

September 2009 Issue No. 9

Good News Unlimited

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS



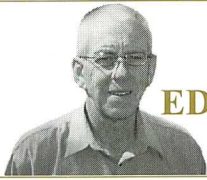
Men and Women
Called to Love

Just Plant the Seed
Why Temptations?

Lessons Life
Taught Me

The Gospel of John

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EDITORIAL

Only one commission has been given to the Church. It is not a commission to erect denominational buildings and office blocks, though their existence is justifiable if they contribute to the great commission.

It is not a commission to print books and magazines, though their existence is justifiable if they contribute to the great commission. It is not a commission to hold conferences and board meetings, though their existence is justifiable if they contribute to the great commission. It is not a commission to erect and operate schools and seminaries, though their existence is justifiable if they contribute to the great commission. It is not a commission to do anything but preach the gospel in all the world and make disciples of all nations.

Matthew reports Jesus as saying: 'Go and make disciples of all nations ...' (28:19). Mark concludes his Gospel with Jesus' assignment for his followers: 'Go into all the

world and preach the good news to all creation' (16:15). Luke announces that 'repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations' (24:47). And John reports Jesus' words: 'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you' (20:21).

Just as the Father sent Jesus, and Jesus sent his disciples, and his disciples sent their disciples, so each generation of Christians must pass on the gospel and the standard of the Gospel Commission to the next, until Jesus returns.

All four Gospels climax with Jesus' commission. They each reveal the story of Jesus' life and teachings; death and resurrection, and then commission us to take this good news to the world. That pattern, which is given in Matthew, is repeated in Mark, Luke and John so there will be no mistaking the Lord's intention for us.

The gospel net must be cast wide, the harvest must be reaped and invitations to the marriage supper must be distributed. The broken bread, given us by Jesus, must be handed out to the hungry multitude and the water of life must be poured out for the thirsty—without cost and without price. Like Elisha's gift of healing to Naaman, it is free. There can be no charge for this service

because the price has already been paid by Jesus.

When Jesus died on the cross he proclaimed: 'It is finished!' And it was. The atonement was complete, the record of our sins was blotted out, the debt we owed God was cancelled and the price of our rebellion was fully paid. There is nothing we owe God—not a single spiritual cent. If we wanted to make a contribution to our salvation we are two millennia too late. It is finished; it is done. The work of our salvation was completed at the cross, and three days later God signalled his acceptance of Christ's perfect sacrifice by raising him from the dead.

This is our message for the world. In God's eyes, our past—with all its shame and pain, all its guilt and neglect, everything negative and destructive—has been fully forgiven and our sins have been cast into the depth of the sea. Once people accept this free gift, God's Spirit will come into their lives; he will take their old garment of mourning and replace it with a garment of praise, and he will exchange their ashes of sorrow for the oil of gladness. Hallelujah!

Ritchie Way

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Mission Statement

Christians united in offering to all, meaning and direction in their lives by a knowledge of God's reconciliation with humanity through his Son, Jesus Christ.

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SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Ritchie Way

BUILDING THE LORD'S HOUSE

The prophet Haggai encouraged the Jewish exiles freed from Babylon to rebuild the House of the Lord. Haggai's message to the returning exiles was simple: 'If we don't build God's house we will not be blessed by God. If we do build God's house we will be blessed by God.'

In chapter two of his book, Haggai speaks of the coming of 'the desired of all nations' (v.7). While this prophecy may have had an initial fulfilment in objects of value for the temple which were provided by King Darius of Persia, its ultimate fulfilment was found in the Messiah himself who filled the House of God with a glory that far outshone any earthly riches.

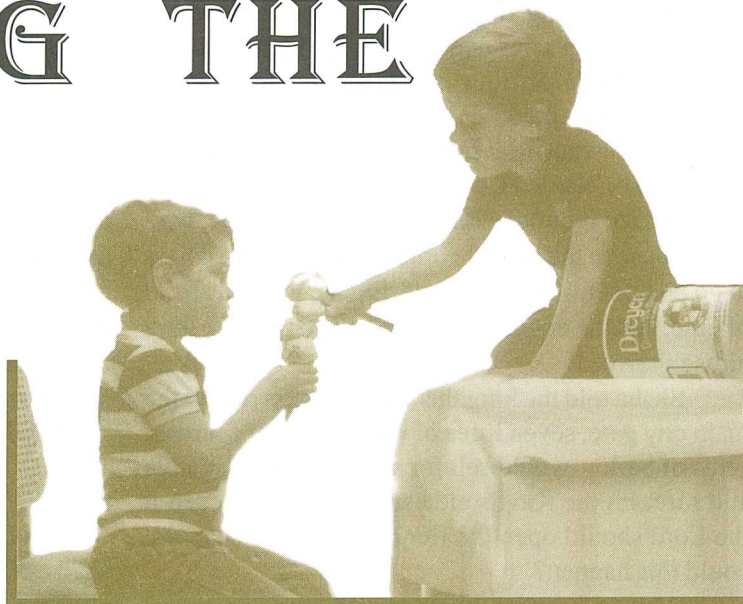
The significance of Haggai's message for today lies in its application under the New Covenant. God's house today is the body of believers (Heb. 3:6). It is not a building located at a specific location, as was the Jerusalem temple, but is found wherever God's people worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:21, 24). And, as in type, God lives in this building by his Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22). Jesus himself graces this 'building' with his presence. He says, 'Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them' (Matt. 18:20).

The echoes of Haggai's appeal reach our ears today: 'If we don't build God's house we will not be blessed by God. If we do build God's house we will be blessed by God.' There is a house of living stones to be constructed (1 Pet. 2:5) and when it is completed—and not before—Messiah will come and grace it with his glory (2 Thes. 1:10).

We have a work to do. There are nets to be cast, a harvest to be reaped and a temple of living stones to be constructed.

THE WIDOW'S OIL

In 2 Kings 4:1-7 there is the story about the wife



of a young minister who revered the Lord. When her husband died unexpectedly she was left in a real quandary, having no way now to pay off the debts the family had incurred in establishing their home in the city.

It was the law in those days, if a person was unable to pay their debts the debtor could be sold as a slave so the creditor could redeem his money. In this case, however, the couple's two boys would be sold. The recently widowed mother, distraught over this possibility, went to Elisha for help.

Elisha said, 'Tell me, what do you have in your house?'

'Your servant has nothing there at all,' she said, 'except a little oil.'

Elisha told her to ask all her neighbours for as many empty jars as she could get. She was then to shut the door to her house while she poured the oil from her little jar into the containers. Her sons 'brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing.'

She sold enough oil to pay off her debts and she and her sons lived on the rest.

The woman in this story represents the Church, whose husband, Jesus, has died. The woman has nothing but 'a little oil'—the oil of God's Spirit. It is her job to fill as many empty people with this oil as possible and the oil will keep flowing until the very last person is filled.

LEPERS WITH GOOD NEWS

There is an intriguing story in 2 Kings 6:24-7:20 which tells us a lot about good news.

Ben-Hadad II, king of Aram, mobilised his entire army, marched up and laid siege to the city of

Samaria, which was the capital of Israel. After many months of being confined to the city, famine set in. One day, while on tour of the battlements, King Jehoram came upon a case of cannibalism. He was so upset by what was happening to his people, he impetuously blamed God for their problems and decided to take it out on God's messenger, Elisha, who had a house in the city. He ordered one of his soldiers to go and cut Elisha's head off. Elisha, warned ahead of time, had the door to his house barred until the king himself arrived.

