecution of God's people the world has ever witnessed (see Mt 24:21ff and Mk 13:19ff). Similarly, as Revelation 13 is recognized as an enlargement of Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14, it will be seen that the idol or image there spoken of parallels the abomination of Matthew 24 and Mark 13. We must note too that the death threat of 13:13-18 corresponds to the desolation (the "great tribulation") in the predictions of Daniel and Christ.

Clue number three. Tradition has it that the Jews sometimes called Daniel

the book of the abomination of desolation. No doubt the reason was that the primary prophecies of Daniel all have to do with this mystical power. Daniel contrasts throughout his book the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. The word "kingdom" occurs more often in Daniel than in all the other prophets combined. The abomination of desolation is worldly power personified and endeavors to copy the divine kingdom. This counterfeiting is made most clear in Daniel 9:24-27 where two princes are brought to view—Messiah the prince, and the prince who is also called the abomination of desolation. Both are powers who lay claim to the hearts and bodies of mankind. Messiah the prince means a priest-prince, that is, someone like Melchizedek, the ancient priest-king of Salem, the early Jerusalem. But the rival prince (leader of an idolatrous religion) attacks the city and the sanctuary, and the desolations continue until the end. Why does he thus besiege and destroy? Because the people of God refuse to bow down to him. It is a repeat of Daniel, chapters 1,3,6, where the worshippers of Yahweh felt the storm of persecution from pagan overlords. Thus "deliver" which is a key word both in the histories and prophecies of Daniel, is a promise to the faithful.

We should note too, as Dr. John Bright has pointed out in his *The Kingdom of God* (p. 183), the theme of loyalty to the law characterizes the stories of Daniel, a loyalty that precipitates persecution from worldly kingdoms.

With this background, we can understand Christ's mysterious warning. He is saying that the kingdom and people of God will again be challenged at the end-time by Antichrist—not a person, but a worldly kingdom uniting political and religious elements and demanding conformity. This power will be an abomination, that is, it will be idolatrous. Its worship is anathema to God. It is a desolating power, for it will sentence to death all who refuse to bow before it, all who persist in worshipping the true God who

created heaven and earth and all things therein, all who love and obey the gospel of God rather than the religious laws and traditions of the creature which enshrine a blatant legalism.

Clue number four. The future but recapitulates for the Church of God the experience of its head. As Christ was sentenced to death by the united efforts of apostate Jews and the worldly Romans, so Scripture foretells a disastrous union of church and state in the latter days. Revelation 13, by referring to a lamb-like power that speaks as a dragon, is alluding to the voracious cries of the Jews who demanded the crucifixion of the Messiah in the days of Pontius Pilate. The people of God, the Jews of Jesus' day should have been lamb-like in innocence and gentleness. But their apostasy brought the guilt of his blood upon them (see Mt 27:25). So it is to be again, according to John, the Revelator. The outward Christian church will repeat the history of the Jewish church apostatising from its true Lord and joining itself to worldly government. This is idolatry, substituting state power for the power of the Spirit, and human religion for the gospel.

The church is to know its Gethsemane and Calvary, but beyond that is the crystal sea and the song that even angels cannot sing.

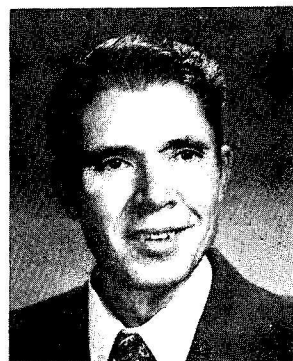
After he made his prophecy elucidating the great theme of Daniel, Christ spoke about the carcass which would be the cause of the gathering of the eagles (see Mt 24:28). He affirms that the world is to become as a polluted, rotting carcass fit only for judgment and destruction which will be executed by the descending angels. While the church visible, in form at least, upholds the Christian gospel and law, it remains as salt in the

world. When the gospel and law are forsaken, the spiritual salt will have lost its savor. It will be replaced by new forms of legalism ultimately submerged by anarchy (antinomianism). Then the end comes.

Immediately before his reference to the abomination, Christ spoke of his gospel (Mt 24:14)—the only hope for a world in chaos. It is also the strength of that remnant which will ultimately be gathered by the Spirit from all countries and all faiths to cluster around the one name—Christ—and the one theme—grace.

And in case you haven't already guessed it—this whole article is a kicker to stir your interest in the coming Congresses. There our emphasis will be not the dirge of Antichrist but the new song of Christ's people as set forth in the Bible's climactic book. As sun and rain together make the rainbow, it is the glory of the gospel which transfigures all the sad scenes of Scripture and life. The church is to know its Gethsemane and Calvary, but beyond that is the crystal sea and the song that even angels cannot sing.

(For more on the themes of this article see the author's three-volume set on Revelation entitled *Crisis!* approximately one thousand pages of inspiration and information. Order from Desmond Ford Publications, 7955 Bullard Drive, Newcastle, CA 95658. \$32.50 includes postage).



