

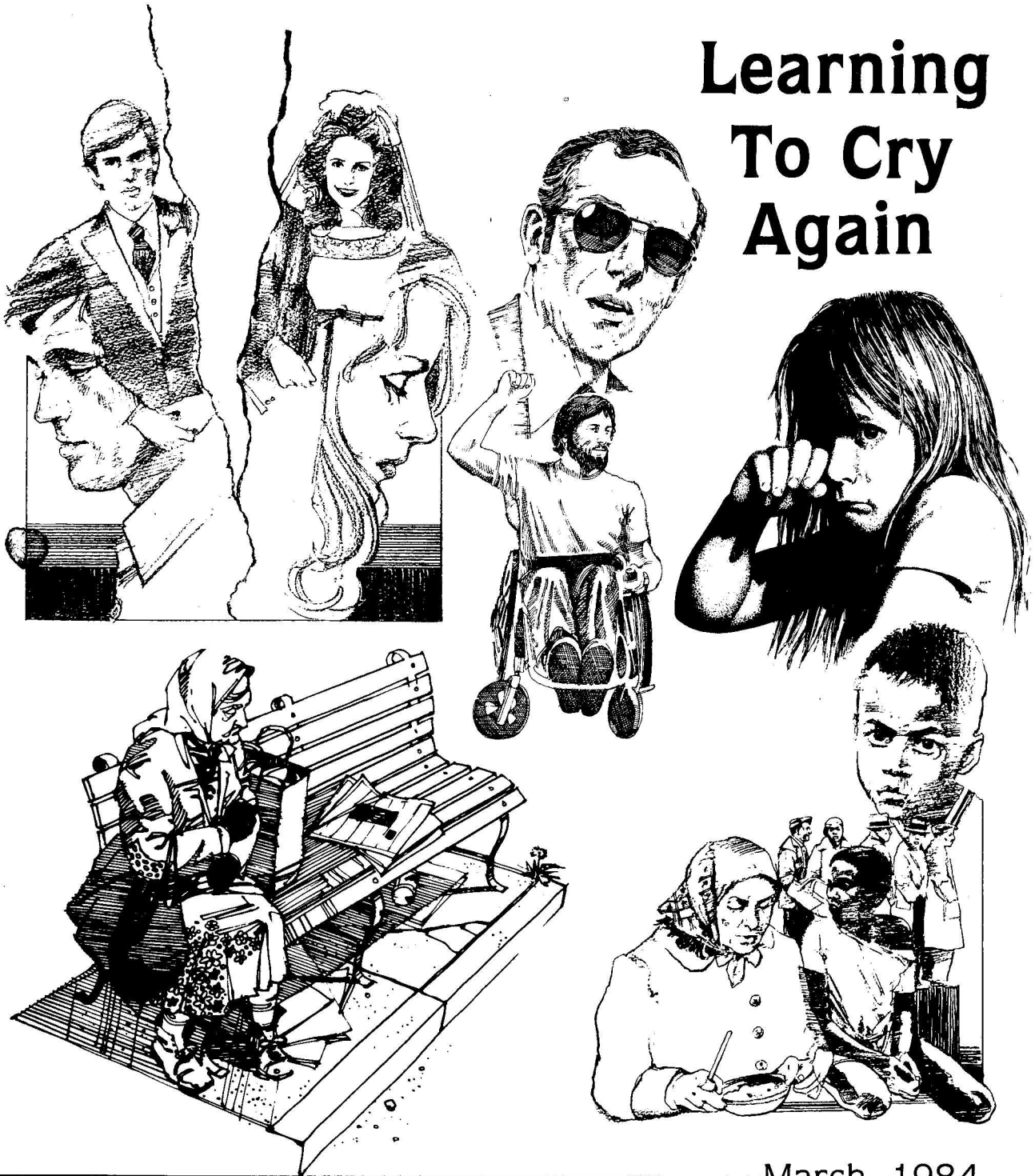
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COMPASSION

Learning To Cry Again



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—editorial—

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There is a confession that each of us should make every day. Confessions are born in those rare moments when we shrug off all the pressure of the material world around us which grabs so urgently for our attention, and humbly sense that we live in the presence of a God who is above all.

At such moments we have a revelation about ourselves and about God. It is at these times that we realize with the old Negro spiritual that "this world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through." It dawns upon us that the things of the spirit are ultimately more real than the material world that constantly seems so real.

I don't remember the clothes my mother wore the day she told me that my uncle had died, but I surely recall the sorrow that overcame me and the tears in her eyes as she broke the news. Ultimately its not the physical, material things that remain with us, but those abstract things that we carry in the important little box on the top of our shoulders.

So none of us should minimize the importance of these moments of confession. They may turn out to be more important, more real than the other things that clutter our lives. Daniel recorded one of the most beautiful of all confessions in his prayer in chapter nine.

An exile in Babylon, he laments the condition of Israel. He has noticed Jeremiah's prediction that the desolation will last for seventy years. This period is coming to an end and he anxiously awaits God's intervention and deliverance. So he pours out his heart in contrition, pleading for forgiveness for the sins of the nation, and for deliverance. O how he longs to return to Jerusalem and reestablish the magnificent temple services.

Daniel confesses: "To us, O Lord, belongs confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belongs mercy and forgiveness; because we have rebelled against him, and have not obeyed" (vv 8, 9).

And this is the confession that should be ours daily — to recognize our waywardness, our lack of understanding and our deliberate wandering from God, and to acknowledge him as the source, the mighty origin of mercy, righteousness and forgiveness.

To make this confession is to participate in the gospel and to catch a glimpse of ourselves and God that will set straight our misplaced sense of values. This prayer we need to pray today.

Calvin W. Edwards



COMPASSION

Learning To Cry Again

Calvin W. Edwards

Categories never work. We all do it but it's time we learned not to. We keep placing people into our neatly created little pigeonholes. He's a democrat. She's divorced. That family are Christians. He is a homosexual. That professor's a liberal.

We only fool ourselves when we pretend that to attach a label to a person is to say something meaningful, to aid in understanding someone.

The opposite is the case. All our categorizing is simply an easy way out of truly understanding a

person. Instead of helping a true and accurate perception of another it actually hinders a sensitive appreciation of them as a whole person.

The Problem with Labels

The problem is that as soon as we "pigeonhole" a person we have focused upon a single one of his many attributes. Rather than seeing a person in the full we have allowed one characteristic to dominate our image of him or her. Rather than saying, "She's a single parent with two beautiful children. Her husband left her seven months ago after meeting a woman while away on a business trip. She has had a tough struggle coping alone but she's got what it takes. Even with two kids she never misses a week at church. . . ." Rather than this sort of compassionate, understanding evaluation, too frequently we settle for a cursory, "She's a divorcee."

The other problem with this slick pigeonhole is that as we do it we tend to put people into a stereotype. Not only have we neglected the fullness of the person and their total personality, but we treat them as if they are the same as every other divorcee, Christian, democrat, or whatever label we've stuck on them.

This problem is probably no more evident than in the programmed roles that exist in a company office. "He's the boss and she's the secretary." The "boss" may be as "non-bossy" as he will but too frequently he can't succeed in having the staff view him as anything other than the "boss" with all the overtones that the title can muster. No matter how efficient and indispensable a secretary is, much too often she is still "just the secretary." Why can't we get beyond the titles to the real people who carry them?

This bad habit, born out of laziness and indifference to the personalities of others, robs us of ever getting to know the real people behind the labels we're so quick to adhere. But worse than this, it displays a reckless lack of compassion.

Compassion, it seems, is a forgotten word. But what a beautiful word it is! A word that conveys a depth of emotion, genuine sympathy, unconditional love, sensitive perception of another person, and a spontaneous willingness to share with one in need. It's a word that's as warm as a lonely campfire on a dark night, as willing as a Salvation Army captain, and as grand as Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture. And yet it's a word whose meaning we've forgotten.