Elisha told the king that the very next day, at the main city gate, seven litres of wheat flour or fourteen litres of barley, would sell for a shekel. With ridicule and sarcasm the King's aide sneered, 'Look, even if the Lord should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen?'

'You will see it with your own eyes,' answered Elisha, 'but you will not eat any of it.'

Four lepers, banned from contact with the general populace, lived outside the city gate. They, like everyone else, were on the verge of starvation. They reasoned, that if they stayed where they were they would surely die, and if they surrendered to the Syrians they might possibly die. However, there was a chance that their lives might be spared by the enemy, so they decided to try their luck by sneaking into the far end of the Aramean camp. To their amazement the camp was totally deserted, there wasn't a single person there.

Unbeknown to them the Lord had miraculously created the sound of a great army charging toward the Aramean camp at dusk. The Syrians, believing that Jehoram had hired the Egyptian and Hittite armies to relieve the siege, fled for their lives, leaving behind all their possessions and stocks of food.

The four lepers couldn't believe their eyes. They rushed around the officers' quarters stuffing themselves with delicacies and scoffing their wine. They then gathered up and buried some booty to care for their future.

After awhile their consciences began to smite them. Here they were, enjoying a feast while the people back in the city were dying of starvation. Getting to their feet they returned to the city gates and informed the gatekeepers that the Arameans had left, but their camp, full of goodies, was still there. The news reached the sleeping king who wondered if the whole thing was a Syrian trick to draw the Israelites out of the city where they could be attacked and defeated. He ordered two chariot teams to go and discover the whereabouts of the Arameans.

The scouting party returned some hours later with the news that the Arameans had indeed fled, leaving the road littered with clothing and equipment

as far as the Jordan River. The king then gave the people the opportunity to go and plunder the Syrian camp. The King's aide was put in charge of the city gate, but was trampled to death by the hungry masses rushing to their salvation.

We are all spiritual lepers with the sentence of death upon us. But the Lord saved our lives and we have access to unlimited wealth, food, clothing, horses and donkeys. Our brethren, however, are starving to death while we live it up. What should we do?

God grant us the insight to say to each other, as did the lepers: 'We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves' (2 Kings 7:9).

NOTHING TO GIVE

In Luke 11:5-13 there is a story about a man we shall call Simeon, who had a friend turn up at his home at midnight. In those days it was the custom to provide your guest with a meal before any other need was met. The trouble was, Simeon's cupboard was as bare as old Mother Hubbard's; he didn't have a crumb to lay before his guest. But he knew that Josh, down the street, had baked several loaves of bread that day. Simeon couldn't help but notice the smell of fresh-baked bread when he passed Josh's home at dusk.

Midnight wasn't a good hour to go calling on neighbours, but the custom of providing food for guests over-rode any hesitation Simeon had. At Josh's home he banged on the door until he got a sleepy response, 'Who's there? Wassa matter?'

'Josh,' called Simeon. 'A friend has just turned up after a long journey and I haven't got any food for him. Please, would you kindly let me have three loaves of bread?'

'Have you got any idea what the time is?' asked Josh. 'For goodness sake go away and let us get some sleep.'

'Please, Josh, just three loaves.'

'Simeon, the door is locked and we are all in bed. If I get up I'll disturb the kids and we don't want them waking the neighbours with their crying. Come back in the morning.'

But Simeon refused to give up and Josh knew he'd get no sleep until he gave Simeon what he wanted, so he eventually yielded to Simeon's request.

Jesus, commenting on this story, said, 'Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened ... if you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?'

Like Simeon, we have people who come to us

in the midnight of their experience, but we have nothing to put before them. So we go to the Lord for the Bread of Life, which he will give us only if we are desperate enough to persist in our request for it.

JONAH

God asked Jonah to take a message to the people of Nineveh. But the Jews of Jonah's time hated the Assyrians for their cruelty and believed the best thing God could do would be to wipe them from the face of the earth. They should be given no chance at all to repent. Why should they share salvation with God's people, the children of Israel?

Nineveh, 850 kms. from Jonah's home town, still wasn't far enough away for Jonah, so he caught a boat to Tarshish, in the opposite direction, on the other side of the Mediterranean.

We all know the story, the ship ran into a violent storm that only subsided when, at Jonah's behest, the sailors threw him overboard. Jonah was swallowed by a great fish the Lord had prepared and three days later he was vomited up on a beach not far from where he had boarded the ship.

Realising he couldn't run away from God, Jonah reluctantly set out for Nineveh. At least he would have the pleasure of seeing the city destroyed by God at the end of forty days. On arriving at the great city Jonah tramped through the streets proclaiming, 'Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.'

To Jonah's chagrin, 'The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.' Even the king joined the people in humbling himself before God (Jonah 3:5-6).¹

'When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened' (Jon. 3:10).

This had to be one of the most significant revivals in Old Testament times, but was Jonah praising God for it? No way! He was sulking in the desert to the east of the city. He 'was greatly displeased and became angry. He prayed to the Lord, "O Lord, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live"' (Jon. 4:1-3).

Jonah knew what God was like, but like the Jewish nation, he didn't want to share God's grace with the Gentiles; they wanted to keep it all for themselves.

The key to the book of Jonah is Romans 3:28: 'Is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles too? Yes, of the Gentiles too ...' We

have a God-given commission to share the gospel with people who do not belong to our fold—the Hindus, the Muslims, the Buddhists, the Atheists, everyone (Matt. 28:19-20). If they do not repent, destruction will come upon them.

And what is our message? There is One who is not affected by the storm which threatens to engulf the world (1:4-6). He tells them that the only way they will get peace is to sacrifice him, which they do (1:9-16). He descends to the depths, but three days later he comes forth from his 'tomb' (1:17; 2:10) and the gospel of repentance is proclaimed to the Gentiles (3:3-10).

THE GOOD MESSAGE

Just before winter Rosemary and I purchased a reverse-cycle heat pump. Why did we choose a heat pump in preference to the wood burner that we had used for seventeen years? We did so because of the good news about heat pumps. No more purchasing and stacking of firewood. No more smoke and ashes. No more chimney cleaning. Just the flick of a switch and for every kilowatt of power used we get four kilowatts of heat. And, unless you have a ready source of free firewood, heating is so much cheaper with a heat pump. It's all good news.

Why would anyone want to be a follower of Jesus? They want to belong because of the good news. The word used in the New Testament for good news is *euangelion*. The *eu* in *euangelion* means good. *Euphoria* means good feeling; *euangelion* means good message.

First day: So what is good about our message? Our message is good because it offers forgiveness. Jesus was condemned and crucified for our sins, so that we might be forgiven. No longer need we struggle under a burden of guilt, for when we put our faith in Jesus who died for us, our sins are completely blotted out.

Second day: Our message is good because it offers rest. Jesus says to us: 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest' (Matt. 11:28). Because Jesus died for us we have rest of soul no matter what our present circumstances.

Third day: Our message is good because it offers hope. Although Jesus was crucified, he rose from the dead on the third day. And he says to us, 'Because I live, you also will live' (John 14:19). If the greatest of our troubles—death—has been conquered by Christ, then we need not fear any lesser troubles; he is well able to handle them also.



Endnote:

1. It is significant that around this time the polytheistic Ninevites became monotheists.

We Need Your Help!

GNU MISSION TO THE UKRAINE

An appeal has come to *Good News Unlimited* for a pastor and his wife to visit the Ukraine in October to conduct revival and evangelistic meetings at gatherings of people in four locations there. These Ukrainian Christians, who have come out of many years in legalism, are hungry for the gospel of the Lord Jesus.

