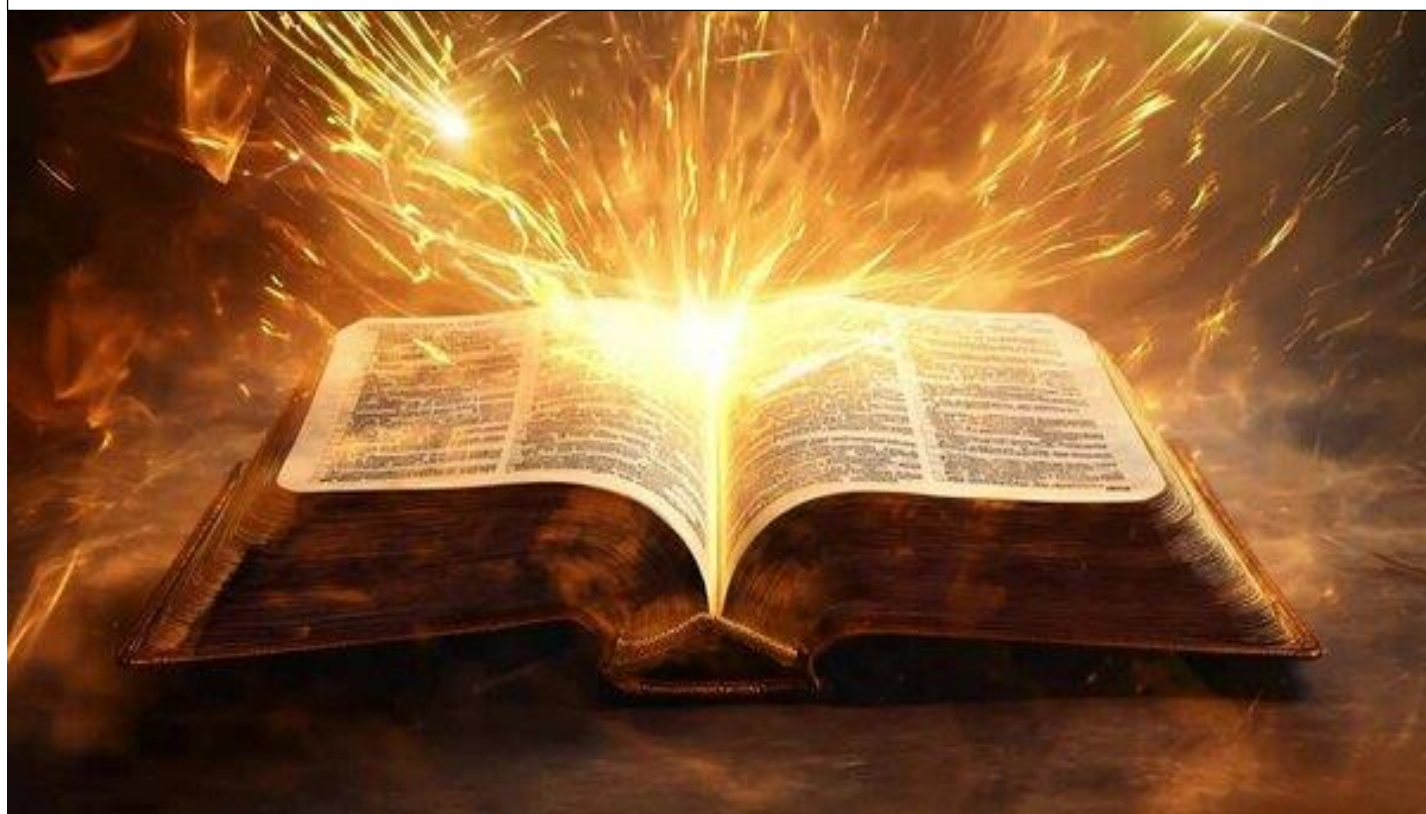




Truth To Wonder

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This Child I Prayed For

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

1 Samuel 1:27 For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him:

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:

Matthew 1:23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

The Garden of Eden was a sight of perfection that would soon become the sight of mankind's Fall. As Adam followed Eve in surrendering to the temptations of the Serpent over the commands of God, sin and death entered Creation. We see a reminder of this great decline every time a new life is brought into this world. As a new little child is greeted by their parents, they are heralded as 'perfect and beautiful'. The passage of time is seemingly halted for a moment of awe, as the incredible wonder of life is glimpsed at its most innocent and fragile. Yet it will not be long before time comes crashing back into effect, as the long, sleepless nights of parenthood begin. Like Eden, we had peace and fulfilment for such a brief and tantalising time.

So as the wages of sin that is death took hold upon all Creation (Romans 6:23). What hope would humanity have to cling onto after the loss of the perfection of Eden? Could Adam show the way forward to a new dawn of self-deliverance? Could our ancestor of old, show us that we can rescue ourselves from our self-inflicted plight? No, he could not. For in this moment of testing of resolve and wisdom, he was found by God cowering in fear and shame in a bush (Genesis 3:8).

Now discovered, would Adam now speak in humility and courage so that he might see his error and seek a remedy for his sin? No, he wouldn't. Instead, he sought to blame God for giving him Eve, the one he blindly followed over following God. Truly then, all fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). For if Adam had failed so miserably to deliver himself, he who had been formed directly by the hands of God, then what hope do we have? We who are conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5), what hope do we have to reach God once more? Do we even truly attempt to seek Him out in our own desire? Again, no. For none seek after the glory of the Lord (Romans 3:11). For how can the dead seek after anything? And we truly are dead in spirit before God (Romans 7:6).

It was by the grace of God then, that hopeless humanity would be offered a way back to Him. It could not be by a fallen man, for if the best of us had already failed (Adam), what hope can be put in any of his offspring? Yet we are the ones in peril, and so it must be one like us in all ways except in sin and guilt. And so, God moved to provide a Redeemer through the seed of a woman. One that would not be fathered by sinful man but begotten by the Father and conceived by the Holy Spirit. One who is equal with the Father (Philippians 2:6), and in whom is the fullness of the Godhead revealed (Ephesians 3:19). He who is without blemish yet took on the flesh of man (John 1:1-4) so that he could strike down that serpent of old (Revelation 12:9). Only God could perform such a miracle, no mortal man was up to the fight!

Though this promise was cast in the certain power of God's Word, its fulfilment would not come for many years. The barrenness of the spirit of fallen mankind would not be replenished to fullness of the life of God in one season. As the patient gardener knows, the wasteland must be carefully cultivated and nurtured over time, before it can host the blooming of a thousand luminous flowers. So too does the fullness of God's timing work, in which He makes all things beautiful (Ecclesiastes 3:11). So, the generations of mankind passed, and as each made way for the next, the Lord would reveal His nature and manner to us patiently and lovingly.

In the timing of God, He called out a faithful man in Abraham, through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 22:18). This calling out of Abraham, would be to father a people who would deliver the Saviour of the world (John 4:42). Yet this promised seed of a woman, this promised Deliverer, would not come until the people of that nation chosen by God would truly know Him. They would be made ready to receive Him through testing and trial, to mould them like the clay on the potter's wheel (Jeremiah 18:2-6). All so that they would turn from their frequent stumbles into great wickedness, and instead treasure the gift that God was to give unto them.

Yet these same stumbles into sin and wickedness, displayed the barrenness of the people's hearts before God. As in all fallen humanity, we only desire true goodness, when we have suffered greatly at the hands of the evil we once embraced. So, Hannah cried out to God for a son to ease her woes, and to silence the mockeries and persecutions of her rival (1

Samuel 1:6). This heartfelt cry God heard and answered with the provision of a son to soothe her cries and sorrows (1 Samuel 1:27).

So too would it be for many more years that Israel, the chosen people of God, would live on in spiritual barrenness before Him. Thus, in their emptiness of life in God, they were sent into despair and physical captivity. They became a source of mockery of the nations, oppressed and persecuted by many. In their suffering they longed for a Deliverer. Like Hannah, they longed for a son. But not just a son, but the Son of God that would be their Messiah. One who would lift them out of the mockeries and persecutions of those near them, and bring them into days of blessing and provision.



As it was with Hannah, in the darkest moments of her heartbreak, the hope of God came to her and gave her life. A life she could embrace and call her own, knowing that it was gifted to her in the fullness of God's immensity of grace. So, it was with Israel. At a time when it was under great darkness of Roman oppression and spiritual corruption of the Sanhedrin, the Son that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 9:6, finally came. He was to come as the seed of a woman, fathered by the Spirit of God. Fully man, yet fully God. On His shoulders would government rest. Through His peace would all peace be established. He would counsel them in all His wondrous glories. Yet, they did not know him. He came to His own and

they refused Him (John 1:11).

Emmanuel, God with us, had come (Matthew 1:23). The promised Son had been given, just as the prophets of God had long foretold. Born of a virgin, thus free from the miseries of sin, He entered this dark world so that He might be the light of salvation (John 8:12). He came in all humility, born into deepest poverty, so that He might know the depths of suffering His beloved Creation experiences. He who held all power and glory, set it all aside for a season. He did so that you and I could know that no matter the pain we feel, He knows it well and that we are not alone in our sufferings. Such is the immensity of God's love for you and me. That He loves us so deeply that He was willing to offer His Beloved Son as a full and final atoning sacrifice for our sins. One born of a virgin, uniquely able to carry our burden and cast it far away forever.

Jesus Christ came to die. This He knew as He stepped out of Heaven and took on the flesh of man. He knew the horrors He would suffer on our behalf, and yet He did not run and hide like Adam did in Eden. He was strong, courageous and selfless. He stepped on the head of the serpent, knowing that He would be bruised as a result, just as Genesis 3:15 revealed. Yet His love towards us was shown in His obedience to the will of the Father. For the Father seeks that none should perish, but all find salvation through His Son Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:9). In the fulfilment of all this, Christ Jesus rose again to glory and life, opening the gates to Heaven at long last.