Compassion at Work

Compassion takes effort, even inconvenience. Most of us are so locked up in our comfortable worlds of ease and comfort that we never take the time to respond to, nor allow ourselves to be inconvenienced by, the needs of others.

I recently heard the story of a famous medical doctor who spent one day each week at the public library. Being a voracious reader, he never missed spending his day there. As he attended, he noticed that every week many of the same people were there — elderly people who evidently had little to do and went to the library for the warmth and friendship they shared there.

One day an old man hobbled painfully towards the doctor. Never had they spoken before, but today the physician broke the silence. "Problems with your feet, sir?" he queried.

"Aw, yes," replied the elderly man. "My toenails are so long, they're curled around into the bottom of my toes. And my arthritis don't allow me to get to them."

The doctor, so entitled to his time off, with all his status in the community, knelt down beside the man and said, "Let me take your shoes and socks off. I'm a doctor, I want to have a look." Tenderly he proceeded. The sight he uncovered was ugly and painful. "Wait here," he said, "I'll be back."

I have settled to pigeonholing people as "old" and have never discovered their aching feet.

Quickly he went to his office, several blocks away, and returned with some of his surgical implements. "Come into the restroom," he invited. "Let me see if I can help." They were a rare sight as the well-groomed professional aided the neglected old man to the restroom.

Gently, meticulously, with well-trained eye and hand, the physician worked on those gnarled old feet. More than an hour later the two emerged — both rewarded for the experience.

In his autobiography, the doctor tells that the next week he performed the same operation for a woman, this time in the women's restroom. It didn't cause any problem, as soon as a woman entered and saw him there, she rapidly left!

Do you get a little of the idea of what I mean by compassion? I sense a feeling of guilt and regret as I pen these words, for I know that so often I have not been sensitive to the inner world of others. I have settled to pigeonholing people as "old" and have never discovered their aching feet.

A World Without a Heart

A part of the problem is that we live in a world that has lost its sensitivity, its sense of beauty and wonder. Everything, from music to love, religion to literature, is commercialized. Computers rule our lives. Our world seems to have left its heart in the filing drawer when that one-time modern convenience was replaced with an electronic Apple. Or is it an IBM?

The world is filled with heartless messages. Artists have walked off into the world of the bizarre leaving us lesser mortals wondering whatever was so wrong with Constable, Rembrandt or even Norman Rockwell. Our ears are bashed with the crazed screaming of rock heros and their frenzied fans. The theaters are filled with films glamorizing fast-paced violence so that a Bruce Lee film is rated by the number of fights stacked into ninety minutes.

The media has robbed sex of its intimacy, its magic, its music, its harmony and romance. It's become a stage performance, a conquest, a feat, or at best a recreational pursuit. The family is no longer respected — soap operas are filled with endless affairs interrupted only by corporate intrigue and visits to a psychiatrist. (Incidentally, have you ever seen an intimate love scene between husband and wife on the media? Why must love scenes **always** be illicit?) Politicians yell half-truths and innuendos at each other, seeking only to persuade supposedly marshmallow-brained voters.

Too often we have been obsessed with the trivial, delighted by the superficial, entertained by the unreal, motivated by crass marketing schemes, fascinated by the sensational, and impressed by the mediocre. We have lost our sensitivity to the difference between good, better and best; and even more frightening, between bad, worse and worst. We live in a world where the deployment of nuclear weapons is of little more significance than the local high school's win in the latest football match. Bludgeoned by the media, somehow it — and we along with it — have lost our hearts.

A Church Without a Heart?

And too often the situation in the churches is no better. Ripped apart by doctrinal strife, the body of Christ is too weakened by its own internal warfare to march unitedly against the forces of evil outside. Petty differences take on an all-important character and churches set a course against those they've defined as "heretical" or "liberal." Rather than searching for souls outside the faith, they dissipate their energy with internal witch hunts. Frequently leaders, once considered to have been appointed by God, turn out to be crass bureaucrats who employ worldly techniques to do the work they call the Lord's. Repeatedly the words of Reinhold Niebuhr have been proven true, "All of history proves that it is as difficult for rational men to be reasonable as for pious men to be charitable." So even the church is not exempt from the widespread epidemic of "tough talk," of language and action that betrays a careless lack of compassion.

Too often we have been obsessed with the trivial, delighted by the superficial, entertained by the unreal, motivated by crass marketing schemes, fascinated by the sensational, and impressed by the mediocre.

The speaker at the keynote address of a religious convention recently addressed several thousand people with a message designed to create guilt for not being sufficiently critical in the areas of abortion, homosexuality, divorce, doctrinal differences (i.e. differences from the speaker's narrow agenda), etc. The way he spoke left not the slightest impression that he understood the trauma that caused a divorce, or that follows it. His perspective on abortion was solely that of the unborn child, never of the mother who did not want the baby. For him the world is run by law, law alone, and human feelings, emotions, sensitivities are irrelevant. My concern is not his view on the subjects he discussed for I would largely (though not wholly) agree, my concern is for **how** he dealt with these subjects. I left the convention center shocked, stunned, I felt like I'd been walking through a desert of indifference to the **real** problems. He didn't seem to have any idea what empathy is.

Let's face it, all the strident, dogmatic talk, even accompanied by all the Hollywood theatrics and holy piety one can find, all such talk about homosexuals

being the lowest of the low and being cursed of God does not bring a minute particle of help to the real person who hourly struggles with a real problem. As long as we continue to put people in these convenient categories we will never be in a position to demonstrate compassion — for compassion reacts to a total person, and pigeonholing cares only for a single characteristic that qualifies one to be plugged into the appropriate slot.

Compassion: A Child of the Gospel

If ever I felt strongly about something, it is this. The church of Jesus Christ must learn ways of expressing compassion in its daily relations with the world. That means you and me. If Christianity is to live and is to be translated into the lives we live and demonstrated in our daily affairs, then we must change the pattern from all this tough talk to a sensitive and compassionate understanding of total people — not parts of them. We must not fall into the trap of the world which is consumed with heartless messages trying to bash us into conformity.

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Colossae he advised them to "seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Col 3:1). He proceeded to list a number of things that the church members were to eliminate from their behavior, then proceeded to recommend attributes they were to foster. At this point, his words went like this: "put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive" (vv 12-13). It's worth writing in the sky and painting on the pavement and subway walls, don't you think?

Notice the logic. Paul is calling for a spirit which is quick to forgive because Jesus has first forgiven us. It is the example of Jesus which is to inspire us to forgive. Those who have sensed the grace of God in their own lives cannot withhold it from others.

And it is the same with compassion. God, in a great act of mercy and tender sympathy for his wayward children, gave his beloved Son for our salvation. In Jesus Christ, God emptied heaven and poured out his love without limits or conditions. He understood the plight of his creation gone astray, and went beyond labeling them "sinners." Because he loved sinners, he went through the agony of Calvary to rescue them.

Is this not the model that those who claim the name of Christ should also follow? Should we not move beyond the casual allocation of labels and indifferent treatment of persons as stereotypes, to a loving, forgiving and compassionate understanding of them as individual people? We need to learn empathy. It's time we needed Paul's call to "Put on. . . compassion."

An Agenda for a New Sense of Compassion.

We need to rediscover a sense of anger and urgency at the multiplying force of evil and wickedness in our world. We need to dig deep in our emotional resources and develop a keen sense of love and concern for those oppressed with problems beyond their control — or even of their own making. We need to commit ourselves to loving the unlovely, and empathizing with those who hurt.

We need to eliminate all the strident talk and jokes about gays, tone down the dogmatism on social issues such as abortion, and look a lot more coolly, carefully and precisely at religio-political issues such as prayer in schools and church-state interaction.