They have asked for Pastor Ritchie Way and his wife Rosemary to come after their harvest is over, when the people will be free to attend meetings during the daytime. For sixteen days Pastor Ritchie Way will run the public revival and evangelistic meetings in four localities and Rosemary will minister to the women.

The Ukrainian Christians will host them while there, but these dear people cannot afford the cost of airfares to and from the Ukraine. The return airfares for two people to the Ukraine, plus visas and travel insurance, is in excess of NZ \$10,000.00. That is the basic cost, which does

not take into account other necessary expenses that will be incurred.

We are blessed by the fact some GNU groups in Canada have made a contribution towards these costs. We believe that our supporters in Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere would also like to invest in this outreach for the Lord. We appeal to you, our readers, for your financial help. If the Lord lays it on your heart to have a part in win-



ning people to the Lord Jesus Christ and blessing these people with the gospel of his grace, please send your donation for the 'UKRAINE MISSION' into either the Australian or New Zealand GNU Office. With your support we will be able to answer the call of the Ukrainians. Please help us to help them.

When Ritchie and Rosemary return they will give you a report and pictures of their four missions in the December GNU magazine.

We have just one further request, please pray for the health and protection of Ritchie and Rosemary while they are away and for God's blessing on their meetings; that they will leave a lasting legacy of God's grace with these dear people. ☐

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When the New Zealand government decided to refund the tax on all donations (up to the level of a person's income) which had been given to approved charitable organizations with donee status, it was decided to establish a New Zealand Branch of GNU, and apply for this charitable and donee status. After consideration we received registration, enabling us to issue receipts so that Inland Revenue would give donors one third of their donations back.

Men and Women Called to Love

‘Be imitators of God therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us’ (Eph. 5:1-2).

Shiralee Plowman

When divorce rates among Christians differ little from that of society, surely we need to ask ourselves why? And why is it that many Christians are living within abusive marriages? Is it possible that we are not hearing all that God is trying to tell us because we are bogged in cultural stereotypes?

In Genesis 3:16 God said to the woman, ‘... *your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.*’ The word of particular interest here is ‘desire,’ it means a stretching out after, a longing for, and it is used only three times in the Bible.¹

This desire was placed into woman by God. Desire makes the subject a servant; if a man’s desire is for gold, he becomes a servant to that desire. A godly woman, by nature of her desire, will naturally want to serve her husband, his love being the object of her longing.

The Lord said man would rule over her, which means the man is in a position of power, and the godly woman is vulnerable in her love for her husband. God planned this according to divine purpose, but it was never in his plan for men to abuse their God-given role in this relationship. He, himself, gave men an example of how to love their wives: ‘*Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*’ (Eph. 5:25). Wow! There is so much packed into this verse.

Firstly, Christ ‘*made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant*’ (Phil. 2:7). Christ chose to become a servant, a role that elevated, rather than depreciated him. He said, ‘*The Son of man did not*

come to be served, but to serve ...’ (Matt. 20:28). Christ’s love manifested itself to his bride in service.

Secondly, Christ’s desire for the church made him vulnerable in that his love would be rejected by many, and violently by some. Nevertheless, he gave himself to die for all. This is love at its pinnacle—real love springing from raw desire, nothing hidden. The Son of God, creator of the entire universe, his tender serving hands nailed to a tree; his gracious head punctured by a crown of thorns; his loving heart pierced by a spear.

Vulnerable, he hangs there, his love on display for the entire world to see. It was not the nails that kept him there, but love—his love for sinners like you and me. Is it any wonder that people say love does crazy things? Look at what love did to the Son of God! Real love sacrifices self for others and gives everything for its beloved.

The common image in society today is that a man has authority over his wife. Jesus, however, said ‘*Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant*’ (Matt. 20:26). Authority, in Jesus’ eyes, belongs to the one who serves rather than the one who rules. The word servant is *doulos*, which is the most abject, servile term used by the Greeks to denote a slave. ‘The word designated one who was born as a slave, one who was bound to his master in chords so strong that only death could break them; one who served his master to the disregard of his own interests; one whose will was swallowed up in the will of his master.’²

Our Lord gave his life in service, yes, surrendered his very soul to the destruction of hell in our place (Matt. 10:28, Acts 2:27). It was by the power



of his giving that he was exalted.

We, like the disciples, become confused when we hear the word ‘power’—we imagine that power means position and authority over others. What we do not realise is that God is love and that his power is the power of love. Christ’s love was manifested in the giving of himself in unselfish service to others. Herein is real power! When we give ourselves to another in unselfish service they are drawn to us. Love awakens love and in turn the receiver gives (submits) to the giver in service.

Thirdly, Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, manifests his love for the Church by granting her freedom. He says, *‘If the Son sets you free you will be free indeed’* (John 8:36). Love is the giver of freedom, for without freedom there can be no love. Any man who supposes he has the right to take away a woman’s free choice, imagining that he has authority over her, does not have a correct concept of God’s love. We are called by God to serve one another in love and love grants freedom to all. God says; *‘serve one another in love’* (Gal. 5:13). Only by love is love awakened.

God’s high calling to men is that they become selfless servants within their marriage relationship! The war of gender supremacy has been raging in the world for millennia, but it should not be that way among God’s people. History teaches that God’s power is not limited by the size or gender of the vessel. He can work a mighty work through any vessel surrendered to his service. While the whole world is pushing and pulling, jostling for power, place and position, Christians reveal Christ best by being servants—slaves to one another in love.

God’s Word is very clear, there should be no discrimination between men and women as to position or vocation; it is God himself who bestows gifts upon both men and women, and they are free to exercise these gifts without man-made limitations.

Christian men who position themselves above women in order to attain their sense of identity by the use of power do not understand the heart of



Christ. There is only one relationship that can empower us with a strong sense of identity and that is our relationship with Christ himself, who came not to be served, but to serve.

We need to look at gender relationships in the home and in the church through the eyes of Christ instead of our own. It serves our egos to have others take us as their authority and obey us, but this is the desire of the enemy and not of God. We tear each other down in order to build ourselves up, because we do not have our identity firmly established in Christ. While it is human for us to be self-serving, it is divine to serve others. While it is human to exalt ourselves, it is divine to exalt others. Let us lay aside the tradition of men and become one in Christ Jesus and the world will witness God’s power—love within his people.

What I have written may be galling to those who have suffered abuse, so I’d like to share a small part of myself with you. To become vulnerable in love was a very scary thing for me. Fearing further rejection, injury and pain, I traded love and vulnerability for independence. I thought nothing of it and guarded myself from love and loving with a shield of independence for most of my life.

Then I read a book, *The Wounded Heart*, by Dr. Dan B. Allender, and God impressed me with the realisation that by leading a life of independence I was cutting myself off from others and therefore sinning. I would like to share the part of this book that opened my eyes to this fact:

WHAT IS RELATIONAL STYLE? A relational style is the ‘typical’ way of protecting oneself in contact with other people. Self-protection is, in essence, the commitment to never be hurt again, to never be powerless, betrayed, or ambivalent in the way we once were. Isaiah 50:10-11 provides an excellent picture of the idea of self-protection: ‘Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God. But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches, go, walk in the light of your fires and of the torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand: You will lie down in torment.’

The context of these verses indicates that the Suffering Servant is in the midst of physical harm, mockery and contempt. Though his experience can be described as dark (full of confusion and struggle), his heart is resting on the vindication of God. The opposite of trusting God in the midst of darkness is the word-picture of lighting one’s

own fire. Consider how reasonable it is to turn the light on at night in a strange hotel room. The placement of furniture is unlike your own room, so when you arise in the dark, the natural response in order to avoid harm, is to switch on the light.