This Christmas season, reflect on all these glorious truths of God. That the plan of salvation of fallen mankind, was ready for the moment of Adam's sin. Whilst humanity fumbled and stumbled in defiance and rebellion against God for generation after generation, He was longsuffering. He moved patiently to show the tenderness and consistency of His grace. He did this by interweaving redeemed soldiers of faith into His glorious plan of salvation. So that by the mouths of men, the words of God might herald the giving of a Son. No ordinary son, but the Son of God, the Saviour of the World.

Is He your Saviour? See how He has held you in His heart with a patient hope, that you will resist Him no longer. Come home to God through repentance of sin and the placing of faith in the risen Lord Jesus. Then you will enjoy the greatest gift you'll ever possess this Christmastime. Amen.

Knowing When To Move On

Moving on from someone can be a hard and painful thing. It can be heartbreaking to see someone that you've been trying so desperately to help, continue to refuse the message of the truth of the Gospel. The pain of this sad situation can easily haunt the servant of God, as the Devil will come along to whisper to you that you have failed in your God given task.

I have battled such attacks for a long time. Yet one day, God led me back to His written Word through a very humble means.

I was sat on my sofa looking out the small side window in my lounge. The window doesn't have a particularly beautiful view, as one of the first things that greets the eye is an overflow pipe from the water tank in the loft. This small overflow pipe however, soon found itself hosting an inquisitive sparrow. The sparrow poked and checked the pipe to see if anything profitable was hidden inside. After quickly realising that nothing was to be found, it simply moved on to continue its quest elsewhere.

This humble, little bird reminded me of Matthew 10:14, and how if when the Word of God is preached and not received, move on. There will be others out there who will hear and treasure the words of God. Yet many times we don't show the same efficiency as the little sparrow. Instead of moving on, we linger and obsess over people who continually show absolutely no regard for the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We often behave in such a manner out of a subtle belief that 'we' can reach a stubborn heart. We hold that if we push on a little more, our efforts will be rewarded. Whereas in fact, we are not living in trust that it is the work of God, not us, that brings life to a dead spirit. Our task is to share the Word of God. Then we are to trust that God will move according to His will as to whether a heart receives the good news or dismisses it.

By living in such faith that it is the Word of God that saves, not us, we can live as efficient witnesses for His Word. As efficient witnesses for Christ Jesus, we can quickly dismiss the lies of the Devil when he accuses us of failing God. We haven't failed God by moving in such a manner, in fact we have glorified God by moving in such a manner! That is because we are living what He has told us to do, no matter how hard it may be at times. This shows trust and obedience, one of the greatest demonstrations of the love that is felt towards Him in our hearts.

The Devil does not want God glorified. He doesn't want the Gospel shared efficiently. He wants the witnesses of Christ Jesus to be downcast and distracted. He doesn't want purposeful, assured witnesses of the truth of the Gospel, that's the last thing he wants!

So don't listen to his lies. When the Devil will have us become bogged down with people who desire only darkness when they have been offered the light of Christ Jesus. Move on with a peaceful heart knowing that you have done your duty as a soldier of Christ. Move on in hope that there are others out there that will hear the message of the risen Lord Jesus, with eagerness and thanks. Yet they will not hear it if you linger on with those who are there to hinder your task for the glory of God.

Friedrich Schleiermacher – A Subtle Voice Still Felt Today

Many Christians get very animated/heated over the topic of eschatology (study of the 'End Times'). Those who hold to a pre-tribulation rapture of the Church, are often derided as people who hold to a 'modern teaching' that only emerged under Clarence Darby in the 1800's. Yet far more Christians today hold to a teaching that emerged in the same era, that has a far greater impact on the entirety of the Christian faith. That teaching being a dismissal of doctrine and the correct defence and teaching of it as fundamental to Christianity; over the holding to the notion that God's Word is primarily to be viewed through the lens 'personal experience' and 'personal interpretation'. This modern teaching has caused far greater damage to the Church than 'pre-tribulationism' has ever done, yet its impact is nearly completely ignored. Let's investigate such a bold and controversial statement together.

Prior to the age of the 'Enlightenment' of the late 1700's (a movement founded in the deeply atheistic academic 'salons' of Paris by God hating men such as Rousseau and Voltaire), the unquestioned basis of Bible interpretation and teaching, was through sound knowledge and imparting of fundamental doctrinal truths. These basics of Biblical doctrine were not subject to the individual interpretation of men, as the Word of God was viewed as exactly that, the Word of God! As such, it was not open to the whims and fanciful thoughts and interpretations of individuals. Instead, it was built upon the unchanging declarations of Almighty God.

Thus, the doctrines and teachings found within its pages were to be interpreted and taught with consistency of imparting the message of the author (God). This correct manner of teaching being in opposition to the modernistic view that a text is to be interpreted by the reader, and that the reader's interpretation is often more valuable than the author's intended message. Yet this most basic ways of interpreting any text, let alone the Word of God, found itself being subtly reframed in 18th/19th century Germany, by a man called Friedreich Schleiermacher.

Schleiermacher was a man who viewed the Holy Scriptures through the lens of the atheistic Enlightenment movement. Dr John H. Leith in his book entitled *Crisis in the Church: The Plight of Theological Education*, made the following statement on the work of Schleiermacher:



‘Contemporary theologians have, since Schleiermacher, been subject to the temptation to understand the Christian faith in the light of the *dogmas* of the Enlightenment, rather than the Enlightenment in the light of the dogmas of the Christian faith.’

So, who was this man, Friedrich Schleiermacher? What was his stance before God and man? Why have his personal views on Holy Scripture shaped so many churches and theological seminaries today?

As mentioned, Schleiermacher was born in the age of unbelief, or the ‘Aufklärung’ as the Enlightenment was known in his native land of Germany. This movement raised human reason as the pinnacle of existence and the only way of knowing and proving truth to be truth. Friedrich was born into a Christian family. His father was a minister in the German Reformed Church, and young Friedrich was sent away to study at Moravian centres where piety, faith and adherence to the Scriptures as divine revelation was determinedly maintained. Yet even in such circles, the spirit of the age slipped its way into the mind of Friedrich as he wrote, ‘God and immortality disappeared before my doubting eyes’. These troubling words were later followed in a letter to his father in 1787, where a young Friedrich wrote:

‘I cannot believe that He, who called himself the Son of Man, was the true, eternal God: I cannot believe that His death was a vicarious atonement, because He never expressly said so Himself: and I cannot believe it to have been necessary, because God, who evidently did not create men for perfection, but for the pursuit of it, cannot possibly intend to punish them eternally, because they have not attained it.’

In a move befitting many modern-day ministers, Friedrich’s disbelief didn’t cause him to change his career plans. He soon became a minister in the German Reformed Church after leaving the Moravian seminary in Barby, Germany. Such a care-free approach to any saving faith being held by ministers was widespread in Germany at the time. Professing a Christian faith was oftentimes mere lip service to God, with this being exemplified by Frederick II of Prussia. Otherwise known as ‘Frederick the Great’, this king’s faith was purely nominal as he was well known to openly blaspheme the name of God at the sight of a cross. With such prominent men being ‘nominal Christians’ at best, it is not hard to see how the realm of German Higher Criticism became prevalent. In many influential arenas, Christianity in Germany was generally far removed from real Biblical faith.

Schleiermacher was not a banner bearer for rationalism, however. He sought to blend rationalism and Enlightenment era thinking with Christianity and theological understanding/teaching. Aware of the possible damage rationalism and materialism could pose to the now flimsy version of Christianity that pervaded much of Germanic culture, Friedrich wrote his book, *On Religion* in 1799. This work attempted to soothe any potential war between Christianity and rationalism/materialism, by mingling the two together. The foundation of this thought was that religion is not primarily a matter of doctrine but of feeling, intuition and experience. By this, Schleiermacher was bringing the study of the Holy Bible under the lens of rationalistic/materialistic thinking. God’s eternal Word was not irrelevant, just merely subject to the personal interpretation of man. Such a view was immensely significant, and it proved extremely popular in a society filled with nominal Christians, all of whom sought a means of holding onto a badge of piety. All the while though they lived by their own preferred code of conduct and ethics (sound familiar of many ‘Christians’ today?).

Friedrich Schleiermacher proposed that the religious instinct within mankind, was independent of thought and therefore through this instinct, all humanity is united to the ‘spirit of the universe’ (hello eastern mysticism and New Age teaching!). He looked to circumvent the issue of exclusivity of salvation through Christ Jesus. He did so by claiming that whilst Christianity is ‘sublime’, by the religious element or nature of man, God is made known and united to all peoples. The outcome of such a teaching was that no longer was salvation from without needed (the need for a Saviour, the foundation stone of Christianity!), but man’s salvation laid within him. Here we have the subtle lies of the Devil weaving its way through the Church. The same lie that he whispered to Eve all the way back in Eden! That lie being, ‘Yes, there may be a God, but you don’t need Him, you can be like Him instead.’

Lord willing in the next issue, we will continue to see how the life and teachings of Friedrich Schleiermacher radically changed western Christendom. This radical change was not for the better however, but instead the instigation of a slow

rot that has seen Christianity go from being the foundation of western society, to fast becoming an irrelevance to the masses. For further reading on this important topic, read Iain H Murray's *Evangelicalism Divided* (see Resource Corner for more information).

Strolling Past Provisions

Creation surrounds us with a living witness of one of God's majestic attributes, His unique knowledge of the future, otherwise known Scripturally as 'foreknowledge'. When you take your winter walk this season, you may likely find yourself strolling through beautiful woodland sites. You may select such a site for a refreshing walk because of the beautiful scenery and clean air. If you are like me, you probably pay scant regard for the silent testimonies of the nature of God that surrounds you as you amble through the wooded scene.

In trees, we can see how God provided for the needs and creativity of mankind from the very outset of Creation. Two days before Adam was formed from the dust of the earth, God brought forth plant life on day four of Creation. A large part of this created vegetation would be trees, a natural building material with varying remarkable physical properties amongst their differing types.