DESMOND FORD

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Pastor: **Ron Allen** – Phone (075) 39 5081

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Saturdays – Phone (09) 458 5469

Culcairn Fellowship

On July 12 a youthful and joyous group of approximately twenty people met at Culcairn, N.S.W. for a day of Spiritual refreshment with Pastor Neville and Pauline McKenzie. The Proceedings started at 10 a.m. and continued unabated until 9 p.m., such was the enthusiasm. Plans have already been laid for a return meeting to be held within three months.

Ballina Congress

The Uniting Church Conference Centre at the delightful Northern N.S.W. town of Ballina was the spot chosen for a GNCM Mini-Congress at the end of June. Folk from as far south as Coffs Harbour and north from Brisbane joined for a weekend of praise and Bible Study. There were about 50 in attendance. Pastors McKenzie and Allen teamed to lead a comparative study of the four Gospels. Bright music and singing made for joyful worship sessions. Excellent food at mealtimes made the fellowship complete. Another Mini-Congress is planned for Ballina at the end of September.

Radio

Dr. Desmond Ford will be heard on Easy Listening 97, Tweed Coast Radio throughout August. He will be using the 60 second capsule formula. We ask for your prayerful support for this outreach.

Television

Dr. Ford will soon commence production of a weekly television program. His theme for this series will be, The Christian and Health. It is hoped that these programs will, in time, be available to Australian viewers.

Anonymous Donors

Good News Christian Ministries wishes to acknowledge receipt of these anonymous donations: \$137.67, \$330.43, \$575, \$400, \$10, \$340, \$3000, \$67.80, \$204, \$5, \$250.

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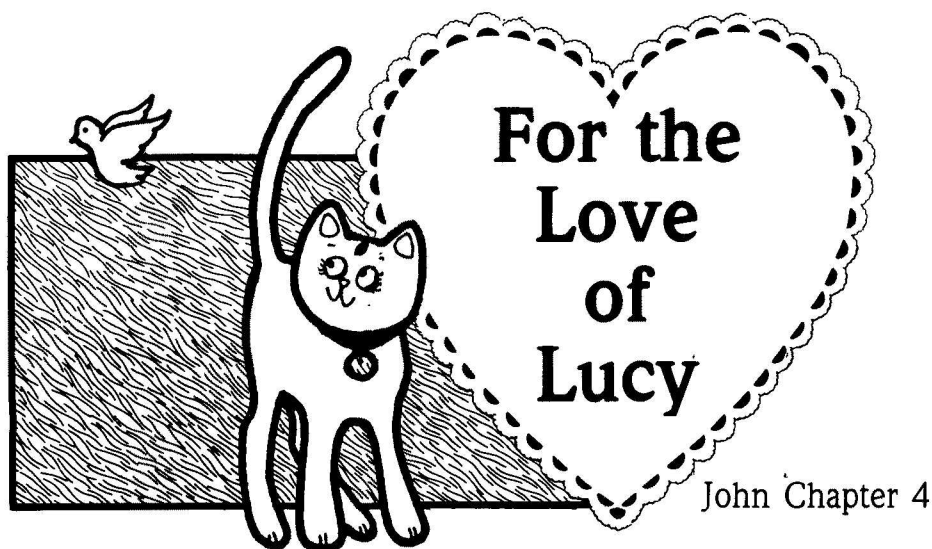
Gospel messages may be heard on these stations:

2BBB FM Bellingen – every second Sunday, 8.00 a.m.

2CHY FM Coffs Harbour – Sunday, 8.00 a.m.

3HA Hamilton – Sunday, 8.15 p.m.

5 PBA FM Adelaide – Sunday, 9.15 a.m.



IT WAS IN THE EARLY HOURS of a rainy cold day that the parents of Samantha Smith dropped her out of a car in the middle of the city of Sacramento near a bleak-looking alley. Tiny, with platinum blond hair and green eyes, she could do nothing else but wail. Having waited for three days with nothing but streetwise snarls from the local alley cats and kicks from the poor remnants of humanity that passed by, she decided to survive.

There was nothing to do but scavenge for scraps in the garbage bins, and as she grew bigger she learned to pounce on unsuspecting pigeons. But it was a difficult life in alley, and those soft green eyes became hard and narrow. When people approached, she ran for cover and hid, or hissed and snarled and spat. Her lovely white coat became matted and dirty, and it was hard to imagine how lovely she had once been.

She still walked like a lady, but the other cats sneered and laughed at her with scorn. "Samantha's your name, you say. Think you're rather fancy. Sally's all you'll get here—Sally of the alley." She had to fight them off tooth and claw but it wasn't always possible. And as time went on, she became more and more resigned to being Sally of the alley, a fierce little wild cat who lived in the shadows,

ate garbage and ran away from human beings.

Then there came kittens, lots of them—but few survived alley life. The alley was a narrow one-way street and quite a few of those little kittens got run over. What a sad, sad life Sally had. What little hope for happiness. Doomed to a life of near starvation and dying kittens. It wasn't very nice.

But down in that alley was the back entrance to a big printing shop called Capital Printing and Mailing. Later some called it Catipal Printing and Mauling, because of the great affection its workers had for cats. Though that cat was no longer a kitten, which people would love for its cute looks; though she was wild and scared and wouldn't come and brush against your legs with affection as many cats do; though she was streaked with dirt and straggly-haired from her street life; nevertheless, the owners took pity on her and began to feed her. They cried when her kittens died and wondered what they could have done to save them.