The so-called reasonable desire to avoid pain, discomfort, or shame compels us to light our own fire. Fire lighters are those who take charge of the dark (particularly, struggle or confusion in relationships) by their own means, for their own purposes. It seems that the natural desire to avoid pain directs us toward a path of independence, when, in fact, the desire for relief and satisfaction, if the hunger is deeply felt, will lead to a path of chosen dependence on a Person greater than ourselves.

How can this be the case when past trust has led to abuse? Protecting oneself and relying on one's own resources for self-preservation has seemed like the only reasonable way to live in a fallen world. There is an inherent and radical battle in the soul of the abused person toward any change that may open the door to re-victimisation. So how does facing one's style of relating lead to a deeper experience of life as it is meant to be lived?

'The Scriptures indicate that fire lighting (a self-protective strategy) leads inevitably to torment. The honest man or woman will eventually acknowledge that self-preservation has not worked, and, even when it seems to, leads to a diminishment of the soul. The person who takes the initiative to keep her soul intact will violate the nature of her being to accomplish the impossible task.

Any effort expended to remain intact is doomed to failure, because it is the attempt to **find** one's life—an attempt that results in **losing** one's life. The self-absorbed interest in keeping intact, ultimately leads to a violation of love, which in turn diminishes the essence of who we were designed to be (representatives of God's love in a doomed world). To the degree that we labour to keep ourselves intact, we become less human, less loving and more like those who cavalierly abuse and dehumanise for their own survival. The honest person will admit that even though her fire-lighting strategies have won her a certain sense of safety, she is not living as she was created to live, and in the hollow chambers of her heart she is lonely as hell.

Reasonable but non-reflective living inevitably leads to subtle autonomy and overt rebellion. The expression of our sinful independence

STANDING IN THE

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NEED OF PRAYER

will be most evident in the quiet, deep, fire-lighting patterns we practice in our relationships with others.

WHY IS STYLE OF RELATING SO IMPORTANT?

If you ask Christians where they struggle with sin, the answer, in many cases, revolves around an act or behaviour, such as a lack of discipline (I don't spend enough time studying God's word, or I don't obey the speed limit) or a failure to perform (I'm not as sensitive as I should be, or I don't witness enough). True enough, those issues constitute a failure to love God and neighbour. But if sin is defined as merely behavioural, the more subtle and wicked sins are often ignored.

Honouring God ultimately means boldly and sacrificially loving him and others; yet it is in relationships that we are most committed to avoiding pain. The call to love and the determination to dodge hurt set up a radical contradiction in the soul. One will give way to the other and the outcome will determine the quality of our walk with God. If we ignore or trivialise our self-protective manner of dealing with people, we will inevitably overlook the deepest sin of the heart, our fallen commitment to take charge of our life so we will never be hurt or shamed as we were in the past.

And if we fail to recognize and repent of the sins of the heart, we will not deeply change. We will not deeply love.³

Jesus did not protect his soul from harm. For the greater good, neither should we. ☐

Endnotes:

1. The other two occurrences are in Genesis 4:7 and Song of Solomon 7:10.
2. Wuest's 'Word Studies from the Greek New Testament'
3. Pages 171 - 173.

TOPSI-TURVI HORMONES

*What cats know
and people need to know.*

(The third of three parts)

Gillian Ford

ON THE LEVEL

My cat, Tpsi continued, ‘**Angiotensin II** is a great stabilizer in the body among the hormones. Men and women who have higher levels tend to be very stable emotionally and physically. However, the downside is, they are at more risk for sudden heart attack, but often have no symptoms ahead of the attack. They tend to be more black and white and definite about things in their personality. They have strong opinions and don’t shift easily. Their lives are often more sane because of this.’

‘By contrast,’ said Tpsi, ‘people who are **prolactin** dominant and low in angiotensin II are less stable physically and emotionally. They tend to get depressed more, cry more and have lots of symptoms. They are affected by outside things and shift easily. These two groups don’t understand each other at all. The high angiotensin II people think the high prolactin group is crazy. The high prolactin people think the high angiotensin II people are insensitive. You know how we talked about hormones and energy and how energy’s what we are all about?’ said Tpsi.

‘Yes,’ replied Turvi.

‘Well, when the body’s energy is compromised, it plays tricks to get energy. One of the things it does is to suppress angiotensin II which makes the system less stable. It’s like when the electric power is cut. Not everything works properly. People get sweats or headaches or mood swings or muscle pain, or panic or heart palpitations, or brain fog and memory loss—they can progress to dizzy spells and blackouts. It’s like a brown-out with electricity. Things don’t work right in the body because there’s not enough energy to go round.’

‘That makes angiotensin II one of the most important hormones in the body, doesn’t it?’ said Turvi.

‘Yes,’ said Tpsi. ‘But you would expect it to be because it regulates the heart and that’s pretty important. Again, there’s a normal level and it’s not healthy to have high or low levels of angiotensin II.’

THE CENTRE OF THINGS

Tpsi said, ‘Hormones have a structure. They make up a complicated signalling system. They work with the central nervous system to send messages everywhere throughout the body, so, in a sense, they control everything. There are just hundreds of them.’

All of them relate to each other and they all regulate each other. They interact with many other chemicals. So, it gets very complicated. Everybody’s hormones are unique in the way they are set. That’s why people get different symptoms for similar problems and different side effects from the same hormone treatment. No one is quite the same.

The way your hormones are structured is mainly set by the time you are born. You inherit your metabolic tendencies. That’s why you see patterns of similar problems within families (such as difficult menopause, diabetes, thyroid problems, etc.). It’s also why some families seem to have lots of hormonal problems and others don’t have any.

The way you live is very important. For instance, eating food is a very hormonal event. Often, when people react to food, it’s not the food itself that’s a problem, but what it does to your hormones. Yes, eating’s important. But sometimes it’s impossible to overcome your inheritance even if you eat the best food in the world.’

‘So,’ said Turvi. ‘When we talk about hormones, it’s much more than estrogen, testosterone, thyroid and cortisol—the ones medicine knows most about.’

‘Absolutely,’ responded Tpsi. ‘You’re so clever Turvi. You got the point.’

SUGAR, SWEETIE, HONEY

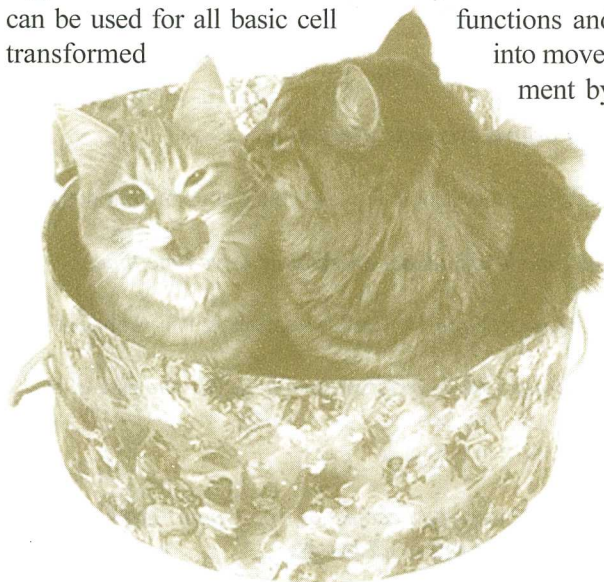
‘Make no mistake,’ continued Tpsi, ‘there’s all sorts of different pathways for energy metabolism. Nothing is simple. You get energy from food and there are three main types—carbohydrates, or starches, which convert to sugars and fats and proteins. When you exercise very hard for a short time, like a cyclist doing a sprint, carbohydrates make up the main energy source your body uses. Fats provide energy, but more for endurance events. Proteins are used to maintain and repair body tissues. All creatures get their chemical energy from molecules like glucose (a form of sugar). Cells break down glucose and capture the released energy as a substance called **ATP** (the long name is **adenosine triphosphate**). Don’t ever think hormones are easy, sweetie honey,’ said Tpsi. ‘Just when you think you have a handle on hormones, you find out there’s another one you haven’t heard of. We haven’t even mentioned **insulin**, and it’s very important.’