For instance, there are particular types of trees that are known as 'tone woods'. The wood from these trees is highly prized by musicians, as the wood that comes from trees such as spruces, hold a wonderful ability to provide the pure resonance required for stringed instruments. To this day, the finest stringed instruments made by mankind rely on God's ancient provision of the spruce tree to construct our instruments. Spruce wood has a high stiffness-to-weight ratio, making it perfect for the construction of soundboards. These are the boards that sit directly underneath the strings of a stringed instrument such as a violin or guitar. It is this soundboard that is vital in the production of the sound of the plucked string. Man's ability to harness this natural resource does not come from 'Mother Nature' but from the provision of God. It was God that made man in His image and likeness, and so we hold the ability to create just as our Creator does, just to a lesser degree. Knowing this ability of mankind to create and express itself through mediums such as art and music, God provided the tools to enable us to do exactly this, express our hearts. The desire of God was that we would use these gifts of creativity to create music, art etc, that glorify Him whilst fulfilling us.

Similar amazing musical properties lay within maple wood. Maple is commonly used for the construction of the back and sides of woodwind instruments due to its amazing ability to carry musical resonance. Again, God foresaw the creativity of man and provided the means so that mankind could express itself in joy and thanksgiving unto our loving Creator.

As we stroll past tree after tree on our winter walks, we would be right to be humbled by the awesome provision, foreknowledge and love of our Lord God towards us. He didn't make mankind, look on and see our frustrated desire to express our hearts through music and art, and then provide the resources to unlock this creative ability. Such a limited and reactionary god is the reserve of pantheism and paganism. Our God knows all. He looked through the corridors of time and provided all the required resources to fulfil our God given potential. This potential that rests upon our being made in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:27).

This truth should bring us confidence to enter each day with boldness and thanksgiving. How many times do we enter a new day, a new week or even a new year with a degree of hope but also worry. We worry about stepping forward to serve God because we fear that our needs may not be met. However, let us remember the testimony that surrounds us in Creation. That quiet testimony of the humble tree. In this witness, we can be reminded that God knows well our daily needs, and moves to provide for them long in advance, we just often don't see it. It's like the old saying, 'They can't see the wood for the trees'. We often can't see the blessings and provisions of God because we fixate on the problems that the blessings are ready to overcome. Let's correct our walk through each day and thank God for His foreknowledge of all things. The greatest demonstration of that foreknowledge being that He knows all those that have not hardened their hearts towards Him. Thus, in His grace, He moved to give His only begotten Son so that those who hear His call, might be redeemed from their sins and brought back to His loving embrace.

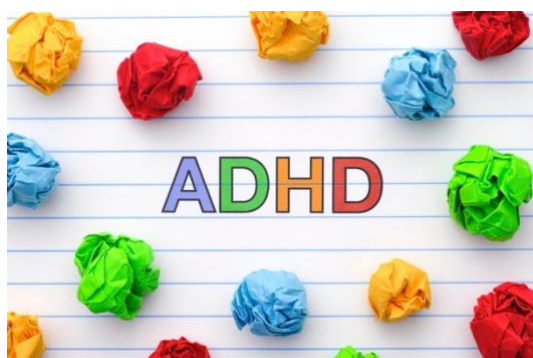
Are 'Consequences' Good For Mental Health?

Many today are preoccupied with their 'mental health'. For several years now we have been repeatedly told that if something is bad for our 'mental health' we are to label it as 'toxic' and remove it from our lives. Of course, there are instances where this a wise course of action (an abusive relationship for example). Sadly though, many are mistaking

difficult and/or challenging situations as 'toxic' and are mislabelling them as detrimental to their mental health. As a result, they wrongly cut out a situation, event, structure, or even person from their life, only to later find themselves suffering even more than if they had simply risen to the challenge.

An example of this is in the identification of consequences for our choices and actions harmful to our mental health. Several years ago, I was working with a troubled child who had been diagnosed with ADHD, autism, Aspergers Syndrome and speech and language difficulties. The child was primary school aged and had been expelled from mainstream schooling due to their consistency of violence towards staff and pupils.

The child had come to my care as they attended the holiday club where I worked at the time. The child was passed around senior staff constantly as no one could cope with the child's behaviour. The child's behaviour was so bad that even Social Services had 'given up on them' (their own words during a phone consultation with them over the child's behaviour). All the modern techniques of trying to avoid 'triggers' and the removal of 'negative approaches' for the child's aggressive actions (punishments for bad behaviour in other words), were implemented by several experienced and well-meaning staff members. The child however, continued to terrorise the holiday club everyday they attended.



Having been raised in a Christian household, I took a very different approach with the child. I disregarded the accepted educational guidance regarding the 'support of the needs of the affected child' and instead implemented a much more concise and effective method of education. That being Proverbs 13:24. I made sure that the child knew that if they misbehaved there would be consequences. As a result, when the child was in my care, they behaved, simple as that. I was asked if I would be the child's one to one carer at the holiday club. I accepted on the proviso that no one would interfere with my methods (God's way of child rearing!). The manager of the centre quickly accepted my terms, out of sheer relief that someone had taken the issue of their hands!

Now, did the child accept the implementing of clear consequences for their actions immediately? No, they didn't. They resisted at first, as they had become used to being pandered to by confused childcare assistants who were trying to avoid giving that toxic thing of consequences. However, I refused to have the safety and welfare of others dictated by the violent actions of one unruly child. And so, I continued to implement that 'toxic' thing of consequences for wrong behaviour.

To cut a long story short, after a couple of weeks of consistent implementing of consequences for bad actions, the child's behaviour dramatically improved! Their social skills saw a massive improvement; their communication skills began to catch up with that of their peers; their ability to focus and complete work increased exponentially, and their daily violent acts faded away. Not long later, they were back in mainstream schooling.

Towards the end of my time with the child, the fruits of my labours began to truly flourish. The child's mother, a lovely lady, came up to me and thanked me sincerely for what I had done with her son. No longer did she have a face of worry and exhaustion every time she picked her child up from the club. Now she had a face of relief and joy, and the child mirrored this in their excited greeting of her. On the same day, I received a call of thanks from Social Services also. They asked as to how I, an 18-year-old university student with no childcare training or qualifications, had managed to turn such a troubled child around so quickly. The answer was quite clear, it was nothing remarkable about me, it was simply an implementing of Proverbs 13:24.

A crucial part of that verse is that such disciplined measures are done in love. I gave boundaries and consequences for the bettering of that poor troubled child. I didn't want them being left behind and labelled a lost cause by everyone. I wanted to see them thrive, as any child should, for we are all made in the image and likeness of God! That investment I made in that child was returned when numerous times they called me 'Dad' (the child's father was not around sadly, I never asked why). I had been stern with them numerous times. I had given them strong consequences for their often-violent actions many times over until they learnt their lesson. Yet rather than treating me as 'toxic', that child came to see me in such terms of endearment. Funnily enough, when I left that holiday club another difficult child when hearing that I was leaving, ran up to me and exclaimed, 'You can't leave! Who's going to tell us off when we've done something wrong?'

I often think of that child. They made a lasting impression on me. That impression was the fulfilment of Proverbs 13:24. That truth that far from being toxic, consequences for wrong and sinful behaviour are **GOOD** for our health; mental and physical! So many today are being treated for ADHD (there is a backlog for assessments of ADHD amongst adults

now as well as children!), not because of any 'mental illness' or neurological disorder, but because their lives are devoid of consequence for actions.

To support such a controversial claim, many highly respected doctors are observing how many patients diagnosed with disorders such as ADHD, are simply suffering from a lack of consequence for action. Many have rightly noted that ADHD patients can spend hours at a time playing videogames but cannot spend even a few minutes doing classwork/homework. It's not out of laziness (that is ironically a lazy conclusion in itself), it's because their interactions with the world of the videogame provides clear, immediate consequences for their input. Press a button on the controller, something immediately happens as a result. There is instant gratification.

As one neurologist observed, when a child fills out their homework page, the consequence of their actions/input is delayed. The outcome of their efforts might not come for hours or even days. That child (and increasingly adults) however, has become accustomed to instant acknowledgment of their inputs. When that acknowledgement is not immediate, it is unpleasant to them. Their brains have become neurologically wired to have that quick gratification by screens. When a teacher, carer or parent does not behave in a similar manner to a screen, they lose interest, and their effort is withdrawn. When such actions occur consistently, the child (again, adults increasingly also) falls behind in attainment, giving the impression that they are academically 'challenged'. Many aren't, instead they are suffering from the modern disease of instant gratification (similar to how pornography affects the health of many modern adult relationships).

As adult cases of ADHD are skyrocketing, consider how this again is likely fuelled by the instantly gratifying and lack of consequences manner of modern living. The efficiency of modern technology means that we expect quick and consistent results from our input. If it's not forthcoming in a timely manner that suits our expectations, we quickly become irritated and/or disinterested. We may even find ourselves labelling that person who has irritated us as 'toxic' and wrongly cut them out of our lives. This only leaves us more isolated and falling further into the immediate gratification of electronic based interactions. In looking to protect our mental health, we are harming ourselves. In removing the consequences of our own sinful behaviours, we are robbing ourselves of the love of God!

People are failing in their hope for a fulfilled life and thus becoming disillusioned, not out of laziness, but out of a lack of consequence for actions made. These consequences can be rewards or punishments. Many people today are working themselves to ill health because what was the reward for a day's labour a generation or two ago, is now not reachable. One recent headline was that an adult in Britain today can work fulltime for the entirety of their lives and the income leftover after paying essential bills, is still not enough to leave them 'economically secure' when they reach retirement. Countless people are rushing 'to and fro' (Daniel 12:4) just to chase a goal that they know they'll likely never reach. The consequence of their actions, good in this instance, is not forthcoming anymore.

So, people are 'tapping out' from life. They are looking for release from a world devoid of consequence, and so they drown their sorrows in the instantly gratifying world of screens. Parents are tired and dejected from the growing futility of modern life, and this is being passed on to their children. Many know this is no way to live and so are looking to psychiatry, counselling and pills to solve their woes. They are looking desperately for peace and genuine love, but it all seems so far away, whereas the world of screens is so close and easy. In a world that has been stripped of consequence for actions, people are searching high and low for consequences to their entire existence!