"What can we do when she has her next lot of kittens?" said Linda to Ron (they were the owners of the print shop). Now Ron worked for the State and was very organized, so they decided to work

with Plan A and Plan B. Plan A was that when the cat was pregnant next time they would try and coax her inside the print shop so she'd have them there in safety. Plan B was that after that they'd get her fixed so she would have no more kittens.

I know all this happened, because I work there at Catipal Printing setting type, and when I first drove to work and parked in the alley, there was that cat miaouing to be fed and to be let into the printing shop. She was grey and raggedy and I sort of ignored her, but I could see that others hadn't because there were several plates of catfood on top of the stairs. And by that time, she would occasionally come inside the shop.

Shortly after I began to work there, it became clear that Momcat was pregnant again (they called her Momcat, not knowing that she was Sally, and certainly not Samantha). "More kittens," they said to each other. "More little kittens who will die in the alley." So they launched Plan A—giving Momcat lots of food and luring her inside the print shop to see if she might decide to have her kittens there.

Now remember, Momcat was quite wild. She would let you pick her up when she was expecting babies, though at other times she would bite and scratch. As she got more pregnant, she became more tame. After I had been there a few weeks, Momcat was quite used to being inside and learned to know the people who worked there but still hissed at strangers. One day, Momcat was introduced to the basement where Scott and I worked in the Art Department. Linda shut us all in together because that was the place they wanted her to have the kittens. She was very scared for a while and

tried to get out but after a while she settled down and quite liked it.

The day arrived for her to have her kittens, but I was away in Australia. When it happened, three of the people at work saw those kittens born. Linda told her when to breathe and Hester scratched her head while she delivered her kittens. She didn't take any notice of the breathing advice, but waved her paw in the air every time Hester stopped scratching her head. The vet told them later it was most unusual for a wild cat to let people watch her give birth.



Momcat had three tiny kittens which she promptly hid behind a piece of sheetrock in a dark room next to the Art Department. They stayed there for about a week and eventually Scott brought them out. How sweet and little they were. One was white with one tiny grey spot on its neck. Another was white with two little grey spots on its forehead. The last was very much like Ebony whom I told you about last week—it was black with four white paws, a white shirtfront, but no stoplight on the tail. How badly I wanted it, but it was taken. One Spot turned out to be a girl. She was very delicate and tiny and moved like a ballerina. Two Spot was a boy and had huge paws, promising to grow up to be the size of a small lion. Manchester, the black one, was also a boy and fought like a tiger.

What a picture it was to see Momcat feeding her babies. Everybody at work wanted to come down in their breaks and watch them. But in the early days, Momcat got angry at all the attention and seemed to say, "Don't you silly people know these babies need to sleep?" And she grabbed them one-by-one by the neck and hid them back behind the sheet-

rock. Later, they all came out again and soon they were all over the basement, playing. There was a constant pattern of wild chasing and exhausted sleeping.

One day Linda brought in a scratch pole for the kittens to play on and how they loved it. It had a large upright pole and several shelves attached, all covered with carpet. When the kittens first saw it they were so tiny, they could barely climb from shelf to shelf, but within a day or two they were performing great feats. The first to the top (often Manchester) was Topcat and Topcat had great fun knocking the others off.

The alley life was not for these three. They were indoor cats from the beginning. They did not know of the hardships of the alley and the sorrows their mother had been through before having them. All they had to do was play with the dozens of toys Linda had bought for them, chase each other around the basement and up and down the cat pole and eat as much as possible (cat food of every shape and texture, plus cottage cheese and tuna and canned boneless chicken for humans!) They were never frightened of people, because they were played with from the time they were tiny.

At five weeks old they were given their shots and were nearly ready to go home. Though the

three kittens had been promised, two people couldn't take theirs, so Hester took two (Manchester and Two Spot, renamed Winchester). One night I said to Linda, "I think I'll take One Spot home and see if the family would like her." But I really didn't think they would because we travel away so often it's hard to have pets. But wonder of wonders, though Uncle Des said no when he first saw the kitten, later he said I could have it if I looked after it. He always says that about pets and ends up looking after them anyway because I'm hardly ever home. But like me, Des loved Lucy and so she stayed home.

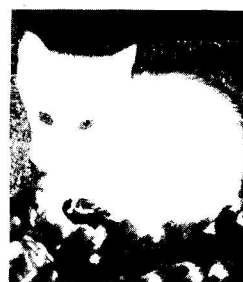
Lucy hadn't liked being in the car coming home. How she wailed and tried to claw herself out of the box I'd put her in. And when I introduced her to our garden, she was terrified of the bigness of it, for she'd never been outside and the noise of the birds and the sighing of the wind alarmed her. She did cry a bit that night, but not much and she quickly settled down that first night sleeping down inside my bed (I tried not to think about the fleas she'd brought home from the basement). She woke me up playing with my leg at 3:00 a.m. The next night it was 2:00 a.m. and the next it was 1:00 a.m. After that I put her in the laundry which she didn't mind at all.

Here's the little announcement I made at work to let everyone know about our new arrival. Isn't she a pretty kitten?