Turvi couldn’t work out why Tpsi was suddenly being so sweet—until she told him that insulin regulates sugar.

‘Insulin has to do with controlling the sugar fuel you get from food,’ said Tpsi. ‘It’s a hormone produced in the cells of the pancreas which breaks down sugar (glucose) and increases protein synthesis in the muscles. If you don’t have enough insulin, or you have high levels that can’t keep your glucose in normal range, you get diabetes.’ She added, ‘**Glucagon** is another hormone produced in the pancreas, and it tends to do the opposite of insulin. It raises glucose in the blood and it helps convert ATP to **cyclic AMP**.’

OXIDATION RELEASES FOOD ENERGY

‘Food energy is released by a chemical reaction with oxygen,’ said Tpsi. ‘The process is called oxidation. When this happens outside the body, this energy is released as heat and light. But inside the body, food energy needs to be released more slowly in a form that can be used for all basic cell functions and transformed into movement by



the muscle cells. The body does this by refining all food types into ATP. ATP has a lot of phosphate in it and phosphate is very important in metabolism. It’s the bonds between the phosphate groups that contain the energy stored in the molecule. And it’s the breaking of these bonds, as ATP is broken down into **ADP** that provides the energy to power muscle contractions and other cell functions.’

‘Boy, all those initials; that’s hard to understand,’ said Turvi.

Tpsi continued. ‘ATP runs out fast in the cells, so the cells have to keep replenishing the ATP. They do it in several ways, by breaking down phosphocreatine, by glycolysis and by aerobic metabolism, which involves oxidation. These three processes interact in a complex way to provide this ATP for different types of energy. You know, short-term energy for quick bursts and long-term energy for marathons.

I think, Turvi, you have lots of ATP because you are so bouncy. ATP is what enables you to leap so fast and so high. I know this is hard to understand, Turvi, and

it’s only a little piece of what really happens in energy metabolism. But all you really need to know is that energy is very complicated. Hormones control it all and we are all different. That’s why we have different levels of energy. You can look at each hormone and their properties on its own. But never forget they are part of a big complex system, and these issues are not simple.’

FIRST HORMONES FIRST

Tpsi said, ‘But getting back to hormones, it seems that angiotensin II, parathyroid and prolactin are especially important. They are like the primary colours of the hormones. They organize and regulate the other hormones. Angiotensin II and prolactin are like sentries that hold the parathyroid ‘in place.’ If angiotensin II tends to run high, prolactin is usually opposite, and the system is more stable. If prolactin tends to run high, angiotensin II is low and the system is less stable. It also represents how the individual responds to the environment. High prolactin people tend to be more sensitive to the environment and change easily. They have more fear and anxiety because they sense danger systems more easily. They tend to be more sensitive and intuitive. The high angiotensin II people don’t sense danger as much. They don’t change as much when the environment changes, that’s their downside. They don’t see danger signals and often don’t respond appropriately. They often ‘miss what’s happening’, that’s why they seem insensitive.’

THE PAWS BUTTON

The next morning, Turvi was crying to go out. He put his paw on Gill’s nose to let her know it was time and woke her at 4:30am exactly. But he had to stay inside today because he was due at the vet at 9.00am. If Gill let him out, he might not come back all day.

It was time to begin the shot regimen for emigrating. He and Tpsi were going to Australia to live with Gill and it was quite a task to get ready.

‘I hear it will take six months,’ said Tpsi. ‘It has to do with making absolutely sure we don’t have rabies.’

Gill was going ahead to Australia and a kind friend was looking after the cats for a few months. To pass the time, Turvi chased Tpsi down the hallway. There were piles of boxes against the walls because Gill was packing to leave. Turvi then sat behind a wall in the kitchen, watching Tpsi. His head darted around as she moved. The pupils of his eyes became larger. He cocked his head and looked as though he was watching a bird. Tpsi was unaware of this and went over to eat some dry food.

Suddenly Turvi pounced on her back.

‘Oh boy,’ said Tpsi. ‘I can see we are back where we started with adrenaline.’

‘And don’t forget the testosterone,’ added Turvi.



—Checked by Dr David Shaw.



Regina Brett

LESSONS LIFE TAUGHT ME

To celebrate growing older, I once wrote the forty-five lessons life taught me. It is the most-requested column I've ever written. My odometer rolled over to 90 in August, so here is the column once more:

1. Life isn't fair, but it's still good.
2. *When in doubt, just take the next small step.*
3. Life is too short to waste time hating anyone.
4. *Your job won't take care of you when you are sick. Your friends and parents will. Stay in touch.*
5. Pay off your credit cards every month.
6. *You don't have to win every argument. Agree to disagree.*
7. Cry with someone. It's more healing than crying alone.
8. *It's OK to get angry with God. He can take it. (He has said, 'Try Me and see that I am Good.')'*
9. Save for retirement starting with your first paycheck.
10. *When it comes to chocolate, resistance is futile.*
11. Make peace with your past so it won't screw up the present.
12. *It's OK to let your children see you cry.*
13. Don't compare your life to others. You have no idea what their journey is all about.
14. *If a relationship has to be a secret, you shouldn't be in it.*
15. Everything can change in the blink of an eye. But don't worry; God never blinks.
16. *Take a deep breath. It calms the mind.*
17. Get rid of anything that isn't useful, beautiful or joyful.
18. *Whatever doesn't kill you really does make you stronger.*
19. It's never too late to have a happy childhood. But the second one is up to you and no one else.
20. *When it comes to going after what you love in life, don't take no for an answer.*
21. Burn the candles, use the nice sheets, wear the fancy lingerie. Don't save it for a special occasion. Today is special.
22. *Over prepare, then go with the flow.*
23. Be eccentric now. Don't wait for old age to wear purple.
24. *The most important sex organ is the brain.*
25. No one is in charge of your happiness but you.
26. *Frame every so-called disaster with these words 'In five years, will this matter?'*
27. Always choose life.
28. *Forgive everyone everything.*
29. What other people think of you is none of your business.
30. *Time heals almost everything. Give time time.*
31. However good or bad a situation is, it will change.
32. *Don't take yourself so seriously. No one else does.*
33. Believe in miracles.
34. *God loves you because of who God is, not because of anything you did or didn't do.*
35. Don't audit life. Show up and make the most of it now.
36. *Growing old beats the alternative — dying young.*
37. Your children get only one childhood.
38. *All that truly matters in the end is that you loved.*
39. Get outside every day. Miracles are waiting everywhere.
40. *If we all threw our problems in a pile and saw everyone else's, we'd grab ours back.*
41. Envy is a waste of time. You already have all you need.
42. *The best is yet to come.*
43. No matter how you feel, get up, dress up and show up.
44. *Yield.*
45. Life isn't tied with a bow, but it's still a gift.

DID YOU KNOW?

THE SAMARITANS

During the time of King Solomon, the country of Israel extended from Dan in the North to Beersheba in the South. But when

Solomon's son, Rehoboam, came to the throne and the people begged him to reduce the heavy tax burden his father had imposed upon them to pay for his extensive public works programme, he not only rejected their request, he also insulted them.