As many neurologists and psychologists are pointing out, the worst thing you can do to a person with ADHD is to further remove consequences from their actions from their life. You may think you are helping them by removing obstacles and 'boundaries' from their lives, but you are removing purpose and reward from their lives! This is where the Church has failed modern society miserably. Rather than standing outside of secular life (as it always should) and declaring loudly that true reward, true purpose in life is found in the love of Christ Jesus alone, it has sided with liberal ideology. That Godless ideology that has removed consequence for actions from daily life and has thus made daily life a pointless trudge to the grave.

Where are the preachers declaring the power, the hope, the purpose of verses such as Isaiah 52:1-3?! The nation of Israel ignored the consequences of their sin and were led into captivity as a result. Societies today have designated consequences 'toxic' and so have been led into captivity of their souls! They have placed chains around their necks and have led themselves into the soulless slavery of modern life! Men of God are to shout to all such afflicted that they are to 'Arise, arise!' (Isaiah 52:1), for the salvation of the Lord is at hand! He has come to bring peace and purpose to our days. And so, we are to put on our 'beautiful garments' (Isaiah 52:2) that is salvation in Christ Jesus and be ready to receive of the fruits of the Spirit of God! Those blessed fruits that bring the immediacy of reward our hearts are so desperately crying out for! Those fruits of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5:22).

The instant gratification of modern life is the cause of many 'mental health' disorders and behavioural difficulties, amongst the young and old. The immediacy of the satisfying of the flesh through screens, is the enemies pale imitation of the immediacy of the satisfying of the spirit that is made known through faith in Christ Jesus.

Consequence is not a toxic thing or bad word. Far from it! Consequences of sin are there to convict us of our need for a Saviour. This drives us to find peace and the satisfying of our soul from one who is uniquely able to free us from the debt of our sins. When we do so, we see how consequence is a safeguard to us from the loving hand of God. We see that the words of Proverbs 13:24, are indeed fuelled by a love that is far greater than our mortal minds can truly comprehend. We see at last, that He did not spare the rod from us, because He loves us so deeply that He sought to save us from eternal damnation. We see at long last, that true 'mental health' is found in the blessed form of Christ Jesus. Amen.

Wealth Devalued

Those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it. That's the old but true saying. Many nations today are struggling with severe economic woes as the impact of using financial 'levers' to unlock wealth is now being felt negatively. The effects of 'quantitative easing' during the financial crisis of 2009, is still having an impact on the value of the Pound today.

This enterprise, whilst having some short-term positive effect during the height of the crisis, heavily devalued the Pound in the long-term. This meant that the UK's ability to pay off the massive levels of interest accrued on the nations ballooning debt, was greatly weakened. This has further heightened levels of government borrowing to astronomical levels (projected to be up to 670% of our GDP in coming years if not corrected soon). This in turn has put off investment from investors, damaging our ability to assure lenders that we can pay back our huge national debt. As a result, sceptical lenders have lowered our international credit rating, meaning the interest levels we pay on the national debt increases yet again. The implication for the average joe is that people's savings and pensions are stagnating in value; interest payments on cars, mortgages etc have increased, taxes and daily living costs have increased, whilst the value of the money earned in monthly wages has decreased.



All this is a very sad state of affairs for a nation whose currency was once the reserve currency for the world, not even that long ago! Yet such downfalls have been seen before in history. Back in ancient Rome, the silver denarius was the reserve currency of the Roman Empire (see picture). The coin was accepted in transactions from Iberia and Britannia, all the way to Judea and Egypt. It was the quality of the silver and its renowned purity that gave traders confidence to utilise it in all manner of transactions.

This trusted currency, gave the wealth that underpinned the expanse that was the Roman Empire.

Yet after some time, greed began to inspire the Emperors of Rome to begin to compromise on the quality and purity of the silver contained in the denarius. Under imperial orders, the silver was mixed with tin to make the currency go further (very similar to quantitative easing as seen earlier) and generate more wealth. This happened for a short time, as money lenders and tradesmen did not immediately detect the small alterations to the purity of the silver denarius coin. However, subsequent emperors all tried to play the same trick and so the levels of tin in the coin increased further. Also, the width of the coin was compromised, as it became thinner and thinner. This further devalued the currency and meant that money lenders and merchants began to refuse to accept this impure coin as payment. Any economist will tell you that the financial markets are easily 'spooked', and concerns over currency value can quickly see a strong currency become worthless extremely quickly! This is what happened to the denarius. The result was that the wealth of Rome began to evaporate, and it soon lost its prominence on the world stage.

A very similar thing happened in Renaissance Era Venice. As greedy bankers did exactly the same thing in compromising the purity of the gold ducat, the lynchpin of the Venetian Lira currency that fuelled their sizeable trading empire.

What lessons can we as Christians take from these economic collapses of the past? Firstly, that the greed of the Romans and the Venetians (and others not mentioned in this article) proved the truth recorded in Holy Scripture that the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10). When we consider the disastrous effects of the economic collapse of

empires such as the Roman and Venetian, on the people living at the time, the evils they endured as a result would've been immense. The inability to pay for food, shelter, medicine, clothing would've meant a miserable existence for huge swathes of the population. All because of the greed of a few men who loved money above all.

Secondly, we can learn how vitally important it is to protect purity! What made ancient Rome and Renaissance Venice the powerhouses of their day, was the initial purity of the coinage in their currencies. The quality and purity in each coin gave traders, bankers and merchants confidence to build their worldly existence on these little metal discs. When the quality and purity of the coins were compromised, the currency collapsed, and not long later the empires built on that currency.

Christianity became the strength of the world when it's point of 'transaction' if you will, the Holy Scriptures, was recognised as full of consistent quality and purity. By 'transaction' we mean that it is through the reading and hearing of the Word of God that lives are purchased from slavery unto sin by the payment of the blood of Christ Jesus. Now look at the history of the Holy Bible and correlate that with the rapid growth of Christianity and its fruits throughout the globe (abolition of slavery, education for the young, improved healthcare, judicial reform, etc). It all came about at astonishing pace and scale whilst one Bible was embraced as the revealed Word of God, the AV/KJV Bible. The facts speak for themselves.

Now consider the well documented 'decline of Christianity' in the world. When did it begin? When the quality and purity of the Word of God was first compromised by the introduction of various translations of the Word of God. These early revisions such as the RSV, knowingly cut the pure Word of God with elements such as humanistic philosophy and 'dynamic equivalence'. Much like in the denarius of ancient Rome, the change was not detected by the vast majority, and so it was still accepted as pure, even though it wasn't! Then subsequent publishing houses saw the increased profits from new Bible translations and promoted further dilution of the Word of God. Some detected the compromise of quality and purity, but they were silenced and laughed at as being fanatical or deluded. Churches were still generally well attended. Christian youth groups were still fairly popular. Christian worship music still openly identified the God they were meant to be worshipping, so where was the problem?

The problem came with the inevitable collapse. As the denarius and the ducat collapsed quickly when merchants caught on the heavily devalued coin they were being told was still pure, so too has much of western Christendom. Sceptics have astutely identified the many errors contained in modern versions (see *Crowned with Glory* by Dr Holland, *New Age Versions* by G.A Riplinger, *Defending The King James Bible* by Rev.D.A Waite) and challenged the validity of the entirety of the Holy Bible as a result. The impact being that record numbers of churches have closed and nations such as ours have ever falling numbers of inhabitants declaring themselves as Christian. All because confidence in the value of the Word of God has been eroded by the greed of men who traded purity for profit, just like in ancient Rome and Renaissance Venice.

What hope do we have then in such dire times? Well, in times of economic peril, the value of gold rockets. Right now (mid-October 2025), gold is selling for record highs. The markets are jittery and awaiting a massive crash, meaning they are looking to put their money in the relative stability that gold affords in economic terms. We Christians, indeed the whole world still has that 'spiritual gold' if you will, that is the pure Word of God available to us. That being the still unmatched AV/KJV Bible.

If you are sceptical on such bold claims, by all means test it! If I was going to sell you a bar of gold under the assurance that it is pure gold and therefore extremely valuable, I wouldn't expect you to simply take my word on it! I'd say test it's purity, check its value. I'm confident you won't be disappointed that it is what I'm telling you it is, namely pure gold. I have that same confidence in saying to you go and thoroughly investigate this all-important matter that is Bible versions. Because what you'll find is that modern bible versions are a devalued mix of gold and Fools gold. It all looks like genuine gold on first glance, but when thoroughly tested, it soon becomes apparent that it's not all what it claims.

So, in these times of spiritual collapse, learn from the mistakes of those that have gone before. Do not be doomed to repeat history out of simple ignorance. Guard the purity of the Word of God and don't ever look to compromise on its value, even if it may achieve some short-term gains. The end is always the same, the short-term gain turns to long term pain. If the Roman silver denarius was purified once and so greatly prized as a result, what does Psalm 12:6 tell you about the Word of God and how it should be prized?!

Have Thine Own Way Lord

Life can seem disappointing sometimes. The hopes and plans of even we believers can feel as though they have been snatched away from us. The love of God can feel so far away, as our hopeful plans to serve Him fail to come to any sense of fruition. Adelaide Pollard was a woman who knew such heavy feelings very well.

Born in 1862 in Iowa, USA, Adelaide showed exemplary talent in many fields. A gifted writer and well educated, Adelaide spent many years initially working in a girl's school. Whilst teaching there, she wrote many hymns, religious articles and poetry, all to utilise her God given talents.

Her real concern though, was the reaching of the lost before God. She held a deep longing to reach many with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, So she began to travel the country to witness for Christ Jesus at many groups, churches and institutions. This did not quell her desire to reach the lost however, and she soon developed a longing for missionary work. She took up a position at the Missionary Training Institute at Nyack, New York, and found a desire to become a missionary to Africa. The problem she found however, was that it seemed God was deserting her as she formed this desire to become a missionary.

In a spirit made heavy with doubt and confusion, young Adelaide attended a prayer meeting. Her mind was so troubled however that she didn't take anything in that the speaker was saying. As she sat there feeling dejected, she heard the prayer of an old lady she knew who regularly attended that same meeting. The old lady prayed in a broken but faithful voice, "It's all right, Lord! It doesn't matter what you bring into our lives; just have your own way with us!" On hearing those words, Adelaide felt the great burden on her spirit lift at last, as she submitted to the will of God.