Dr. Desmond and Mrs. Gillian Ford

are proud to announce
Little Miss Lucy Ford
just arrived
from the Deep South
(Capital Basement)
to take up residence
at

7955 Bullard Drive
Newcastle, California 95658



All cards, kitty litter
and catfood gifts
may be sent to
the above address

Word from Miss Lucy:
"Sure lookin' forward to
gettin' to know you all."

* * * * *

Do you know there's a chapter in the Bible that reminds me a lot of this story about Momcat. It's found in John, chapter four, and begins with Jesus' taking a trip.

The Pharisees were upset because they'd heard that Jesus was baptizing more disciples than John, despite the fact that Jesus didn't baptize; only his disciples did. Apparently Jesus felt he should take a trip away and let things die down. He left Judea and headed for Galilee, stopping in Samaria at a city called Sychar.

This city was located near a field which Jacob had given Joseph thousands of years before and in this field was a well that Jacob had used. Jesus had walked a long way in the heat of the sun and he was extremely thirsty.

His disciples had gone ahead into the town to buy food. How much Jesus longed for some water, but he had no container to draw it up with. Of course, as God, he could have easily made himself a drink, but as was his practice, he would not use his divine power for his own needs and he waited for some kind person to come along and help him.

I'm talking about water which will quench your thirst forever. It will become like a spring of joy inside you that will overflow and float you to heaven.

After a while, tramping along in the dust, came a woman (my husband says she was a fat lady because the Bible says she was a woman of some area—Samaria). Maybe her name was Samantha of Samaria. Anyhow, Jesus asked for a drink of water. It seems a simple enough request, but look who he was asking. She was a Samaritan, a race of people hated by the Jews. Probably the feeling was mutual. Weren't the Jews and Samaritans taught to hate each other from birth?

She must have been a kind lady for she took her water jar and drew up water for Jesus. But she couldn't re-

sist asking, "How is it that you, a Jew, would speak to me, a Samaritan?" Jesus' answer was a bit of a puzzle. "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." Jesus had a far greater gift to give this lady if she only knew it. He was the Son of God, the living water of salvation, with the power to give her eternal life.

But she was puzzled. "Sir, how can you give me water? You have no pitcher to scoop it out with and this well is very deep. Where would you get that living water from?" How curious she was about his kingly bearing. How kind his eyes were. Surely this was no ordinary man. "Are you greater than our father Jacob," she said, "who gave us this well and took water from it for himself, his sons and his cattle?"

Jesus answered her, "Look, whoever drinks of Jacob's well will soon get thirsty again. I'm talking about water which will quench your thirst forever. It will become like a spring of joy inside you that will overflow and float you into heaven."

"Oh Sir," said the lady of Samaria, "please give me some of this precious water so I won't thirst again. For I am so thirsty and I don't like having to keep coming here to draw from the well."

You see, she just didn't understand what Jesus was saying. She still thought he meant the real, runny, wet stuff that surged up from the well. But Jesus had read her weary thirsty heart. Oh she **was** so thirsty—thirsty for a better life than the one she had. Jesus could tell she had a deep longing in her heart for God, much stronger than her desire for water to drink.

Here in Northern California there seem to be streams and irrigation ditches everywhere. It's hard to imagine anybody really thirsty the way people often were in Jesus' time. There was no

indoor plumbing, with piped water and several faucets in each home. Water was very precious.

It was usually the job of the women to fetch the day's supply of water and they often had to walk some distance to get it. No wonder Jesus used the symbol of water to convey the idea of a person longing and seeking after God.

Jesus had a far greater gift to give this lady if she only knew it. He was the Son of God, the living water of salvation, with the power to give her eternal life.

To help her understand, Jesus tried another tack. "Go and call your husband," he said. The woman looked rather embarrassed and said, "I don't have one!" She had trouble looking into Jesus' eyes, but she couldn't escape his gaze and soon found herself looking straight at him as he said to her, "That's exactly right. You have no husband, for you've had five husbands and the one you now have is not your husband."

Samantha tried to pass it off. "Why Sir, you must be a prophet. How could you know it otherwise?" Maybe she thought that by flattering Jesus he would change the subject. So she carried on, "Our fathers have always worshiped here on this mountain—but you Jews say that worship is only acceptable if you do it in Jerusalem."

Jesus answered her, "Where you worship is not important. How you worship is. The day will come when people won't worship here or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans don't know who you are worshipping. At least we Jews know that much. However, the time is coming when people all over the world will worship with their minds and hearts—that's what God wants."

Then Samantha, wondering when this time would be, said to Jesus: "I know the Messiah, the one sent from God, who is called the Christ, is coming and that he will show us all things."

Jesus looked her straight in the eye and said, "I am he." She was so amazed and excited that she left her water jars and sped to the village to tell everyone about Jesus. About the same time, the disciples got back from buying food. They'd seen Jesus talking to the woman but made no comment.

When they offered him something to eat, he shook his head. "It's all right, thanks. I'm not hungry any-more. I've got food to eat that you don't know about." They thought that somebody else, maybe that woman, had given him food to eat. But Jesus meant that giving the water of eternal life to Samantha and by that action doing the will of God, was more satisfying to him than food.