We need to be infinitely more tolerant of divergent theological views, and much more open to variations in biblical interpretation. We need to rediscover the profundity of Scripture and its value as a source of authority in our lives, and leave alone the casuistic impositions of our own making upon the word of God. We need to **let** it speak, instead of **making** it speak.

We need to discover anew the beauty God has placed within the variety of personalities he has created. We need to learn again what it means to cry at violence, to feel proud at the on-going word of God's church, to become angry at injustice, to hold the hand of the outcast. We need a rebirth of compassion.

In theological debate we need compassion, not dogmatism. In social issues we need compassion, not blame. In moral issues we need compassion, not condemnation.

If Christianity is to live, we must change the pattern from all this tough talk to a sensitive and compassionate understanding of total people — not parts of them.

I want to challenge you, and me too, to rediscover the meaning of the word "tenderness." I know it's not popular. I know we're supposed to be tough. That it's a "dog eat dog" world. I know that most people don't care for such sentimental stuff. But I mean it. The Lord who loved us beyond measure, who pities us as a father does his children, this God who willingly gave his all — he invites us to reflect his tender mercy to others. This compassion must be reflected in the homes, workplaces and neighborhoods of Christians.

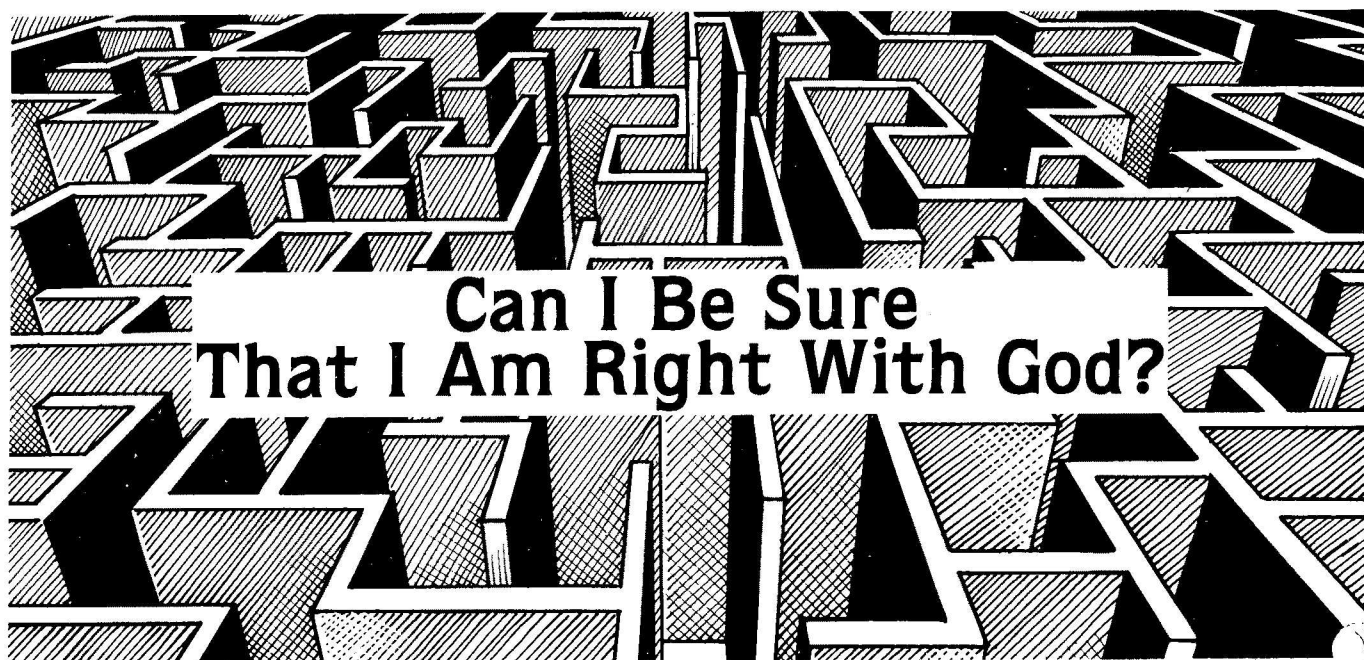
Let me conclude with an illustration from the life of the great American baseball hero, Babe Ruth.

Babe Ruth had hit 714 home runs during his baseball career and was playing one of his last full major league games. It was the Braves versus the Reds in Cincinnati. But the great Ruth was no longer as agile as he had once been. He fumbled the ball and threw badly, and in one inning alone his errors were responsible for most of the five runs scored by Cincinnati.

As the Babe walked off the field after the third out and headed toward the dugout, a crescendo of yelling and booing reached his ears. Just then a boy jumped over the railing onto the playing field. With tears streaming down his face, he threw his arms around the legs of his hero.

Ruth didn't hesitate for one second. He picked up the boy, hugged him, and set him down on his feet, patting his head gently. The noise from the stands came to an abrupt halt. Suddenly there was no more booing. In fact, hush fell over the entire park. In those brief moments, the fans saw two heroes: Ruth, who in spite of his dismal day on the field could still care about a little boy; and the small lad, who cared about the feelings of another human being. Both had melted the hearts of the crowd (Ted W. Engstrom, *The Pursuit of Excellence*, pp. 66, 67.)

After all, didn't Jesus say that belonging to the Kingdom of God was like being a child? It's time we kingdom citizens were prepared to go into public, with tears in our eyes, because of the love in our hearts, and throw our arms around the "outcasts." If Christ's voice is to be heard, we must stop yelling, and start crying. □



Can I Be Sure That I Am Right With God?

Desmond Ford

How can we be right with God? The answer to this question is worth more than knowing how to make a fortune. What cause for rejoicing and gratitude! What a spring of energy! What strength in trouble and courage in defeat to know one is right with God! When we speak of God, we're speaking of him in whom we live and move and have our being. He's the author of life, the preserver of life and our judge. To know we are right with him is worth more than all other knowledge in the world.

Presumptuous?

Some people say, "But that's a bit presumptuous, isn't it?" It is not presumptuous, it's common sense. Suppose you meet me and there's a lady with me and you say, "Is this lady your wife?" and my answer is, "Well, I'm not sure, but I hope so." You would think me somewhat strange. Or, if you pointed to one of my children and said, "Is this your child?" and I said, "Well, I'm not sure, but I hope so." That would be more than strange. Or suppose there was a car outside my house and you said, "Is this your car?" and I replied, "I'm not sure." You would surely think that I am more than unusual.

The salvation one hopes one has but isn't sure will do no more good than the money one hopes one has and isn't sure. Paul did not say, "I hope I know in Whom I have believed." Job did not say "I hope my Redeemer liveth." Paul said "I know in Whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him unto that day." Job said "I know that my Redeemer liveth and He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth....Whom my eyes shall behold and not another."

The Testimony of John

Yes, we may know how we stand with God. In fact there's one whole book of the Bible devoted to it — the first epistle of John. The Greek word for "know" occurs in this epistle forty times. Consider the following typical passages from this book, because if

you read it through you can answer for yourself the question whether you have eternal life right now, whether God has accepted you, whether all your past guilt has gone.

And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says "I know him" but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps his word, in him truly love for God is perfected (1 Jn 2:3-5) We know that any one born of God does not sin, but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, to know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. (1 Jn 5:18-20)

Did you notice? "We know," and "we know," and "we know." But don't misunderstand that verse which says, "We know that anyone born of God doesn't commit sin." The writer is speaking about presumptuous, willful sinning, not the slips, the failures which we hate and detest and fight against. The same epistle says "If any man sin we have an Advocate" (1 Jn 2:1), and "the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin" (1 Jn 1:8), and "if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn 1:9).

So you must not let your assurance be shaken by your failures and mistakes. To be human is to err but the Christian hates to err. He hates sin and fights it and flees from it. But even when a Christian does his best, he still must pray the Lord's prayer "Forgive us our trespasses."