As a result, the ten northern tribes, led by Jeroboam, split off from Judah and Benjamin. From that time on the northern tribes were known as Israel and the southern tribes as Judah, or Judea.

The capital of Judah was Jerusalem and the capital of Israel was at first Shechem, then Samaria. To stop the Israelites going to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple, Jeroboam built two pagan temples in his kingdom, one in the North and the other in the South where the citizens worshiped golden calves (1 Kings 12:26-30). This put Israel into a downward spiral from which it never recovered.

In the year 721BC the Assyrian king, Tiglath Pileser, moved into Israel and took the tribes of

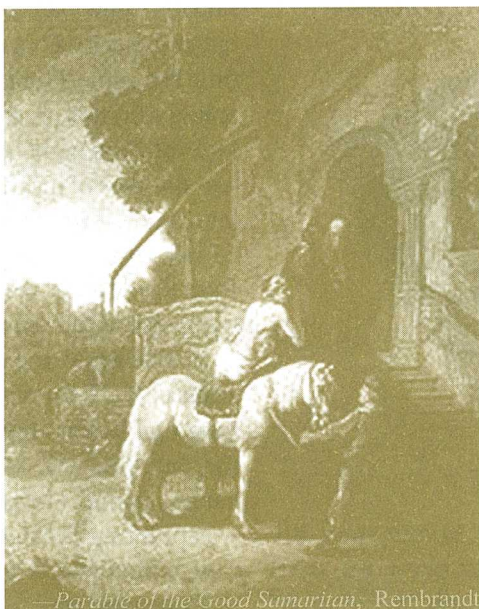
Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh into captivity and settled these Israelites among the pagans in Mesopotamia (2 Kings 15:29).

Later, when Israel stopped paying tribute to Assyria, Shalmaneser carried away the leading people of the remaining northern tribes and settled them in Assyria (2 Kings 17:6; 18:9-12). In the Khorsabad annals he boasted, 'I besieged and captured Samaria, carrying off 27,290 of the people who dwelt therein.'

He then replaced the deported Israelites with foreign colonists who intermarried with the Israelites that remained in the land. The country now became known as Samaria, after its capital city. A mixed religion resulted. The Bible says 'they worshipped the Lord, but they also served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought' (2 Kings 17:33). From this point forward the Jews regarded the Samaritans as the off-scouring of the earth. Later, a religious revival under King Josiah of Judah, crossed the border and many Samaritans

turned back to God, but that did not change the opinions of the self-righteous Jews.

The name, Samaritan, became a term of abuse (John 8:48). Their food was considered to be of the same nature as pig's flesh and many Jews who wished to travel between Galilee in the North and Judah in the South, would go many kilometres out of their way in order to avoid walking through Samaria. ☐



—Parable of the Good Samaritan, Rembrandt

SATURDAY SERVICE CANBERRA, ACT

The Belconnen Baptist Church in Canberra now conducts a **Saturday service at 5.00pm**. You are invited to attend this great and friendly service each Saturday. Refreshments are provided.

The address is: Belconnen Baptist Church, Corner of Dallachy and MacAdam Streets, Page, 2614 Canberra, ACT.

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Good News Unlimited

Saturday Bible School 9.30am

Morning tea provided.

Please bring your Bible

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September 5 & 19

October No meetings

November 21 & December 5

Narellan

Sydney

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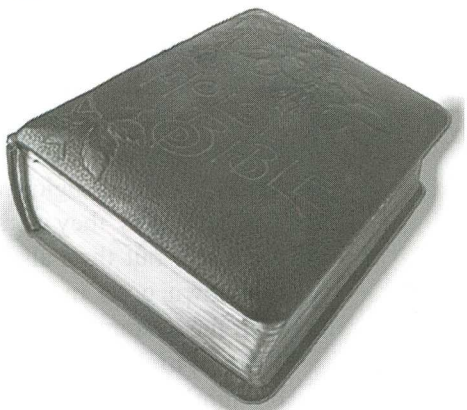
Those living in or near Narellan are warmly invited to meet for Bible study and fellowship in the Salvation Army Worship Centre on the corner of Exchange Parade and Narellan Road in Narellan, every **Saturday at 1:30pm**. For further information, contact Pastor Santo Calarco.

phone: 0404 029822

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Part 9

Is Jesus the Messiah?



Ritchie Way

No one knew Jesus better than his own brothers who grew up with him. What was their opinion of Jesus once he began his mission after his baptism? The Bible says, ‘For even his own brothers did not believe in him’ (John 7:5). They did not deny that he worked miracles (John 7:3), but, they would have told you, it takes more than miracles to make a Messiah; Elisha was a miracle-worker, but he wasn’t the Messiah (see Matt. 13:54-58).

Right up to the time that Jesus was crucified and buried, many Jewish people regarded him as ‘a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people’ (Luke 24:19). His brothers may have conceded that he was a prophet (Matt. 21:11; Luke 7:16), but because of the ‘religiously insensitive’ things Jesus did which irritated the Pharisees and Sadducees—such as the refusal to ceremonially wash his hands before a meal, or participate in weekly fasts, not to speak of the riot he created when he ‘cleansed’ the Temple—they weren’t prepared to take his side against the religious institution that supported them in times of spiritual and physical need. They even attempted to reign in Jesus’ ambitions (Mark 3:21).

But something changed Jesus’ brothers—something of great magnitude. James, Jesus’ brother (Gal. 1:19), was converted and became the acknowledged leader of the Christian Church. He even gave his life for Jesus when he was stoned to death by the Jews.

Jesus’ other brothers, Joseph, Judas and Simon,¹ (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3), became Christian missionaries, and their names were listed in the Bible alongside those of the apostles (1 Cor. 9:5). What made the difference? What changed them?

Earlier Jesus’ brothers had challenged Jesus to show himself to the world (John 7:4). In response he said, ‘The right time for me has not yet come’ (John 7:6, 8). Several times, throughout John’s Gospel, Jesus said his ‘time’ had not yet come (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20), but at the end of his ministry he declared, ‘Father, the time has come’ (John 17:11, see also 2:23; 13:1). Jesus announced this on the night he was betrayed by Judas Iscariot—the night before his crucifixion. Jesus’ ‘time’ was the time of his death and resurrection, a time when he would glorify the Father and the Father would glorify him by raising him from the dead. His resurrection from the dead set the seal upon his divinity and turned his sceptical family and many others into believers.²

Earlier, at one of the annual Feasts in Jerusalem Jesus said, ‘I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the One who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am you cannot come’ (John 7:33-34). In saying this, Jesus was pointing forward to both his death and resurrection, which would terminate his mission among men and open the way for him to return to the Father. The phrase, ‘You will look for me, but you will not find me,’ is a *double entendre*. It applied first of all to the fact that people would look for Jesus’ body but would not find it, and secondly, they would look for him after his ascension and not find him.

After Jesus had finished speaking to the people in the Temple (John 7:14) folk realised that he was no ordinary man. Some claimed he was the Prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15), while others claimed he was the Christ (Messiah) (John 7:31). Still others sneered, “‘How can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David’s family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?’” Thus the people were divided because of Jesus’ (John 7:41-43).

If people really wanted to know where Jesus was born, a simple question put to Jesus, or any member of his family, would have given them the correct answer. But most people don’t really want to know the truth; they just want some argument that will give them an excuse not to believe. That is the way it was then, and that is the way it is today. People are still divided because of Jesus. □

Endnotes:

1. These were all popular names in Jesus’ day.

2. Jesus’ resurrection superseded the resurrection of Lazarus, in that he had powers Lazarus did not have, and was finally taken up into heaven, which Lazarus wasn’t.