As for Samantha, many of the village people believed her report about Jesus. They came to see for themselves and asked Jesus to stay a couple of days to talk to them. He did and many people were saved. They had seen Jesus for themselves and believed he was the Saviour of the world.

Everyone who tastes the water of life that Jesus gives to all so freely, will never need to worry about their eternal life.

Samantha, or Momcat, the mother of those kittens, was a bit like the Woman of Samaria. They'd both had a rather wild life with lots of husbands and a bad reputation. Remember how Ron and Linda loved Momcat just the same, despite her matted grey fur and scared green eyes and the deep scratches she'd given them at times. That sort of love is a shadow of the deep love that Jesus has for people, like the woman of Samaria—in fact, all people including you and me. And just as Momcat from now on will be left "in clover" for the rest of her life, with all her physical needs provided by the printing shop—so everyone who tastes the water of life that Jesus gives to all so freely, will never need to worry about their eternal life. It's secure and forever. How he longs to give you this precious gift. Why don't you take it today.

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JESUS, NARCISSUS, and the QUEST for SELF- FULFILLMENT



THERE IS A STORY from Greek mythology that contains a bit of timely wisdom for our day. It's the story of Narcissus. Narcissus was the son of the river-god Cephissus and was distinguished for his beauty. A seer told his mother that he would have a long life provided he never looked upon his own features. But alas, Narcissus lost his favorite twin sister who looked just like him. In order to console himself, he sat and gazed into the waters of a spring, his reflection recalling hers, and pined his life away.

When the great Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), asked himself, "How should I live my life?" he found in society two answers: "Live for yourself," and "live for the good of others." If he were alive today, he would see the same, for millions in western society have succumbed to a narcissistic preoccupation with the self.

The Cultural Crisis

For some years now, a number

by Noel Mason

of social psychologists have been warning us of the general crisis in western culture. Christopher Lasch, in his provocative study, "The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in An Age of Diminishing Expectations," states that "After the political turmoil of the sixties, Americans have retreated to purely personal preoccupations . . . to live for the moment is the prevailing passion—to live for yourself, not for your predecessors or posterity."¹ In short, this psychologist believes that many of us are like Narcissus, totally hung-up on ourselves.

Because we have all been influenced to some degree by the modern philosophy of narcissism, Lasch's study proves rather discomfiting. He writes:

Having no hope of improving their lives in many of the ways that matter, people have convinced themselves that what matters is psychic self-improvement: getting in touch with their feelings, eating health food, taking lessons in ballet or belly-dancing, immersing themselves in the wisdom of the East,

jogging, learning how to "relate," overcoming the "fear of pleasure." *Harmless in themselves, these pursuits, elevated to a program and wrapped in the rhetoric of authenticity and awareness, signify a retreat from politics and a repudiation of the recent past.*²

According to Lasch, the contemporary climate is therapeutic, not religious. In general, people are not hungering for personal salvation, let alone for the restoration of an earlier golden age, but for the feeling, the momentary illusion, of personal well-being, health, and psychic security.³

Kernberg is another critic of contemporary culture. He, too, speaks of narcissism as the prevalent contemporary sickness. According to this critic, the narcissistic personality suffers from an excessive self-absorption, but is also socially adept in a superficial way. Yet despite this social adeptness, the narcissist suffers serious distortions in his internal relationships with other people. Here is Kernberg's description of the narcissist personality:

They present various combinations of intense ambitiousness, grandiose

fantasies, feelings of inferiority, and other dependence on external admiration and acclaim. Along with feelings of emptiness and continuous search for gratification, of strivings for brilliance, wealth, power and beauty, there are serious deficiencies in their capacity to love and to be concerned about others. . . . Chronic uncertainty and dissatisfaction about themselves, conscious and unconscious exploitiveness and ruthlessness toward others are also characteristics. . . .⁴

According to the social psychologists, the contemporary narcissist desperately needs other people to validate his self-esteem and in order to survive, he attaches himself to those in society who radiate power and charisma. The world becomes a vast mirror for his own pathetic image.

The narcissist has an irrational fear of old age which impels him to live for self and for the present moment. "Because the narcissist has so few inner resources," writes Lasch, "he looks to others to validate his sense of self. . . . Unable to achieve satisfying sublimations in the form of love and work, he finds that he has little to sustain him when youth passes him by."⁵

People are not hungering for personal salvation, let alone for the restoration of an earlier golden age, but for the feeling, the momentary illusion, of personal well-being, health, and psychic security.

The modern quest for self-fulfillment has led some former political leaders to experiment with some rather strange and exotic psychic brews. Jerry Rubin, for example, having reached the dreaded age of thirty, finds himself face-to-face with his private fears and anxieties. He moves from New York to San Francisco, where he shops voraciously in the spiritual supermarkets

of the West Coast. "In five years," Rubin says, "from 1971 to 1975, I directly experienced est, gestalt therapy, bioenergetics, rolfing, massage, jogging, health foods, tai chi, Esalen, hypnotism, modern dance, meditation, Silva Mind Control, Arica, acupuncture, sex therapy, Reichian therapy and More House—a smorgasbord course in New Consciousness."⁶

According to the social psychologists, the modern narcissist is emotionally shallow, fearful of intimacy, hypochondriacal, primed with pseudo-self-insight, escaping from reality into the delirium of promiscuous sex, and having little or no interest in the future.