In 1 John 5:13 it says: "I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life."

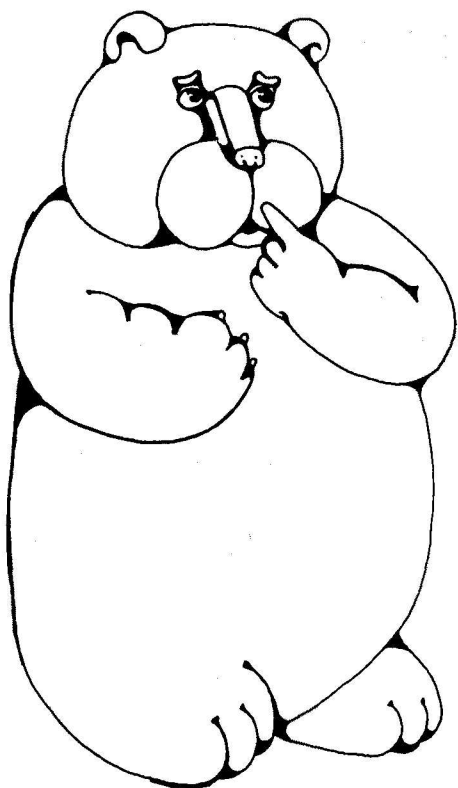
Don't think that eternal life is something future. Eternal life is ours the moment we believe and for as long as we believe. It refers to a quality of existence as well as to its duration. The New Testament certainly teaches that we can have assurance. "We **know** we have passed from death unto life," "We **know** we have eternal life," "we **know** we are of God."

In ancient Israel the priests had to know their



GLADLY, THE CROSS-EYED BEAR

Romans 3:25
Gillian Ford



A little girl asked her Mommy, "Can we sing that hymn about the teddy for worship?"

Her Mommy was mystified. "The hymn about the teddy?" she asked. "Which one is that?"

"You know, Mommy, 'Gladly, the cross-eyed bear.'"

The real name of the song was "*Gladly the Cross I'd Bear*." But don't laugh! There's a lot of religion in a teddy.

Teddies stand for safety and security. They're cuddly. They make you feel good. And you're never too old for one. I've got one myself and it has two babies. I also have a green stuffed crocodile, a white seal, a kangaroo, two kissing mice, and a panda. I keep giving my stuffed toys away from time to time, but they seem to multiply in the cupboard. Somehow I keep getting more.

But back to teddies. We ought to give them some due praise. How often they have been sat on or squashed in the line of duty, thrown out of bed when someone's having a tantrum, neglected when some other, flashier toy comes along. How loyal and dependable they are.

At school when people leaned against us by accident, we'd say, "I'm not a P.L.P" (P.L.P. being a public leaning post). Teddies would never say that if they could speak. They welcome being leaned on.

Jesus is a bit like a teddy. He's safe. He makes you feel secure. Yes, he's cuddly. He's even a P.L.P. You may know the hymn,

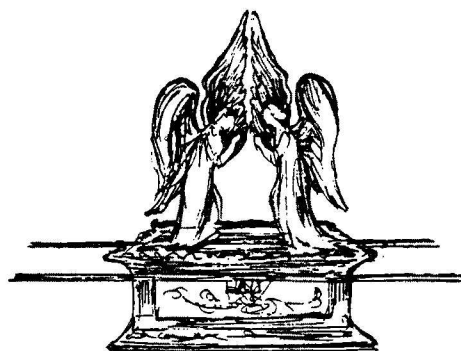
Leaning, Leaning, Leaning on the Everlasting Arms. Then think of the beloved apostle, John, who leaned on Jesus' breast before his death. There's another hymn called *Flee As A Bird*, which says, "He on his bosom will bear you, O thou who art weary of sin." Then there's another song, *Safe in the Arms of Jesus, Safe on His Gentle Breast.* Yet another hymn called *There Were Ninety and Nine* comes from Luke 15:3-7, where Jesus tells the story of himself, the shepherd seeking the one lost sheep out of a hundred. Verse 5 says, "And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulder, rejoicing."

Not only can you lean on Jesus' arms, his breast, and his shoulders, you can also sit on his lap. How do I know? We said you could sit on teddies but the lumps are usually very uncomfortable. That's not true of Jesus because he's called our "mercy seat" and he's very comfortable.

We talked last month about that hard word "pro-pishy-ayshun." Let's hear you all say it. It was found in Romans 3:25: "[Jesus] whom God put forth as a propitiation, to be received by faith." You can lose all fear of that word when you realize that the Greek word for propitiation means "mercy seat."

But what's a mercy seat? Well, in the Old Testament, in the temple behind the second curtain, was a section that nobody could enter lest they died. Nobody, that is, except one man, the high priest. Even he could only go in once a year and he had to take animal blood with him to cover his sins or he would die. Inside that curtain was the Most Holy Place and it housed the ark of God which contained the law of ten commandments.

The ark had a gold top which covered the ten commandments and on it were two burning angels. This gold top was called the mercy seat. Above the mercy seat was the



Shekinah, a glorious light which was the presence of God on the earth. You see God was in this place. It was very holy and very sacred. When the high priest took the blood in there, he poured it over the mercy seat.

This probably seems a strange ceremony to you but what it meant was this. The blood had no value in itself, but it represented the blood of Jesus that would be shed for our sins when he died on the cross. It was symbolically poured on the mercy seat, over the law, to show that Jesus' death would pay for our sins against the law, so that we need not die.

When Jesus died on the cross, the Bible tells us in Luke 23:45 that the veil or the curtain in the temple that covered the Most Holy Place, was torn in two. The Book of Hebrews tells us what that meant. For many, many years the presence of God was hidden behind that second curtain. Now the curtain was torn down. For the priests it showed that God had departed from the temple, but for Christians it teaches that the way to the heart of God is now open. There are no barriers. Because of Jesus the barrier of sin between us and God has gone. That is why Romans calls him our propitiation (mercy seat).

Accepting Jesus is really very simple. Are you sad or lonely or hurting or do you just long for him? In your mind just crawl up into Jesus' lap like onto mommy or daddy's. Say, "Jesus, please be my mercy-seat." It's a very safe place to be.

Some men who commit murder may end up in the electric chair. That always means death. But to end up in the mercy seat, boys and girls, is a different matter. It always means life. Do you want to live forever? Go to Jesus, our mercy seat.

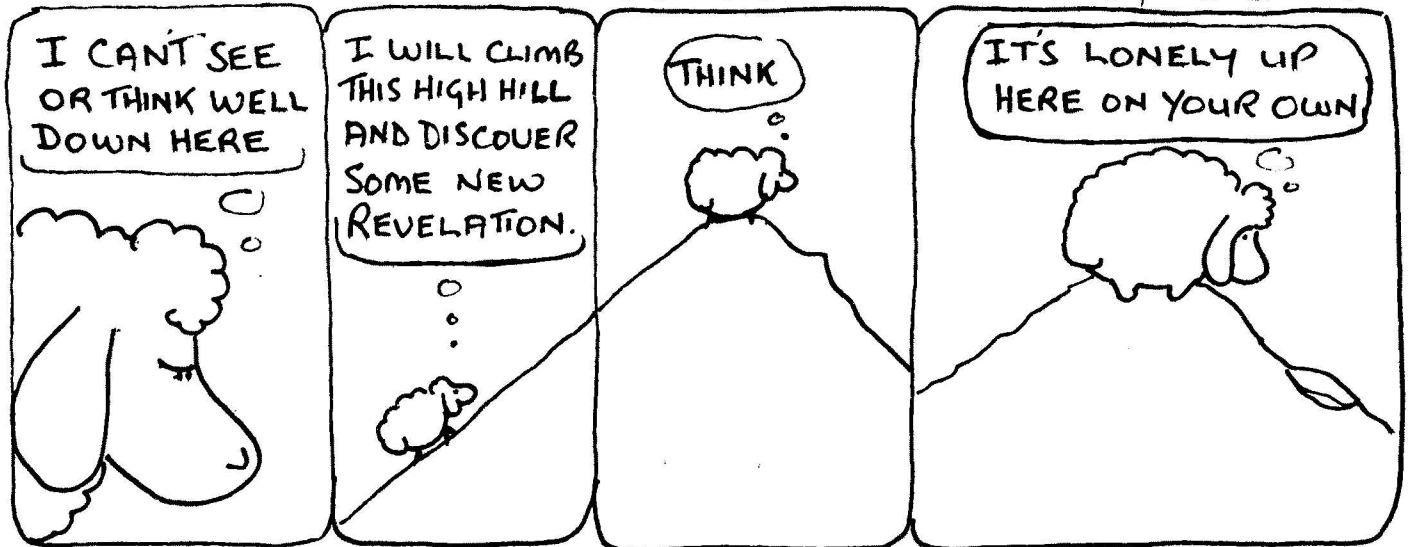
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Editor: Gillian Ford