WHY WHY TEMPTATION? TEMPTATION? WHY TEMPTATION?



Santo Calarco

Why is temptation so powerful? Why doesn't God step in and shield us from Satan's enticements? If God neither dampens the passions of our sinful natures, nor prevents sinful circumstances from testing us, what positive purpose does temptation serve?

One thing I have found from my study of Scripture, which I know to be true in my life, is when we are confronted with tough, tempting choices, we are given opportunities to choose to stand with God and say 'No' to the world. In this way we demonstrate and reinforce our love for him.

Our response to temptation seems to be a *spiritual barometer* of our love and loyalty for God, while at the same time, *revealing* the true condition of our hearts. These two points seem to be highlighted in Deuteronomy 8:2: 'And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you *and* test you, to know what *was* in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.'¹

I would like to focus on the latter point; namely that God permits temptations and trials so they can reveal and develop character. Our temptations and even our sins (which are never his will) are allowed by God to help us develop spiritual maturity. I have seen this to be true many times in my own life and in the lives of many that I pastor and counsel. God uses our temptations and even our failures to teach us very important lessons. How?

In Deuteronomy 8:2 Moses tells us that God had led the Israelites through the wilderness for forty years to test them and humble them so that what was in their hearts may be revealed. Man looks on the outward appearance and so judges others based on ex-

ternal performance. The Bible teaches us however, that God looks on the heart. What this says to me is, that a person can do something right externally, but for the wrong reasons. Read Matthew 23:5, 25-28 very carefully. This means that others may not be doing very well on the outside, but their hearts are right on the inside. As a therapist, I have had enough experience to know that this is often the reality.

Many times I have encountered folk whose behaviour was seemingly impeccable, and then with further investigation, realised that they were clever enough to control their external circumstances and so prevent what was in their heart from manifesting. A man may have lust in his heart and regularly think adulterous thoughts, but arranges his schedule in such a way so that he will not have opportunity to express that which is in his heart. Or, he may just be too scared to put his thoughts into practice. Nonetheless, Jesus says that adultery is a matter of the heart—and it is the heart that God is most concerned with.

The New Testament explicitly says that the failures of Israel have been recorded for our learning, so that we may not repeat their errors (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1-6; Heb. 4:11).

Let's consider one episode from the wilderness wanderings. The Israelites had just witnessed the plagues on Egypt. They had personally experienced all the miracles involved in their deliverance, culminating with the parting of the Red Sea. They had just sung the joyful song of Moses and it would have been natural for them to think that since God had changed their circumstances so mightily, that from now on it would be 'easy street' for them! However, although God had delivered them from external oppression, he still needed to deliver them from their internal oppression—the sinfulness of their own hearts.

Moses said to the Israelites, at the end of their
(Continued on page 18)

Discussion Point

GNU is a meeting of minds from a wide range of church affiliations and therefore, opinions expressed in our articles may differ from that of many of our readers. Recognising that opinions can differ and we all have much to learn and unlearn, we encourage our readers to participate in this forum.

RELIGION AND POLITICS

Dear Sir

I am writing in response to your article on the former Prime Minister of England, Mr. Tony Blair, in the May GNU magazine.

I know that the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ is available to any man, however bad his life has been, or may be, provided he accepts the gospel. As Christians, we see another person's works, past and present, without feeling the need to judge that person as to his or her standing with God.

However, Blair's accord with John Howard and George Bush and their invasion of Iraq against the wishes of the United Nations and the advice of other countries, resulted in the loss of life of thousands upon thousands of men, women and children (so-called 'collateral damage'), which does not gel too well in my mind. They began a war for which there appears to be no end in sight. Just maybe you have opened a Pandora's Box by the inclusion of his speech, which you are entitled to do.

Please find enclosed an article on Evangelical Fundamentalism at work in El Salvador. Whether or not you read it is up to you.

Kind regards to all at Good News Unlimited.

Dear A

Our endorsement of Tony

Blair's stand for Christianity does not translate into an endorsement of his support for the invasion of Iraq. But, as you point out, Christians do not get into Christ's kingdom by what they do or don't do, but by what Christ did for us on the cross. Your sins, my sins and Tony Blair's sins—no matter how small or horrendous—have been blotted out by the death of the Lord Jesus.

As to the involvement of Christians in the politics of El Salvador, I can only say that any union of faith and politics resurrects the prostitute who controls the seven-headed beast that supports her. I do not support Christian parties in politics, because no matter what kind of Christian party they might be—orthodox, fundamentalist, evangelical, charismatic, Messianic, etc.—they will represent only a minority of people whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. I do, however, endorse as many Christians as possible becoming politicians so that they will exert an influence for good upon their fellow politicians and country.

Abundant blessings

Ritchie.

FREE & GRATEFUL

Hi Pastor Ritchie

D. N. here. I just want to thank you for the support GNU gave me while I was incarcerated. B. S. [GNU Board Member] has been a blessing to me and a great witness for the Lord. His visits to the jail while I was there gave me

hope that my God had not forsaken me. He kept me on the straight and narrow ... When I was released he was there to pick me up at the gate. After a coffee and stroll around some local shops he walked me to the station.

A couple of days later he delivered my belongings to my address in Newcastle. Thanks to you and your GNU team I've landed on my feet and am slowly beginning the task of rebuilding my life. Though I am a free man now, my journey is far from over.

I just want to say thank you for reaching out to me.

D.N.

Hi D

Thank you for your note of gratitude. God bless you as you make a new life for yourself. Please keep in contact and let us know what's happening in your life.

Our thoughts and prayers will be with you.

Grace and peace

Ritchie.

GOD'S INFLUENCE

Dear Ritchie

Do the fortunes and misfortunes of life come directly from God or are they the product of our heritage? I mean, does God give us wealth or is it a product of our family's assets, or our personal gifting, or good luck in business, or just mere chance? Is our health controlled by God or is it subject to our genetic inheritance or the random whims of disease and accident?

I've been reading Job, and everything is automatically linked to his relationship with God. His loss of assets, family and health is attributed to a problem in his relationship with God. What did he do to deserve that?

And when Job passed the test, he was rewarded with assets, family and health. So his thinking was absolutely correct—God is the cause of every-

thing. Interesting ...

S. G

Dear S.

While Job understood that God was the ultimate cause of everything, he did not attribute his misfortunes to a problem in his relationship with God. His wife did and so did his friends, but he did not. He believed that God, for some reason unknown to him, had allowed the unjust tragedies to befall him, but he did not believe they were due to a break in his relationship with the Lord.

The book of Job is about theodicy, the justice of God in the light of human suffering. The solution offered is that the relationship between God and man is not an inviolable relationship, but is, in fact, negatively impacted by Satan, who personifies all the evil which separates man and God. And God permits this intrusion into our relationship with him to test our commitment to him and to strengthen our characters. And if we pass the test, then, like Job, the Day will come when we shall be rewarded far in excess of all that we have suffered or lost.

There is also a gospel theme in Job that we should not overlook. The story of Job is about the age-old question: Why do the innocent suffer? That question was fully answered at the Cross. The last Job, the totally Innocent One, suffered, so the guilty ones could go free.

Hallelujah!

Ritchie.

A PERFECT HEAVEN

Dear Ritchie

I have thought a lot about your statement that 'heaven won't be perfect,' and the more I think about it the more it upsets me. I know there aren't any texts in the Bible that say heaven will be 'perfect'—at least I haven't been able to find any—but it's natural to believe that it will be.

Imperfection is all around us in this world, which is why

heaven, where there will be no imperfection, will be so welcome.

So how can you justify your position that heaven won't be perfect?