Sadly, the contemporary narcissist is lured on in his search for self-fulfillment by a host of pop-psychologists. The bookshelves of our supermarkets are bulging with their self-help books. As John Douglas Müllen has pointed out, this literature promises an end to the search for satisfying answers by recommending some minor adjustment, by providing some superficial insight wrapped in catchy phrases, or by suggesting a list of exercises, whether physical, meditative, social, psychological or dietary.⁷

The Trouble with Narcissism

The narcissistic philosophy has not gone without criticisms. Lasch is not just a neutral commentator on modern culture. He feels that the trouble with the consciousness movement is not that it addresses trivial or unreal issues, but that it provides self-defeating solutions.⁸ In a brief comment on the popular dime-store psychology, J. D. Müllen says: "What all this (pop-psychology literature) has in common is the assumption that your life has no depth; that what you need and are searching for is resting there on the surface of every day."⁹

We only have to watch a modern soap opera to see the trouble with modern narcissism. In almost every scene we behold two attractive actors wallowing in the

emotions of self-centered interpersonal relationships, desperately trying to find a meaning to life in romantic love. Now, it is true, ideally at least, that some measure of self-fulfillment is to be experienced in loving relationships. But as we watch those engaged in the self-fulfillment movement, we become convinced that what they are searching for is not merely self-fulfillment but rather something that will give absolute meaning to their lives. This cannot be found in romantic love. Indeed, it cannot be found in any of the solutions suggested by the popular humanistic psychologists. Career, sex, money, success, talent, possibility thinking, beauty, power, drugs, health, self-awareness, marriage, family, education, etc. do not hold within themselves the clue to the meaning of life.

Because the narcissist has so few inner resources, he looks to others to validate his sense of self. . . .

The modern narcissist has been taught that feelings are the real person, the real you. This is perhaps a reaction to a former age that suppressed feelings. But it is an overreaction. Norman Cousins, in a brilliant article "See Everything, Do Everything, Feel Nothing," emphasizes the dangers of an existence centered on feelings. During the 1970's several entertainment centers opened for business on one of New York City's busiest streets (42nd Street). For the price of a movie ticket, customers can see in full color and on a large screen all the sexual variations of which human anatomy and ingenuity are capable. The promoters argue that questions of morality are relative, and that any adult should be allowed to see or do whatever his curiosity or needs demand. They contend that there is no evidence to show that sex exhibitions are dangerously provocative or that they lead to random and irresponsible sexual behavior. In response to these arguments, Norman

Cousins claims that it is possible to oppose censorship but still be severely critical of sex exhibitions—not because they lead to promiscuity or irresponsibility but because they lead to desensitization. He argues:

The problem is not that they arouse lust but that they tend to produce impotence. By detaching sex from love, they separate sex from its basic sustaining power. In making sex mechanical, they contribute to the malfunctioning of the machine. By annihilating privacy, they rob sex of delight. Feelings are not merely bypassed; they are obliterated. The danger is not that the exploitation of sex may create sex fiends, but that it may spawn eunuchs. What is even worse, an infallible formula has apparently been found for making sex boring. People who insist on seeing everything and doing anything run the risk of feeling nothing.¹⁰

Self-fulfillment cannot be found in anything under the sun. Nothing satisfies in any ultimate way—all is vanity.

Cousin's argument holds true in every other area of life which the narcissist exploits for self-fulfillment or meaning. As the writer of Ecclesiastes stated centuries ago, self-fulfillment (in holistic sense) cannot be found in anything under the sun. Nothing satisfies in any ultimate way—all is vanity.

The Christian Answer

The Christian solution to the problems of the modern narcissist is found in those memorable words of Jesus at Caesarea Philippi. Addressing his quarreling, self-seeking disciples and the gathering crowd, Jesus said:

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. *For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.* (Mk 8:35)

In these paradoxical words we have the key to a happy self-fulfilled life. Self-fulfillment or happiness can only come as we forget ourselves, our needs, etc. The Christian psychologist, John Powell, put this truth succinctly when he wrote:

When a person orients his life towards the satisfaction of his own needs, when he goes out to seek the love which he needs, no matter how we try to soften our judgments of him, he is self-centered. He is not loveable, even if he does deserve our compassion. He is concentrating on himself, and as long as he continues to concentrate on himself, his ability to love will always remain stunted and he will himself remain a perennial infant. If, however, a person seeks not to receive love, but rather to give it, he will become loveable and he will most certainly be loved in the end. This is the immutable law under which we live: concern for ourself and convergence upon self can only isolate self and induce an even deeper and more torturous loneliness.¹¹

This basic Christian psychology does not deny the many good things stressed by the modern humanistic psychologists. Christianity teaches that we should be concerned with human potential, etc. What we are criticizing is the self-defeating solutions of modern pop-psychology and the fact that self-fulfillment or self-actualization, in itself, has become the very point of human existence, a philosophy of life for millions in western society.