On returning home, Adelaide thought deeply on the story of the potter as seen in Jeremiah 18:3-4. As she reflected on those words of Holy Scripture, she noted, 'perhaps my questioning of God's will shows a flaw in my life, so God has decided to break me, as the potter broke the defective vessel, and then to mould my life again...in His own pattern.'

That realisation caused the Adelaide to pen the poem that would be later set to music and become the hymn *Have Thine Own Way Lord*.



Adelaide had learnt that Christians can indeed be self-centred and self-willed. This behaviour is often so subtle that we don't even detect the flaws in our vessel. But the master potter that is the Lord sees all the hairline cracks in our ways. He moves to first break and then reshape that damaged vessel so that it be fit for purpose, His purpose. Adelaide learnt that every venture made in the name of God must be done so carefully, in case it is done on the leaning of our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5).

In God's time, He allowed Adelaide to become a missionary to Africa, so revealing the patience and grace of His loving heart to her. But His plan was greater than her dreams, as she also spent many years in England during WWI, witnessing to many in this land in a truly dark hour. She then returned home to the USA to continue her work for Christ in her travels across her homeland.

Adelaide continued to speak publicly until the age of 72, when on her way to yet another meeting, she fell gravely ill in New York. She went home to glory soon after. What she left behind were the sweet words of the hymn *Have Thine Own Way Lord*. A hymn that speaks to us that when we truly mean those words we are singing unto God, we are given peace in the remembrance that His Way is ours always. For the Way is our Saviour Jesus Christ, and it is by Him that we shall walk golden streets with dear Adelaide. Amen.

Christ The King Day

The state of Michigan, USA, passed as legislation a statewide recognition of Sunday November 23rd 2025 as 'Christ the King Day'. The motion was carried and implemented following the furthering of the call of 'Christian Nationalism' that

is gathering increasing support across many US States. The ambition of the legislation is to set aside one day to recognise the Kingship of Christ Jesus over all nations and enshrine this honouring into official government legislation.

On initial inspection, many Christians may get excited by such a move, especially when we bear in mind the rampant liberal progressivism that has ripped western society to shreds in the last two decades. Yet what is being implemented here is not built upon the rock of Scripture, but upon the ambitions of the Papacy.

The designation of November 23rd as 'Christ the King Day' was first put forward for world adoption by Pope Pius XI in 1925 (hence its resurgence to mark its 100th anniversary as a concept). It was an attempt by Rome to reassert its power over a markedly different world following WWI. The huge power and wealth that Rome enjoyed prior to this terrible conflict was deeply hit. This combined with the rise of Communism, Fascism and secularism amongst world nations, prompted Rome to seek to reassert its political supremacy over the nations of the world once again.



The rise of 'Christian Nationalism' in nations such as the US today, is being fuelled by a powerful ecumenical force of which the Papacy is a driving force. There is a great and much desired clamour to legislate 'Christianity' (not Biblical Christianity) into society and thereby force Protestant nations such as the US, to come under the supremacy and leadership of the Papacy. It has long been Rome's belief that it holds divine right to rule the nations of the world. It seeks to enforce political power through legal enforcement of its dogmas and practices. One only need look at the Dark Ages (or Middle Ages as they have been re-termed) to see the brutal enacting of Rome's ideals upon European nations. History tells us that Rome looks to enforce faith through legislation. This is not Biblical! But it is the goal of the Antichrist.

Rome is capitalising on the socio/political fear of western nations, as it is these once Protestant nations that have been a thorn in its side since the Reformation. These once Godly nations have embraced liberalism and are paying the price in well documented ways (just turn on the news each day!). Now, there is a growing call to 'return to Christianity', in such nations as our own. Whilst this on the surface is good news, the long-worked plan of Satan is quietly unfolding before our eyes. That plan being that many preachers, ministers, churches have become so weak in the Biblical understanding, so flimsy in their theological stands, and so embracing of ecumenism, that what many understand to be 'Christianity' today is far removed from what the Holy Bible reveals it to be.

In truth, much of what is preached and taught today is pleasant, easily digestible and often virtually indistinguishable from Catholicism. So, when people are clamouring for a return to Christianity, what they are unwittingly signing up to support is not what God has revealed in Holy Scripture. Instead, it is a corrupted version of it that has been peddled by Rome for centuries.

In John 6:15 we read of the people attempting to take Jesus and make Him King by force (just as this current legislation is attempting to do in the USA). Did Jesus allow this? No, He didn't. He slipped away and went up to the mountains alone. He would not have the people follow and worship Him by force or by legislation. He did not need popular opinion to lift Him up to rule as any mortal man does. He desires that we follow Him and have Him be King of our hearts by choice. For if God is love, which He is of course (1 John 4:8), then how can He force us to worship Him and follow Him? That wouldn't be loving at all! He would contravene His own self, something that is impossible! This is why it would be eternally cruel of God to force all non-believers to spend eternity worshipping Him. That's the last thing they want to do, spend eternity with the God they warred against all their lives.

It is very easy in this fear filled world to eagerly sign up to the possibility of anything that appears to uphold the Gospel. But we must be sober and vigilant, for the Devil goes about seeking those he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). We must be wise as a serpent, and humble of spirit to remember that the coming deception of the Antichrist would deceive the very elect of God if it were possible! (Matthew 24:24). What's coming is going to sweep up so many eager but weak souls who genuinely think they are Christian because what they have been poorly taught by weak and sometimes corrupted teachers. So, judge all things by Holy Scripture. Test such seemingly happy news as 'Christ the King Day' and see as to whether it is the one who poses as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) is behind it all!

Lessons From The Shunamite Woman - Part Two

Sometimes living in constant selfless service of others in the name of God is hard and can feel thankless. The words of Galatians 6:9 in that we are not to grow weary in well doing, are known to us to be true, yet we may still have moments where we feel that its hopeful words may not apply to us.

The Devil is a master at making the faithful servant of Christ believe that they are the exception to the rule. He will whisper doubts into our ear that whilst others are rewarded for their service to God, we are not seeing anything for our sacrifice and so why continue in our work? The shame of the doubt planted in our minds is the brilliant second blow of the enemy, as the Devil looks to make us hide our doubts away in fear of judgment from fellow believers. So, we find ourselves isolated from strengthening and encouragement. We may even soon find ourselves going about our service for the Lord with a constantly heavy heart. The world still sees our efforts, but it doesn't see the burden we are carrying silently.

The Lord knows, however. He desires that we serve Him with a light and joyful heart. He doesn't want to look upon His children and see lives riddled with doubt and secret pain. He came to give us life more abundantly (John 10:10), and longs for each of His redeemed to enjoy this abundance of spirit every day. This desire of God is seen moving throughout Holy Scripture, and it is evident in 2 Kings 4:11-17.

The kindness that the Shunamite woman had shown Elisha and his servant Gehazi in the building of a room for him to rest in, was to be returned to her. Again, falling on a seemingly inconsequential day, the grace of God would come to meet the silent longings of a faithful servant. The Lord has moved in such a manner so many times over in so many lives throughout the generations. His blessings arrive at a time that appears random to our mortal understanding, but in fact arrives in the perfection of God's timing (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

So, the gracious provisions of God would move again in this familiar manner. His movements are unheralded by the understanding of mankind, whilst the angels watch on in Heaven with eager anticipation of what majesties they are about to bear witness to. Here a servant of God that was Elisha, laid upon that bed given to him by the Shunamite and wondered how he might repay her kindness to him. The insight of even the mightiest man of God pales in light of the eternal wisdom of God, for who can truly know the heart apart from God! (1 Kings 8:39). So, this searching for a kindness to return to the Shunamite woman was stirred within the heart of Elisha by the tender mercies of the Lord. Those mercies that are new every morning, had come to visit that faithful Shunamite woman that seemingly random day (Lamentations 3:23), and so she is called to visit Elisha in that little room.

The Shunamite woman stands there before the man of God and listens to his enquiry as to what kindness he can do to show his thanks towards her. He asks as to whether she would like an audience with the King or the Captain of the army as a reward for her kindness. Many worldly hearts would snatch eagerly at such an invite. Elisha and Gehazi perhaps assumed that this offer, so prized in the ancient world and still today would be accepted, yet the Shunamite woman declines. She notes that she is content amongst her people, and politely leaves.

So what kindness is to be given to such a humble, contented and generous soul? How the mind of Elisha searched and how the angels watched on in wonder as to how such a heart might be rewarded for its gentleness and service. Unbeknown to them, the gentle decline of the Shunamite woman, whilst true and no mere placation of Elisha, maybe masked a long-held desire in her heart. A good and God honouring desire that wept out in silent tears unto the Lord God many times over in the quiet of the night hours. Those tears were likely spent not knowing that they were being heard by a merciful and gracious God. The mighty archangel with all his power and strength could not determine their source, God alone is tender and knowing of such hidden pains. Those pains that live so deeply in the heart that sometimes we don't even know how much they trouble our days. We know that something burdens us, but the secret groans of the heart we cannot articulate (Romans 8:26). And so, we believe that we are to suffer quietly, and to endure with a constant ache in our spirit. The Lord would not have His children love Him in such a heavy and sorrowful way, however. He longs to see His children delight in His love and sing in the security of His provision.

So, the Shunamite woman is called back after Gehazi notes that she has no child of her own, and that her husband is an old man. In fleshly terms the outlook for the joy of embracing a child of her own is seemingly bleak. The time for that happy blessing of God has passed them by. Whilst she knows this joyful gift of God to be true, as she had likely witnessed it many times over through friends and family members offspring, that joy was not to be hers. So, she had contented herself with the thought that this joy was never to be hers. As a result, she would not press for something that she believed God would not have her to know. Oh, how we unknowingly deny God glory with such sad thoughts of

resignation. And in the unwitting denial of God His due glory, we rob ourselves of the peace and purpose we know deep in our hearts when we live to glorify God with all our heart, mind and strength.