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JAKE'S CHOICE



Part Two (of two installments)

Written by
Linda Driscoll

[In the first installment of this story, Jake's father has been very concerned about the type of company that Jake has been keeping at school. While Jake hasn't actually been in serious trouble, he has done some things of which he is not proud. He feels accepted by the group of friends he has made, and they give him a great sense of freedom. Jake's father has been having a lot of trouble with a hawk that keeps stealing his chickens despite all the ruses he thinks up and he can't help noticing the similarity of expression between Jake and the hawk — their scowling eyebrows, the look of scorn and defiance. Finally Jake's father captures the hawk in a rabbit trap. Jake feels sorry for the beautiful bird, and wonders whether his father will shoot it.]

The hawk had not struggled or called. It seemed to take no notice of its surroundings, but stared in scorn and defiance, with its "eyebrows" scowling.

"Maybe we could teach him a lesson, so he associates us with danger and steers clear of our place." Jake had pleaded with his dad. "Let's keep him cooped up for a while to enforce it. Then we can let him go, and he won't come back!" His father agreed and Jake had won a reprieve for the hawk with the proud spirit.

The hawk was kept in a small, closed-in part of the veranda for a week. They fed it on bits of raw meat, and a few mice they had taken from the cat when it was hunting in the barn. The hawk had even allowed Jake to feed it with his fingers and stroke its head. Its claws remained closed on the perch and Jake never felt the sharpness of its beak. It never flew madly around the room, as a trapped smaller bird would have, but its yellow eyes never lost their defiance or stoical stare.

Jake had been sad to lose the bird at the end of the week, but the same pity that wanted the hawk to live, wanted it to be free

4

too. So one morning they had let it go. He had opened his gloved fist, expecting the hawk to take madly to the sky, but it had sat on his hand, watching him for several moments before leisurely spreading its wings and taking off. They had not seen it again, and that was almost two weeks ago.

The jangling telephone made Jake jump out of his reverie. A few moments later his mother came out onto the deck.

"Jake. It's Pete," she said, her eyes showing the concern Jake knew she felt about his friendship with Pete and the others.

"It's okay, Mom. It really is." He gave her a hug and went in to the phone.

It was not easy to put Pete off. He and the other boys were at a loose end and wanted Jake to join them in town. In the end, he persuaded them to come out to the farm to ride around the bike track his dad had made. They spent the afternoon trying out and improving some of the jumps, and they even talked about forming a club. When the action slowed down, they sat on their bikes in a group. Jake knew boredom was settling in, but did not know how to avoid what he knew was coming.

"Let's go and irritate old man Cooper," Pete suggested. The other boys burst into enthusiastic agreement and stood up to go. Mr. Cooper, a crabby old pensioner, had a

standing feud with the group over their riding through his property. He had called the police the last time they had sped through.

"Count me out. I'll see you later," Jake heard himself say. Pete turned and looked straight at him.

"What's the matter? Chicken, or something?"

Maybe more like a hawk, thought Jake. He turned to face Pete squarely and looked him full in the eyes.

"You can call me what you like. It won't change the fact that I don't think Cooper deserves that kind of treatment, so I'm not coming."

Pete stared at Jake for a few seconds, then shrugged and turned around. "Suit yourself."

The other boys turned and followed Pete but as they closed the gate at the road, they turned and waved.

"See you at school, Jake." "See you tomorrow." "Bye."

Jake watched them with mixed emotions as they disappeared down the road. Well, the friendship seems to have survived that, he supposed.

A sharp call made him look up, just in time to see a hawk skimming across the treetops over the creek. Jake looked after it thoughtfully for a moment, then rode back up the track towards the house.

ANIMAL FARM

1. Who was it who made a riddle out of bees in a lion's tummy?
2. Who was it who hit his donkey for seeing an angel?
3. On account of whose bald head did two bears chase forty-two boys?
4. Which animal in four different colors represents plagues in the book of Revelation? What are the colors or shades of these animals?
5. Who sent for an ass and her colt to be a king's chariot?
6. Who got bitten by a deadly snake and didn't die?

Find the answers in the Bible chapters below:

1. Judges 14. _____
2. Numbers 22. _____
3. 2 Kings 2. _____
4. Revelation 6 _____ 1. _____ 2. _____
3. _____ 4. _____
5. Matthew 21. _____
6. Acts 28. _____

pedigree or they could not be priests. And the soldiers had to know their pedigree or they couldn't go to war. Read about it in Nehemiah 7:61,64 and Numbers 1:18-20. And today we cannot be the priests and soldiers of Christ unless we know that we have been born again and that God is our Father.

If you've laid hold of Jesus as your savior, you have eternal life and know it. In the Gospel of John every chapter except two speaks of believing. The word "know" which in the epistle of John is found forty times in its Greek forms, occurs approximately seventy times in the Gospel of John. Believing in Christ and knowing our salvation go together. Let me read you one or two verses from the gospel of John:

Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he hath sent" (Jn 6:28,29).

Now notice verse 40:

For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Believing — What It Is and Isn't

The question we must ask now is, "What is this believing?" If he that believes has eternal life, what is this believing? The Jews asked for a work of God to do and Jesus said, "This is the work, that you believe." It is vital because the same book says, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him (Jn 3:36). Also, "I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins unless you believe that I am he" (Jn 8:24).

What is this believing? One preacher says, "It means coming to Christ." What does that mean? Am I to sit on nettles all the time because the preacher doesn't tell me how to come to Christ? I can't fly to Christ, I can't walk on my feet to him. I come to Christ with my mind and my heart. I come to Christ by believing what he says.

The word "belief" comes from two old words "by live" or "live by." I believe what I live by. It is sometimes made too easy. It is sometimes made too hard. But if we see Jesus, that seeing brings believing, creates it.

Let us talk about what it is not. Believing is not repenting. We can't even repent of ourselves. The Bible calls repentance a gift. We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience, than we can be pardoned without Christ. We can no more repent perfectly than we can live perfectly. But the cross is the wonder-working rod that can bring water out of the rock, repentance from our hard hearts. Repentance does not make us see Christ but to see Christ makes us repent. That's what it says in Acts: "God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31). "Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" (Rom 2:4).

The gospel is the opposite of legalism. Legalism says, "If you are good, God will love you." The gospel says "Though you are not good, God loves you. Believe it and he will make you good." We're not to look for holiness in order to be accepted of God. We are to accept our acceptance and that will bring holiness.

So faith isn't repenting and faith isn't reforming either. One might just as well try to leap over the moon

as serve God in the flesh. Whatever is not of faith is sin. Any attempts to reform oneself before one has accepted one's acceptance is sin. The Episcopalian Church has thirty Articles in its famous Creed and one of them says this:

Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit are not pleasant to God forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace. Rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin.