In principle, psychotherapist Viktor Frankl's logotherapy is in harmony with Christian teaching. He states:

The more one's search for meaning is frustrated, the more intensively he devotes himself to what since the American Declaration of Independence has been termed "the pursuit of happiness." When this pursuit originates in a frustrated search

for meaning it is aimed at intoxication and stupefaction. In the final analysis it is self-defeating, *for happiness can arise only as a result of living out one's self-transcendence*, one's dedication to a cause to be served or a person to be loved.¹²

Christianity invites us to live self-transcendently—to reach out, up, around, beyond ourselves. When Jesus said, "Man cannot live by bread alone," he was acknowledging a universal human need to find meaning and purpose in the metaphysical realm. Self-actualization or self-fulfillment, the preoccupation of the modern narcissist can only be achieved as a by-product of the Christian philosophy of life. Consider another of Frankl's insights:

What is called self-actualization is, and must remain, the unintended effect of self-transcendence; it is ruinous and self-defeating to make it the target of intention. And what is true of self-actualization also holds for identity and happiness. It is the very "pursuit of happiness" that obviates happiness. The more we make it a target, the more widely we miss.¹³

The best in modern psychology confirms the simple yet profound words of Jesus:

But seek *first* his kingdom and his righteousness and *all these things* (see context) will be given to you as well. (Mt 6:33)

If a person seeks not to receive love, but rather to give it, he will become loveable and he will most certainly be loved in the end.

It's paradoxical but true that the greatest achievements in self-actualization or self-fulfillment are experienced in the act of self-forgetfulness, when we lose our lives in the cause of God and in concern for others.

Christians too have been greatly influenced by the culture of narcissism. Much of modern humanistic

psychology has crept into the church. We must beware of the soft, persuasive voices that would have us, like Narcissus of old, preoccupied with our own reflection, our self-image. A person with a healthy self-image is not aware of his self-image.

Christianity invites us to live self-transcendently—to reach out, up, around, beyond ourselves. When Jesus said, "Man cannot live by bread alone," he was acknowledging a universal human need to find meaning and purpose in the metaphysical realm.

As Frankl says, "A healthy eye sees nothing of itself—it is self-transcendent." As Christians, we are to gaze upon the image of another—One who gave himself up for each one of us. By beholding Christ, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18) and delivered from a narcissistic preoccupation with ourselves.

1. C. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, p. 29,30.
2. Ibid, p. 29-30.
3. Ibid, p. 33.
4. Kernberg, *Borderline Conditions*, p. 264.
5. C. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, p. 61.
6. Ibid, p. 44.
7. J. D. Mullen, *Kierkegaard's Philosophy*, p. 3.
8. C. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, p. 64.
9. J. D. Mullen, Ibid, p. 3.
10. N. Cousins, *See Everything, Do Everything, Feel Nothing*, *Saturday Review*, January 23, 1971
11. J. Powell, *Why Am I Afraid to Love?* p. 104-5.
12. V. Frankl, *The Unheard Cry For Meaning*, p. 93.
13. Ibid, p. 39.

**Just
a thought...**

*I can do all things
through Christ which
strengthen me.*

Philippians 4:13

WHO ARE THE REMNANT IN THE APOCALYPSE?

by Noel Mason

In John's scheme of things the remnant emerge during the final conflict with the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. They are not a group of people who are keeping the commandments of God in a land with a government that guarantees religious liberty. Rather they are a group of witnesses who remain faithful and obedient in a land where they are threatened with death from the totalitarian powers symbolized in Revelation 12-14. Can any denomination claim to be the remnant today?

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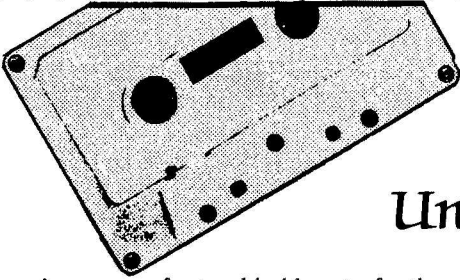
WILL YOU WILL?

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None of us will die any the sooner for making legal provision for the final allocation of the goods God has lent to us. It should not be delayed even a day, especially in times when the making of the will can be both simple and inexpensive.

Will you not pray about the matter and act if you have not already done so? And will you remember the work of the gospel that others may come to share the eternal life in which you now rejoice? It is within your power to make provision that some might find the treasure to which our Lord referred (Mt 13:44), a treasure which illuminates the shadows of death and points to the everlasting gates of pearl, and the welcoming Savior (1 Th 4:13-18).

—Desmond Ford



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EVERYONE WANTS to feel happy. Unfortunately such a feeling never lasts long. Life seems to oscillate between joy and sorrow; laughter and tears.

Several hundred years before Christ, a man called Epicurus claimed that happiness was to be had in freedom from troublous thoughts, especially ones to do with religion. He said that "joy" was not a thing to be found in religion. Many people since Epicurus have observed the same thing about religion. Even within the Christian religion there are many joyless people. A question that needs an answer is: Is there such a thing as abiding joy; joy that doesn't go away?