Such a sad resolution plagues many of God's children today. We may have waited on a longed-for blessing for many, many years. Yet we are seemingly left to watch others gain their versions of that same blessing, whilst we go without. Some become bitter in such times. Other become painfully resigned to their lot in life. They accept it but with burning tears of knowing that their hearts desire will never be realised. Their walk with God, though whilst remaining faithful, has lost its spring and joy.

Unbeknownst to such hearts, is the watching eye of God, who looks on such enduring but heavy steps with great compassion. The Lord moves through His servant Elisha to utter a promise that is implausible to the mind of man. He says to the Shunamite woman that she will embrace a son in coming days according to the natural timings of the delivery of a child.

What joy should burst out from the heart of the Shunamite woman at such happy news! Her likely longed-for desire was to be hers in reward for her diligent and generous service of another believer. Yet in her reaction we see an all too familiar pain emerge. It makes itself known through weary words of a heart that has grown accustomed to serving through quiet longing. She hears the joyful news and responds to Elisha, 'Nay, my lord, *thou* man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid.' She knows Elisha to be a great man of God and has performed great deeds and miracles through the power of God. This she does not deny, indeed, she has sacrificed her own wealth and property to enable Elisha's continuing work in the name of the Lord. Yet, when a gift is offered to her, her likely deep, deep sadness is too loud to hear the powerful promise that has been delivered to her.



We often behave in a very similar way. We speak to others about how the Lord can heal any wound! And yet, when it comes to our secret scars, we listen to the lies of Satan as he sows seeds of doubt in our minds. Satan whispers to us that whilst God may bless and deliver others from sadness, you are the forgotten one. You are the exception to the rule. In such a lie we see Satan's appeal to our prideful nature. For when we listen to such lies from the enemy, we are giving space to the notion that we are special above all others. For when we feel as though we are the forgotten of God, we are quietly saying that God may be able and ready to help others, but not me. There is great danger in the surrendering to such thoughts of 'me' and 'my condition'. We must be as Joseph in such thoughts and flee from their tempting ways! We must not consider the self nor worry about 'me'. Instead, we are to consider Him and how He has delivered all who call upon His name for redemption, refuge and provision.

Yet even in these dark caves of human pride, the Lord moves with meekness of power. Note how on hearing such a response to his joyful news to the Shunamite woman, Elisha gives no correction or rebuking to her. That is the meekness and the compassion of God holding the tongue of Elisha. The Lord does so because He sees the inward person, not the outer person that the world sees (1 Samuel 16:7). He looked upon the heart of the Shunamite woman and saw one who loves Him dearly and lives her faith with actions and not just words (James 1:22). The Lord looked upon her and saw a heart that does not look to deny His power in providing such a blessing to her, but one that has grown weary in the long-carried pain. Her strength for God is strong when others need to be refreshed; but her strength is failing when it comes to her own need to find refreshment of spirit.

So, the Lord gives no rebuke to the Shunamite woman. Her slipping into doubt of Him and His ability to provide for His own was not in defiance, but in ignorance fuelled by the wounds of a heart likely filled with quiet, silent tears. How many times over do we engage in such moments of doubt in God! We do not find ourselves doing so in wilful defiance or anger against Him, but in that blinding malaise of a quietly sorrowful heart. Our Lord is tender and gracious, knowing our frailties of the flesh (Psalm 103:14 & Hebrews 4:15), and looks to prove His love and provision to us not through vain and empty promises as is the manner of humanity, but in fulfilled action!

The Lord did this very thing, He meekly answered the Shunamite woman's doubts with a loving gift of a son. At long last, she could embrace and hold sweetly to her chest the child her heart had likely longed for. Her quiet wound was healed in His gracious gifting of a son, the only way her deep ache could be satisfied.

How we see the Gospel in this tremendous event. How many lives are lived with quiet aching for something more. A deep-rooted longing for someone who will soothe the pain that lingers quietly within the caverns of their heart. We may have material wealth, friends and family surrounding us, as the Shunamite woman did. Yet still there was a quiet longing crying deep in the heart day and night. It cries out to the heavens and all the majesty of the stars in the night sky cannot hear our call. The mighty angels in all their heavenly splendour cannot hear our pleas, yet they see our troubled face in the cold night hours. They gaze on wondering who will aid such troubled lives. Then they kneel in silent reverence, as the Lord God bends His ear to hear the whimpers of the plagued heart. The angels watch on in awe at how the Thrice Holy God moves to ease the sighs and groans of the troubled heart. A heart that was once at war with Him and showed no desire to love Him. Yet He loved us first, whilst we were yet sinners, and all the courts of Heaven stood in awe at the sending of God's own Son to redeem such repentant hearts.

So, the Son of God came in the flesh of man, to offer Himself as a full and final sacrifice for the sins of the world. In triumph, He rose from the tomb having conquered sin and death, so that all who believe on Him might also rise again from the grave and live in eternal glory. He came to seek those who longed to embrace Him, not just a son but **the** Son of God. He came to give Himself in obedience to the will of the Father, so that all who cling to Him and treasure Him above all else, might find the balm to soothe their deep wounds of the heart.

There is much to learn from the life of the Shunamite woman. A woman who many of us can recognise in ourselves. A woman whose life was like so many known unto God. A life rich in faithful service of God and His servants. But a life also likely affected by quiet wounds that no earthly balm could heal. It's healing required the provision of a son; a blessed picture of all lives that are to be healed by God. For all lives if they are to be truly healed and brought to fulfilment and peace, must embrace the Son of God and love Him with all their heart, soul and strength (Matthew 12:30). Amen.

The Known Gospel

The word 'known' is a powerful word. It is used to 'refer to something or someone that is familiar to or understood by people' (Cambridge Dictionary - <https://dictionary.cambridge.org>). A good question to ask ourselves as Christians is to whether the Gospel of Jesus Christ is truly 'known' by us? Have we really understood the lengths and breadths of the Good News? Well, there is a very handy and concise way to answer this question, and it's by breaking down the word 'known'.

Consider the construction of the word 'known'. It opens with a silent 'K'. The Old Testament is the ever-building revelation as to who the coming Messiah that is Jesus Christ, would be. Throughout the flowing pages of the Old Testament, we see a picture of the Lord Jesus emerge clearer and clearer with each passing book. This is done through the various 'Theophanies' or 'Christophanies' (pre-Incarnate appearances of Jesus) seen in the Old Testament. Along with these, we see various 'types of Christ' in the pages of the Old Testament. Through figures such as Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Joshua, Boaz, David etc, etc, we see pointers as to who the coming King was to be. In short, Christ Jesus, the coming King was there but seemingly silent to the casual reader. Much like the letter 'K' for King, is silent but very much there in the word 'known'.

Let's come to the next letter in 'known', that is 'n'. The New Testament opens with the arrival of the King that is Christ Jesus. He has 'now' appeared as the full revelation of the Godhead in the flesh of man. We can remember this using the letter 'n' as seen in the word 'now'. So, we have thus far, the seemingly silent but very present 'King' is 'now' revealed to mankind in the flesh of man, so that we may know God through Him.

Then we come to the work of the King that is Christ Jesus. We come to see in His atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world at Calvary, and His rising again from the tomb, we can **own** (the last part of 'known') eternal life through repentance of sin and the placing of faith in Him. This is the good news of the Gospel, that by the power of the King of kings, sin and death has been conquered and the gates of Heaven have been opened to all who believe on Him!

In this simple word that is 'known', we have a handy tool to work efficiently through the Biblical narrative. Let's look at it again.

K – the seemingly silent but very present letter that reflects the **King**. He who is revealed ever more fully through the words of the prophets and the various 'types of Christ' as seen in the Old Testament.

N – the **King** has 'now' come in the flesh of man as the full revelation of the Godhead so that mankind might be redeemed through His full and final sacrifice at Calvary.

‘Own’ – we can own eternal life (the good news!) through repentance of sin and the placing of faith in recognition of the fact that the King has come and has opened the way to life eternal through the shedding of His perfect blood.

Put it all together and you have ‘known’. If you believe all of that with all your heart, soul and strength then the King of kings that is Jesus Christ is **known** to you personally. If you don’t commit to it all, then Jesus Christ may be someone you ‘know of’ but is not **known** to you! That missing ‘n’ that changes ‘know’ to ‘known’ is crucial! It changes the Gospel from a nice message to a personal salvation!

So, ask yourself, is Jesus Christ truly known to you, or is He just someone you know. For example, I know different women, but only one is known to be my wife! I only have that deep bond of marital love with one as she is the one known to my heart. Is Christ Jesus truly **known** to you as the one great love of your life? Or is He just one of many you know? A crucial question that needs answering by many today. A question that can be posed and indeed answered through that great word that is ‘known’.

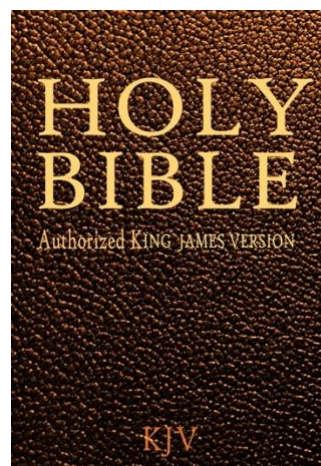
When Some Versions Just Don’t Cut It

Isaiah 52:12 has a fascinating declaration that God will be Israel’s ‘rereward’. The NIV and many other versions replace this ‘archaic’ term with the words ‘rear guard’. The picture being that the Israelites and indeed all who go out in service of God, needn’t fear attacks from the rear for God would protect their vulnerability in this area. These words were given to the people by God through the prophet Isaiah, to remind them of when He literally did this when they fled Egypt in Exodus 14:20.

Considering this, the replacement of ‘rereward’ with ‘rear guard’ seems to be a fair and possibly better translation that is more in line with modern parlance. It may seem so on initial inspection at least, and so I included this basic meaning of the word ‘rereward’ in a Sunday sermon I delivered for Remembrance Day. However, when it came to writing up the same points for this article, I found myself unsatisfied with this definition of the term ‘rereward’. So, I stopped and spent a whole extra five minutes (yep, it really doesn’t take long to check these things) checking the meaning of this word ‘rereward’.