Don't think that eternal life is something future. Eternal life is ours the moment we believe and for as long as we believe.

In other words, all our attempts to reform are so many splendid sins unless we believe what God has said about his love for us and Christ's death for us. No one is ever saved till they give up trying to save themselves. God is the author of life, one can't give it to oneself. It is like someone drowning. He has to give up his efforts, give himself up to the savior who has gone out to help him. We have to give ourselves up to Christ. Faith isn't reforming. It isn't trying, either.

Faith and Its Accomplishments

Faith is trusting and trusting is reposing in the arms of Jesus, realizing that he has done what we could never do, believing that as we're not saved by our good works, neither are we lost by our bad works. Yes, we are saved by works, but not our own. We're saved by Christ's works. The Bible says the gift of God is eternal life. Don't try and buy it, it's a gift.

Read the last verses of Romans 5. Five times there we are told that righteousness is a gift. That shouldn't surprise us. The best things are free. What do you pay for a ray of sunshine? A drop of water? The sight of green grass and blue hills? A smile from a friend? The embrace of a spouse? Love that is bought is prostitution. God is not in that business.

So if you see your sinfulness, don't wait to make yourself better. How many people that think they are not good enough to come to Christ! How foolish to think that we can become better by our own efforts! The Bible asks the question, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? So can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil." There's help for us only in God. We mustn't wait for stronger persuasion, for better opportunities, or holier tempers. We can do nothing for ourselves. We must come to Christ just as we are. That's how the lepers came to him, that's how the blind men came to him. Just as they were.

He won't leave us as we are. The promise of Scripture is he'll cause us to keep his statutes, he'll cause us to walk in his way, he'll write his law in our hearts and our minds and we'll love to run in the way of his commandments. We'll walk at liberty because we keep his precepts. The righteousness of the law will be fulfilled in us who walk no longer after the flesh but after the Spirit. Sin will not have dominion over us because we've learned that we're not under the law as a method of salvation, we're under grace. And once we're under grace, sin loses its charms.

It's finished, yes, indeed
Finished every jot
Sinner, this is all you need
Tell me, is it not?

The Scripture says:

"And to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteous" (Rom 4:5) "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8)

So faith, trust or belief, is not repenting, it is not reforming, it is not trying and it is not feeling. Too many confuse faith and feeling. They are different. You can't help your feelings. If we could help our feelings, we'd never have a headache, we'd never feel ill, we'd never have a toothache. The Bible doesn't say, "He that feeleth" or "He that feeleth and believeth" hath everlasting life. Faith is not feeling.

Dwight L. Moody had trouble with one lady when trying to get this across. At last he said to her, "Madam, what was it that saved Noah, his feelings or the ark?" And she saw it. Christ is our Ark. The storms of the wrath of God have beaten upon him but if we're in him, we're safe and we'll be lifted up to the mountaintops of heaven and rest in him there.

Look to Jesus, weary one, look and live
Look at what the Lord has done, look and live
Though unworthy, vile, unclean, look and live
Look away from self and sin, look and live.

Jesus the Center of Faith

This faith that saves us is not faith in faith. Looking at our faith is like a man plucking his eye out to see whether it is in good shape. We're not to look to self, we're not to look to anything that we have. It's not faith itself but faith in Christ. Faith is the hand that takes him. It's Christ who is our life and our righteousness.

Hudson Taylor once said, "Not a striving to have faith but a looking off to the Faithful One is all we need." Do you see it? Christ received is holiness begun, Christ cherished is holiness advancing, Christ counted upon as never absent would be holiness complete.

To believe means to put God back into the center of one's thinking.

We don't mean by faith, just a mental "yes" or an "amen" to a set of doctrines, because the Scripture says, "The devils believe and tremble." They are certainly not right with God. What then is faith? Faith is a right relationship to a person, not to a creed. The heart of Christianity is not a set of beliefs, it is Jesus Christ the Son of God, our Substitute, our Surety, our Representative. When we receive Christ, we receive righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, redemption. Everything we need is in him.

We are not to seek for purity. When we receive the Pure One, Christ, purity will come. We are not to seek for patience, we don't have any. We are to receive the Patient One and then patience will come. We are not to seek for endurance, we don't have any. We are to seek for the One who endured in our stead. So faith is a relationship to a person. It has three ingredients: knowledge, assent, commitment. Our Lord said, "And this is eternal life, that they know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou has sent" (Jn 17:3).

We need to know about Christ, who he is, what he's done, what he's doing. And that knowledge becomes a

part of faith. We need to know that we are sinners, that we've broken his law, that none of us has any claims on God, that we've lived selfish lives, that we're judgment-bound. And then, seeing the disease, we look to the Great Physician and we assent to what he says about our case. That's our second point — assenting. Assent needs to become commitment. Even the devils assent that God is.

The Test of True Faith

I like the old, old story about commitment that's been told a thousand times by evangelists concerning Blondin taking a wheelbarrow across a tightrope over Niagara Falls and then asking the crowd did they believe he could put a man in there and safely take him across. There was a young minister who said, "Yes, Blondin, I believe. I think you could." Blondin said, "Get in the wheelbarrow." But the minister disappeared. He wouldn't commit himself. We have to get into the wheelbarrow with Jesus Christ. We commit ourselves to him. If we believe in a doctor as a doctor, we'll go to him if we need a doctor. If we believe in a banker as a banker, we'll go to him if we need a banker. If we believe in the Savior as a savior, we'll go to him because we all need him.

So faith has knowledge, assent and commitment. It has been illustrated so often in Scripture. When the Israelites took the hyssop, which was just a weed outside their houses, and dipped it in the blood and applied it to the lintels and doorposts, that was faith. When the bitten Israelites looked at the serpent on the bannerstaff, that was faith.

Adam and Eve in the beginning took of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and died spiritually. When Jesus came as the second Adam, he said, "Take, eat." And the taking of the emblems in the Lord's supper is symbolic of what faith is all about. It is receiving Jesus. "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth," says Scripture.

Man lost life by his unbelief. We regain life by believing. We've got to dance Adam's dance backwards. We have to repent of our unbelief, of Adam's unbelief, in order that we might live and live forever. To believe means to put God back into the center of one's thinking.

The greatest philosophical problem of our day is that of the one and the many. Man's search is for a single ordering principle that will bring unity to the manifold phenomena of life's experience. The answer to the philosophical problem of the one and the many is that God is the One and spiritual sanity comes when we recognize that. It was Archibald McLeish who said, "The sickness of our day is the sickness of disorder, multifarious phenomena, undisciplined, unorganized, uncomposed. Our desperate need is to impose upon the world of chaotic phenomena an order of understanding."

That understanding only comes through the gospel. The human mind cannot rest in a world uninterpreted. Only in Christ is truth, peace and righteousness found. You can know today that you have eternal life for whosoever will may come and all manner of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven unto those that come. For Christ has promised, "He that cometh I will in no-wise cast out." Come today, receive, believe and live eternally. □

Q. I have four young children and many times I find them so frustrating, I shout at them. I hate doing this but do not seem able to stop it. I used to pray that God would help me overcome this, but did not seem to shout any less and then I would feel mad with God for not helping me. In the end I gave up praying about it and decided that shouting was part of me and there was nothing I could do about it. Can you help me?

A. Don't give up. To turn back means certain loss. To venture forward means a battle but success is ultimately assured. Whatever you choose to think upon, to believe, determines the outcome.

Any parent with four young children must be continually wearied out. And when tired it is almost impossible to think positively and optimistically. May I suggest that one of your greatest needs is sheer physical vitality — only to be gained by careful planning. Is there some way you can plan to get more rest — and enough physical exercise to balance the strain on your nerves? Prayer alone is not enough — all the laws of nature must be obeyed. Shouting is usually the result of overweariness.