Paul's letter to the Philippians is noteworthy for its many expressions of joy. There are at least sixteen of them. In this letter, I find four grounds upon which Paul's abiding joy was based:

1. The joy of a great cause. Philippians 1:12-18.

Everyone needs a reason for living. Human rationality demands purpose. This passage shows that Paul had a cause—it was not just a hobby with him. With a death sentence looming over him, all he can speak of is the fact that all that has happened to him, has served to advance the gospel. The gospel is Paul's great cause; his reason for existence.

Paul exhibits excitement because his imprisonment has set the palace guard to talking about Christ. It has spurred the brethren in Rome, to bolder witness for Christ and has also provoked some jealous brethren to poorly motivated gospel preaching. All of this brings untold joy to the prisoner. His life's great project is prospering and all else is insignificant.

2. The joy of fellowship in a cause. Philippians 1:3-7.

The apostle speaks of the Philippians' "partnership" in the gospel. It is the Greek word, *koinonia*, that is used here. It means fellowship, fellow feeling, close interpersonal involvement. This fellowship that Paul has in his great cause is one of the fountain-heads of his joy. People who join the Christian church are in for one of life's great pleasures—the joy of

GOSPEL JOY

A Study In Philippians

by Ron Allen

fellowship in God's cause. Paul relished this fellowship.

It is said that one of the great needs in the church today is the rediscovery of this fellowship. We do not necessarily need more leaders. There is a need for more people who will fellowship their leaders. We need more yoke-fellows (see 4:3).

A question that needs an answer is: Is there such a thing as abiding joy; joy that doesn't go away?

In chapter 2:16-18, this fellowship is expressed another way. The life of faith is spoken of as a sacrifice, and Paul's possible death is pictured as a drink offering, being poured onto the sacrifice that the Philippians made in their service to God. Thus, Paul sees himself as supplementing them, rather than the other way around. This prospect is reason for joy and Paul invites them to share it with him. Joy loves company. The joy of fellowship in the gospel cause is very precious.

3. The joy of certainty. Philippians 1:19-23.

Whereas earlier in this chapter, Paul has found joy in what *has* happened to him, now he joys over what *might* happen. There are two possibilities here. He might live or he might be executed. But so what! It will all turn out for his salvation. So sure is he of this, that he discusses with remarkable objectivity whether it would be

best to die or best to live. One thing is sure, if life means Christ, then death will mean even more of Christ. Paul did not seem to conceive of death as an interruption of his experience of Jesus.

When a person knows that in life there is Christ and in death there is Christ, death itself is reduced to what it is in terms of Christ. That is, as something that has been conquered. Thus Paul's joy is the joy of certainty. You can rejoice in the Lord always. Chapter 4:4.

4. The joy of knowing Christ personally. Philippians 3:1-11.

In this famous passage, Paul sets himself on the same ground as the Judaisers who placed their confidence in the flesh. Flesh means human activity or achievement. He finds that if the flesh is a basis for confidence before God, he has more to put up than most. So he lists some of his grounds for confidence in the flesh. (Verses 4-6). When he has piled up his list, he explains that what he had once thought to be achievement, he now considers failure. What once he thought was an advantage, he now considers disadvantage. What was profit is now loss. In place of his former ground of confidence, is the surpassing greatness of Christ. Paul says that he has lost everything for Christ. He traded his whole world for Christ, and he was glad of the exchange. He was not sorry. He had gained so much more. For him there is now nothing so wonderful as "knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." Jesus himself is Paul's great secret of joy.



RON ALLEN

Letters

David & Friends

Sirs:

My how we praise the Lord for your ministry! We get such a blessing out of Dr. Ford's talks and tapes. We really enjoyed this month's tape "David & Friends."

Enclosed is \$15 for your continued ministry.

D.W.

Lafayette, Colorado

Spiritual Lifesavers

Sirs:

I do thank and praise the Lord for your encouraging report of May 5. Your tapes of the Month and the *Good News Unlimited* bulletin are spiritual lifesavers for me. We just returned from a trip to New Mexico, were gone a little over a month, and two bulletins and tapes were waiting for us when we returned last Friday.

In commenting on Brad's article "Have You Experienced God Today?"—I need to learn to schedule my time so I can spend time with God in Bible study and prayer. I still don't know how to study the Bible to get the most from it, and my

prayers seem to be so repetitious. I am bored with them and I wonder if God is too!

V.G.

Woodburn, Oregon

God's New Things

Sirs:

Just want to say a big "thank you" for the special tape we received a few days ago.

Dr. Ford's sermon on "God's New Things" was the best we heard yet. Sure did enjoy it.

Also, the talk show was real interesting. We played this tape several times. We enjoy the *Good News Unlimited* magazine so very much. May your work of soul winning go on until the Lord comes. God bless you all.

I.F.

Orlando, Florida

Come Alive

Sirs:

I listen to your program at 7:15 a.m. on KMAY, Riverside, several mornings a week on my way to work and enjoy it so much. You

have really made God's Word come alive for me. Thank you and may God bless you richly.

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Sirs:

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W.N.

Honolulu, Hawaii

Requests

Sirs:

Sorry to be so long getting this check to you.

Please send the tape "Singing at Midnight," by Noel, and do you still have the book *Good News For Adventists*? I'd like to have one.

H.E.

Camino, California

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