What I found was illuminating and gave extra depth to an already tremendous assurance given by God to His people. The term ‘rereward’ does not just refer to troops or men at arms that would guard the rear of a company or army. Not at all! In the ‘rereward’, we would also find physicians and nurses, chaplains, and the quartermasters (responsible for supplies, equipment, accommodation etc). In this group therefore, you have not only the troops, but also those who could heal the wounded, support and encourage the fearful and weary, and those who would feed, clothe and bring shelter to the whole army!

In this one word ‘rereward’ with have a far fuller reflection of all the roles fulfilled by God towards His people than ‘rear guard’ ever could! For God doesn’t lead us and defend us in the battles of the day, but He also heals our wounds (the medics), He strengthens and encourages us when we are low and fearful (chaplains) and meets our daily needs (quartermasters). He does all these things, all at the same time for all His children! This entire paragraph that has used to define the full provisions of God towards His own, has been succinctly rendered into one word, ‘rereward’, by the incomparable genius of the Lord God and His eternal Word!



Isn’t this an amazing assurance to each of us as we step out into a new year! One filled with possibility but also danger. One that is exciting but also filled with testing and trial. How each Christian can step out into their days without haste as the prophet Isaiah speaks, but with peace and confidence that God not only goes before them, but stands with them, and defends their backs. We can enter each day knowing that He is our strength, but also our healer, our comforter and our provider.

So then, we have seen in just this one instance, that with just a truly tiny bit of extra research (it was less than five minutes for me to find this full definition and check it with other sources), that many bible versions just don’t match the depth of wonder and meaning that is available to us in AV/KJV Bible. I know many are sceptical of AV/KJV ‘fanatics’, but I ask you to put your quiet prejudice aside and simply check such facts for yourself. Be thorough in your study of Holy Scripture and delve deeply into the meaning of the words chosen by God. Remember, the Gospel of John closes with the jaw dropping assurance from John, that if he wrote down all the wonders and miracles he saw Christ perform, the

books of the world would not be able to contain them! Now consider, that if many of Christ's powerful miracles were not recorded but other such words were recorded by God to be given to us, they must be there for a deep and meaningful reason!

There is no 'filler' in Holy Scripture as it is all profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction of righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). And so, every word, every use of punctuation is to be carefully studied by the child of God, for our God is a God of the massive and the microscopic. In such diligent study, you will find like myself and many other giants of the faith like C.H Spurgeon (his last message preached was on this very topic), Dr Henry Morris, Dean Burgon etc, etc, that in the AV/KJV Bible, we have been blessed with a uniquely rendered text. One that is the purest, deepest and most beautiful rendering of God's Word the world has seen.

A Leopard Changing Its Spots?

Is the Roman Catholic Church changing? Is there finally a reason for an acceptance of the ecumenical movement? The casual observer seeing the latest declaration from the Vatican and Pope Leo XIV, would believe so. But is there more than meets the eye? Does this subtlety of movement actually reveal what the Papacy is truly? So many questions are being raised, so let's explore them together.

Pope Leo XIV recently caused surprise throughout the Catholic Church when he announced that Mary is **not** the 'Co-Redemptrix' of the world alongside Jesus Christ. His statement was made to clarify a deeply contentious issue for the Catholic Church, as this topic has seen recent Pope's flip-flop between supporting this heresy (Pope John Paul II for example), and criticising it (Pope Benedict and Pope Francis). In short, this exalting of Mary as 'Co-Redeemer' of mankind alongside Jesus Christ, has caused significant contention and confusion amongst the Catholic masses.

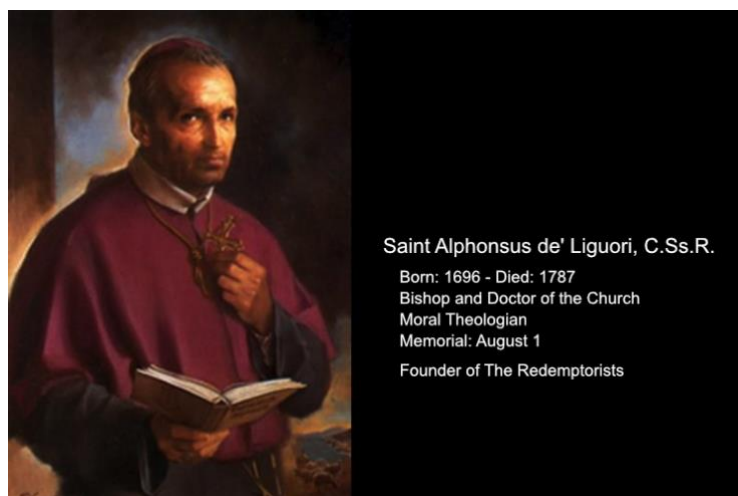
So, is this 'clarification' by Pope Leo XIV, that Mary is not a 'Co-Redemptrix' alongside Christ Jesus, the heralding of a bold new era when Catholics and Protestants can unite? The reality of the situation makes the answer to this wide-eyed question a clear 'NO'.

Whilst this announcement by Pope Leo XIV does open the way for a blending of the 'brotherhood' of Christian denominations that Papal Rome likes to inject itself into; it doesn't change its deeply held dogma on Mary. Whilst Christ Jesus is now being regarded as the sole Redeemer of the world, the view held on Mary is still deeply heretical. Roman Catholicism holds that although Christ Jesus is our Redeemer, He is not approachable by mankind as a Mediator between God and man.

The Papacy teaches that a 'mediator for the Mediator' is required, and this role is fulfilled by Mary, the 'Mother of God'. Rome contends that Mary, being a gentle and loving mother, is far more approachable than Jesus Christ. So, we are to go to Mary for intervention in the belief that she mediates for us before the Mediator that is Christ Jesus. The Papacy preaches that Christ Jesus listens to the petitions made to Him by Mary on our behalf, and then accepts them.

Therefore, although Christ Jesus is the sole Redeemer of the world, He is not an approachable Mediator between God and man. This gap is filled by Mary, who becomes the 'mediator for the Mediator'. This is blatant heresy and is seen nowhere in Holy Scripture. There is but one Mediator between God and mankind and that is Christ Jesus. All those who deny this are not Christians, the Holy Bible makes that very clear (see John 14:6 for a famous example of this point).

This position has long been held by the Roman Catholic Church, and it shows no signs of abandoning this heresy. Going back the days of Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787), one of only 38 'doctors' in the entire history of the Catholic church (thus showing the prominence of this teaching in Catholicism), Liguori



said on this important matter, 'St Bonaventure says that Mary is called "the gate of heaven, because no one can enter that blessed kingdom without passing through her."

Elsewhere in Liguori's book entitled *The Glories of Mary*, he states, 'And St Laurence Justinian asks, "How can she be otherwise than full of grace, who has made the ladder to paradise, the gate of heaven, the most true mediatrix between God and man?" Firstly, the ladder that Jacob saw the angels ascending and descending on in Genesis 28:12 was pointing to Christ Jesus, not Mary! To say that Mary is full of grace is debunked by the woman herself in Luke 1:46-47, where she says, "My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Why would Mary acknowledge God as her Saviour is she was full of grace as she would not need saving! Next, to call Mary the 'most true mediatrix between God and man' is heresy! Only Christ Jesus is the Mediator between God and man. Anyone who denies this and lifts up another in His place, is not a Christian according to Holy Scripture.

Further to this, Liguori later wrote, 'needed with the mediator himself, nor could a more fitting one be found than Mary.' Here we have the centuries old Catholic dogma that Christ Jesus needed a mediator between Himself and man. The Church of Rome has pushed the heretical notion that Mary is the one to fill this role, and it has pushed this heresy for centuries. Crucially, it is showing no signs of abandoning this heresy.

To conclude, the Roman Catholic Church has not changed its base position that is one built on heresy. It still holds that Christ Jesus is not the only way to the Father, going against the very words and revelation of the Son of God Himself (again, John 14:6). Even though it may have de-muddled some its less than certain dogmas on the 'Co-Redemptrix' role of Mary, it still strongly holds that Mary is the first port of call for the prayers of humanity. Rome still contends most vehemently, that Mary is superior in the role as Mediator between God and man. This remains a great foundational heresy that prohibits any true Christian from ever uniting with the Roman Catholic Church.

The Papacy is relying on many Christians' lack of Church history, theological understanding, and general awareness of the nature of the Catholic Church and what it teaches. It's relying on these fatal miscalculations and spiritual laziness of many Christians, to lure them into believing that true Christianity and Catholicism are compatible. This blind embracing of Rome under the ecumenical movement will further hasten the rise of the Antichrist. He who will lead this pagan mystery religion that is Catholicism under the banner of a 'brotherhood of religions.' The late Pope Francis declared numerous times to numerous pagan religions, that every faith prays and worships the same God. That he was correct on. What he's finding out now though tragically, is that it's not the God he thought!

The Ipuwer Papyrus

Many critics of the Holy Bible attempt to attack the accuracy of the history contained within it. One of these areas of attack is the events of the Exodus. Some contend that the only historical record we have of the Exodus and the preceding plagues, comes from the Bible and as a result cannot be seen as verified history. Well, there is a remarkable papyrus that contains a poetic recording (a common practice in the ancient world) of events unfolding in Egypt by a native Egyptian, that is strikingly similar to what we read in the Book of Exodus. Below are some extracts from the Ipuwer Papyrus. Read through them and see for yourself how neatly they match the Biblical record as given in the Biblical chapter and verse reference.

poor men have become owners of wealth, and he who could not make sandals for himself is now a possessor of riches: [Exodus 12:35](#)

pestilence is throughout the land, blood is everywhere: [Exodus 7:17](#) – "With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. 18 The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink; the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water.' "

the river is blood, yet men drink of it: [Exodus 7:24](#)

gold and lapis lazuli, silver and turquoise, carnelian and amethyst, Ibhet-stone and [. . .] are strung on the necks of maidservants: [Exodus 12:35](#)



trees are felled and branches are stripped off: [Exodus 9:25](#)

all animals, their hearts weep; cattle moan because of the state of the land: [Exodus 9:2](#)

the children of princes are dashed against walls, and the children of the neck are laid out on the high ground: [Exodus 12:29](#)

All very interesting isn't it! The Ipuwer Papyrus contains remarkably similar events to what we read in the Book of Exodus. It is further very interesting to note that the events detailed in the Ipuwer Papyrus, are written by an Egyptian, not a Hebrew. This means that there is no potential bias by the writer to construct a timeline of events that matches the existing national narrative of what took place during the Exodus.