Patience is the fruit of long nervous strain. Is there not somebody who could care for the children part of the day so you could rest or venture out without the responsibility of them for an hour or two?

Sometimes very simple changes can change everything else. You must not give up, for four little lives are dependent on you. But you need your nervous "batteries" recharged. Think and plan about that and life will change. Read often the promises of God such as Romans 8:28-39. You must believe either God or your own troubled heart. The second is not a safe guide. Try listening to gospel tapes as you work in the kitchen — whatever gets your attention ultimately gets you.

— Desmond Ford

Q. I often wonder about some of the Psalms in the Old Testament. Do you really think that Psalm 137:8,9 and Psalm 109:6-15 are inspired by the spirit of God?

A. Psalm 137:8,9 reads as follows: "O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us — he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks." It does seem a rather bad ending to a Psalm that has a poignant and sensitive beginning. One commentator has said "The clash of emotions expressed in this psalm reveal human nature at its best and at its worst" (W.O.E. Oesterly, *The Psalms*, p. 548). The psalm which begins so nobly seems to end so brutally.

We need to remember that God was not the only one involved in the writing of Scripture. God has spoken, but in the form of our earthly language. Inspiration does not put a prophet's faculties to sleep. What God has revealed is mediated to us through the organs of the prophet's personality, who to a certain degree was influenced by his own times and culture. This point of course must not be pressed too far for one of the unique things about a prophet was that aspects of his life and teaching transcended his particular culture. He was ahead of his times in many respects.

The first thing to realize is that there are not many of these "imprecatory psalms." One writer has estimated that there are eighteen such Psalms with a total of 368 verses of which only sixty-five include anything that appears to call down a curse on someone. The same writer states that it is "more true to the facts of the case to speak of 'imprecation in the psalms' than of 'imprecatory psalms'" (Chalmers Martin, *Classical Evangelical Essays*, p. 113, ed. by W.C. Kaiser, "Imprecations In The Psalms"). The Psalms are prayers to God in the form of lyric poems and one

finds it difficult to know how any child of God could utter such statements.

The problem is compounded when we realize that the author of the Psalms is capable of a different attitude. Consider Psalm 35:12: "They repay me evil for good and leave my soul forlorn. Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting. When my prayers returned to me unanswered, I went about mourning as though for my friend or brother. I bowed my head in grief as though weeping for my mother."

What can be said in answer to this vexing question? First, before we become too critical of Old Testament standards of morality we need to remember that Old Testament ethics represent a quantum jump ahead ethically over other existing law codes. (See *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, by J.B. Pritchard, Princeton: University Press pp. 162, 175, etc.).

Second, it must be kept in mind that the Psalms are oriental poetry and abound in hyperbole. The dictionary defines hyperbole as "exaggeration for effect, not meant to be taken literally."

Third, many commentators understand the imprecations as expressions of the longing of an Old Testament saint for the vindication of God's righteousness (see Ps 7:9ff). They understand these exaggerated statements as expressions of zeal for God and God's kingdom. They are a witness to the need and prospect of divine judgment, rather than examples of personal spite. Fourth, it must be remembered that even the New Testament prophet can say: "If anyone does not love the Lord — a curse be on him. Come, O Lord!" (1 Cor 16:22).

One of our problems today is that we tend to have soft, sentimental conceptions of love. There is something terribly wrong with a Christian who does not abhor wickedness. — Noel Mason

I must confess that when I first read the poetic account of the battle of Beth-Horon I found it difficult to believe that God stopped the rotation of the earth while Joshua battled with the Amorites. The verses that have aroused serious discussion and even recriminations are found in Joshua 10:12-14.

Even with my very limited understanding of physics and astronomy I knew that if these verses were interpreted literally it would imply a miracle of staggering, stupendous proportions. I never for a moment doubted the omnipotence of God. The question was not **could** God do such a thing, but rather, **would** God do it?

It appears that many conservative Christians feel that a strict exegesis of Joshua 10:12-14 does not require one to believe that God miraculously held our solar system in obedience while Joshua fought with the Amorites. Over the years conservative Christian scholars have developed a number of alternatives. While not all of these alternative interpretations have stood the test of critical investigation some are still accepted by evangelical scholars today.

In a recent book **Classical Evangelical Essays** Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. has collected and published fourteen essays in Old Testament interpretation which he feels represent some of "the finest moments in Old Testament scholarship" (p. 7). In one of the essays, "**Understanding 'The Sun Stood Still'**" Robert Dick Wilson suggests that Joshua 10:12-14 should be translated as follows: "Be **eclipsed**, O sun, in Gibeon, And thou moon in the valley of Ajalon! And the sun was **eclipsed** and the moon turned back, while the nation was avenged on its enemies. Is it not written upon the book of Jashar? And the sun **stayed** in the half of the heavens, and set not hastily as when a day is done. And there never was a day like that day before or since,

in respect to Jehovah's hearing the voice of a man" (p. 64).

Why "eclipsed"? The root of the verbs occurring in Joshua 10:12,13 suggest that the words used in Joshua's account are technical astronomical words for their Babylonian counterparts, and actually mean "to darken."

What gives Wilson's viewpoint further appeal is the fact the Herodotus tells of an eclipse of the sun which occurred during a battle between the Lydians and the Medes that scared both of the combatants so much that they stopped fighting and made an immediate peace.

Other scholars have not been satisfied with Wilson's interpretation. "The interpretation 'cease from shining' is very questionable, and the latter half of the verse, 'The moon **stayed**,' showed that such was not intended" writes John Bright (**Interpreter's Bible Commentary**, Vol. 2, p. 605). The authors of Joshua in the Anchor Bible Commentary, Robert G. Boling and Ernest G. Wright state that the most serious problem with such astronomical explanations (eclipses, refraction of the sun's rays, etc.) is the tension which remains with the meteorological phenomena in verse 11, i.e. the hail storm. (Vol. 6, p. 283). These authors suggest a different interpretation based on a number of historical and literary insights. Consider the following ideas drawn from the Anchor Bible Commentary on Joshua, and a number of other sources. First, the battle account is preserved in both a **poetic** and **prosaic** form. The prosaic account is found in verses 9-11 with the poetic following in 12-14. The poetic account is obviously a different account of the battle for the enemy is already defeated in verse 10-11. Secondly, apart from the extraordinary convergence of the hailstorm and the battle, the "miraculous" elements occur in the poetic account of the battle. Third, it has been argued that the

worship of the sun and the moon is reflected in the names Beth-Horon and Aijalon. Fourth, comparison with Assyrian astronomical texts, where the simultaneous appearance in the sky of the sun and the moon can mean a good omen throws some light on the meaning of the poem. With this point in mind scholars argue that the first part of the poem resembles a prayer or incantation that the two great luminaries will stand in opposition over Gibeon and Aijalon (i.e. east and west) on a day favorable to Israel. Fifth, it is clear from the poem that the chief deities of the Amorites are considered collaborators with Israel and her God. The sun and the moon are in Yahweh's entourage.

The sun and the moon may have been in the sky as Joshua went out to battle. Undeterred by what may have been interpreted by the Amorites as a good omen, Joshua goes into battle and with the help of the hailstorm wins a decisive victory. The writer of Joshua then pictures the leader of Israel poetically proclaiming the superiority of the God of Israel over the deities of the Amorites. The sun and the moon are subordinate to Yahweh.

It would seem to me that this poetic version of the victory of Joshua is in some respects like the song of Deborah. It is stated there that the stars fought against Sisera (Judges 5:20)! No one would think of interpreting this passage in a literal way. Nor, it would seem to me, should we interpret Joshua 10:12,13 literally.

Whatever way we may interpret the poem the lesson is the same. The God of Israel is superior to the deities of its enemies and when necessary he can use natural phenomena to achieve his ultimate goals. At least that is the way I see it. Can you see it that way too? □

TAPE of the MONTH

Our Tape of the Month for March has on it a sermon by Calvin Edwards entitled, "The Good Lord keeps Bad Company." The other side features Dr Ford with, "The Heart of the Matter."