P. H.

Dear P

Just look out into the universe where sin has not ventured. There are tens of thousands of suns out there that have burned out; there are exploding stars (supernovae); there are huge hunks of rock and ice flying around; there are gigantic clouds of dust thousands of light years across; there are deadly gamma rays; there are great voids of emptiness; there are galaxies gobbling up other galaxies; there are frozen worlds and worlds that are roasting hot; there are crushing gravitational forces and there are bursts of lethal high-energy and particle radiation from black holes, to identify just a few major problems for people. That may not be our kind of perfection, but it is God's.

So how do you define perfect? What is a perfect universe? What is perfect weather? Weather that is perfect for one person would be imperfect for another. Is a perfect climate one that is tropical, temperate or frigid?

Without the glaciers that feed huge amounts of microscopic flora into the southern ocean many of our fish, albatross, penguin, seal and whale stocks would disappear, and the ocean currents that transport warm water into the northern Atlantic would shut down. Is a perfect landscape one that contains no rugged mountains? Land that is undulating, well-watered and fertile, cannot exist without mountains that capture the moisture in winter, store it as snow and release it as water in summer to provide running streams. Central Australia is a good example.

Our human concept of perfection is very narrow and is defined more by our personal comfort than by long-term sustainability.

The Bible says the New Earth will be 'the home of righteousness' (2 Peter 3:13). That is the true perfection of the world to come. It will be a world where people will always be able to work together in loving, supportive and trusting relationships.

That will be heaven indeed. See you there

Ritchie.

VEGETARIANISM

Dear Ritchie

How am I to understand the following verses, all of which seem to refer to vegetarianism? Rom. 14:2-3, 14, 17-18, 22; Mark 7:14-19; 1 Cor. 10:25-30 and Acts 21:25.

N.J.

Hi N

The selection of verses that you sent in cover a range of issues, none of which is about vegetarianism *per se*. Some are about avoiding certain types of flesh because they are ceremonially unclean; one is about the need to avoid meat that hasn't been bled; others are about avoiding meat that has been dedicated to heathen gods.

Jesus, in Mark 7, says a person can't be made spiritually unclean by eating food that is ceremonially unclean. His exact words are: 'Nothing outside a man can make him unclean by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him unclean' (v. 15).

To his disciples Jesus expanded on his words in verse 15: 'Nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him unclean. For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach and then out of his body.' (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean) (vv. 18-19).

Avoiding so-called 'unclean' meats can sometimes be a matter of health, but is not a matter of spirituality. For example, people will not go to heaven because they don't eat unclean meats, nor will they go to hell if they do.

God bless

Ritchie.

JUST PLANT THE SEED

An English pastor tells this story: A man in his church was approached by a little white-haired man in George Street, Sydney, handed a tract and asked 'Are you Saved? If you died tonight, are you going to heaven?'

The question haunted the man until he finally surrendered his life to Christ. Later, the pastor was visiting Adelaide and a lady testified to a similar experience in George Street. It motivated her to come to Jesus also.

The pastor shared this story in the Caribbean, Perth and even Atlanta and each time people would testify that part of their salvation story was also being approached by a little man in George Street. Years later, the pastor was visiting Sydney and asked a friend about this man. 'That would be Mr Jenner, but I don't think he does it anymore, he's too frail and elderly.'

They sought out Mr Jenner and told him about

Bob Gass



all the people who had come to know Christ because of the question he'd asked them. Deeply moved, the old man said, 'When I was led to Christ I promised God I would share Jesus in a simple way with at least ten people each day. In forty years I hadn't heard of one person coming to Jesus until today.'

Some people come to Christ on the first call, but the hard-headed among us usually take the long route home. Your job is not to change people; just share the life-giving Word and let God change them. Jesus said, 'I, when I am lifted up ... will draw all men to Myself' (John 12:32 NIV).

Just *plant the seed* and let the Lord of the Harvest do the rest! ☐

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(Continued from page 15)

WHY TEMPTATION?

wilderness wanderings, 'God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you *and* test you, to know what *was* in your heart' (Deut. 8:2). The same God who had delivered them from their slave-drivers in Egypt, also led them to undrinkable water after three days of parched travelling in the desert. This was a test, but they failed it, because they complained instead of asking God for help.

In 1 Corinthians 10:10 we are warned not to complain 'as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.' Have you ever found times in your life when you were praising God for his goodness only to be followed by difficult, bitter circumstances? When faced with the bitter circumstances of life Israel complained—and we don't fare much better either. So what was the purpose of that test? Yes they failed and sinned, but God used this test to reveal two things; that they may see the true condition of their hearts, and secondly, that they may receive a revelation of the heart of God; namely, that he wanted to heal them of latent sin from within. 'The people complained ... there he tested them ... I am the Lord who heals you' (Exod. 15:25-26).

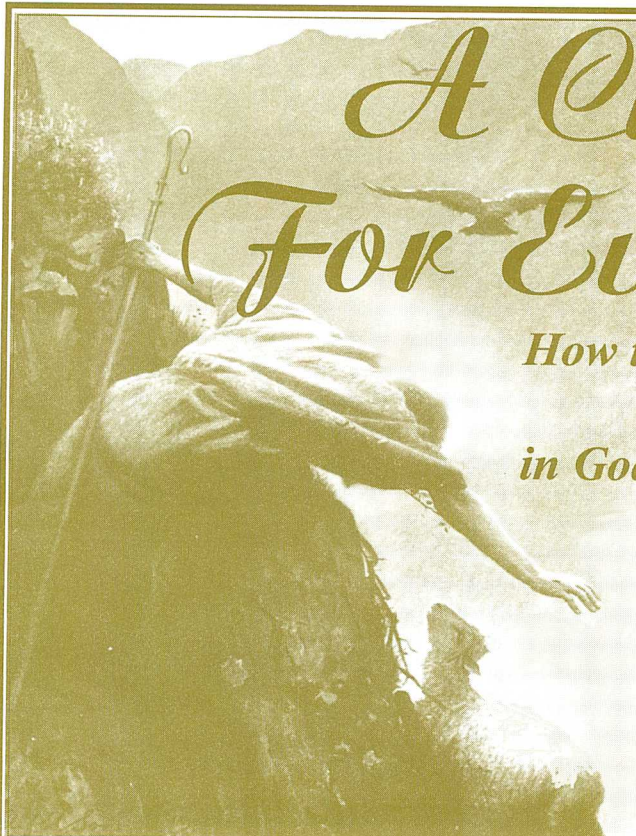
Years later, when Moses recounted this story to the Hebrews, just prior to their entry into the Promised Land, he encouraged them to remember how God led them 'through that great and terrible wilderness,

in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water ... that he might humble you and that he might *test* you, to do you good in the end' (Deut. 8:14-16). God wanted the latent sin to surface so that he could heal them from within. He had their best good in mind even when they failed. The Israelites didn't know how rebellious they were until they got thirsty. Yes, test means the possibility of risk and failure, but God is looking at the bigger picture. Once we are saved from the tyranny of sin then God begins to save us from ourselves—our sinful hearts.

If we see our sinful struggles only as liabilities we will never learn the positive lessons God has for us. Tests and even temptations are God's character development curriculum. When we are tempted and learn to say 'No' to our temptations, we are at the same time saying 'Yes' to God. Just think about that one sin of yours that doesn't seem to budge—maybe God wants you to take time and look to see what is causing it at a heart level, and then to see that God is waiting there as your Healer. If you are preoccupied with your sin, I challenge you to turn your eyes to Jesus and become preoccupied with him, your Healer.

Endnote:

1. *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.



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