This impressive piece of evidence that heavily points to the veracity of the Biblical record, is dismissed by Bible sceptics. Their grounds for this dismissal are twofold. Firstly, that its poetical style means it might not be a historical record. Such a view conveniently dispenses with the well-known use of poetry to record historical events in the ancient world. Secondly, it is contended by Bible sceptics that the writing of the Ipuwer Papyrus is too early to coincide with the Biblical Exodus. The papyrus is believed to have been written somewhere between 1800-1400 BC, placing it before the secular timeline of the Exodus (around the reign of Ramesses II in 1279-1213 BC). As a result, sceptics argue the Ipuwer Papyrus must be recording the events of an earlier troubled era for the Egyptian kingdom. However, if we use the Biblical timeline, a timeline gaining increasing support from scholars across the globe (see the excellent *Patterns of Evidence* DVD series on this topic), the date of the Exodus would fit neatly within the dating of the Ipuwer Papyrus.

So, when people argue that the history of the Holy Bible has no proof of its accuracy outside of its own pages, remember the Ipuwer Papyrus. The words written by that ancient Egyptian in an era that fits nicely with the Biblical timeline of the events of the Exodus, mirror Holy Scripture amazingly well. As always, the truth of the Holy Bible is not found wanting, all to the glory of God and the assurance of our salvation and coming glory through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Encouragement In Troubled Days

As nations drift further and further away from God, it is easy for a true believer to become downhearted, just as Elijah became in 1 Kings 19. In this chapter we read of how Elijah became despondent of heart in the thought that he was alone in all Israel in his stand against the worship of the foul false god Baal. Yet the Lord reassured Elijah in 1 Kings 19:18, that he was not alone, but that 7000 others known to Him stood with Elijah in refusing to bow their knee before Baal.

The Lord has brought similar refreshing to His beloved children throughout the generations, and His ways have remained true to this day. With the rise of dark and demonic 'entertainment' for children and families via hugely popular movies such as *KPop Demon Hunters*, it can leave believers feeling despondent as to who else out there truly stands for Christ Jesus. Yet some good news emerged in late mid-November 2025, as a CofE school in Lilliput, Poole, publicly announced that it was banning all singing of songs from *KPop Demon Hunters*. The school stated that the singing of any songs from such a demonically themed movie in its school, was against its Christian ethos and offensive to its Christian students and families. The school stated that no matter how 'positive' the messages of the songs of the movie may appear to be, its subject matter is still against Christianity and the Holy Bible.

Furthermore, I heard other encouraging comments made on the same topic of children's entertainment being made in a queue at Smyths toy store recently. A 'meet and greet' event was being held where families could meet the star of a children's show about real life horses and ponies. The family ahead of us complimented the young star of the show that it was so nice to have a 'watchable' children's show where they didn't have to worry about what 'rubbish was being promoted to their children'. The star responded with an acknowledgement of this point and commented how they wanted to produce something that was wholesome and simply about caring for beautiful creatures such as horses and ponies. Whilst not any talk of the Lord was made, it showed that there are people out there who are aware of the increasing evil that surrounds them every day. It is such souls that can be won to Christ Jesus. It is such souls that can be shown that the unease they have over so much of what is being promoted as 'good' is the still, small voice of God witnessing to their hearts. The Lord has not returned yet because there are still souls to save and thereby fill the rooms of our Father's house!

On a different but related point, my wife and I enjoyed an unexpected time of fellowship with believers at the church where we got married 18 years ago. Happening to stop by and see the church again for ‘old times sake’, we entered the church café next door and were warmly greeted by those inside. We chatted about how we got married at the church many years prior, and it wasn’t long before we were all talking excitedly about our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Whilst the church had lost many of its younger congregants to ‘cooler’ churches in town, those few that were left had gathered in that little church annex that morning and gave my wife and I unexpected but welcome fellowship. The Lord is so very good to all His servants in that He sees when our spirits are becoming weary with sadness that we are alone in our faith. In His grace, He gives a little reminder that there are others out there, unknown to us but known to Him, that still hold true.

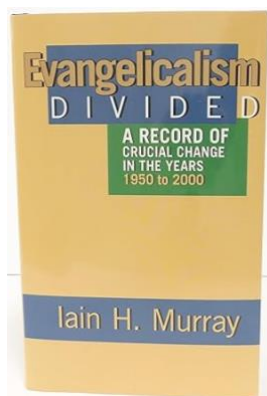
We are to pray for such schools, such families and such churches. We are to pray that the Lord strengthens their stand and blesses their lives so that they remain true and faithful witnesses for the Light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Where possible, we are to encourage such endeavours, and employ our God given resources to support and aid those who are placing themselves in harm’s way in service of Christ Jesus and the Gospel.

On reflection of these thoughts, let’s share a moment of thankful prayer. Dear Lord and Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are a powerful yet meek God. One that is mighty and able to save any who call on the name of your Son Christ Jesus for salvation; and that you are gentle and loving to know and heal all the troubles of our heart.

Forgive us Lord when we let our heads drop in the thought that we are alone in our faith, and when we become disheartened in our service of you. Lord, we thank you that you see our lowness of spirit and move to refresh us through gentle reminders that we are not alone in this world. That there are others out there that serve you, and that we are bonded to them through our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus. We thank you Lord, in how you bless us with times of refreshing of heart, so that we are not afraid of the descent of the world into ever greater sin and evil. We thank you that we can keep our eyes fixed on victory, the victory of Christ Jesus at Calvary. We thank you that there are others that we can join in songs of celebration and thanks for your love towards us. Give us bold hearts Lord each day, so that we may search out such faithful souls. Thereby that we may bring them encouragement, as you have used them to encourage us. Amen.

Resource Corner

Evangelicalism Divided

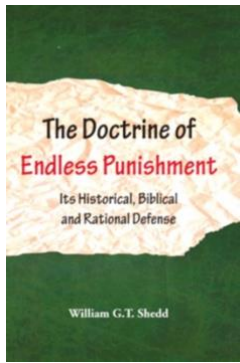


Why has Christian unity proved to be such a divisive topic? In the 1950’s two movements- evangelicalism and ecumenism offered differing paths to unity in the church. But as the decades have passed the influence of ecumenism has exposed a fault line in evangelicalism. Questions of critical importance have been brought to the surface: Is the Gospel broader than evangelicals have historically insisted? Can there be unity with non-evangelicals in evangelism and church leadership? Does the Gospel have priority over denominational loyalty?

These gained high profile in the crusades of Dr. Billy Graham on both sides of the Atlantic, and in the subsequent interaction among evangelicals in North America and Europe. At first a new policy of ‘co-operation without compromise’ promised an ‘evangelical renaissance’. Those who feared an inevitable devaluation of the Gospel were viewed as destined for the kind of isolation to which fundamentalism had been consigned earlier in the century.

Evangelicalism Divided traces the fascinating saga of the personalities, institutions and publications involved in this fifty-year period. Iain Murray’s account is not simply a black and white narrative. But using the mass of sources now available he shows how the new policy involved concessions which seriously weakened Biblical Christianity. The first and greatest need, he argues, is to answer the most fundamental and divisive question of all: What is a Christian?

Available from Amazon



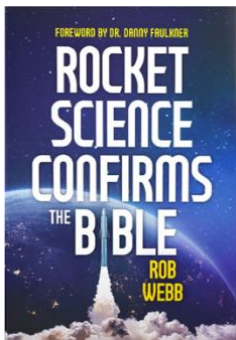
The Doctrine of Endless Punishment: Its Historical, Biblical and Rational Defence

This doctrine is so solemn that man's natural instinct is either to ignore it or deny it. From time to time in the history of the Christian church it comes under concerted attack, as it did during the life of W.G.T. Shedd, the noted nineteenth century theologian and preacher. In this work, Shedd carefully expounds the biblical teaching on divine judgment, and sets it in the context of the history of Christian doctrine. He deals carefully and cogently with objections to it.

Shedd shows that 'The strongest support of the doctrine of endless punishment is the teaching of Christ, the Redeemer of man; without the explicit and reiterated statements of God incarnate, it is doubtful whether so awful a truth would have had such a conspicuous place as it always has had in the creed of Christendom. Christ could not have warned men so frequently and earnestly as he did, had he known there is no future peril.' This book will have a profoundly sobering effect on its readers; but its lasting impression will be to cause a new concern for men and women without Christ, and undying gratitude for 'Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come'.

Available from icmbooks.co.uk

Rocket Science Confirms The Bible



Whether you're a space enthusiast, a budding scientist, or someone seeking to better integrate faith and work, this book offers something for everyone.

In *Rocket Science Confirms the Bible*, aerospace engineer Rob Webb—affectionately known as "Rocket Rob"—delves into more than just rockets and space exploration. This thought-provoking book challenges readers to examine their worldview. Is it rooted in man's fleeting ideas, or in the unshakable foundation of Scripture?

With a decade of experience working on NASA spacecraft, Webb seamlessly connects the intricacies of rocket science with the truth of God's Word. He demonstrates how careers in science and engineering can honour God while inspiring a biblical understanding of our universe.

From exploring the heavens to answering big questions about life on other planets, *Rocket Science Confirms the Bible* invites readers to stand firm in their faith and marvel at the Creator's handiwork.

Prepare for launch—discover how science and Scripture align to proclaim the glory of God!

Available from Answers in Genesis

A Final Thought

As the year closes with celebration and a new year quickly follows, ask yourself, 'What have I done for my Lord this year? Have I served Him well? Have I used the provisions, blessings and resources graciously given to me each day for myself and my will, or for God and His will?' Every day is an opportunity to serve the King of kings that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Dwell on that for a moment. Now rethink what you'll do with the hours and days that God blesses you with this coming year. Onward Christian soldiers and God bless you all. Amen.

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