Remember, any donation of \$25.00 in any one month will automatically attract a complimentary T of M from GNU to the donor. Otherwise Tapes of the Month can be ordered individually at \$4.00 each or \$48.00 for twelve months supply.

Donations

We gratefully acknowledge the receipt of many anonymous gifts. One of these was \$94.00 received during the month of February.

New Office

Yes. The GNU office for Australia and New Zealand is no longer in Melbourne. Note the new address: PO Box 1603 Hornsby Northgate NSW 2077

Our premises are small but well appointed and easily suited for the kind of work we anticipate doing. Don't forget GNU is a ministry. That means that we are here to serve you. Write to us with your enquiry or request. We are prepared to travel widely in order to meet your needs. Take advantage of us.

Australian Seminars

The Church of Christ in Wangaratta - North East Victoria - was the starting place for the 1984 GNU Seminars. Carl Claydon, the host Pastor, heartily welcomed Dr Ford and Ron Allen to his friendly church. Dr Ford gave a memorable exposition of John 3:16.

Wangaratta was an earnest of even more wonderful things. On Saturday February 18 the Salvation Army Citadel at Camberwell, Victoria, was filled with glad expectancy as visiting GNU ministers, Dr Ford and Calvin Edwards, joined with Ron Allen to present the first of three Capital city seminars. It was a splendid occasion. The love of God was spoken of from the pulpit and seen in the fellowship. The following weekend found the GNU team at Macquarie University in

Sydney where a large crowd of eager people rejoiced together in the wonderful Good News of God.

The city of Brisbane was the venue for the last of the meetings. Several hundred people gathered to hear five encouraging addresses on the Love of God. A noteworthy feature of all the meetings was the earnestness of those in attendance. All present were aware of a great spirit of love and a deep and calm resolve to get on with the business of preaching and teaching the word of God.

Dr Ford's itinerary was an extremely busy one. Aside from the Seminars in which he took part he kept many other speaking appointments. Among Dr Ford's audiences were these: Golden Square Uniting Church, Bendigo Vic. Adelaide Christian Fellowship, Adelaide SA. Seventh Day Baptist Church, Regents Park NSW. Wattle Grove Christian Fellowship, Perth WA. Palm Beach Baptist Church, Palm Beach Qld. Capricornia Institute of Advance Education, Rockhampton Qld.

The Board and staff of GNU Australia wish to thank Dr Ford and Calvin Edwards for their recent ministry in Australia and wish them well as they return to their responsibilities in the USA.

Ford Interviews

During his recent Australian tour Dr Ford was interviewed twice by the Rev. Gordon Moyes, Director of the Wesley Centre in Sydney. The first of these interviews was broadcast live on Gordon's Sunday night program on Radio 2KY. The second interview was for the popular Sunday morning telecast on Channel 9, TURN ROUND AUSTRALIA with Gordon Moyes. This program goes to air at 8.30 am on Sunday March 25.

New Tape Prices

Please note these new pricing arrangements for GNU Cassette tapes.

Audio Cassettes: \$4.00 each.
Videos: \$5.00 rental fee + \$15.00 refundable deposit.
\$35.00 Sale price.

Tape of the Month Club \$48.00 for 12 months.

GNU Board

During the month of February the first meeting of the Australian GNU Board of Directors took place. The Board consists of seven persons from three States. Among the decisions taken at the meeting were these:

RESOLVED to hire a secretary to assist the director in Australia. This resolution has now been realised. Our secretary will have commenced work with us as we go to press.

RESOLVED that one of the major media for GNU ministries be the use of Radio. Research is now under way with a view to introducing at the earliest possible time Dr Ford's new 15 minute broadcasts for wide distribution to Radio Stations. Some attention is also being given to the possibility of broadcasting even shorter Gospel messages. Say 5 minutes or even less.

RESOLVED that a feasibility study be conducted re the acquisition of a computer which would be compatible with the type used in the GNU American office.

The new board here in Australia is excited and confident that GNU will grow and become an efficient and well appreciated Gospel witnessing agency in this country. Calvin Edwards - the GNU President from North America - was present at the meeting and expressed his pleasure at the high level of commitment and professional competence present in the board.

12

Rest in Jesus

Sirs:

Until I received GNU bulletins my spiritual life was an almost hopeless struggle and continual failure. I thank God for the Gospel and restfulness in Jesus.

Please continue to send me GNU bulletins. I'll be extremely grateful if in the future they could be sent by airmail. Surface mail is too slow.

Kindly send me as many of Pastor Ford's gospel tapes from his inspiring radio broadcasts. I shall be pleased to receive tapes suitable for nonchurchgoers, those who have given up and those of limited religious knowledge and background.

I know this is a very tall order but I have the assurance that you understand and will supply within your capabilities. God is pleased with your ministry and will continue to bless. God's richest blessing to your entire staff.

Jessima Linda Samuel
Trinidad. West Indies.

Lost for Words

Sirs:

Thankyou again. Especially for staying power. We thank God every time we study our Bibles - without prejudice and with freedom to accept simple, plain Gospel truth - that you all had courage to stand up and be counted. Enclosed please find tangible evidence of our appreciation. We thank God every day for his great plan of Salvation through the Lord Jesus. The enormity (for want of a better word, which I can't find at the moment) of his love and compassion is beyond my comprehension.

Frances Were
Eden Hills SA.

In Tune

Sirs:

I found the article by Smuts van Rooyen "When Christians face decisions" in last months magazine, excellent. The clarity of his writing and the manner in which he expressed his ideas is indicative of a real gift.

We find ourselves in tune with the confession of faith in the December issue. However my only criticism relates to the use of language. Such a confession should use direct and simple language. For example the word "casuistic" in paragraph two. This word could in fact be deleted and still not detract from the intended meaning.

R. Jones
Burgengary Qld.

Not Doing Our Job?

Sirs:

While I do appreciate some of the articles in your GNU magazine, it appears to me that GNU is not doing what it claims to be doing, and that is, "making the word of God relevant and meaningful in our contemporary world." (Nov 1 Edition 1983.)

Your magazine articles, for example, are full of theological concepts and religious terminology that would only be "relevant and meaningful" to the converted, or at least to those with a religious orientation. Most of the letters you publish are from Christian readers who themselves outline their responses in conservative and wordy religious language.

I have attended some of your seminars, and they would not be meaningful to a person who has a secular western outlook, and who is not thinking in theological terms. The titles of your seminars and

tapes, and indeed your radio programs, also display what appears to be an inherent problem and would not be attractive, for the most part, to a thinking secularist, particularly one with a professional or academic background.

If I may make a constructive criticism then it is this - I believe you are making the same mistake that many other evangelical groups are making. That is, you are stating in theological terms that "Jesus is the answer" without first stating in secular (or at least understandable) terms, what the question is. In short you are preaching to the converted and while this may be helpful to the converted (or almost converted) it certainly is not fulfilling your aim of relevance "to the contemporary world." It leaves you open the danger and indeed the charge of becoming just another evangelical huddle of self interest.

Working in a university environment as a Christian, I find it useful to adopt Francis Schaeffer's "presuppositional apologetics" approach which essentially probes the other persons philosophical position or world view, with sensitivity, while avoiding religious language. Schaeffer says that if he has 30 minutes with a non-Christian, he spends 25 minutes discussing his world view and that last 5 minutes his Christian view, without the cliches. It may be that GNU needs to follow these proportions in its outreach communications if it is to achieve its stated and commendable aims of relevance and meaningfulness in our contemporary world.

Daniel A Sheehy
Queensland Australia.
(Yes, you are right, our main target group at this stage are persons who are already part of the body of Christ. We hope that these horizons may expand in the future.)

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